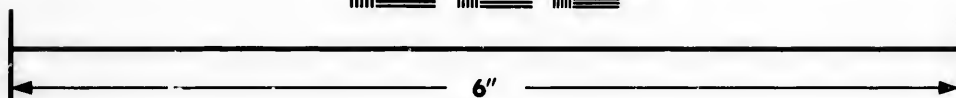
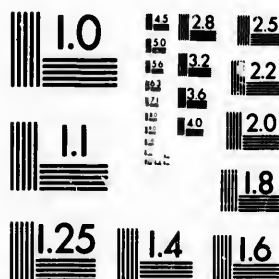


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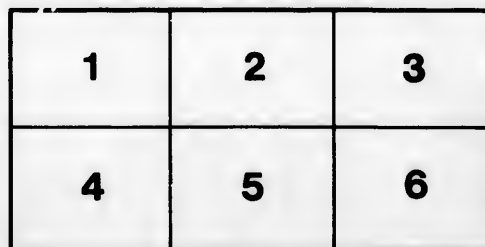
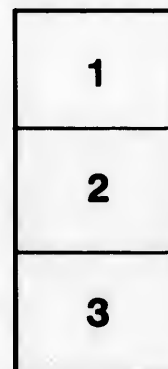
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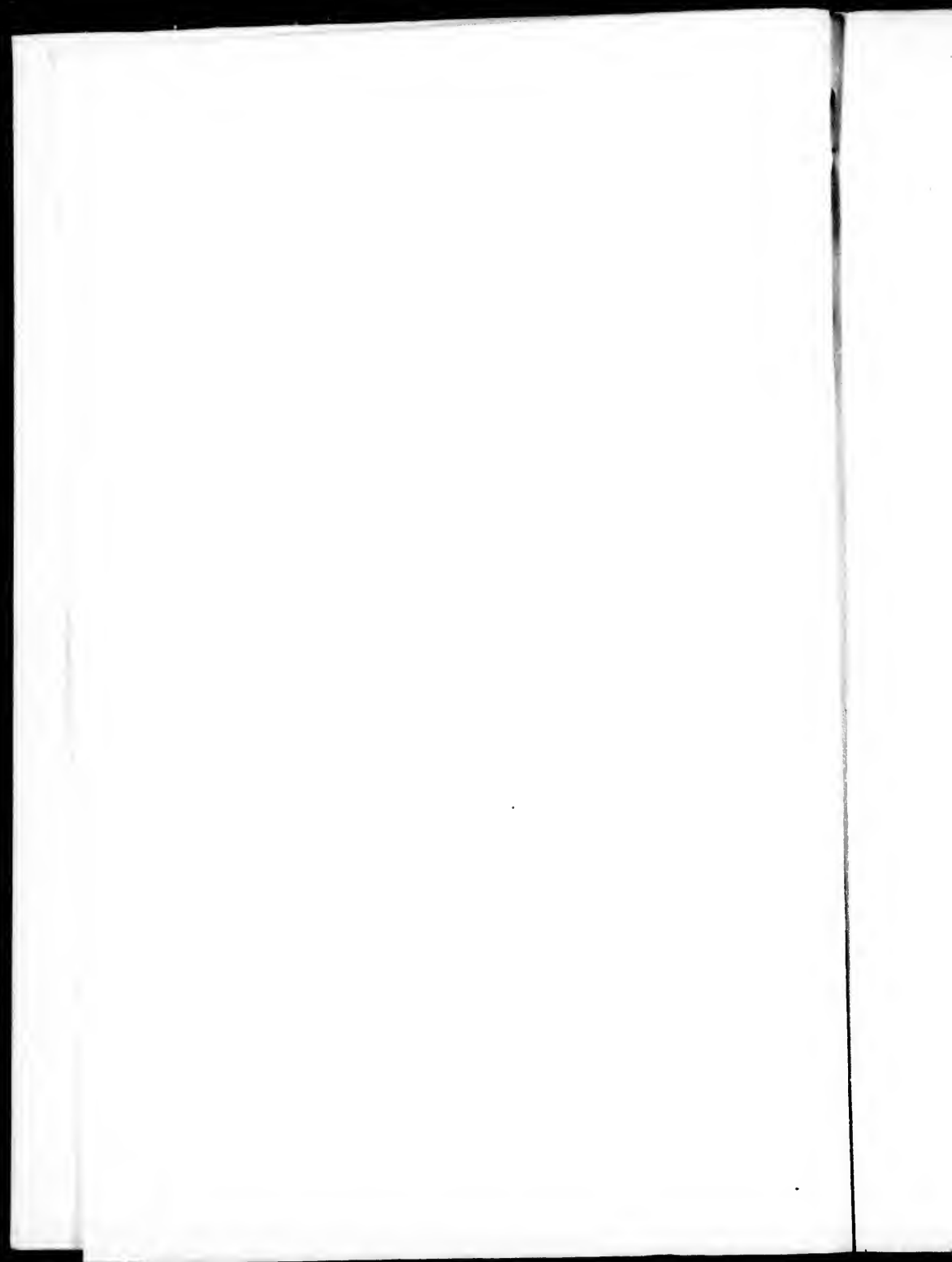
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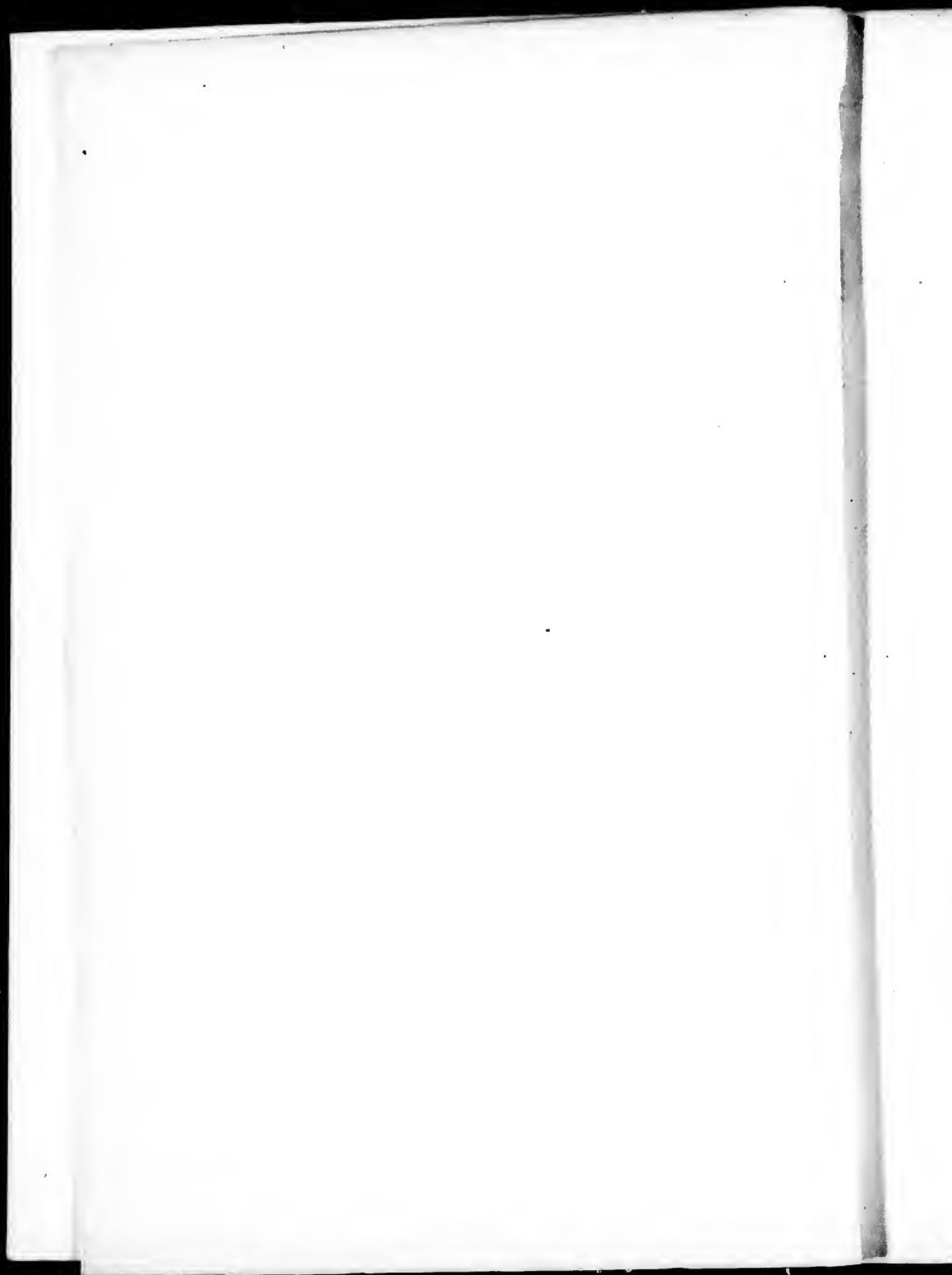
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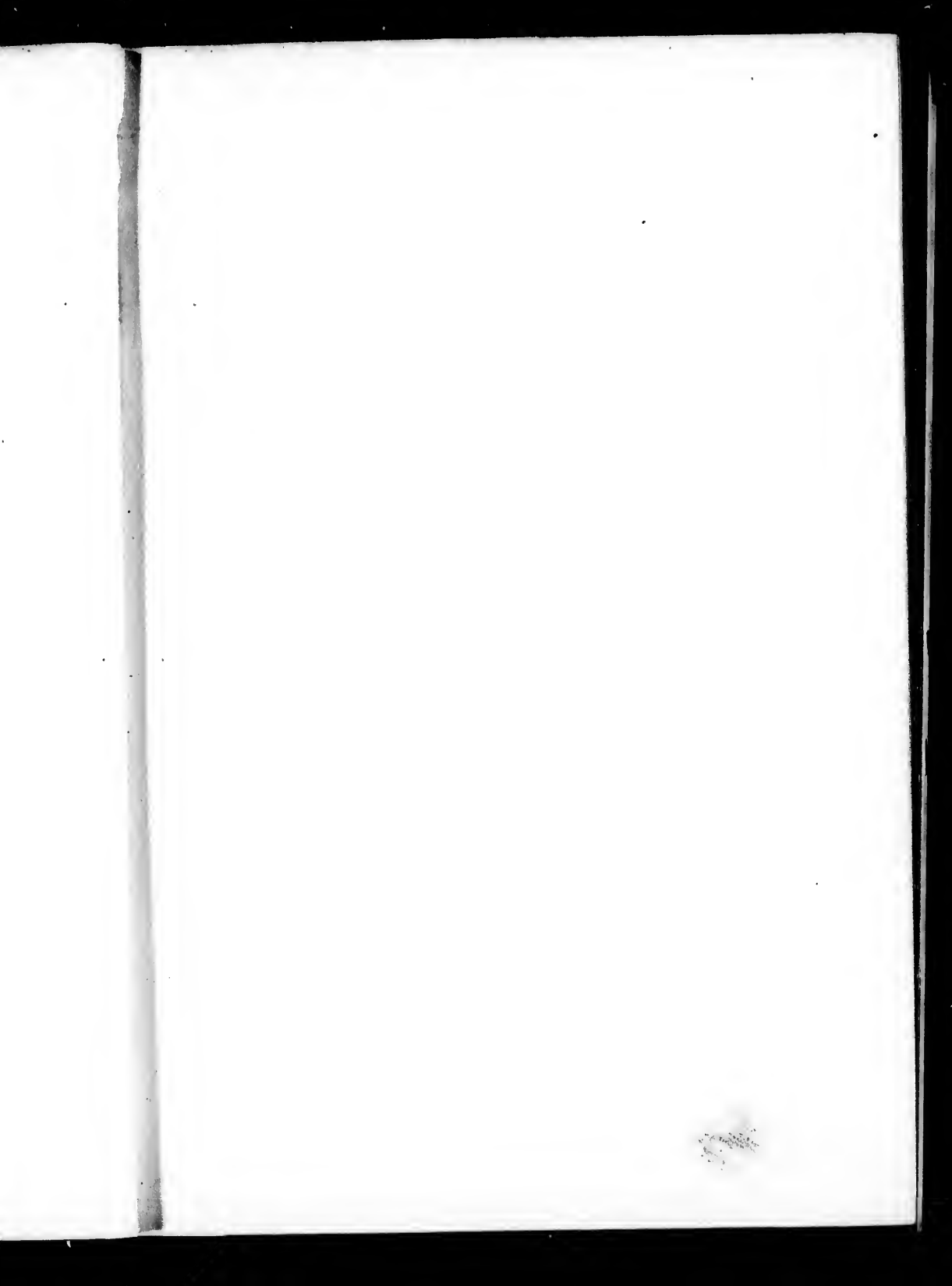
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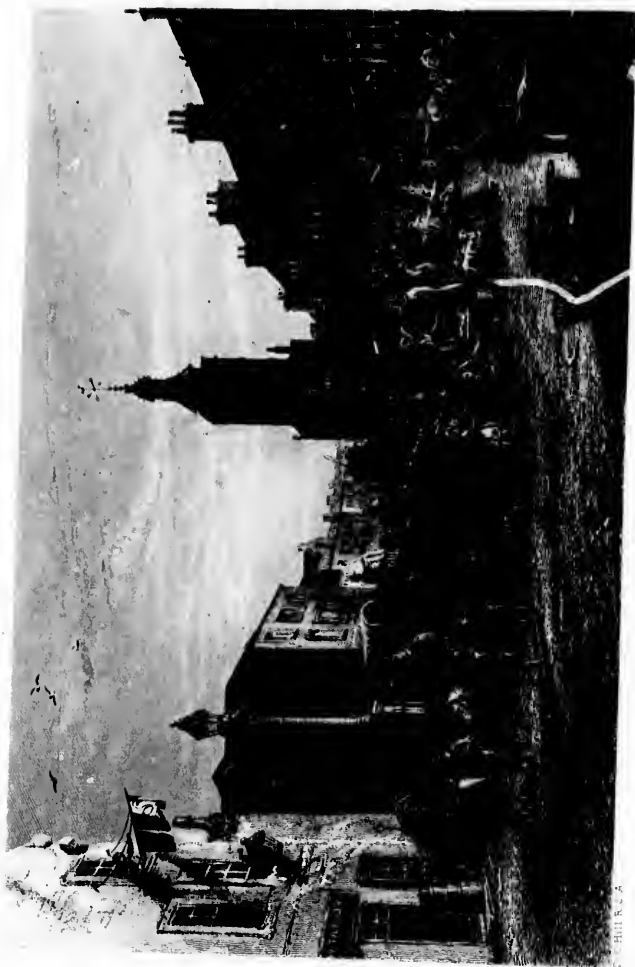


THE WORKS
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ALSO
THE LIFE OF BURNS, BY J. G. LOCKHART;
AND ESSAYS ON THE GENIUS, CHARACTER, AND WRITINGS OF BURNS,
BY THOMAS CARLYLE AND PROFESSOR WILSON.

EDITED BY
CHARLES ANNANDALE, M.A., LL.D.,
EDITOR OF THE "IMPERIAL DICTIONARY," ETC.

VOL. V.



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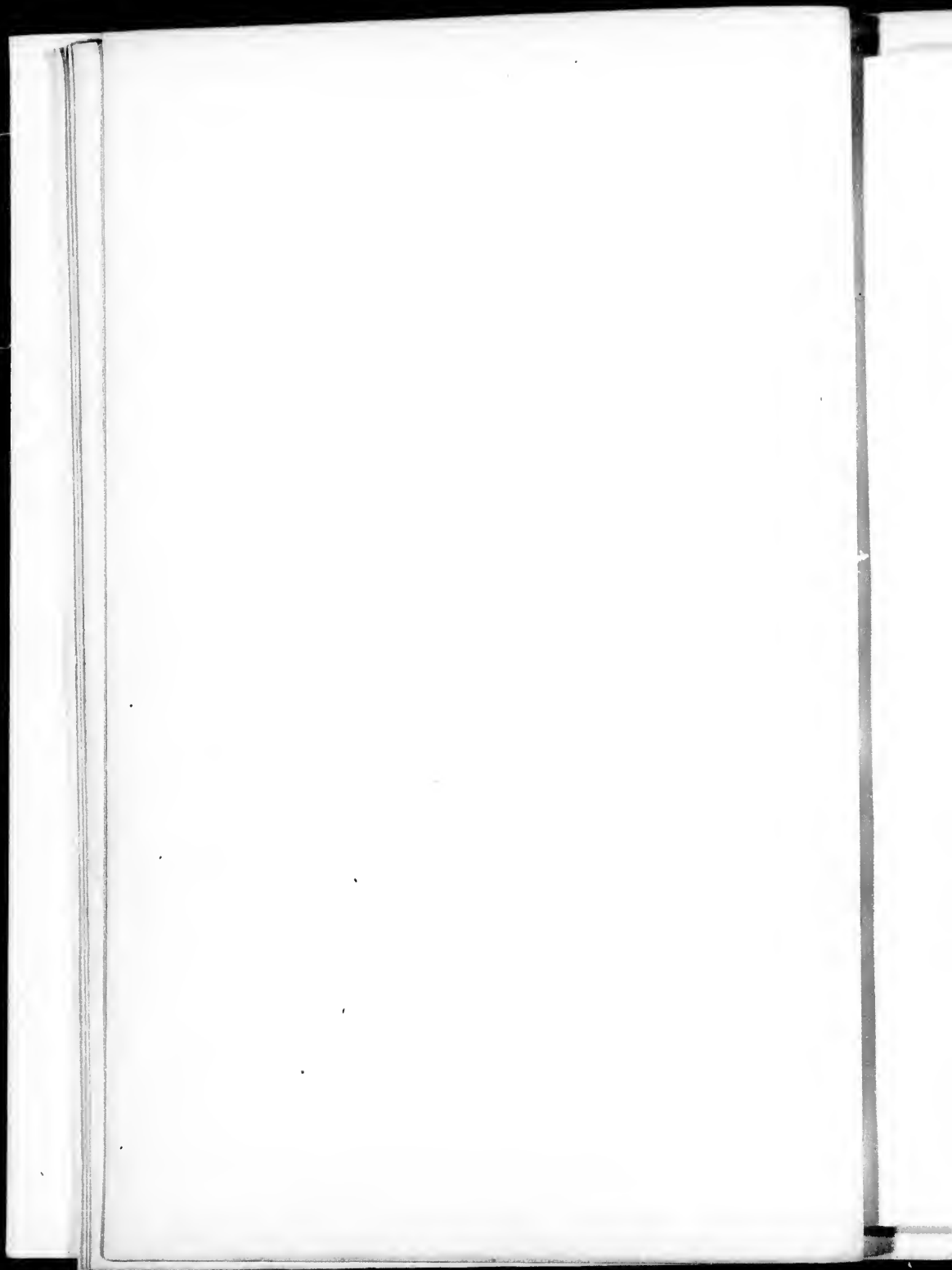
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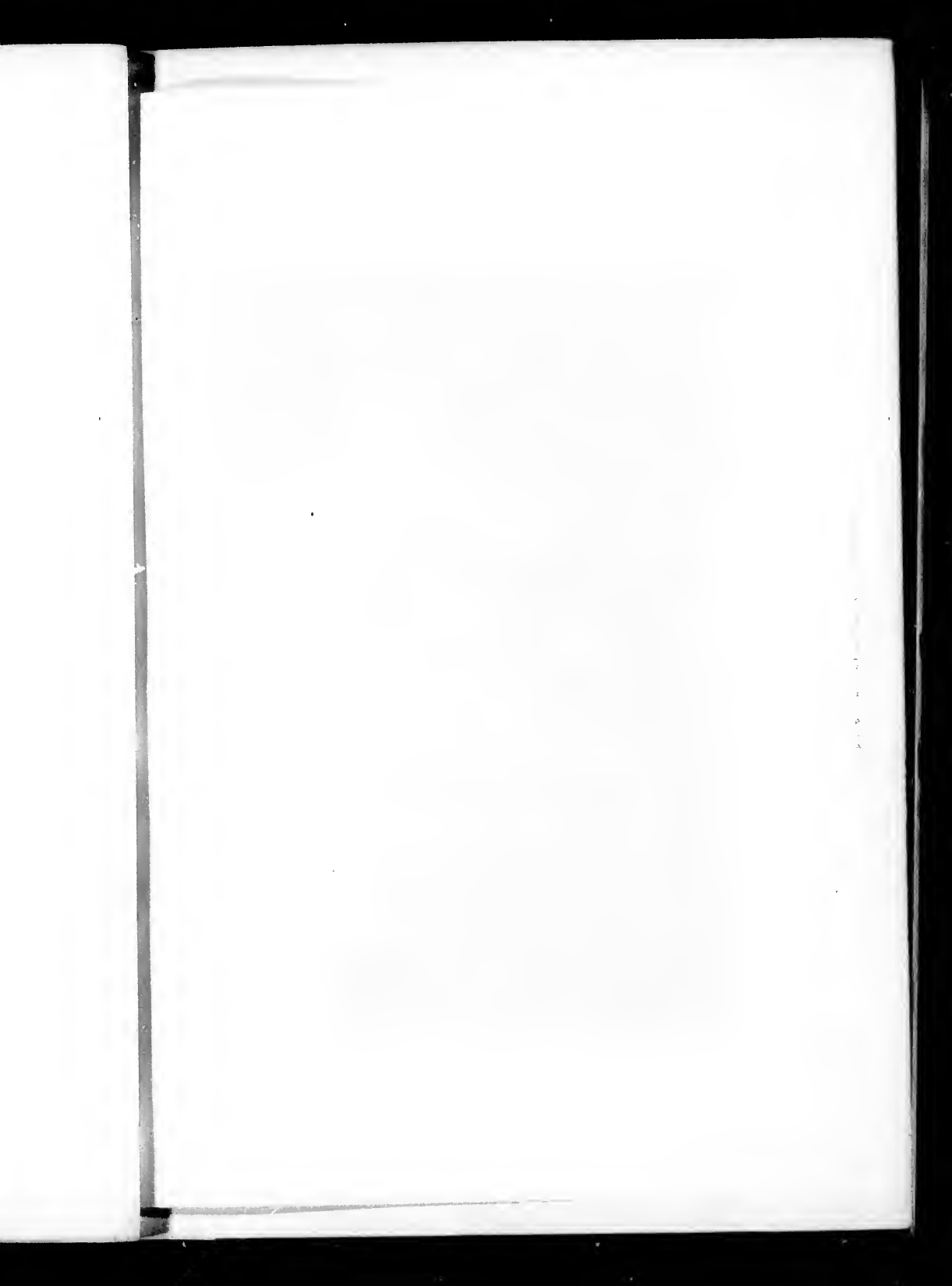
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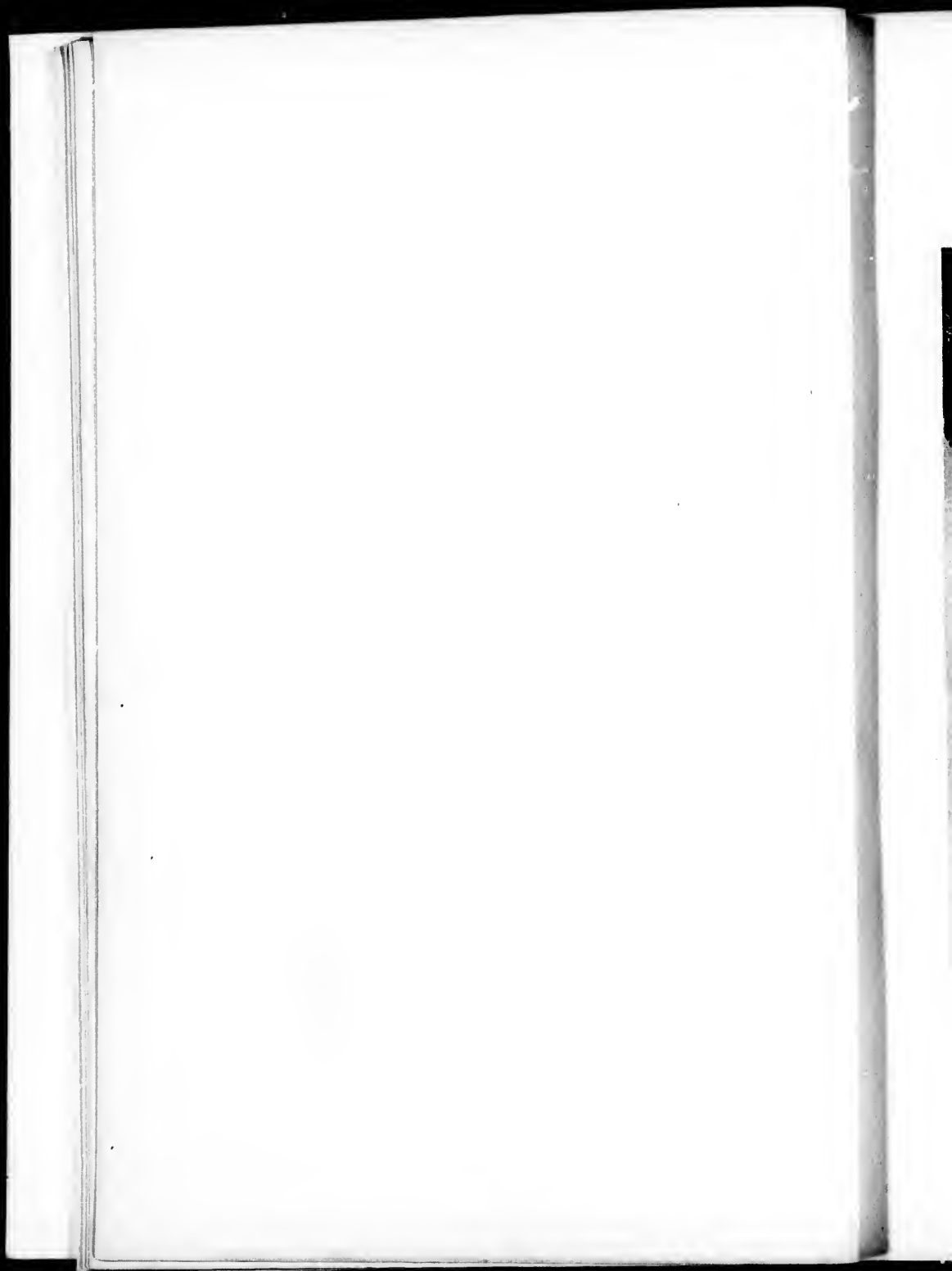
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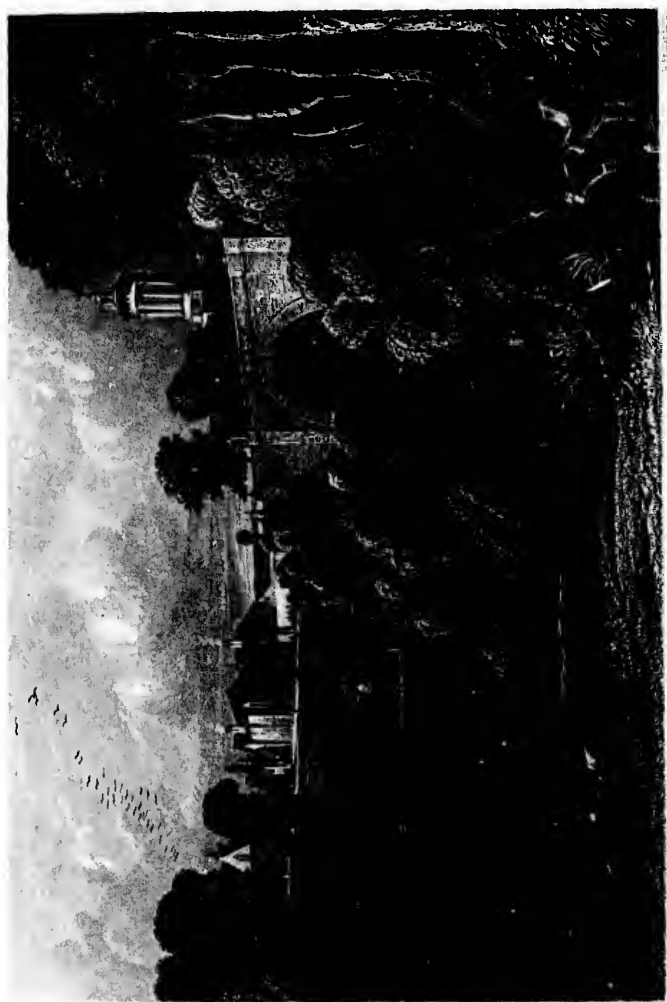
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THE WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS.

ON THE GENIUS, CHARACTER, AND WRITINGS
OF THE POET.

BY PROFESSOR WILSON.

SYNOPSIS.

BURNS a born poet;—derived his might from the peasant life in Scotland;—speaks out straight from his own experience and feeling;—his name a household word among his countrymen;—lives in the hearts of the people;—immortality of Burns's poetry;—his early home;—education;—reading;—supernatural lore;—at fifteen the principal labourer on the farm;—book-knowledge;—Murdoch's opinion of the brothers;—dawn of love and poesy;—life at Lochlea;—"passion's guilty cup;"—Highland Mary;—"Thou lingering star;"—death of the poet's father;—Mossgiel;—"The Vision;"—"Epistle to Davie;"—first suggestion of becoming an author;—his love of nature intensified by being restricted by his sympathy for living creatures;—"Halloween;"—"The Cotter's Saturday Night;"—Jean Armour;—West Indian project;—publication of poems;—Edinburgh;—conversational power;—in high society;—publication of Edinburgh edition;—tours;—return to Mossgiel;—marriage;—"Of a' the airts the wind can blaw;"—Ellisland;—journeys to Ayrshire;—Dr. Blacklock;—Heron;—becomes a gauger;—life at Ellisland;—"Friars' Carse;"—friendships with local gentry;—"Tam o' Shanter;"—"Address to the Deil;"—Burns's humorous strains;—"Whistle" contest—Burns not present;—"Death and Dr. Hornbook;"—Epistles to his friends;—"The Auld Farmer's New-year Morning Salutation;"—"Twa Dogs;"—"The Earnest Cry and Prayer;"—Scotsmen's humour—Burns and drinking;—Maeneil's "Will and Jean;"—Sathes;—Prof. Walker on Burns's marriage;—removal to Dumfries;—songs, and song-writers;—Johnson's "Museum" and Thomson's "Collection;"—Burns's songs;—spirit of independence;—friendships;—"Lament for Glencairn;"—Elegy on Captain Matthew Henderson;—Milton, Wordsworth, and Burns;—Graham of Fintry;—love, friendship, independence, patriotism, the perpetual inspirers of his genius;—"Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?"—scene in Dumfries theatre;—"Farewell, thou fair day;"—Syme's account of the composition of "Scots wha hae;"—Thomson's emendations;—"the grandest ode out of the Bible;"—Burns and his professional duties;—Josiah Walker and Supervisor Findlater;—Gray's letter;—Walker's visit to Burns at Dumfries;—tavern parties;—Globe Inn;—Burns as a demagogue;—"Tree of Liberty;"—Excise-board reproof;—self-reproach and rueful remorse;—Bard's epitaph;—Burns and Byron;—Burns and Samuel Johnson;—Burns's religion;—Was Burns neglected?—a gauger by his own choice;—Burns's later idea that it was degrading to write for money the cause of his unhappiness during the closing years of his life;—no mercenary bard;—Burns and George Thomson;—dying days;—how was Burns served in his straits?—at Brow;—interview with Maria Riddell;—return to Dumfries;—last letter;—death;—grief of the people;—pity for the sorrows that clouded the close of his life.

Burns is by far the greatest poet that ever sprung from the bosom of the people, and lived and died in an humble condition. Indeed, no country in the world but Scotland could have produced such a man; and he will be for ever regarded as the glorious represen-

tative of the genius of his country. He was born a poet, if ever man was, and to his native genius alone is owing the perpetuity of his fame. For he manifestly never studied poetry as an art, nor reasoned much about its principles, nor looked abroad with the wide ken of

intellect for objects and subjects on which to pour out his inspiration. The condition of the peasantry of Scotland, the happiest, perhaps, that providence ever allowed to the children of labour, was not surveyed and speculated on by him as the field of poetry, but as the field of his own existence; and he chronicled the events that passed there, not merely as food for his imagination as a poet, but as food for his heart as a man. Hence, when inspired to compose poetry, poetry came gushing up from the well of his human affections, and he had nothing more to do than to pour it, like streams irrigating a meadow, in many a cheerful tide over the drooping flowers and fading verdure of life. Imbued with vivid perceptions, warm feelings, and strong passions, he sent his own existence into that of all things, animate and inanimate, around him; and not an occurrence in hamlet, village, or town, affecting in any way the happiness of the human heart, but roused as keen an interest in the soul of Burns, and as genial a sympathy, as if it had immediately concerned himself and his own individual welfare. Most other poets of rural life have looked on it through the aerial veil of imagination—often beautified, no doubt, by such partial concealment, and beaming with a misty softness more delicate than the truth. But Burns would not thus indulge his fancy, where he had felt—felt so poignantly—all the agonies and all the transports of life. He looked around him, and when he saw the smoke of the cottage rising up quietly and unbroken to heaven, he knew, for he had seen and blessed it, the quiet joy and unbroken contentment that slept below; and when he saw it driven and dispersed by the winds, he knew also but too well, for too sorely had he felt them, those agitations and disturbances which had shook him till he wept on his chaff bed. In reading his poetry, therefore, we know what unsubstantial dreams are all those of the golden age. But bliss beams upon us with a more subduing brightness through the dim melancholy that shrouds lowly life; and when the peasant Burns rises up in his might as Burns the poet, and is seen to derive all that might from the life which at this hour the peasantry of Scotland are leading, our hearts leap within us, because that such is our country, and such the nobility of her chil-

dren. There is no delusion, no affectation, no exaggeration, no falsehood in the spirit of Burns's poetry. He rejoices like an untamed enthusiast, and he weeps like a prostrate penitent. In joy and in grief the whole man appears: some of his finest effusions were poured out before he left the fields of his childhood, and when he scarcely hoped for other auditors than his own heart, and the simple dwellers of the hamlet. He wrote not to please or surprise others—we speak of those first effusions—but in his own creative delight; and even after he had discovered his power to kindle the sparks of nature wherever they slumbered, the effect to be produced seldom seems to have been considered by him, assured that his poetry could not fail to produce the same passion in the hearts of other men from which it boiled over in his own. Out of himself, and beyond his own nearest and dearest concerns, he well could, but he did not much love often or long to go. His imagination wanted not wings broad and strong for highest flights. But he was most at home when walking on this earth, through this world, even along the banks and braes of the streams of Coila. It seems as if his muse were loth to admit almost any thought, feeling, image, drawn from any other region than his native district—the hearth-stone of his father's hut—the still or troubled chamber of his own generous and passionate bosom. Dear to him the jocund laughter of the reapers on the corn-field, the tears and sighs which his own strains had won from the children of nature enjoying the mid-day hour of rest beneath the shadow of the hedgerow tree. With what pathetic personal power, from all the circumstances of his character and condition, do many of his humblest lines affect us! Often, too often, as we hear him singing, we think that we see him suffering! "Most musical, most melancholy" he often is, even in his merriment! In him, alas! the transports of inspiration are but too closely allied with reality's kindred agonies! The strings of his lyre sometimes yield their finest music to the sighs of remorse or repentance. Whatever, therefore, be the faults or defects of the poetry of Burns—and no doubt it has many—it has, beyond all that ever was written, this greatest of all merits, intense, life-pervading, and life-breathing truth.

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There is probably not a human being come to the years of understanding in all Scotland who has not heard of the name of Robert Burns. It is, indeed, a household word. His poems are found lying in almost every cottage in the country, on the "window sole" of the kitchen, spence, or parlour; and in the town-dwellings of the industrious poor, if books belong to the family at all, you are pretty sure to see there the dear Ayrshire Ploughman. The father or mother, born and long bred, perhaps, among banks and braes, possesses, in that small volume, a talisman that awakens in a moment all the sweet visions of the past, and that can crowd the dim abode of hard-working poverty with a world of dear rural remembrances that awaken not repining but contentment.

No poet ever lived more constantly and more intimately in the hearts of a people. With their mirth, or with their melancholy, how often do his "native wood-notes wild" affect the sitters by the ingles of low-roofed homes, till their hearts overflow with feelings that place them on a level, as moral creatures, with the most enlightened in the land, and more than reconcile them with, make them proud of, the condition assigned them by Providence! There they see with pride the reflection of the character and condition of their own order. That pride is one of the best natural props of poverty; for, supported by it, the poor envy not the rich. They exult to know and to feel that they have had treasures bequeathed to them by one of themselves—treasures of the heart, the intellect, the fancy, and the imagination, of which the possession and the enjoyment are one and the same, as long as they preserve their integrity and their independence. The poor man, as he speaks of Robert Burns, always holds up his head and regards you with an elated look. A tender thought of the "Cotter's Saturday Night," or a bold thought of "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled," may come across him; and he who in such a spirit loves home and country, by whose side may he not walk an equal in the broad eye of day as it shines over our Scottish hills? This is true popularity. Thus interpreted, the word sounds well, and recovers its ancient meaning. The land "made blithe with plough and harrow,"—the broomy or the heathery

braes—the holms by the river's side—the forest where the woodman's ringing axe no more disturbs the cushat—the deep dell where all day long sits solitary plaided boy or girl watching the kine or the sheep—the moorland hut without any garden—the lowland cottage, whose garden glows like a very orchard when crimsoned with fruit-blossoms most beautiful to behold—the sylvan homestead sending its reek aloft over the huge syeamore that blackens on the hill-side—the straw-roofed village gathering with small bright crofts its many white gable-ends round and about the modest manse, and the kirk-spire covered with the pine-tree that shadows its horologe—the small, quiet, half-slatted, half-thatched rural town,—there resides, and will for ever reside, the immortal genius of Burns. Oh, that he, the prevailing Poet, could have seen this light breaking in upon the darkness that did too long and too deeply overshadow his lot! Some glorious glimpses of it his prophetic soul did see; witness "The Vision," or that somewhat humbler but yet high strain, in which, bethinking him of the undefined aspirations of his boyhood, he said to himself—

E'en then a wish—I mind its power— remember
A wish, that to my latest hour
Shall strongly heave my breast,
That I for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some usefu' plan, or book could make,
Or sing a sang at least.

The rough burr-thistle spreading wide
Among the bearded bear, harley
I turn'd the weeder-ellips aside, weeding-shears
An' spar'd the symbol dear.¹

Such hopes were with him in his "bright and shining youth," surrounded as it was with toil and trouble that could not bend his brow from its natural upward inclination to the sky; and such hopes, let us doubt it not, were also with him in his dark and faded prime, when life's lamp burned low indeed, and he was willing at last, early as it was, to shut his eyes on this dearly beloved but sorely distracting world.

With what strong and steady enthusiasm is the anniversary of Burns's birth-day celebrated, not only all over his own native land, but in every country to which an adventurous spirit has carried her sons! On such occasions, nationality is a virtue. For what else is the

¹ "To Mrs. Scott of Wauchope," vol. ii. p. 203.

"Memory of Burns," but the memory of all that dignifies and adorns the region that gave him birth? Not till that region is shorn of all its beams—its honesty, its independence, its moral worth, its genius, and its piety, will the name of Burns

Die on her ear, a faint unheeded sound.

But it has an immortal life in the hearts of young and old, whether sitting at gloaming by the ingle-side, or on the stone seat in the open air, as the sun is going down, or walking among the summer mists on the mountain, or the blinding winter snows. In the life of the poor there is an unchanging and a preserving spirit. The great elementary feelings of human nature there disdain fluctuating fashions; there pain and pleasure are alike permanent in their outward shows as in their inward emotions; there the language of passion never grows obsolete; and at the same passage you hear the child sobbing at the knee of her grandame whose old eyes are somewhat dimmer than usual with a haze that seems almost to be of tears. Therefore, the poetry of Burns will continue to charm, as long as Nith flows, Criffel is green, and the bonny blue of the sky of Scotland meets with that in the eyes of her maidens, as they walk up and down her hills silent or singing to kirk or market.

Let us picture to ourselves the Household in which Burns grew up to manhood, shifting its place without much changing its condition, from first to last always fighting against fortune, experiencing the evil and the good of poverty, and in the sight of men obscure. His father may be said to have been an elderly man when Robert was born, for he was within a few years of forty, and had always led a life of labour; and labour it is that wastes away the stubbornest strength—among the tillers of the earth a stern ally of time. "His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare" at an age when many a forehead hardly shows a wrinkle, and when thick locks cluster darkly round the temples of easy-living men. The sire who "turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace the big ha'-Bible," is indeed well-stricken in years, but he is not an old man, for

Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin', stacher thro'
To meet their dad, wi' flichterin' noise an' glee.
[stagger
[stuttering]

His wee bit lugle, blinkin' bonnily, freside
His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie wife's smile,
The sleeping infant prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary, carking cares beguile,
An' makes him quite forget his labour an' his toil.

That picture, Burns, as all the world knows, drew from his father. He was himself, in imagination, again one of the "wee things" that ran to meet him; and "the priest-like father" had long worn that aspect before the poet's eyes, though he died before he was three-score. "I myself have always considered William Burnes," says the simple-minded tender-hearted Murdoch, "as by far the best of the human race that ever I had the pleasure of being acquainted with—and many a worthy character I have known. . . . He was a tender and affectionate father; he took pleasure in leading his children in the path of virtue, not in driving them, as some parents do, to the performance of duties to which they themselves are averse. He took care to find fault but very seldom; and therefore when he did rebuke, he was listened to with a kind of reverential awe. . . . I must not pretend to give you a description of all the manly qualities, the rational and Christian virtues of the venerable William Burnes. . . . I shall only add that he carefully practised every known duty and avoided everything that was criminal, or, in the apostle's words, 'herein did he exercise himself in living a life void of offence towards God and towards men.' . . . Although I cannot do justice to the character of this worthy man, yet you will perceive from these few particulars what kind of person had the principal hand in the education of our poet." Burns was as happy in a mother, whom, in countenance, it is said he resembled; and as sons and daughters were born, we think of the "auld clay biggin'" more and more alive with cheerfulness and peace.

His childhood, then, was a happy one, secured from all evil influences, and open to all good, in the guardianship of religious parental love. Not a boy in Scotland had a better education. For a few months, when in his sixth year, he was at a small school at Alloway Mill, about a mile from the house in which he was born; and for two years after under the tuition of good John Murdoch, a

1 "Cotter's Saturday Night," vol. II. p. 74.

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young scholar whom William Burnes and four or five neighbours engaged, to supply the place of the schoolmaster, who had been removed to another situation, lodging him, as is still the custom in some country places, by turns in their own houses. "The earliest thing of composition that I recollect taking pleasure in was the 'Vision of Mirza,' and a hymn of Addison's, beginning 'How are thy servants blest, O Lord!' I particularly remember one half-stanza, which was music to my boyish ears,—

For though on dreadful whirls we hung
High on the broken wave.

I met with these pieces in Mason's *English Collection*, one of my school-books. The two first books I ever read in private, and which gave me more pleasure than any two books I ever read again, were *The Life of Hannibal*, and *The History of Sir William Wallace*. Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bagpipe, and wish myself tall enough that I might be a soldier; while the story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice in my veins, which will boil along there till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest." And speaking of the same period and books to Mrs. Dunlop, he says, "For several of my earlier years I had few other authors; and many a solitary hour have I stole out, after the laborious vocations of the day, to shed a tear over their glorious, but unfortunate stories. In those boyish days I remember, in particular, being struck with that part of Wallace's story where these lines occur—

Syne to the Leglen wood, when it was late,
To make a silent and a safe retreat.

I chose a fine summer Sunday, the only day my line of life allowed, and walked half a dozen of miles to pay my respects to the Leglen wood, with as much devout enthusiasm as ever pilgrim did to Loretto; and explored every den and dell where I could suppose my heroic countryman to have lodged." Murdoch continued his instructions until the family had been about two years at Mount Oliphant, "and, there being no school near us," says Gilbert Burns, "and our little services being useful on the farm, my father undertook to teach us

arithmetic in the winter evenings, by candle-light; and in this way my two elder sisters got all the education they received." Robert was then in his ninth year, and had owed much, he tells us, to an old woman who resided in the family, "remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraps, giants, enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poesy; but had so strong an effect on my imagination, that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp look-out in suspicious places; and though nobody can be more sceptical in these matters than I, yet it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idle terrors."

We said, that not a boy in Scotland had a better education than Robert Burns, and we do not doubt that you will agree with us; for in addition to all that may be contained in those sources of useful and entertaining knowledge, he had been taught to read, not only in the *Spelling Book*, and Fisher's *English Grammar*, and *The Vision of Mirza*, and Addison's *Hymns*, and *Titus Andronicus* (though on Lavinia's entrance with her hands cut off, and her tongue cut out, he threatened to burn the book;) but in THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE BIBLE, and all this in his father's house, or in the houses of the neighbours; happy as the day was long, or the night, and in the midst of happiness; yet even then, sometimes saddened, no doubt, to see something more than solemnity or awfulness on his father's face, that was always turned kindly towards the children, but seldom wore a smile.

Wordsworth had these memorials in his mind when he was conceiving the boyhood of the Pedlar in his great poem, the "Excursion."

But eagerly he read and read again,
Whate'er the minister's old shelf supplied;
The life and death of martyrs, who sustained
With will inflexible, those fearful pangs
Triumphantly displayed in records left
Of persecution, and the covenant, times
Whose echo rings through Scotland to this hour;
And there, by lucky hap, had been preserved
A straggling volume, torn and incomplete,
That left half-told the preternatural tale,
Romance of giants, chronicle of fiends,

Profuse in garniture of wooden cuts
Strange and uncouth; dire faces, figures dire,
Sharp-kneed, sharp-elbowed, and lean-ankled too,
With long and ghastly shanks—forms which once
seen

Could never be forgotten. In his heart
Where fear sat thus, a cherished visitant,
Was wanting yet the pure delight of love
By sound diffused, or by the breathing air,
Or by the silent looks of happy things,
Or flowing from the universal face
Of earth and sky. But he had felt the power
Of nature, and already was prepared,
By his intense conceptions, to receive
Deeply the lesson deep of love, which he
Whom nature, by whatever means, has taught
To feel intensely, cannot but receive.
SUCH WAS THE BOY.

Such was the boy; but his studies had now to be pursued by fits and snatches, and therefore the more eagerly and earnestly, during the intervals or at the close of labour that before his thirteenth year had become constant and severe. "The cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing toil of a galley-slave!" These are his own memorable words, and they spoke the truth. For "nothing could be more retired," says Gilbert, "than our general manner of living at Mount Oliphant; we rarely saw anybody but the members of our own family. There were no boys of our own age, or near it, in the neighbourhood." They all worked hard from morning to night, and Robert hardest of them all. At fifteen he was the principal labourer on the farm, and relieved his father from holding the plough. Two years before he had assisted in thrashing the crop of corn. The two noble brothers saw with anguish the old man breaking down before their eyes; nevertheless assuredly, though they knew it not, they were the happiest boys "the evening sun went down upon." True, as Gilbert tells us, "I doubt not but the hard labour and sorrow of this period of his life was in a great measure the cause of that depression of spirits with which Robert was so often afflicted through his whole life afterwards. At this time he was almost constantly afflicted in the evenings with a dull headache, which, at a future period of his life, was exchanged for a palpitation of the heart and a threatening of fainting and suffocation in his bed in the night-time." Nevertheless assuredly both boys were happy, and Robert the happier of the two; for if he had not been so, why did he not

go to sea? Because he loved his parents too well to be able to leave them, and because, too, it was his duty to stay by them, were he to drop down at midnight in the barn and die with the flail in his hand. But if love and duty cannot make a boy happy, what can? Passion, genius, a teeming brain, a palpitating heart, and a soul of fire. These too were his, and idle would have been her tears, had Pity wept for young Robert Burns.

Was he not hungry for knowledge from a child? During these very years he was devouring it; and soon the dawn grew day. "My father," says Gilbert "was for some time almost the only companion we had. He conversed familiarly on all subjects with us, as if we had been men; and was at great pains, while we accompanied him in the labours of the farm, to lead the conversation to such subjects as might tend to increase our knowledge, or confirm our virtuous habits. He borrowed *Salmon's Geographical Grammar* for us, and endeavoured to make us acquainted with the situation and history of the different countries in the world; while, from a book-society in Ayr, he procured for us the reading of Derham's *Physico- and Astro-Theology* and Ray's *Wisdom of God in the Creation*, to give us some idea of astronomy and natural history. Robert read all these books with an avidity and an industry scarcely to be equalled. My father had been a subscriber to Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*. . . . From this Robert collected a pretty competent knowledge of ancient history; for no book was so voluminous as to slacken his industry, or so antiquated as to damp his researches." He kept reading, too, at the *Spectator*, "Pope" and Pope's *Homer*, some plays of Shakespeare, Boyle's *Lectures*, Locke on the *Human Understanding*, Hervey's *Meditations*, Taylor's *Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin*, the works of Allan Ramsay and Smollett, and A COLLECTION OF SONGS. "That volume was my *vade mecum*. I pored over them driving my cart or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse; carefully noting the tender or sublime from affectation and fustian. I am convinced I owe much to this for my critic craft, such as it is."

So much for book-knowledge; but what of the kind that is born within every boy's own bosom, and grows there till often that bosom

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feels as if it would burst? To Mr. Murdoch, Gilbert always appeared to possess a more lively imagination, and to be more of a wit than Robert. Yet imagination or wit he had none. His face said, "Mirth, with thee I mean to live;" yet he was through life sedate. Robert himself says that in childhood he was by no means a favourite with anybody—but he must have been mistaken; and "the stubborn, sturdy something in his disposition" hindered him from seeing how much he was loved. The tutor tells us he had no ear for music, and could not be taught a psalm tune! Nobody could have supposed that he was ever to be a poet! But nobody knew anything about him—nor did he know much about himself; till Nature, who had long kept, chose to reveal, her own secret.

"You know our country custom of coupling a man and woman together as partners in the labour of harvest. In my fifteenth autumn my partner was a bewitching creature who just counted an autumn less. My scarcity of English denies me the power of doing her justice in that language, but you know the Scotch idiom—she was a *bonnie, sweet, sossie lass*. In short, she, altogether unwittingly to herself, initiated me into a certain delicious passion, which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin!—rise prudence, and bookworm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our chiefest pleasure here below! How she caught the contagion I can't say: you medical folks talk much of infection by breathing the same air, the touch, &c.; but I never expressly told her that I loved her. Indeed, I did not well know myself why I liked so much to loiter behind with her when returning in the evening from our labours; why the tones of her voice made my heart-strings thrill like an Æolian harp, and particularly why my pulse beat such a furious rantann when I looked and fingered over her hand to pick out the nettle-stings and thistles. Among her other love-inspiring qualifications she sung sweetly; and 'twas her favourite Scotch reel that I attempted to give an embodied vehicle to in rhyme. I was not so presumptuous as to imagine that I could make verses like printed ones, composed by men who had Greek and Latin: but my girl sung a song which was said to be composed by a small country laird's son on one of his father's

malids, with whom he was in love; and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well as he; for, excepting smearing sheep and casting peats (his father living in the moors), he had no more scholar-craft than myself. THUS WITH ME BEGAN LOVE AND POESY."

And during those seven years, when his life was "the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing toil of a galley-slave," think ye not that the boy poet was happy, merely because he had the blue sky over his head, and the green earth beneath his feet?—he who ere long invested the most common of all the wild-flowers of the earth with immortal beauty to all eyes, far beyond that of the rarest, till a tear as of pity might fall down many cheeks on the dew-drop nature gathers on its "snowie bosom, sun-ward spread!"

Wee, modest, crimson-tipp'd flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I mann crush among the stoure must dust
 Thy slender stem;
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
 Thou bonnie gem!

Alas! It's no thy nelbor sweet, neighbour
The bonnie lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet, moisture
 W! speckled breast,
When upward-springing, blithe to greet
 The purpling east.¹

Thus far the life of this wonderful being is blameless—thus far it is a life of virtue. Let each season, with him and with all men, have its due meed of love and of praise—and, therefore, let us all delight to declare how beautiful was the Spring! And was there in all those bright and bold blossoms a fallacious promise? Certainly not of the fruits of genius; for these far surpassed what the most hopeful could have predicted of the full-grown tree. But did the character of the man belie that of the boy? Was it manifested at last, either that the moral being had undergone some fatal change reaching to the core, or that it had been from the first hollow, and that these noble-seeming virtues had been delusions all?

The age of puberty has passed with its burning but blameless loves, and Robert Burns is now a man. Other seven years of the same kind of life as at Mount Oliphant, he enjoys and suffers at Lochlea. It is sad to think that

¹ "To a Mountain-Daisy," vol. II. p. 134.

his boyhood should have been so heavily burdened; but we look with no such thoughts on his manhood, for his strength is knit, and the sinews of soul and body are equal to their work. He still lives in his father's house, and he still upholds it; he still reverences his father's eyes that are upon him; and he is still a dutiful son—certainly not a prodigal. "During the whole of the time we lived in the farm of Lochlea with my father, he allowed my brother and me such wages for our labour as he gave to other labourers, as a part of which, every article of our clothing, manufactured in the family, was regularly accounted for. When my father's affairs grew near a crisis, Robert and I took the farm of Moss-giel, consisting of 118 acres, at the rent of £90 per annum, . . . as an asylum for the family in case of the worst. It was stocked by the property and individual savings of the whole family, and was a joint concern among us. Every member of the family was allowed ordinary wages for the labour he performed on the farm. My brother's allowance and mine was £7 per annum each. And during the whole time this family-concern lasted, which was for four years,¹ as well as during the preceding period at Lochlea, his expenses never in any one year exceeded his slender income. As I was intrusted with the keeping of the family accounts, it is not possible that there can be any fallacy in this statement in my brother's favour. *His temperance and frugality were everything that could be wished.*" During his residence for six months in Irvine, indeed, where he wrought at the business of a flax-dresser, with the view of adopting that trade, that he might get settled in life, paid a shilling a-week for his lodging, and fed on meal and water, with some wild boon-companions he occasionally lived rather free. No doubt he sometimes tasted the "Scotch drink," of which he ere long sung the praises; but even then his inspiration was from "well-head undefiled." He was as sober a man as his brother Gilbert himself, who says, "I do not recollect, during these seven years, . . . to have ever seen him intoxicated; nor was he at all given to drink-

¹ [The family entered Moss-giel in March, 1784, and Burns himself left it at the close of the third harvest, in 1788, so that his connection with the farm extended to a period of little more than two years.]

ing." We have seen what were his virtues—for his vices where must we look?

During all these seven years, the most dangerous in the life of every one, that of Robert Burns was singularly free from the sin to which nature is prone; nor had he drunk of that guilty cup of the intoxication of the passions that bewilders the virtue, and changes their wisdom into foolishness, of the discreetest of the children of men. But drink of it at last he did; and like other sinners seemed sometimes even to glory in his shame. But remorse puts on looks and utters words that, being interpreted, have far other meanings; there may be recklessness without obduracy; and though the keenest anguish of self-reproach be no proof of penitence, it is a preparation for it in nature—a change of heart can be effected only by religion. How wisely he addresses his friend!

The sacred love o' weel-placed love, flame
Luxuriantly indulge it;
But never tempt th' illicit rove,
Though naething should divulge it:
I waive the quantum o' the sin,
The hazard of concealing;
But, *oh!* it hardens a' within,
And petrifies the feeling!²

It was before any such petrification of feeling had to be deplored by Robert Burns that he loved Mary Campbell, his "Highland Mary," with as pure a passion as ever possessed young poet's heart; nor is there so sweet and sad a passage recorded in the life of any other one of all the sons of song. Many such partings there have been between us poor beings—blind at all times, and often blindest in our bliss—but all gone to oblivion. But that hour can never die—that scene will live for ever. Immortal the two shadows standing there, holding together the Bible—a little rivulet flowing between—in which, as in consecrated water they have dipt their hands, water not purer than, at that moment, their united hearts!

There are few of his songs more beautiful, and none more impassioned than

Ye banks, and braes, and streams around
The castle o' Montgomery,
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
Your waters never drumlie!

² "Epistle to a Young Friend," vol. II. p. 146.

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¹ The true was not know his essay. See Life.]

² He was s

There sinners first unfault her robes,
And there the longest tarry;
For there I took the last farewell
O' my sweet Highland Mary.

But what are lines like these to his "Address to Mary in Heaven!" It was the anniversary of the day on which he heard of her death—that to him was the day on which she died. He did not keep it as a day of mourning—for he was happy in as good a wife as ever man had, and cheerfully went about the work of his farm. But towards the darkening "he appeared to grow very sad about something," and wandered out of doors into the barn-yard, where his Jean found him lying on some straw with his eyes fixed on a shining star "like another moon."

Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,
That lov'st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usher'st in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.
O Mary! dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

He wrote them all down just as they now are, in their immortal beauty, and gave them to his wife. Jealousy may be felt even of the dead. But such sorrow as this the more endeared her husband to her heart—a heart ever faithful—and at times when she needed to practise that hardest of all virtues in a wife—forgiving; but here all he desired was her sympathy—and he found it in some natural tears.¹

William Burnes was now—so writes Robert to one of his cousins—"in his own opinion (and, indeed, in almost everybody's else), in a dying condition"—far gone in a consumption, as it was called; but dying, though not sixty,² of old age at last. His lot in this life was in many things a hard one, but his blessings had been great, and his end was peace. All his children had been dutiful to their parents, and to their care he confided their mother. If he knew of Robert's transgressions in one year, he likewise knew of his obedience through many; nor feared that he would strive to the

[¹ The true history of the Highland Mary episode was not known at the time Professor Wilson wrote his essay. See "Highland Mary" in Appendix to Life.]

[² He was sixty-three years of age at his death.]

utmost to shelter his mother in the storm.³ Robert writes, "On the 13th current (Feb. 1784) I lost the best of fathers. Though, to be sure, we have had long warning of the impending stroke, still the feelings of nature claim their part, and I cannot recollect the tender endearments and parental lessons of the best of friends and ablest of instructors, without feeling what perhaps the calmer dictates of reason would partly condemn. I hope my father's friends in your country will not let their connection in this place die with him. For my part I shall ever with pleasure—with pride, acknowledge my connection with those who were allied by the ties of blood and friendship to a man whose memory I shall ever honour and revere." And now the family remove to Moss-giel,

A virtuous household but exceeding poor.

How fared Burns during the next two years as a peasant? How fared he as a poet? As a peasant, poorly and hardly—as a poet, greatly and gloriously. How fared he as a man? Read his *confessions*. Moss-giel was the coldest of all the soils on which the family had slaved and starved—starved is too strong a word—and, in spite of its ingratitude, its fields are hallowed ground. Thousands and tens of thousands have come from afar to look on them; and Wordsworth's self has "gazed himself away" on the pathetic prospect.

"There," said a stripling, pointing with much pride,
Towards a low roof, with green trees half-concealed,
"Is Moss-giel farm; and that's the very fiel"
Where Burns plough'd up the daisy." Far and wide
A plain below stretched seaward, while, descried
Above sea-clouds, the peaks of Arran rose;
And, by that simple notice, the repose
Of earth, sky, sea, and air, was vivified.

³ [It is recorded that when his last hour drew on, the father said that there was one of his children of whose future he could not think without fear. Robert, who was in the room, came up to his bedside and asked, "O father, is it me you mean?" The old man said it was. Robert turned to the window, with tears streaming down his cheeks and his bosom swelling, from the restraint he put on himself, almost to bursting. The father had early perceived the genius that was in the boy, and even in Mount Oliphant days had said to his wife, "Whoever lives to see it, something extraordinary will come from that boy." He had lived to see and admire his son's earliest poetic efforts. But he had also noted the strong passions with the weak will, which might drive him on the shoals of life.—*Shairp*.]

Beneath the random bield of clod or stone
Myriads of daisies have shone forth in flower
Near the lark's nest, and in their natural hour
Have passed away; less happy than the one
That, by the unwilling ploughshare, died to prove
The tender charm of poetry and love.

Peasant—Poet—Man—is, indeed, an idle distinction. Burns is sitting alone in the Auld Clay Biggin', for it has its one retired room; and, as he says, "half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit"—all he had made by rhyme! He is the picture of a desponding man, steeped to the lips in poverty of his own bringing on, and with a spirit vainly divided between hard realities and high hopes beyond his reach, resolving at last to forswear all delusive dreams, and submit to an ignoble lot. When at once, out of the gloom, arises a glory, effused into form by his own genius, creative according to his soul's desire, and conscious of its greatness despite of despair. A thousand times before now had he been so disquieted and found no comfort. But the hour had come of self-revelation, and he knew that on earth his name was to live for ever.

"All hail! my own inspired bard!
In me thy native muse regard!
Nor longer mourn thy fate is hard,
Thus poorly low!
I come to give thee such reward
As we bestow.

"Know, the great genius of this land
Has many a light, aerial band,
Who, all beneath his high command,
Harmoniously,
As arts or arms they understand,
Their labours ply.

"Of these am I—Coila my name;
And this district as mine I claim,
Where once the Campbells, chiefs of fame,
Held ruling pow'r:
I mark'd thy embryo tuneful flame,
Thy natal hour.

"With future hope, I oft would gaze,
Fond, on thy little early ways,
Thy rudely caroll'd chiming phrase,
In uncouth rhymes,
Fir'd at the simple, artless lays
Of other times.

"I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
Delighted with the dashing roar;
Or when the north his fleecy store
Drove thro' the sky,
I saw grim nature's visage hoar
Struck thy young eye.

"Or, when the deep green-mantl'd earth
Warm cherish'd ev'ry flow'ret's birth,
And joy and music pouring forth
In ev'ry grove,
I saw thee eye the gen'ral mirth
With boundless love.

"When ripen'd fields, and azure skies,
Call'd forth the reaper's rustling noise,
I saw thee leave their evening joys,
And lonely stalk
To vent thy bosom's swelling rise
In pensive walk.

"When youthful love, warm-blushing, strong,
Keen-shivering shot thy nerves along,
Those accents, grateful to thy tongue,
Th' adored Name,
I taught thee how to pour in song,
To soothe thy flame.

"I saw thy pulse's maddening play,
Wild send thee pleasure's devious way,
Misd by fancy's meteor ray,
By passion driven;
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from heaven.

"To give my counsels all in one,
Thy tuneful flame still careful fan;
Preserve the dignity of man,
With soul erect;
And trust the Universal Plan
Will all protect.

"And wear thou this"—she solemn said,
And bound the Holly round my head;
The polish'd leaves, and berries red,
Did rustling play;
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away.¹

"To reconcile to our imagination the entrance of an aerial being into a mansion of this kind," says the excellent Currie, "required the powers of Burns; he, however, succeeds." Burns cared not at that time for our imagination—not he, indeed—not a straw; nor did he so much as know of our existence. He knew that there was a human race; and he believed that he was born to be a great power among them, especially all over his beloved and beloved Scotland. "All hail! my own inspired bard!" That "all hail!" he dared to hear from supernatural lips, but not till his spirit had long been gazing, and long been listening to one commissioned by the "genius of the land," to stand a Vision before her chosen poet in his hut. Reconcile her entrance to our imagination! Into no other mansion

¹ The "Vision," vol. II. p. 111.

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but that "Auld Clay Biggin," would Coila have descended from the sky.

The critic continues, "To the painting on her mantle, on which is depicted the most striking scenery, as well as the most distinguished characters of his native country, some exception may be made. The mantle of Coila, like the cup of Thyrasis, (see the first *Idyllium* of Theocritus,) and the shield of Achilles, is too much crowded with figures, and some of the objects represented upon it are scarcely admissible according to the principles of design."

We advise you not to see the first Idyllium of Theocritus. Perhaps you have no Greek. Mr. Chapman's translation is as good as a translation can well be, but then you may not have a copy of it at hand. A pretty wooden cup it is, with curled ears and ivy-twined lips—embossed thereon the figure of a woman with flowing robes and a Lydian head-dress, to whom two angry men are making love. Hard by, a stout old fisherman on a rock is in the act of throwing his net into the sea: not far from him is a vineyard, where a boy is sitting below a hedge framing a loenst trap with stalks of asphodel, and guarding the grapes from a couple of sly foxes. Thyrsis, we are told by Theocritus, bought it from a Calydonian Skipper for a big cheese-cake and a goat. We must not meddle with the shield of Achilles.

Turn we then to the "Vision" of Burns, our Scottish Theocritus, as we have heard him classically called, and judge of Dr. Currie's sense in telling us to see the cup of Thyrsis.

Down flow'd her robe, a tartan sheen,
Till half a leg was scrimply seen ; barely
And such a leg ! my bonnie Jean

Could only peer it;
Sae straicht, sae taper, tight, and clean, so straight
Nane else came near it.

You observe Burns knew not yet who stood before him—woman, or angel, or fairy—but the Vision reminded him of her whom best he loved.

Green, slender, leaf-clad *holly-boughs*
Were twisted, graceful, round her brows
I took her for *some Scottish Muse*,
By that same token.

Some Scottish Muse—but which of them he had not leisure to conjecture, so lost was he in

admiration of that mystic robe—that "mantle large, of greenish hue." As he continued to gaze on her, his imagination beheld whatever it chose to behold. The region dearest to the Poet's heart is all emblazoned there—and there too its sages and its heroes.

Here, rivers in the sea were lost;
There, mountains to the skies were tost;
Here, tumbling billows mark'd the coast,
 With surging foam;
There, distant shone art's lofty boast,
 The lordly dome.

Here, Doon pour'd down his far-fetch'd floods;
There, well-fed Irwine stately thuds:
Auld hermit Ayr staw thro' his woods,
On to the shore;
And many a lesser torrent seuds,
With seeming roar.

Low, in a sandy valley spread,
An ancient borough rear'd her head;
Still, as in Scottish story read,
She boasts a race,
To ev'ry nobler virtue bred,
And polish'd grace.

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

My heart did glowing transport feel,
To see a race heroic wheel,
And brandish round the deep-dy'd steel
In sturdy blows;
While back-recoiling seem'd to reel
Their Suthron foes.

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

There, where a scepter'd Pictish shade,
Stalk'd round his ashes lowly laid,
I mark'd a martial race, portray'd
In colours strong;
Bold, soldier-featur'd, undismay'd
They strode along.

What have become of "the laws of design?" But would good Dr. Currie have dried up the sea! How many yards, will any body tell us, were in that green mantle? And what a pattern! Thomas Campbell knew better what liberty is allowed by nature to Imagination in her inspired dreams. In his noble Stanzas to

Ev'n winter bleak has charms for me
When winds rave thro' the naked tree;
Or frosts on hills of Ochiltree

Are hoary gray;
Or blinding drifts wild-furions flee,
Dark'ning the day!

O Nature! a' thy shows an' forms
To feeling, pensive hearts hae charms!
Whether the summer kindly warms,

Wi' life an' light,
Or winter howls, in gusty storms,
The lang, dark night!

The Muse, nae poet ever fand her,
Till by himsel' he learn'd to wander,
Adown some trotting burn's meander,
An' no think lang;
O sweet! to stray, an' pensive ponder
A heart-felt sang!

found

It has been thoughtlessly said that Burns had no very deep love of nature, and that he has shown no very great power as a descriptive poet. The few lines quoted suffice to set aside that assertion; but it is true that his love of nature was always linked with some vehement passion or some sweet affection for living creatures, and that it was for the sake of the humanity she cherishes in her bosom, that she was dear to him as his own life-blood. His love of nature by being thus restricted was the more intense. Yet there are not wanting passages that show how exquisite was his perception of her beauties even when unassociated with any definite emotion, and inspiring only that pleasure which we imbibe through the senses into our unthinking souls.

Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays, sometimes
As thro' the glen it wimpl't;
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays; precipitous bank
Whyles in a wick it dimpl't; caddy
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle; hurrying
Whyles cookit underneath the brnes, disappeared
Below the spreading hazel,
Unseen that night.¹

Such pretty passages of pure description are rare, and the charm of this one depends on its sudden sweet intrusion into the very midst of a scene of noisy merriment. But there are many passages in which the descriptive power is put forth under the influence of emotion so gentle that they come within that kind of composition in which it has been thought Burns does not excel. As for example,

¹ "Halloween," vol. ii. p. 53.
VOL. V.

Nae mair the flower in field or meadow springs;
Nae mair the grove with airy concert rings,
Except perhaps the robin's whistling glee,
Proud o' the height o' some bit half-lang tree:
The hoary moros precede the sunny days,
Mild, calm, serene, wide spreads the noon-tide blaze,
While thick the gossamour waves wanton in the rays.²

Seldom setting himself to describe visual objects, but when he is under strong emotion, he seems to have taken considerable pains when he did, to produce something striking; and though he never fails on such occasions to do so, yet he is sometimes ambitious overmuch, and, though never feeble, becomes bombastic, as in his lines on the Fall of Foyers:

And viewless echo's ear, astonish'd rends.

In the "Brigs of Ayr" there is one beautiful, and one magnificent passage of this kind.

All before their sight,
A fairy train appear'd in order bright:
Adown the glittering stream they featly danc'd;
Bright to the moon their various dresses glanc'd:
They footed o'er the wat'ry glass so neat,
The infant lee scarce bent beneath their feet:
While arts of Minstrelsy among them rung,
And soul-ennobling bards heroic ditties sung.

He then breaks off in celebration of "M'Lauchlan, thairm-inspiring Sage," that is, "a well-known performer of Scottish music on the violin," and turns at his leisure to the fairies!

The other passage which we have called magnificent is a description of a spate. But in it, it is true, he personates the Auld Brig, and is inspired by wrath and contempt of the New.

Conceited gowk! puff'd up wi' windy pride! fool
This monie a year I've stood the flood an' tide;
And tho' wi' crazy eild I'm snar forfain, age, enfeebled
I'll be a brig when ye're a shapeless cairn!
As yet ye little ken about the matter, know
But twa-three winters will inform yon better.
When heavy, dark, continued, a'-day rains,
Wi' deepening deluges o'erflow the plains;
When from the hills where springs the brawling
Coil,
Or stately Lugar's mossy fountains boll,
Or where the Greenock winds his moorland course,
Or haunted Gargal draws his feeble source,
Arous'd by blustering winds an' spotting thowes, ithaws
In mony a torrent down his snaw-broo rows; [melted snow rolls
While crashing lee, borne on the roaring spout, [flood
Sweeps dams, an' mills, an' brigs, a' to the gate; [out of the way
[out of the way

² "The Brigs of Ayr," vol. ii. p. 176.
68

wedlock's joys sin' Mar's year did desire"—
 Rab and Jock, and "fechtin' Jamie Fleck,"
 like all bullies "ecowad afore bogles;" the only
 pause in their fast following proceedings being
 caused by garrulous grannie's pious reproof of
 her o' for daurin' to try sic sportin' "as eat
 the apple at the glass"—a reproof proving
 that her own wrinkled breast holds many queer
 memories of lang-syne Halloweens;—all the
 carking cares of the work-day world are clean
 forgotten; the hopes, fears, and wishes that
 most agitate every human breast, and are by
 the simplest concealed, here exhibit themselves
 without disguise in the freedom not only per-
 mitted but inspired by the passion that rules
 the night—"the passion," says the poet him-
 self, "of prying into futurity, which makes a
 striking part of the history of human nature
 in its rude state, in all ages and nations; and
 it may be some entertainment to a philosophic
 mind, if any such should honour the author
 with a perusal, to see the remains of it, among
 the more unenlightened of our own."

But how have we been able to refrain from
 saying a few words about the "Cotter's Saturday
 Night?" How affecting Gilbert's account of
 its origin!

"Robert had frequently remarked to me,
 that he thought there was something peculiarly
 venerable in the phrase, 'Let us worship God,'
 used by a decent sober head of a family intro-
 ducing family worship. To this sentiment of
 the author the world is indebted for the 'Cot-
 ter's Saturday Night.' The hint of the plan
 and title of the poem were taken from Fergus-
 son's 'Farmer's Ingle.' When Robert had not
 some pleasure in view, in which I was not
 thought fit to participate, we used frequently
 to walk together, when the weather was favour-
 able, on the Sunday afternoons (those precious
 breathing-times to the labouring part of the
 community), and enjoyed such Sundays as
 would make one regret to see their number
 abridged. It was on one of these walks that
 I first had the pleasure of hearing the author
 repeat the 'Cotter's Saturday Night.' I do
 not recollect to have read or heard any thing
 by which I was more highly *electrified*." No
 wonder Gilbert was highly electrified; for
 though he had read or heard many things of
 his brother Robert's of equal poetical power,
 not one among them all was so charged with

those sacred influences that connect the human
 heart with heaven. It must have sounded
 like a very revelation of all the holiness for
 ever abiding in that familiar observance, but
 which custom, without impairing its efficacy,
 must often partially hide from the children of
 labour when it is all the time helping to sus-
 tain them upon and above this earth. And
 this from the erring to the steadfast brother!—
 from the troubled to the quiet spirit!—out of
 a heart too often steeped in the waters of bit-
 terness, issuing, as from an unpolluted foun-
 tain, the inspiration of pious song! But its
 effects on innumerable hearts is not now *elec-
 trical*—it inspires peace. It is felt yet, and
 sadly changed will then be Scotland if ever it
 be not felt, by every one who peruses it, to be
 a communication from brother to brother. It
 is felt by us, all through, from beginning to
 end, to be Burns's "*Cotter's Saturday Night*;"
 at each succeeding sweet or solemn stanza we
 more and more love the man—at its close we
 bless him as a benefactor; and if, as the pic-
 ture fades, thoughts of sin and of sorrow will
 arise, and will not be put down, let them, as
 we hope for mercy, be of our own—not his;
 let us tremble for ourselves as we hear a voice
 saying, "Fear God and keep his command-
 ments."

There are few more *perfect* poems. It is
 the utterance of a heart whose chords were all
 tuned to gratitude, "making sweet melody"
 to the Giver, on a night not less sacred in His
 eye than His own appointed Sabbath.

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sigh: *song*

The short'nug winter-day is near a close.

The miry beasts retreating frae the plough; *plough*

The black'nug trains o' crows to their repose;

The toll-worn cotter frae his labour goes,

This night his weekly mool is at an end,

Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,

Hoping the *morn* in ease and rest to spend,

And weary, o'er the moor, his course does homeward
 bend.

That one single stanza is in itself a picture,
 one may say a poem, of the poor man's life.
 It is so imaged on the eye that we absolutely
 see it; but then not an epithet but shows the
 condition on which he holds, and the heart
 with which he endures, and enjoys it. Work
 he must in the face of November; but God who
 made the year shortens and lengthens its days
 for the sake of his living creatures, and has

appointed for them all their hour of rest. The "merry beasts" will soon be at supper in their clean-strawed stalls—"the black'nug trunks o' craws" invisibly hushed on their rocking trees; and he whom God made after his own image, that "toll-worn cotter," he too may lie down and sleep. There is nothing especial in his lot wherefore he should be pitted, nor are we asked to pity him, as he "collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes;" many of us who have work to do, and do it not, may envy his contentment, and the religion that gladdens his release—"hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend," only to such as he, in truth, a Sabbath. "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labour and do all that thou hast to do. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt do no manner of work." O! that man should ever find it in his heart to see in that law a stern obligation—not a merciful boon and a blessed privilege!

In those times family-worship in such dwellings, all over Scotland, was not confined to one week-day. It is to be believed that William Barnes might have been heard by his son Robert duly every night saying, "Let us worship God." "There was something peculiarly venerable in the phrase" every time he heard it; but on "Saturday night" family worship was surrounded, in its solemnity, with a gathering of whatever is most cheerful and unalloyed in the lot of labour; and the poet's genius in a happy hour hearing those words in his heart collected many nights into one, and made the whole observance, as it were, a religious establishment, it is to be hoped, for ever.

"The fifth and sixth stanzas, and the eighteenth," says Gilbert, "thrilled with peculiar ecstacy through my soul;" and well they might; for, in homeliest words, they tell at once of home's familiar doings and of the highest thoughts that can ascend in supplication to the throne of God. What is the eighteenth stanza, and why did it too "thrill with peculiar ecstacy through my soul?" You may be sure that whatever thrilled Gilbert's soul will thrill yours if it be in holy keeping; for he was a good man, and walked all his days fearing God.

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest;

The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to heaven the warm request
That He who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
Would, in the way his wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But, chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.

Think again of the first stanza of all—for you have forgotten it—of the toll-worn Cotter collecting his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes, and weary o'er the moor bending his course homewards. In spite of his hope of *the morn*, you could hardly help looking on him *then* as if he were disconsolate—*now* you are prepared to believe, with the poet, that such brethren are among the best of their country's sons, that

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad;

and you desire to join in the Invocation that bursts from his pious and patriotic heart:—

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toll,
Be bless'd with health, and peace, and sweet content!

And, O! 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-lov'd isle.

O Thou! who pour'd the patriot's tide
That stream'd thro' Wallace's undaunted heart;
Who dar'd to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part,
(The patriot's God peculiarly thou art,
His friend, his saviour, guardian, and reward!)
O never, never, Scotia's realm desert:
But still the patriot, and the patriot hard,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!

We said there are few more perfect poems. The expression is hardly a correct one; but in two of the stanzas there are lines which we never read without wishing them away, and there is one stanza we could sometimes almost wish away altogether; the sentiment, though beautifully worded, being somewhat harsh, and such as must be felt to be unjust by many devout and pious people:

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim;
Perhaps *Dundee's* wild warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive *Martyrs*, worthy of the name;
Or noble *Elgin* beats the heav'nward flame,
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:

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*Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tick'd ear no heart-felt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.*

We do not find fault with Burns for having written these lines; for association of feeling with feeling, by contrast, is perhaps most of all powerful in music. Believing that there was no devotional spirit in Italian music, it was natural for him to denounce its employment in religious services; but we all know that it cannot without most ignorant violation of the truth be said of the hymns of that most musical of all people, and superstitious as they may be, among the most devout, that

Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

Our objection to some lines in another stanza is more serious, for it applies not to a feeling but a judgment. That there is more virtue in a cottage than in a palace we are not disposed to deny at any time, least of all when reading the Cotter's Saturday Night; and we entirely go along with Burns when he says,

*And certes, in fair virtue's heavenly road,
The cottage leaves the palace far behind;*

but there, we think, he ought to have stopped, or illustrated the truth in a milder manner than

*What is a lordling's pomp?—a cumbersome load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refin'd!*

Our moral nature revolts with a sense of injustice from the comparison of the wickedness of one class with the goodness of another; and the effect is the very opposite of that intended, the rising up of a miserable conviction, that for a while had been laid asleep, that vice and crime are not excluded from cots, but often, alas! are found there in their darkest colours and most portentous forms.

The whole stanza we had in our mind as somehow or other not entirely delightful, is

*Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method, and of art,
When men display to congregations wide,
Devotion's ev'ry grace except the heart!
The Power, licens'd, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
But haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well pleas'd, the language of the soul;
And in his book of life the inmates poor enrol.*

"Let us join in the worship of God" is a

strong desire of nature, and a commanded duty; and thus are brought together, for praise and prayer, "congregations wide," in all populous places of every Christian land. Superstition is sustained by the same sympathy as religion—enlightenment of reason being essential to faith. There sit, every Sabbath, hundreds of hypocrites, thousands of the sincere, tens of thousands of the indifferent—how many of the devout or how few who shall say that understands the meaning of *devotion*? If *all* be false and hollow, a mere semblance only, then indeed

*The Power, licens'd, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;*

but if, even in the midst of "religion's pride," there be humble and contrite hearts—if a place be found for the poor in spirit even "in gay religions full of pomp and gold"—a Christian poet ought to guard his heart against scorn of the ritual of any form of Christian worship. Be it performed in Cathedral, Kirk, or Cottage—God regards it only when performed in spirit and in truth.

Remember all this poetry, and a hundred almost as fine things besides, was composed within little more than two years, by a man all the while working for wages—seven pounds from May-day to May-day; and that he never idled at his work, but mowed and ploughed as if working by the piece, and could afford therefore, God bless his heart, to stay the share for a minute, but too late for the "wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie's" nest. Folks have said he was a bad farmer, and neglected Moss-giel, an idler in the land.

*How various his employments whom the world
Calls idle!*

Absent in the body, we doubt not, he frequently was from his fields; oftenest in the evenings and at night. Was he in Nause Timnock's? She knew him by name and head-mark, for once seen he was not to be forgotten; but she complained that he had never drunk three half-mutchkins in her house, whatever he might say in his lying poems. In Poosie Nansie's—mother of Racer Jess?—He was there *once*; and out of the scum and refuse of the outcasts of the lowest grade of possible being, he constructed a Beggar's Opera, in which the singers and dancers, drabs and

drunkards all, belong still to humanity; and though huddling together in the filth of the flesh, must not be classed, in their enjoyments, with the beasts that perish. In the Smiddy? Ay, you might have found him there at times when he had no horse to be shoed, no coulter to be sharpened.

When Vulcan gies his bellows breath,	
An' ploughmen gather wi' their graithe,	implements
O rare! to see thee tizz an' freath	froth
I' th' luggit caup!	carved cup
Then Burneie comes on like death	
At every clump,	blow
Nae merey, then, for airm or steel;	iron
The brawnie, babie, ploughman chiel,	boy
Brings hard owre hip, wi' sturdy wheel,	
The strong forehammer,	
Till block an' stiddle ring an' reel	stithy
Wi' dinsome clamour. ¹	

On frozen Muir-loch? Among the curlers "at their *voaring* play"—roaring is the right word—but 'tis not the bonspiel only that roars, it is the ice, and echo tells it is from her crags that submit not to the snow. There king of his rink was Robbie Burns to be found; and at night in the Hostelry, in the reek of beef and greens and "Scotch drink," Apollo, in the shape of a ploughman, at the head of the fir-table that dances with all its glasses to the horny fists clenching with cordial thumpers the sallies of wit and humour volleying from his lips and eyes, unreprieved by the hale old minister who is happy to meet his parishioners out of the pulpit, and by his presence keeps the poet within bounds, if not of absolute decorum, of that decency becoming men in their most jovial mirth, and not to be violated without reproach by genius in its most wanton mood dallying even with forbidden things. Or at a Rockin'? An evening meetin', as you know, "one of the objects of which," so says the glossary, "is spinning with the rock or distaff;" but which has many other objects, as the dullest may conjecture, when lads and lasses have come flocking from "behind you hills where Stinchar flows, 'mang moors an' mosses many, O," to one solitary homestead made roomy enough for them all; and if now and then felt to be too close and crowded for the elderly people and the old, not unprovided with secret spots near at hand in : : broom

¹ "Scotch Drink," vol. II. p. 83.

and the brackens, where the sleeping lint-whites sit undisturbed by lovers' whispers, and lovers may look, if they choose it, unashamed to the stars.

And what was he going to do with all this poetry—poetry accumulating fast as his hand, released at night from other implements, could put it on paper, in bold, round, upright characters, that tell of fingers more familiar with the plough than the pen? He himself sometimes must have wondered to find every receptacle in the space crammed with manuscripts, to say nothing of the many others floating about all over the country, and setting the smiddies in a roar, and not a few, of which nothing was said, folded in the breast-kerchiefs of maidens, put therein by his own hand on the lea-rig, beneath the milk-white thorn. What brought him out into the face of day as a Poet?

Of all the women Burns ever loved, Mary Campbell not excepted, the dearest to him by far, from first to last, was Jean Armour. During composition her image rises up from his heart before his eyes the instant he touches on any thought or feeling with which she could be in any way connected; and sometimes his allusions to her might even seem out of place, did they not please us, by letting us know that he could not altogether forget her, whatever the subject his muse had chosen. Others may have inspired more poetical strains, but there is an earnestness in his fervours, at her name, that brings her breathing in warm flesh and blood to his breast. Highland Mary he would have made his wife, and perhaps broken her heart. He loved her living, as a creature in a dream, dead as a spirit in heaven. But Jean Armour possessed his heart in the stormiest season of his passions, and she possessed it in the lull that preceded their dissolution. She was well worthy of his affection on account of her excellent qualities; and though never beautiful, had many personal attractions. But Burns felt himself bound to her by that inscrutable mystery in the soul of every man, by which one other being, and one only, is believed, and truly, to be essential to his happiness here,—without whom life is not life. Her strict and stern father, enraged out of all religion both natural and revealed, with his daughter for having sinned with a man of sin,

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tore from her hands her *marriage lines* as she besought forgiveness on her knees, and without pity for the life stirring within her, terrified her into the surrender and renunciation of the title of wife, branding her thereby with an abhorred name. A father's power is sometimes very terrible, and it was so here; for she submitted, with less outward show of agony than can be well understood, and Burns almost became a madman. His worldly circumstances were wholly desperate, for bad seasons had stricken dead the cold soil of Moss-giel; but he was willing to work for his wife in ditches, or to support her for a while at home, by his wages as a negro-driver in the West Indies.

A more unintelligible passage than this never occurred in the life of any other man, certainly never a more trying one; and Burns must at this time have been tormented by as many violent passions, in instant succession or altogether, as the human heart could hold. In verse he had for years given vent to all his moods; and his brother tells us that the "LAMENT" was composed "after the first distraction of his feelings had a little subsided." Had he lost her by death he would have been dumb, but his grief was not mortal, and it grew eloquent, when relieved and sustained from prostration by other passions that lift up the head, if it be only to let it sink down again, rage, pride, indignation, jealousy, and scorn. "Never man loved, or rather adored a woman more than I did her; and to confess the truth between you and me, I do still love her to distraction after all. . . . My poor dear unfortunate Jean! . . . It is not the losing her that makes me so unhappy, but for her sake I feel most severely: I foresee she is in the road to, I am afraid, eternal ruin. May Almighty God forgive her ingratitude and perjury to me, as I from my very soul forgive her; and may his grace be with her and bless her in all her future life! I can have no nearer idea of the place of eternal punishment than what I have felt in my own breast on her account. I have tried often to forget her; I have run into all kinds of dissipation and riots, mason-meetings, drinking-matches, and other mischief, to drive her out of my head, but all in vain. And now for a grand cure: the ship is on her way home that is to take me out to Jamaica; and then, farewell, dear old Scotland; and farewell, dear

ingrateful Jean! for never, never will I see you more."¹ In the "LAMENT" there are the same passions, but genius has ennobled them by the tenderness and elevation of the finest poetry, guided their transitions by her solemnizing power, inspired their appeals to conscious night and nature, and subdued down to the beautiful and pathetic the expression of what had else been agony and despair.

Twenty pounds would enable him to leave Scotland, and take him to Jamaica; and to raise them, it occurred to Robert Burns to publish his poems by subscription! "I was pretty confident my poems would meet with some applause; but at the worst, the roar of the Atlantic would deafen the voice of censure, and the novelty of West Indian scenes make me forget neglect. I threw off six hundred copies, of which I had got subscriptions for about three hundred and fifty. My vanity was highly gratified by the reception I met with from the public; and besides, I pocketed, all expenses deducted, near twenty pounds. This sum came very seasonably, as I was thinking of indenting myself, for want of money to procure my passage. As soon as I was master of nine guineas, the price of waiting me to the torrid zone, I took a steerage passage in the first ship that was to sail from the Clyde, for 'Hungry ruin had me in the wind.'"² The ship sailed; but Burns was still at Moss-giel, for his strong heart could not tear itself away from Scotland, and some of his friends encouraged him to hope that he might be made a gauger!—In a few months he was about to be hailed by the universal acclamation of his country a great National Poet.

But the enjoyment of his fame all round his birth-place, "the heart and the main region of his song," intense as we know it was, though it assuaged, could not still the troubles of his heart; his life amidst it all was as hopeless as when it was obscure; "his chest was on its road to Greenock, where he was to embark in a few days for America," and again he sung

Farewell, old Coila's hills and dales,
Her heathy moors and winding vales;
The scenes where wretched fancy roves,
Pursuing past, unhappy loves!

¹ Letter to David Blee, shoemaker, Glasgow, 12th June, 1786.

² Letter to Moore, as given by Currie.

Farewell, my friends! farewell, my foes!
My peace with these—my love with those—
The bursting tears my heart declare,
Farewell the bonnie banks of Ayr;¹

when a few words from a blind old man to a country clergyman kindled within him a new hope, and set his heart on fire; and while

November chill blew loud wth angry sigh,

"I posted away to Edinburgh without a single acquaintance, or a single letter of introduction. The baneful star that had so long shed its blasting influence on my zenith, for once made a revolution to the nadir."²

At first, Burns was stared at with such eyes as people open wide who behold a prodigy; for though he looked the rustic, and his broad shoulders had the stoop that stalwart men acquire at the plough, his swarthy face was ever and anon illumined with the look that genius alone puts off and on, and that comes and goes with a new interpretation of imagination's winged words. For a week or two he had lived chiefly with some Ayrshire acquaintances, and was not personally known to any of the leading men. But as soon as he came forward, and was seen and heard, his name went through the city, and people asked one another, "Have you met Burns?" His demeanour among the Magnates was not only unembarrassed but dignified, and it was at once discerned by the blindest, that he belonged to the aristocracy of nature. "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 once instance, with the unaccountable disparity between their general talents and the occasional inspirations of their more favoured moments. But all the faculties of Burns's mind were, as far as I could judge, equally vigorous; and his predilection for poetry was rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper, than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition." Who those poets were, of occasional inspiration and low general talents, and in conversation felt to be of the race of the feeble, Dugald Stewart had too much

delicacy to tell us; but if Edinburgh had been their haunt, and theirs the model of the poetical character in the judgment of her sages, no wonder that a new light was thrown on the Philosophy of the Human Mind by that of Robert Burns. For his intellectual faculties were of the highest order, and though deferential to superior knowledge, he spoke on all subjects he understood, and they were many, with a voice of determination, and when need was, of command. It was not in the debating club in Tarbolton alone, about which so much nonsense has been prosed, that he had learned eloquence; he had been long giving chosen and deliberate utterance to all his bright ideas and strong emotions; they were all his own, or he had made them his own by transfusion; and so, therefore, was his speech. Its fount was in genius, and therefore could not run dry—a flowing spring that needed neither to be *fanned* nor pumped. As he had the power of eloquence, so had he the will, the desire, the ambition to put it forth; for he rejoiced to carry with him the sympathies of his kind, and in his highest moods he was not satisfied with their admiration without their love. There never beat a heart more alive to kindness. To the wise and good, how eloquent his gratitude! to Glencairn, how imperishable! This exceeding tenderness of heart often gave such pathos to his ordinary talk, that he even melted common-place people into tears! Without scholarship, without science, with not much of what is called information, he charmed the first men in a society equal in all these to any at that time in Europe. The scholar was happy to forget his classic lore, as he listened, for the first time, to the noblest sentiments flowing from the lips of a rustic, sometimes in his own Doric divested of all offensive vulgarity, but oftener in language which, in our northern capital, was thought pure English, and comparatively it was so, for in those days the speech of many of the most distinguished persons would have been unintelligible out of Scotland, and they were proud of excelling in the use of their mother tongue. The philosopher wondered that the peasant should comprehend intuitively truths that had been established, it was so thought, by reasoning demonstrative or inductive; as the illustrious Stewart, a year or two afterwards,

wondered how he had of Aliso it is that th no one been sentence as clangor of a vastly more the twingle-delicat flex blown flowe dawn, was i gant than th that from se of all assoc down as iri perusing yo man of wit self—and a social life— ful amenity series of ano the peculiar nals, and al by his own p companies from the ri converser fr

And how besides ever a duchess³ in all her l carried her Stewart: "his stay in tions of pe turned any that I coul which they same simpl which had saw him in feel any ad number an In many pe

¹ "The gloomy night is gathering fast," vol. ii. p. 184.

² Letter to Moore.

¹ Dugald Stewart, a schooled Ayrshire man, "a distinct of the doctrine marks, "We the doctrine familiar to h

² Letter to

³ The Duke

wondered how clear an idea Burns the Poet had of Alison's True Theory of Taste.¹ True it is that the great law of association has by no one been so beautifully stated in a single sentence as by Burns: "That the martial clangor of a trumpet had something in it vastly more grand, heroic, and sublime, than the twingle-twangle of a Jew's-harp; that the delicate flexure of a rose-twigg, when the half-blown flower is heavy with the tears of the dawn, was infinitely more beautiful and elegant than the upright stub of a burdock; and that from something innate and independent of all associations of ideas;—these I had set down as irrefragable, orthodox truths, until perusing your book shook my faith."² The man of wit—ay, even Harry Erskine himself—and a wittier than he never charmed social life—was nothing loth, with his delightful amenity, to cease for a while the endless series of anecdotes so admirably illustrative of the peculiarities of nations, orders, or individuals, and almost all of them created or vivified by his own genius, that the most accomplished companies might experience a new pleasure from the rich and racy humour of a natural converser fresh from the plough.

And how did Burns bear all this, and much besides even more trying! For you know that a duchess³ declared that she had never before in all her life met with a man who so fairly carried her off her feet. Hear Professor Stewart: "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." In many passages of his letters to friends who

had their fears, Burns expressed entire confidence in his own self-respect, and in terms the most true and touching: as, for example, to Dr. Moore: "The hope to be admired for ages is, in by far the greater 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." And to his venerated friend Mrs. Dunlop, he gives utterance, in the midst of his triumphs, to dark forebodings, some of which were but too soon fulfilled! "You are afraid I shall grow intoxicated with my prosperity as a poet: alas! Madam, I know myself and the world too well. . . . 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-almusement and modesty. I have studied myself, and know what ground I occupy; and however a friend or the world may differ from me in that particular, I stand for my own opinion, in silent resolve, with all the tenaciousness of property. I mention this to you once for all to disburthen my mind, and I do not wish to hear or say more about it.—But,

When proud fortune's ebbing tide recedes,

you will bear me witness, that when my bubble of fame was at the highest I stood unintoxicated, with the inebriating cup in my hand, looking forward with rueful resolve to the hastening time, when the blow of Calumny should dash it to the ground, with all the eagerness of vengeful triumph."⁴

Such equanimity is magnanimous; for though it is easy to declaim on the vanity of fame, and the weakness of them who are intoxicated with its bubbles, the noblest have

¹ [Dugald Stewart expressed surprise that the unschooled Ayrshire ploughman should have formed "a distinct conception of the general principles of the doctrine of association;" on which Carlyle remarks, "We rather think that far subtler things than the doctrine of association had from of old been familiar to him."]

² Letter to Rev. A. Alison, Feby. 1701.

³ The Duchess of Gordon.

⁴ Letter dated 15th January, 1787.

still longed for it, and what a fatal change it has indeed often wrought on the simplicity and sincerity of the most gifted spirits! There must be a moral grandeur in his character who receives sedately the unexpected, though deserved ratification of his title to that genius whose empire is the inner being of his race, from the voice of his native land uttered aloud through all her regions, and harmoniously combined of innumerable tones all expressive of a great people's pride. Make what deductions you will from the worth of that "All hail!" and still it must have sounded in Burns's ears as a realization of that voice heard by his prophetic soul in the "Vision."

ALL HAIL! MY OWN INSPIRED BARD! . . .
I taught thy manners-painting strains,
The loves, the ways of simple swains,
TILL NOW, O'ER ALL MY WIDE DOMAINS
THY FAME EXTENDS!

Robert Burns was not the man to have degraded himself everlastingly, by one moment's seeming slight or neglect of friends, new or old, belonging either to his own condition, or to a rank in life somewhat higher perhaps than his own, although not exactly to that "select society" to which the wonder awakened by his genius had given him a sudden introduction. Persons in that middle or inferior rank were his natural, his best, and his truest friends; and many of them, there can be no doubt, were worthy of his happiest companionship either in the festal hour or the hour of closer communion. He had no right, with all his genius, to stand aloof from them, and with a heart like his he had no inclination. Why should he have lived exclusively with lords and ladies—paper or land lords—ladies by descent or courtesy—with aristocratic advocates, philosophical professors, clergymen, wild or moderate, Arminian or Calvinistic? Some of them were among the first men of the age; others were doubtless not inerudite, and a few not unwitty in their own esteem; and Burns greatly enjoyed their society, in which he met with an admiration that must have been to him the pleasure of a perpetual triumph. But more of them were dull and pompous; incapable of rightly estimating or feeling the power of his genius; and when the glitter and the gloss of novelty was worn off before their shallow eyes, from the poet who

bore them all down into insignificance, then no doubt they began to get offended and shocked with his rusticity or rudeness, and sought refuge in the distinctions of rank, and the laws not to be violated with impunity, of "select society." The patronage he received was honourable, and he felt it to be so; but it was still patronage; and had he, for the sake of it or its givers, forgotten for a day the humblest, lowest, meanest of his friends, or even his acquaintances, how could he have borne to read his own two bold lines—

The rank is but the ginea stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that?

Besides, we know from Burns's poetry what was then the character of the people of Scotland, for they were its materials, its staple. Her peasantry were a noble race, and their virtues moralized his song. The inhabitants of the towns were of the same family—the same blood—one kindred—and many, most of them, had been born, or in some measure bred, in the country. Their ways of thinking, feeling, and acting were much alike; and the shopkeepers of Edinburgh and Glasgow were as proud of Robert Burns, as the ploughmen and shepherds of Kyle and the Stewartry. He saw in them friends and brothers. Their admiration of him was, perhaps, fully more sincere and heartfelt, nor accompanied with less understanding of his merits, than that of persons in higher places; and most assuredly among the respectable citizens of Edinburgh Burns found more lasting friends than he ever did among her gentry and noblesse. Nor can we doubt, that then, as now, there were in that order great numbers of men of well cultivated minds, whom Burns, in his best hours, did right to honour, and who were perfectly entitled to seek his society, and to open their hospitable door to the brilliant stranger. That Burns, whose sympathies were keen and wide, and who never dreamt of looking down on others as beneath him, merely because he was conscious of his own vast superiority to the common run of men, should have shunned or been shy of such society, would have been something altogether unnatural and incredible; nor is it at all wonderful or blamable that he should occasionally even have much preferred such society to that which has been called

"more select and proper general behaviour," and the humblest on completely the rich, the must often restraint, and painful; or sometimes companions superiority Burns must because com ment given faculties; a but believe powers show splendour. a thousand dom and all society of have been which, had either not have given which is of of those teaching, a restraints of that Burns alarmingly and that on an idiot fact truth that e in presence a meal as most confi was then he never h rich men's have displ and lustre measure ha rent of his never was, irresistible him—no, Duchess of two Ex-m of the Chu Burns,

"more select," and therefore above his natural and proper condition. Admirably as he in general behaved in the higher circles, in those humbler ones alone could he have felt himself completely at home. His demeanour among the rich, the great, the learned, or the wise, must often have been subject to some little restraint, and all restraint of that sort is ever painful; or, what is worse still, his talk must sometimes have partaken of display. With companions and friends, who claimed no superiority in anything, the sensitive mind of Burns must have been at its best and happiest, because completely at its ease, and free movement given to the play of all his feelings and faculties; and in such companies we cannot but believe that his wonderful conversational powers shone forth in their most various splendour. He must have given vent then to a thousand familiar fancies, in all their freedom and all their force, which, in the fastidious society of high life, his imagination must have been too much fettered to conceive; and which, had they flowed from his lips, would either not have been understood, or would have given offence to that delicacy of breeding which is often hurt even by the best manners of those whose manners are all of nature's teaching, and unsubjected to the salutary restraints of artificial life. Indeed, we know that Burns sometimes burst suddenly and alarmingly the restraints of "select society:" and that on one occasion he called a clergyman an idiot for misquoting Gray's "Elegy"—a truth that ought not to have been promulgated in presence of the parson, especially at so early a meal as breakfast: and he confesses in his most confidential letters, though indeed he was then writing with some bitterness, that he never had been truly and entirely happy at rich men's feasts. If so, then never could he have displayed there his genius in full power and lustre. His noble rage must in some measure have been repressed—the genial current of his soul in some degree frozen. He never was, never could be, the free, fearless, irresistible Robert Burns that nature made him—no, not even although he carried the Duchess of Gordon off her feet, and silenced two Ex-moderators of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Burns, before his visit to Edinburgh, had

at all times and places been in the habit of associating with the best men of his order—the best in everything, in station, in manners, in moral and intellectual character. Such men as William Tell and Hofer, for example, associated with in Switzerland and the Tyrol. Even the persons he got unfortunately too well acquainted with (but whose company he soon shook off) at Irvine and Kirk-Oswald—smugglers and their adherents—were, though a lawless and dangerous set, men of spunk, and spirit, and power, both of mind and body; nor was there anything the least degrading in an ardent, impassioned, and imaginative youth becoming for a time rather too much attached to such daring and adventurous, and even interesting characters. They had all a fine strong poetical smell of the sea, mingled to precisely the proper pitch with that of the contraband. As a poet Burns must have been much the better of such temporary associates; as a man, let us hope, notwithstanding Gilbert's fears, not greatly the worse. The passions that boiled in his blood would have overflowed his life, often to disturb, and finally to help to destroy him, had there never been an Irvine and its seaport. But Burns's friends, up to the time he visited Edinburgh, had been chiefly his admirable brother, a few of the ministers round about, farmers, ploughmen, farm-servants, and workers in the winds of heaven blowing over moors and mosses, corn-fields and meadows beautiful as the blueskies themselves; and if you call that low company, you had better sling your copy of Burns, "Cotter's Saturday Night," "Mary in Heaven," and all, into the fire. He, the noblest peasant that ever trod the greensward of Scotland, kept the society of other peasants, whose nature was like his own; and then, were the silken-snooded maidens whom he wooed on lea-rig and 'mang the rigs o' barley, were they who inspired at once his love and his genius, his passion and his poetry, till the whole land of Coila overflowed with his immortal song,—so that now to the proud native's ear every stream murmurs a music not its own, given it by sweet Robin's lays, and the lark more lyrical than ever seems singing his songs at the gates of heaven for the shepherd's sake as through his half-closed hand he eyes the musical mote in the sunshine, and remembers him who sung her new-wakened

by the daisy's side,—were they, the blooming daughters of Scotia, we demand of you on peril of your life, low company and unworthy of Robert Burns?

As to the charge of liking to be what is vulgarly called "cock of the company," what does that mean when brought against such a man? In what company, pray, could not Burns, had he chosen it, and he often did choose it, have easily been the first? No need had he to crow among dunghills. If you liken him to a bird at all, let it be the eagle, or the nightingale, or the bird of Paradise. James Montgomery has done this in some exquisite verses, which are clear in our heart, but indistinct in our memory, and therefore we cannot adorn our pages with their beauty.¹ The truth is, that Burns, though when his heart burned within him, one of the most eloquent of men that ever set the table in a roar or a hush, was always a modest, often a silent man, and he would sit for hours together, even in company, with his broad forehead on his hand, and his large lamping eyes sobered and tamed, in profound and melancholy thought. Then his soul would "spring upwards like a pyramid of fire," and send "illumination into dark deep holds," or brighten the brightest hour in which Feeling and Fancy ever flung their united radiance over the common goings of this our common-place world and everyday life. Was this the man to desire, with low longings and base aspirations, to shine among the obscure, or rear his haughty front and giant stature among pigmies?—he who

walked in glory and in joy,
Following his plough upon the mountain side;

he who sat in glory and in joy at the festal board, when mirth and wine did most abound, and strangers were strangers no more within the fascination of his genius, for

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin;

or at the frugal board, surrounded by his wife and children, and servants, lord and master of his own happy and industrious home—the frugal meal, preceded and followed by thanksgiving to the Power that spread his table in the barren places.

Show us any series of works in prose or verse

¹ See "Poems in Memory of Burns," vol. v.

in which man's being is so illustrated as to lay it bare and open for the benefit of man, and the chief pictures they contain drawn from "select society." There are none such; and for this reason, that in such society there is neither power to paint them, nor materials to be painted, nor colours to lay on, till the canvas shall speak a language which all the world as it runs may read. What would Scott have been, had he not loved and known the people? What would his works have been, had they not shown the many-coloured character of the people? What would Shakspeare have been had he not often turned majestically from kings, and "lords and dukes and mighty earls," to their subjects and vassals and lowly bondsmen, and "counted the beatings of lonely hearts" in the obscure but impassioned life that stirs every nook of this earth where human beings abide? What would Wordsworth have been, had he disdained, with his high intellect and imagination, "to stoop his anointed head" beneath the wooden lintel of the poor man's door? His *Lyrical Ballads*, "with all the innocent brightness of the new-born day," had never charmed the meditative heart. His "Church-yard among the Mountains" had never taught men how to live and how to die. These are men who have descended from aerial heights into the humblest dwellings; who have shown the angel's wing equally when poised near the earth, and floating over its cottaged vales, as when seen sailing on high through the clouds and azure depth of heaven, or hanging over the towers and temples of great cities. They shunned not to parley with the blind beggar by the way-side; they knew how to transmute, by divinest alchemy, the base metal into the fine gold. Whatever company of human beings they have mingled with, they lent it colours, and did not receive its shade; and hence their mastery over the "wide soul of the world dreaming of things to come." Burns was born, bred, lived, and died in that condition of this mortal life to which they paid but visits; his heart lay wholly there; and that heart, filled as it was with all the best human feelings, and sometimes with thoughts divine, had no fears about entering into places which timid moralists might have thought forbidden and unhallowed ground, but which he, wiser far, knew to be inhabited by creatures of con-

science, born by the insect

For a year the Edinburgh roving life, He had a not appear his conduct he did not There was much hard general soc worst; and circles—but cates were after life; a of the resp Of his vari little to be tish Song h pilgrim; an by the grav said to Mr than to hav the routin knows I an pilgrimages fields of her banks of h towers or v abodes of h thoughts: life; 'tis ti an aged m bosom ties individual his own the may be ex some of the heedless el have intru where the that man strangely nexions wi Burns h "stately E favoured a and literat returned a neither ess his city lif

science, bound there often in thick darkness by the inscrutable decrees of God.

For a year and more after the publication of the Edinburgh Edition, Burns led a somewhat roving life, till his final settlement with Creech. He had a right to enjoy himself; and it does not appear that there was much to blame in his conduct either in town or country, though he did not live upon air nor yet upon water. There was much dissipation in those days—much hard drinking—in select as well as in general society, in the best as well as in the worst; and he had his share of it in many circles—but never in the lowest. His associates were all honourable men, then, and in after life; and he left the capital in possession of the respect of its most illustrious citizens. Of his various tours and excursions there is little to be said; the birth-places of old Scottish Song he visited in the spirit of a religious pilgrim; and his poetical fervour was kindled by the grandeur of the Highlands. He had said to Mrs. Dunlop, “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 connexions will not rouse to exertion.”

Burns has now got liberated, for ever, from “stately Edinburgh throned on crags,” the favoured abode of philosophy and fashion, law and literature, reason and refinement, and has returned again into his own natural condition, neither essentially the better nor the worse of his city life; the same man he was when “the

poetic genius of his country found him at the plough and threw her inspiring mantle over him.” And what was he now to do with himself? Into what occupation for the rest of his days was he to settle down? It would puzzle the most sagacious even now, fifty years after the event,¹ to say what he ought to have done that he did not do at that juncture, on which for weal or woe the future must have been so deeply felt by him to depend. And perhaps it might not have occurred to every one of the many prudent persons who have lamented over his follies, had he stood in Burns’s shoes, to make over, unconditionally, to his brother one half of all he was worth.² Gilbert was resolved still to struggle on with Mossiel, and Robert said, “there is my purse.” The brothers, different as they were in the constitution of their souls, had one and the same heart. They loved one another—man and boy alike; and the survivor cleared, with pious hands, the weeds from his brother’s grave. There was a blessing in that two hundred pounds—and thirty years afterwards Gilbert repaid it with interest to Robert’s widow and children, by an Edition³ in which he wiped away stains from the reputation of his benefactor, which had been suffered to remain too long, and some of which, the most difficult too to be effaced, had been even let fall from the fingers of a benevolent biographer who thought himself in duty bound to speak what he most mistakenly believed to be the truth. “Oh Robert!” was all his mother could say on his return to Mossiel from Edinburgh. In her simple heart she was astonished at his fame, and could not understand it well, any more than she could her own happiness and her own pride. But his affection she understood better than he did, and far better still his generosity; and duly night and morning she asked a blessing on his head from Him who had given her such a son.

“Between the men of rustic life,” said Burns—so at least it is reported—“and the polite world I observed little difference. In the former, though unpolished by fashion, and unenlightened by science, I have found much

¹ This essay was first published in 1840.

² [The sum given to Gilbert was £180. Regarding what Burns got as the profits of the Edinburgh edition of his poems, see vol. I. p. 82.]

³ A reprint of Currie’s edition, with notes and additions by Gilbert Burns, published in 1829.

observation and much intelligence. But a refined and accomplished woman was a thing altogether new to me, and of which I had formed but a very inadequate idea."¹ One of his biographers² seems to have believed that his love for Jean Armour, the daughter of a Manichline mason, must have died away under these more adequate ideas of the sex along with their corresponding emotions; and that he now married her with reluctance. Only think of Burns taking an Edinburgh Belle to wife! He flew, somewhat too fervently,

To love's willing fetters, the arms of his Jean.

Her father had again to curse her for her infatuated love of her husband—for such if not by the law of Scotland—which may be doubtful—Burns certainly was by the law of heaven—and like a good Christian had again turned his daughter out of doors. Had Burns deserted her he had merely been a heartless villain. In making her his lawful wedded wife he did no more than any other man, deserving the name of man, in the same circumstances would have done; and had he not, he would have walked in shame before men, and in fear and trembling before God. But he did so, not only because it was his most sacred duty, but because he loved her better than ever, and without her would have been miserable. Much had she suffered for his sake, and he for hers; but all that distraction and despair which had nearly driven him into a sugar plantation, were over and gone, forgotten utterly, or remembered but as a dismal dream endearing the placid day that for ever dispelled it. He writes about her to Mrs. Dunlop and others in terms of sobriety and good sense—"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 he thought in a woman might, with a knowledge of the scriptures, make a good wife. During the few months he was getting his house ready for her at Ellisland he frequently travelled, with all the fondness of a lover, the long wilderness of moors to Mauchline, where she was in the house of her austere father,

reconciled to her at last.³ And though he has told us that it was his custom, in song-writing, to keep the image of some fair maiden before the eye of his fancy, "some bright particular star," and that Hymen was not the divinity he then invoked, yet it was on one of these visits, between Ellisland and Mossiel, that he penned under such homely inspiration as precious a love-offering as genius in the passion of hope ever laid in a virgin's bosom. His wife sung it to him that same evening—and indeed he never knew whether or no he had succeeded in any one of his lyrics, till he heard his words and the air together from her voice.

Of a' the airts the wind can blaw,	directions
I dearly like the west,	
For there the bonnie lassie lives,	
The lassie I lo'e best:	
There's wild woods grow, and rivers row,	roll
And mony a hill between;	
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,	wood
There's not a bonnie bird that sings,	
But minds me o' my Jean.	

And here we ask you who may be reading these pages, to pause for a little, and consider with yourselves, what up to this time Burns had done to justify the condemnatory judgments that have been passed on his character as a man by so many admirers of his genius as a poet? Compared with that of men of ordinary worth, who have deservedly passed through life with the world's esteem, in what was it lamentably wanting? Not in tenderness, warmth, strength of the natural affections; and they are good till turned to evil. Not in the duties for which they were given, and which they make delights. Of which of these duties was he habitually neglectful? To the holiest of them all next to piety to his Ma'ner, he was faithful beyond most—few better kept the fourth commandment. His youth, though soon too impassioned had been long pure. If he were temperate by necessity

³ [Not so: Jean at this time was resident with the family at Mossiel, "regularly and constantly apprenticed to my mother and sisters in their dairy and other rural business."]

¹ Cromek's *Reliques*.

² Prof. Josh. Walker.

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and not nature, yet he was so as contentedly as if it had been by choice. He had lived on meal and water with some milk, because the family were too poor for better fare; and yet he rose to labour as the lark rises to sing.

In the corruption of our fallen nature he sinned, and, it has been said, became a libertine. Was he ever guilty of deliberate seduction? It is not so recorded; and we believe his whole soul would have recoiled from such wickedness: but let us not affect ignorance of what we all know. Among no people on the face of the earth is the moral code so rigid, with regard to the intercourse of the sexes, as to stamp with ineffaceable disgrace every lapse from virtue; and certainly not among the Scottish peasantry, austere as the spirit of religion has always been, and terrible ecclesiastical censure. Hateful in all eyes is the reprobate—the hoary sinner loathsome; but many a grey head is now deservedly revered that would not be so, were the memory of all that has been repented by the Elder, and pardoned unto him, to rise up against him among the congregation as he entered the house of God. There has been many a rueful tragedy in houses that in after times “seemed asleep.” How many good and happy fathers of families, who, were all their past lives to be pictured in ghastly revelation to the eyes of their wives and children, could never again dare to look them in the face! It pleased God to give them a long life; and they have escaped, not by their own strength, far away from the shadows of their misdeeds that are not now suffered to pursue them, but are chained down in the past no more to be let loose. That such things were is a secret none now live to divulge; and though once known they were never emblazoned. But Burns and men like Burns showed the whole world their dark spots by the very light of their genius; and having died in what may almost be called their youth, there the dark spots still are, and men point to them with their fingers, to whose eyes there may seem but small glory in all that effluence.

Burns now took possession at Whitsuntide (1788), of the farm of Ellisland, while his wife remained at Mossgiel, completing her education in the dairy, till brought home next term to their new house, which the poet set a-building

with alacrity, on a plan of his own which was as simple a one as could be devised: kitchen and dining-room in one, a double-bedded room with a bed-closet, and a garret. The site was pleasant, on the edge of a high bank of the Nith, commanding a wide and beautiful prospect,—holms, plains, woods, and hills, and a long reach of the sweeping river. While the house and offices were growing, he inhabited a hovel close at hand, and though occasionally giving vent to some splenetic humours in letters indited in his sooty cabin, and now and then yielding to fits of despondency about the “ticklish situation of a family of children,” he says to his friend Ainslie, “I am decidedly of opinion that the step I have taken is vastly for my happiness.” He had to qualify himself for holding his exchequer commission by six weeks’ attendance on the business of that profession at Ayr—and we have seen that he made several visits to Mossgiel. Currie cannot let him thus pass the summer without moralizing on his mode of life. “Pleased with surveying the grounds he was about to cultivate, and with the rearing of a building that should give shelter to his wife and children, and, as he fondly hoped, to his own grey hairs, sentiments of independence buoyed up his mind, pictures of domestic comfort and peace rose on his imagination, and a *few days* passed away, as he himself informs us, the most tranquil, if not the happiest, which he had ever experienced.” Let us believe that such days were not few, but many, and that we need not join with the good Doctor in grieving to think that Burns led all the summer a wandering and unsettled life. It could not be stationary; but there is no reason to think that his occasional absence was injurious to his affairs on the farm. Currie writes as if he thought him incapable of self-guidance, and says, “it is to be lamented that at this critical period of his life, our poet was without the society of his wife and children. A great change had taken place in his situation; his old habits were broken; and the new circumstances in which he was placed, were calculated to give a new direction to his thoughts and conduct. But his application to the cares and labours of his farm was interrupted by several visits to his family in Ayrshire; and as the distance was too great for a single day’s

Come, FIRM RESOLVE, take thou the van,
 Thou stalk o' earl-heup in man!
 And let us mind, faibit heart ae'er wan
 A lady fair;
 Wha does the utmost that he can,
 Will whyles do mair. male-hemp
won
 But to conclude my silly rhyme,
 (I'm scant o' verse, and scant o' time.)
 TO MAKE A HAPPY FIRE-SIDE CLIME
 TO WEANS AND WIFE,
 THAT'S THE TRUE PATHOS AND SUBLIME
 OF HUMAN LIFE!

These noble stanzas were written towards the end of October, and in another month Burns brought his wife home to Ellisland, and his three children, for she had twice born him twins.¹ The happiest period of his life, we have his own words for it, was that winter.

But why not say that the three years he lived at Ellisland were all happy, as happiness goes in this world? As happy perhaps as they might have been had he been placed in some other condition apparently far better adapted to yield him what all human hearts do most desire. His wife never had an hour's sickness, and was always cheerful as day, one of those

Sound healthy children of the God of heaven,

whose very presence is positive pleasure, and whose silent contentedness with her lot inspires comfort into a husband's heart, when at times oppressed with a mortal heaviness that no words could lighten. Burns says with gloomy grandeur, "There is a foggy atmosphere native to my soul in the hour of care which makes the dreary objects seem larger than life"—the objects seen by imagination; and he who suffers thus cannot be relieved by any direct appliances to that faculty, only by those that touch the heart—the homelier the more sanative, and none so sure as a wife's affectionate ways, quietly moving about the house affairs, which, insignificant as they are

¹[There are some mistakes here. Mrs. Burns went to reside at Ellisland in the end of 1788, but she and the poet could not get into their new house till at least the spring following. They had no children with them then: the twins which were born at Tarbolton Mill in March, 1788, died shortly after birth, while Robert, Jenn's only surviving child, was not brought to Ellisland till well on in 1789. Francis Wallace, the second of the "twa wee laddies" mentioned in the above stanzas, which were written on 21st October, 1789, was born in August of the same year, in the new house at Ellisland.]

in themselves, are felt to be little truthful realities that banish these monstrous phantoms, showing them to be but glooms and shadows.

And how fared the Ganger? Why he did his work. Currie says, "his farm no longer occupied the principal part of his care or his thoughts. It was not at Ellisland that he was now in general to be found. Mounted on horseback, this high-minded poet was pursuing the defaulters of the revenue among the hills and vales of Nithsdale; his roving eye wandering over the charms of nature, and muttering his wayward fancies as he moved along." And many a happy day he had when thus riding about the country in search of smugglers of all sorts, zealous against all manner of contraband. He delighted in the broad brow of the day, whether glad or gloomy, like his own forehead; in the open air, whether still or stormy, like his own heart. "While pursuing the defaulters of the revenue," a gauger has not always to track them by his eyes or his nose. Information has been lodged of their whereabouts, and he deliberately makes a seizure. Sentimentalists may see in this something very shocking to the delicate pleasures of susceptible minds, but Burns did not; and some of his sweetest lyrics, redolent of the liquid dew of youth, were committed to whitey-brown not scented by the rose's attar. Burns on duty was always as sober as a judge. A man of his sense knew better than to muddle his brains, when it was needful to be quick-witted and ready-handed too; for he had to do with old women who were not to be sneezed at, and with middle-aged men who could use both club and entlass.

He held them with his glittering eye;

but his determined character was nothing the worse of being exhibited on broad shoulder. They drooped, as you know, but from the habit of a strong man who had been a labourer from his youth upwards; and a gauger's life was the very one that might have been prescribed to a man like him, subject to low spirits, by a wise physician. Smugglers themselves are seldom drunkards—gaugers not often—though they take their dram; your drunkards do not belong to that comprehensive class that cheat the excise.

Then Burns was not always "mounted on horseback pursuing the defaulters of the revenue among the hills and vales of Nithsdale;" he sat sometimes by himself in Friars' Carse hermitage.

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;
Hope not sunshine ev'ry hour,
Fear not clouds will always lower.

As the shade of ev'ning close,
Beck'ning thee to long repose;
As life itself becomes disease,
Seek the chimney-nook of ease.
There ruminant, with sober thought,
On all thou'st seen, and heard, and wrought;
And teach the sportive youngsters 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?
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 giv'n.
Say, to be just, and kind, and wise,
There solid self-enjoyment lies:
That foolish, selfish, faithless ways,
Lead to the wretched, vile, and base.

Thus resign'd and quiet, creep
To the bed of fasting 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 headman of Nithside.¹

Burns acquired the friendship of many of the best families in the vale of Nith, at Friars' Carse, Terraughty, Blackwood, Closeburn, Dalzwinton, Glenae, Kirkconnel, Arbigland, and other seats of the gentry old or new. Such society was far more enjoyable than that of Edinburgh, for here he was not a lion but a man. He had his jovial hours, and sometimes they were excessive, as the whole world knows from "the Song of the Whistle." But the Laureate did not enter the lists—if he had, it

¹ "Verses written in Friars' Carse Hermitage," vol. iii. p. 13.

is possible he might have conquered Craigdarroch. These were formidable ogles; but we have heard "O! Willie brewed a peck o' maut," sung after a presbytery dinner, the bass of the moderator giving something of a solemn character to the chorus.

But why did Burns allow his genius to lie idle—why did he not construct some great work such as a Drama? His genius did not lie idle, for over and above the songs alluded to, he wrote ever so many for his friend Johnson's *Museum*. Nobody would have demanded from him a Drama, had he not divulged his determination to compose one about "The Bruce," with the homely title of "Rob M'Quechan's Elshin." But Burns did not think himself an universal genius, and at this time writes, "No man knows what nature has fitted him for till he try; and if after a preparatory course of some years' study of men and books I shall find myself unequal to the task, there is no harm done. Virtue and study are their own reward. I have got Shakspeare, and begun with him," &c. He knew that a great National Drama was not to be produced as easily as "The Cotter's Saturday Night;" and says, "though the rough material of fine writing is undoubtedly the gift of genius, the workmanship is as certainly the united efforts of labour, attention, and pains."

And here, one day between breakfast and dinner, he composed "Tam o' Shanter." The fact is hardly credible, but we are willing to believe it. Dorset only corrected his famous "To all ye ladies now on land, we men at sea indite," the night before an expected engagement, a proof of his self-possession; but he had been working at it for days. Dryden dashed off his "Alexander's Feast" in no time, but the labour of weeks was bestowed on it before it assumed its present shape. "Tam o' Shanter" is superior in force and fire to that Ode. Never did genius go at such a gallop—setting off at a score, and making play, but without whip or spur, from starting to winning post.²

² [That a rough draft of "Tam o' Shanter" was made in one day is no doubt true, but we are not to suppose that the finished poem was thus hurriedly put into shape. Burns was too good a workman not to use the file. He first mentions the poem in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop, dated November, 1790, but it is not till near the end of January following that he speaks of it as a poem "I have just finished."]

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Now Tam, O
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Auld Horni
Wha in you

Spairges ab

Hear me, an
An' let poet

All is inspiration. His wife with her weans
a little way aside among the broom watched
him at work as he was striding up and down
the brow of the Scur, and reciting to himself
like one *demented*,

Now Tam, O Tam! had they been weans,
A' plump and strapping, in their teens;
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannin, ^{greasy}
Been snaw-white seventeen-hunder linen! ^(flannel)
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair, ^{these breeches}
That ance were plush, o' guld blue hair,
I wad hae gien them aff my hurdies, ^{thighs}
For ae blink o' the bonnie burdles! ^{loaves}

His bonnie Jean must have been sorely perplexed—but she was familiar with all his moods, and like a good wife left him to his cogitations. It is "all made out of the builder's brain;" for the story that suggested it is no story at all, the dull lie of a drunken dotard. From the poet's imagination it came forth a perfect poem, impregnated with the native spirit of Scottish superstition. Few or none of our old traditional tales of witches are very appalling—they had not their origin in the depths of the people's heart—there is a meanness in their mysteries—the ludicrous mixes with the horrible—much matter there is for the poetical, and more perhaps for the picturesque—but the pathetic is seldom found there—and never—for Shakspeare we fear was not a Scotsman—the Sublime. Let no man therefore find fault with "Tam o' Shanter," because it strikes not a deeper chord. It strikes a chord that twangs strangely, and we know not well what it means. To vulgar eyes, too, were such unaccountable ongoing most often revealed of old; such seers were generally *doited or dazed*—half-born idiots or *werdowels in drink*. Had Milton's Satan shown his face in Scotland, folk either would not have known him or thought him mad. The devil is much indebted to Burns for having raised his character without impairing his individuality—

O thou! whatever title suit thee,
Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie,
Wha in yon cavern grim an' sooty,
Clos'd under hatches, ^(pail)
Spairges about the brunstane cottie, ^{scatters foot-}
To send poor wretches! ^{scald}

Hear me, auld *Hannie*, for a wee,
An' let poor dunn'd bodies be;

I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,
E'en to a *deil*,
To skelp an' send poor dogs like me,
An' hear us squeel!!

This is conciliatory; and we think we see him smile. We can almost believe for a moment, that it does give him no great pleasure, that he is not inaccessible to pity, and at times would fain devolve his duty upon other hands, though we cannot expect him to resign. The poet knows that he is the Prince of the Air

Great is thy power, an' great thy fame;
Far kenn'd and noted is thy name; ^{known}
An' tho' you lowin' heugh's thy name, ^{flaming pit}
Thou travels far;
An', faith! thou's nether lag nor lame, ^{lazy}
Nor blate nor scur. ^{bashful}
^(frightened)

Whyles, ranging like a roarin' lion, ^{at times}
For prey, n' holes an' corners tryin';
Whyles on the strong-whig'd tempest flyin',
Tirling the kirks; ^{unroofing}
Whyles, in the human bosom pryin',
Unseen thou lurks.

That is magnificent—Milton's self would have thought so—and it could have been written by no man who had not studied scripture. The "Address" is seen to take; the Old Intrusionist is glorified by "tirling the kirks;" and the poet thinks it right to lower his pride.

I've heard my reverend grannde say,
In lanely glens ye like to stray;
Or where auld-ruin'd castles, gray,
Nod to the moon,
Ye fright the nightly wand'rer's way, ^{uneasily}
Wi' eldritch croon.
When twilight did my grannde summon
To say her prayers, donce, honest woman!
Aft yont the dyke she's heard you bannin' ^{beyond}
Wi' eerie drone; ^(the wall)
Or, rustlin', thro' the boortrees comin' ^{elder-trees}
Wi' heavy groan

Ae dreary, windy, winter night,
The stars shot down wi' sklentlin' light, ^{slanting}
Wi' you, mysel, I gat a fright,
Ayont the lough; ^{beyond the lake}
Ye, like a rash-buss, stood in sight, ^{a bush of rushes}
Wi' waving singh. ^{hollow sound}

Throughout the whole "Address" the elements are so combined in him, as to give the world "assurance o' a deil;" but then it is the Deil of Scotland.

Just so in "Tam o' Shanter."² We know not

¹ "Address to the Deil," vol. ii. p. 79.

² See vol. iii. p. 79.

what some great German genius like Goethe might have made of him; but we much mistake the matter, if "Tam o' Shanter" at Alloway Kirk be not as exemplary a piece of humanity as Faustus on May-day Night upon the Hartz Mountains. Faust does not well know what he would be at, but Tam does; and though his views of human life be rather hazy he has glimpses given him of the invisible world. His wife—but her tongue was no scandal—calls him

A skellum,	[noisy fellow
A blithering, blustering, drunken bleeblum;	babbling from
That frae November till October,	
Ae market-day thou was nae sober,	
That ilka melder, w' the miller,	every milling
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;	money
That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on,	nag driven
The earth and thee gat roaring fou on;	drunk
That at the L—d's house, ev'n on Sunday,	
Thou drank w' Kirkton Jean till Monday.	
She prophes'd, that late or soon,	
Thou would be found deep drown'd in Doon;	
Or catch'd w' warlocks in the mirk,	
By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.	

That is her view of the subject; but what is Tam's? The same as Wordsworth's,—“He sits down to his cups while the storm is roaring, and heaven and earth are in confusion; the night is driven on by song and tumultuous noise; laughter and jests thicken as the beverage improves upon the palate; conjugal fidelity archly bends to the service of general benevolence; selfishness is not absent, but wearing the mask of social cordiality; and while these various elements of humanity are blended into one proud and happy composition of elated spirits, the anger of the tempest without doors only heightens and sets off the enjoyment within. I pity him who cannot perceive that, in all this, though there was no moral purpose, there is a moral effect.

Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
O'er a' the ill o' life victorious.

What a lesson do these words convey of charitable indulgence for the vicious habits of the principal actor in the scene and of those who resemble him! Men who, to the rigidly virtuous, are objects almost of loathing, and whom therefore they cannot serve. The poet, penetrating the unsightly and disgusting surfaces of things, has unveiled, with exquisite skill,

the finer ties of imagination and feeling that often bind those beings to practices productive of much unhappiness to themselves and to those whom it is their duty to cherish; and as far as he puts the reuler into possession of this intelligent sympathy, he qualifies him for exercising a salutary influence over the minds of those who are thus deplorably deceived.”

We respectfully demur from the opinion of this wise and benign judge, that “there was no moral purpose in all this, though there is a moral effect.” So strong was his moral purpose and so deep the moral feeling moved within him by the picture he had so vividly imagined, that Burns pauses, in highest moral mood, at the finishing touch

Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious;

and then, by imagery of unequalled loveliness, illustrates an universal and everlasting truth:

But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snow falls in the river,
A moment white—then melts for ever;
Or like the Borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form
Evanishing auld the storm.

Next instant he returns to Tam: and, humanized by that exquisite poetry, we cannot help being sorry for him “mountin' his beast in sic a night.” At the first clap of thunder he forgets Souter Johnny—how “conjugal fidelity archly bent to the service of general benevolence”—such are the terms in which the philosophical Wordsworth speaks of

The Landlady and Tam grew gracious;
W' favours, secret, sweet, and precious:

and as the haunted Ruin draws nigh, he remembers not on Kate's advice but her prophecy. He has passed by some fearful places; at the slightest touch of the necromancer, how fast one after another wheels by, telling at what a rate Tam rode! And we forget that we are not riding behind him,

When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,
Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a breeze.

We defy any man of woman born to tell us who these witches and warlocks are, and why

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the devil brought them here into Alloway
Kirk. True

This night, a child might understand,
The deil had business on his hand;

but that is not the question—the question is
what business? Was it a ball given him on
the anniversary of the Fall?

There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast;
A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large, shaggy
To gie them music was his charge:

and pray who is to pay the piper? We fear
that young witch Nannie!

For Satan glow'd, and fildg'd fu' fain, fidgeted
And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main: jerked

and this may be the nuptial night of the Prince
—for that tyke is he—of the Fallen Angels!

How was Tam able to stand the sight,
“glorious” and “heroic” as he was, of the
open presses?

Coffins stood round like open presses,
That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses; showed
And by some devilish contrivance slight, artful charm
Each in its cuuld hand held a light. cold

Because show a man some sight that is alto-
gether miraculously dreadful, and he either
faints or feels no fear. Or say rather, let a
man stand the first *glower* at it, and he will
make comparatively light of the details. There
was Auld Nick himself, there was no mistaking
him, and there were

wither'd beldams, muld and droll,
Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foul, sapless wean
Lowping an' flinging— leaping

to such dancing what cared Tam who held the
candles? He was bedevilled, bewarlock'd, and
bewitched, and therefore

able
To note upon the haly table, holy
A murderer's bones in gibbet arms; trous
Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns;
A thief, new-cutted frae a rape, rope
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;
Five tomahawks, wi' bluid red-rusted;
Five scimitars, wi' murder crusted;
A garter, which a babe had strangled;
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
Whom his ain son o' life hereft,
The gray hairs yet stuck to the heft."

This collection has all the effect of a selection.
The bodies were not placed there; but follow-
ing each others' heels, they stretch themselves

out of their own accord upon the “haly table.”
They had received a summons to the festival,
which murderer and murdered must obey.
But mind ye, Tam could not see what you see.
Who told him that *that* garter had strangled
a babe? That *that* was a parricide's knife?
Nobody—and that is a flaw. For Tam looks
with his bodily eyes only, and can know only
what they show him; but Burns knew it, and
believed Tam knew it too; and we know it,
for Burns tells us, and we believe Tam as wise
as ourselves; for we almost turn Tam—the
poet himself being the only real warlock of
them all.

You know why that Haly Table is so plea-
sant to the apples of all those evil eyes? They
feed upon the dead, not merely because they
love wickedness, but because they inspire it
into the quick. Who ever murdered his father
but at the instigation of that “towzie tyke,
black, grim, and large?” Who but for him
ever strangled her new-born child? Scimitars
and tomahawks! Why, such weapons never
were in use in Scotland. True. But they
have long been in use in the wildernesses of the
western world, and among the orient cities of
Mahoun, and his empire extends to the utter-
most parts of the earth.

And here we shall say a few words, which
perhaps were expected from us when speaking
a little while ago of some of his first produc-
tions, about Burns' humorous strains, more
especially those in which he has sung the
praises of joviality and good-fellowship; as it
has been thought by many that in them are
conspicuously displayed, not only some striking
qualities of his poetical genius, but likewise
of his personal character. Among the count-
less number of what are called convivial songs
floating in our literature, how few seem to
have been inspired by such a sense and spirit
of social enjoyment as men can sympathise
with in their ordinary moods, when withdrawn
from the festive board, and engaged without
blame in the common amusements or recrea-
tions of a busy or a studious life! The finest
of these few have been gracefully and gaily
thrown off, in some mirthful minute, by Shak-
speare and Ben Jonson and “the Rest,” in-
ebriating the mind as with “divine gas” into
sudden exhilaration that passes away not only
without headache, but with heartache for a

time allayed by the sweet *afflatus*. In our land, too, as in Greece of old, genius has imbibed inspiration from the wine-cup, and sung of human life in strains befitting poets who desired that their foreheads should perpetually be wreathed with flowers. But putting aside them and their little lyres, with some exceptions, how nansous are the bacchanalian songs of Merry England!

On this topic we but touch; and request you to recollect, that there is not half a dozen, if so many, drinking songs in all Burns. "Willie brew'd a peck o' maut" is, indeed, the chief; and you cannot even look at it without crying "O Rare Rob Burns!" So far from inducing you to believe that the poet was addicted to drinking, the freshness and fervour of its glee convince you that it came gushing out of a healthful heart, in the exhilaration of a night that needed not the influence of the flowing bowl, which friendship, nevertheless, did so frequently replenish. Wordsworth, who has told the world that he is a water drinker—and in the late country he can never be at a loss for his favourite beverage—regards this song with the complacency of a philosopher, knowing well that it is all a pleasant exaggeration; and that had the moon not lost patience and gone to bed, she would have seen "Rob and Allan" on their way back to Ellisland, along the bold banks of the Nith,¹ as steady as a brace of bishops.

Of the contest immortalized in the "Whistle" it may be observed, that in the course of events it is likely to be as rare as enormous; and that as centuries intervened between Sir Robert Laurie's victory over the Dane in the reign of James VI., and Craighdarroch's victory over Sir Robert Laurie in that of George III., so centuries, in all human probability, will elapse before another such battle will be lost and won. It is not a little amusing to hear good Dr. Currie on this passage in the life of Burns. In the text of his Memoir he says, speaking of the poet's intimacy with the best families in Nithsdale, "Their social parties too often seduced him from his rustic labours and his rustic fare, overthrew the unsteady fabric of his resolutions, and inflamed those propensities which temperance might have weakened, and

¹ [It may be remarked that the symposium took place at Moffat, twenty miles distant from Ellisland.]

prudence ultimately suppressed." In a note he adds in illustration, "The poem of the 'Whistle' celebrates a bacchanalian event among the gentlemen of Nithsdale, where Burns appears as umpire. Mr. Riddell died before our bard, and some elegiac verses to his memory will be found in vol. iii. p. 174. From him and from all the members of his family, Burns received not kindness only, but friendship; and the society he met with in general at Friars' Carse was calculated to improve his habits, as well as his manners. Mr. Fergusson of Craighdarroch, so well known for his eloquence and social habits, died soon after our poet. Sir Robert Laurie, the third person in the drama, survives; and has since been engaged in contests of a bloodier nature—long may he live to fight the battles of his country! (1799)." Three better men lived not in the shire; but they were gentlemen, and Burns was but an exciseman; and Currie, unconsciously influenced by an habitual deference to rank, pompously moralizes on the poor poet's "propensities, which temperance might have weakened, and prudence ultimately suppressed;" while in the same breath, and with the same ink, he eulogizes the rich squire for "his eloquence and social habits," so well calculated to "improve the habits, as well as the manners," of the bard and gauger! Now suppose that "the heroes" had been not Craighdarroch, Glenriddell, and Maxwellton, but Burns, Mitchell, and Findlater, a gauger, a supervisor, and a collector of excise, and that the contest had taken place not at Friars' Carse, but at Ellisland, not for a time-honoured hereditary ebony whistle, but a wooden ladle not a week old, and that Burns the Victorious had acquired an implement more elegantly fashioned, though of the same materials, than the one taken from his mouth the moment he was born, what blubbering would there not have been among his biographers! James Currie, how exhortatory! Josiah Walker, how lachrymose!

Next up rose our bard, like a prophet in drink:—
"Craighdarroch, thou'lt soar when creation shall sink!
But if thou wouldst flourish immortal in rhyme,
Come—one bottle more—and have at the sublime!

"Thy line, that have struggled for freedom with
Bruce,

Shall heroes and patriots ever produce;

So thine be the laurel, and mine be the bay;

The field thou hast won, by yon bright god of day!"

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How very shocking! Then only hear in what a culpable spirit Burns writes to Riddell, on the forenoon of the day of battle!—"Sir, Big with the idea of this important day at Friars' Carse, I have watched the elements and skies in the full persuasion that they would announce it to the astonished world by some phenomena of terrific portent. Yesternight until a very late hour did I wait with anxious horror for the appearance of some comet firing half the sky; or aerial armies of sanguinary Scandinavians, darting athwart the startled heavens, rapid as the ragged lightning, and horrid as those convulsions of nature that bury nations. The elements, however, seemed to take the matter very quietly: they did not even usher in this morning with triple suns and a shower of blood, symbolical of the three potent heroes, and the mighty claret-shed of the day.—For me, as Thomson in his 'Winter' says of the storm—I shall 'Hearastonished, and astonished sing.' . . . To leave the heights of Parnassus and come to the humble vale of prose.—I have some misgivings that I take too much upon me, when I request you to get your guest, Sir Robert Lawrie, to post the two inclosed covers for me, the one of them, to Sir William Cunningham, of Robertland, Bart., at Auchenskeith, Kilmarnock,—the other, to Mr. Allan Master-ton, Writing-Master, Edinburgh. The first has a kindred claim on Sir Robert, as being a brother Baronet, and likewise a keen Foxite; the other is one of the worthiest men in the world, and a man of real genius; so, allow me to say, he has a fraternal claim on you. I want them franked for to-morrow, as I cannot get them to the post to-night. I shall send a servant again for them in the evening. Wishing that your head may be crowned with laurels to-night, and free from aches to-morrow, I have the honour to be, Sir, your deeply indebted humble servant, R. B." Why, you see that this "Letter,"¹ and the "Whistle"—perhaps an improper poem in priggish eyes, but in the eyes of Bæchus the best of triumphal odes—make up the whole of Burns's share in this transaction. *He was not at the Carse.* The "three potent heroes" were too thoroughly gentlemen to have asked a fourth to sit by with an empty bottle before him as umpire of that debate. Burns that evening was sitting with his eldest

child on his knee, teaching it to say Dad—that night he was lying in his own bed, with bonnie Jean by his side—and "yon bright god of day" saluted him at morning on the Seaur above the glittering Nith.

Turn to the passages in his youthful poetry, where he speaks of himself or others "wi' just a drappie in their ee." Would you that he had never written "Death and Dr. Hornbook?"²

The clachan yill had made me canty, village ale lively
I was na fou, but just had plenty; drunk
I stacher'd whyles, but yet took tent aye staggered
To free the ditches; sometimes heed
An' hillocks, stanes, an' bushes, kenn'd aye
Frae ghaists an' witches. ghosts

The rising moon began to glower stare
The distant Cummoek hills out-owre:
To count her horns, wi' a' my power,
I set myself;
But whether she had three or four,
I cou'd na tell.

I was come round about the hll, tottering
And toddlin' down on Wille's mill,
Setting my staff wi' a' my skill,
To keep me sicker: steady
Tho' leeward whyles, against my will,
I took a bicker. a few quick stops

I there wi' SOMETHING did forgather, &c.

Then and there, as you learn, ensued that "celestial colloquy divine," which, being reported, drove the doctor out of the country, by unextinguishable laughter, into Glasgow, where half a century afterwards he died universally respected. SOMETHING had more to say, and long before that time Burns had been sobered.

But just as he began to tell,
The auld kirk-hammer strak the bell
Some wee short hour ayont the twal,
Which rais'd us bath:
I took the way that pleas'd mysel',
And sae did Death.

In those pregnant Epistles to his friends, in which his generous and noble character is revealed so sincerely, he now and then alludes to the socialities customary in Kyle; and the good people of Scotland have always enjoyed such genial pictures. When promising himself the purest pleasures society can afford, in company with "Auld Lapraik," whom he warmly praises for the tenderness and truthfulness of his "sangs"—

¹ It is dated Oct. 16th, 1780.

² Vol. i. p. 243.

There was na sang, among the rest, one
above
 Aboon them a' it pleased me best,
 That some kind husband had adrest
 To some sweet wife:
 It thirl'd the heart-strings thro' the breast,
 A' to the life;

and when luxuriating in the joy of conscious
 genius holding communion with the native
 muse, he exclaims—

Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire,
 That's a' the learning I desire;
 Then tho' I drudge thro' dub an' mire paddle
 At plough or cart,
 My muse, though humely in attire,
 May touch the heart;

where does Burns express a desire to meet his
 brother-bard? Where but in the resorts of
 their fellow-labourers, when, released from
 toil, and flinging weariness to the wind, they
 flock into the heart of some holiday, attired in
 sunshine, and feeling that life is life?

But Mauchline race, or Mauchline fair,
 I should be proud to meet you there;
 We'se gie ae night's discharge to care,

If we forgather, meet
exchange
 An' hae a swap o' *rhymie*-neare
 Wi' ane anither.

The four-gill chap, we'se gar him clatter, pint-measure
 An' kirsen him wi' reekin' water; christen
 Syne we'll sit down an' tak our whitter, then a hearty [drink]
 To cheer our heart;
 An' faith we'se be acquainted better
 Before we part.

Awa, ye selfish warly race, worldly
 Wha think that havins, sense, an' grace, good manners
 Ev'n love an' friendship, should give place
 To catch-the-plack! to turn the penny
 I dinna like to see your face, do not
 Nor hear your crack. talk

But ye whom social pleasure charms,
 Whose heart the tide of kindness warms,
 Who hold your being on the terms,

"Each aid the others,"
 Come to my bowl, come to my arms,
 My friends, my brothers!¹

Yet after all, "the four-gill chap" clattered
 but on paper. Lapraik was an elderly man of
 sober life, impoverished by a false friend in
 whom he had confided; and Burns, who wore
 good clothes, and paid his tailor as punctually
 as the men he dealt with, had not much money
 out of seven pounds a year, to spend in "the
 change house." He allowed no man to pay
 his "lawin," but neither was he given to

treating—save the sex; and in his "Epistle to
 James Smith,"² he gives a more correct account
 of his habits, when he goes thus off career-
 ingly—

My pen I here fling to the door,
 And kneel, "Ye Powers!" and warm implore
 "Tho' I should wander Terra o'er,
 In all her climes,
 Grant me but this, I ask no more,
 Aye rowth o' rhymes.

"While ye are pleas'd to keep me hale, whole
 I'll sit down o'er my scanty meal,
 Be't water-bress, or mushu-kail, watery soup
 Wi' cheerfu' face,
 As lang's the muses dinna fall
 To say the grace."

Read the "Auld Farmer's New-Year Morn-
 ing Salutation to his Auld Mare Maggie."³ Not
 a soul but them two selves is in the stable—in
 the farm yard—nor, as far as we think of, in
 the house. Yes—there is one in the house—
 but she is somewhat infirm, and not yet out of
 bed. Sons and daughters have long since been
 married, and have houses of their own—such
 of them as may not have been buried. The
 servants are employed somewhere else out of
 doors—and so are the "four gallant brutes as
 e'er did draw" a moiety of Maggie's "bairn-
 time." The Address is an Autobiography. The
 master remembers himself, along with his
 mare—in the days when she was "dappl't,
 sleek, and glaizic, a bonnie gray;" and he
 "the pride o' a' the parishen."

That day, ye prane'd wi' muckle pride,
 When ye bure hame my bonnie bride;
 An' sweet, an' gracefu' she did ride,
 Wi' maiden air!

Kyle Stewart I could bragg'd wide,
 For sic a pair.

What passages in their common life does he
 next select to "roose" mare and master? "In
 tug or tow?" In cart, plough, or harrow?
 These all rise before him at the right time,
 and in a cheerful spirit; towards the close of
 his address he grows serious, but not sad—as
 well he may; and at the close, as well he may,
 tender and grateful. But the image he sees
 galloping, next to that of the "broose," comes
 second, because it is second best:

When thou an' I were young an' skeigh, high-mettled
 An' stable-meals at fairs were drelgh, follous
 How thou wad prance, an' snore, an' skreigh, scream
 An' tak the road!

¹ "Epistle to John Lapraik," vol. I. p. 249.

² See vol. II. p. 105.

³ Vol. II. p. 86.

Town's-bodies ran, and stood abelgh, aloof
An' ca't thee mad.

When thou wast corn't an' I was mellow,
We took the road aye like a swallow.

We do not blame the old farmer for having
got occasionally mellow some thirty years ago
—we do not blame Burns for making him
pride himself on his shame; nay, we bless
them both as we hear these words whispered
close to the auld mare's lug:

Monie a sair daurk we twa hae wrought, day's work
An' wi' the weary war! fought! world
An' monie an anxious day, I thought

We wad be bent!
Yet here to crazy age we're brought,
Wi' something yet.

And think na, my auld trusty servan',
That now perhaps thou's less deservin',
An' thy auld days may end in starvin',

For my last fou, fill
A heapit stimpant, I'll reserve ane heaped measure
Laid by for you.

We've worn to crazy years thegither;
We'll toyte about wi' ane another; totter
Wi' tentle care I'll flit thy tether, thoughtful remove

To some hah'd rig, spared ridge
Whare ye may nolly rax your leather, stretch
Wi' sin'a fatigue.

Or will you turn to the "Twa Dogs,"¹ and
hear Luath, in whom the best humanities
mingle with the canine—the Poet's own colley,
whom some cruel wretch murdered; and gib-
beted to everlasting infamy would have been
the murderer, had Burns but known his
name?

The dearest comfort o' their lives,
Their grushie weans an' faithfu' wives, thriving children
The prattling things are just their pride,
That sweetens a' their fire-side.

An' whiles twalpennie worth o' nappy 12d. Scots—1d.
Can mak' the bodies unco happy; stg. ale
They lay aside their private cares, exceedingly
To mind the Kirk and State affairs
They'll talk o' patronage and priests,
Wi' kindling fury in their breasts,
Or tell what new taxation's comin',
An' ferlie at the folk in Lon'on. marvell

As bleak-fac'd Hallowmass returns, harvest-homes
They get the jovial, rantin' kins,
When rural life, o' ev'ry station,
Unite in common recreation;
Love blinks, Wit slaps, an' social Mirth
Forgets there's care upo' the earth. flashes

That merry day the year begins,
They bar the door on frosty win's;

¹ Vol. II. p. 89.

The nappy reeks wi' mantling ream,
An' sheds a heart-inspiring steam;
The luntin' pipe, an' sneeshin' mill, smoking, snuff-mull
Are handed round wi' right guid will;
The cantie auld folks cracklin' crouse, cheerful, talking
The young anes rantin' thru' the house,— iglefully
My heart has been sae fain to see them, pleased
That I for joy hae barkit wi' them.

Yet how happens it that in the "Halloween"
no mention is made of this source of enjoy-
ment, and that the parties concerned pursue
the ploy with unflagging passion through all
its charms and spells? Because the festival is
kept alive by the poetic power of superstition
that night awakened from all its slumber in all
those simple souls; and *that* serves instead of
strong drink. They fly from freak to freak,
without a thought but of the witcheries—the
means and appliances needful to make them
potent; this Burns knew to be nature, and
therefore he delays all "creature comforts"
till the end, when the curtain has dropped on
that visionary stage, and the actors return to
the floor of their every-day world. Then—

Wi' merry sangs, an' friendly cracks, talks
I wat they didna weary;
An' unco tales, an' funny jokes, strange
Their sports were cheap an' cheery;
Till butter'd so's, wi' fragrant lunt, smoke
Set a' their gabs a-steerin'; mouths
Syne, wi' a social glass o' strunt, then spirits
They parted aff careerin'

Fu' blythe that night.

We see no reason why, in the spirit of these
observations, moralists may not read with
pleasure and approbation, "The Author's
Earnest Cry and Prayer to the Scotch Repre-
sentatives in the House of Commons."² Its
political economy is as sound as its patriotism
is stirring; and he must be indeed a dunce
who believes that Burns uttered it either as
a defence or an encouragement of a national
vice, or that it is calculated to stimulate poor
people in pernicious habits. It is an Address
that Cobbett, had he been a Scotsman and one
of the Forty-Five,³ would have rejoiced to lay
on the Table of the House of Commons; for
Cobbett, in all that was best of him, was a
kind of Burns in his way, and loved the men
who work. He maintained the cause of malt,
and it was a leading article in the creed of his

² Vol. II. p. 96.

³ The number of Scotch members of Parliament
before the Reform Act of 1832.

This judgment on our national characteristics implies a familiar acquaintance with Scottish poetry from Dunbar to Burns. It would be nearer the truth—though still wide of it—to affirm, that we have more humour than all the rest of the inhabitants of this earth besides; but this at least is true, that unfortunately for ourselves, we have too much humour, and that it has sometimes been allowed to flow out of its proper province, and mingle itself with thoughts and things that ought for ever to be kept sacred in the minds of the people. A few words by and bye on this subject; meanwhile, with respect to his “Rhapsodies about Drinking,” Burns knew that not only had all the states, stages, and phases of inebriety been humorously illustrated by the comic genius of his country’s most popular poets, but that the people themselves, in spite of their deep moral and religious conviction of the sinfulness of intemperance, were prone to look on its indulgencies in every droll and ludicrous aspect they could assume, according to the infinite variety of the modifications of individual character. As a poet dealing with life as it lay before and around him, so far from seeking to avoid, he eagerly seized on these; and having in the constitution of his own being as much humour and as rich as ever mixed with the higher elements of genius, he sometimes gave vent to its perceptions and emotions in strains perfectly irresistible—even to the most serious—who had to force themselves back into their habitual and better state, before they could regard them with due condemnation.

But humour in men of genius is always allied to pathos—its exquisite touches

On the pale cheek of sorrow awaken a smile,
And illumine the eye that was dim with a tear.

So is it a thousand times with the humour of Burns—and we have seen it so in our quotations from these very “Rhapsodies.” He could sit with “rattling roarin’ Willie”—and when he belonged to the Crochallan Fencibles, “he was the king o’ a’ the core.” But where he usually sat up late at night, during these glorious hard-working years, was a low loft above a stable—so low that he had to stoop even when he was sitting at a deal table three feet by two—with his “heart inditing a good matter” to a plough-boy, who *realt it up to*

the poet before they lay down on the same truckle bed.¹

Burns had as deep an insight as ever man had into the moral evils of the poor man’s character, condition, and life. From many of them he remained free to the last; some he suffered late and early. What were his struggles we know, yet we know but in part, before he was overcome. But it does not appear that he thought intemperance the worst moral evil of the people, or that to the habits it forms had chiefly to be imputed their falling short or away from that character enjoined by the law written and unwritten, and without which, preserved in its great lineaments, there cannot be to the poor man, any more than the rich, either power or peace. He believed that but for “Man’s inhumanity to man,” this might be a much better earth; that they who live by the sweat of their brows would wipe them with pride, so that the blood did but freely circulate from their hearts; that creatures endowed with a moral sense and discourse of reason would follow their dictates, in preference to all sollicitations to enjoyment from those sources that flow to them in common with all things that have life, so that they were but allowed the rights and privileges of nature, and not made to bow down to a servitude inexorable as necessity, but imposed, as he thought, on their necks as a yoke by the very hands which Providence had kept free;—believing all this, and nevertheless knowing and feeling, often in bitterness of heart and prostration of spirit, that there is far worse evil, because self-originating and self-inhabiting within the invisible world of every human soul, Burns had no reprobation to inflict on the lighter sins of the oppressed, in sight of the heavier ones of the oppressor; and when he did look into his own heart and the hearts of his brethren in toil and in trouble, for those springs of misery which are for ever welling there, and need no external blasts or torrents to lift them from their beds till they overflow their banks,

¹[The story of Burns’s bed-place and study being a stable loft and his bed-fellow a plough-boy has been distinctly contradicted by the poet’s sister, Mrs. Begg. It is one of the fictions of the mendacious John Blane. Burns’s bed-fellow was Gilbert; their bedroom was a garret in the dwelling-house, which contained a small table, at which the poet wrote many of his most famous pieces.]

and inundate ruinously life's securest pastures, he saw THE PASSIONS to which are given power and dominion for bliss or for bale—of them in his sweetest, loftiest inspirations, he sung as a poet all he felt as a man; willing to let his fancy in lighter moods dally with inferior things and merry pleasures—even with the very meat and drink that satiate him who is but grass, and like the flower of the field flourisheth and is cut down, and raked away out of the sunshine into the shadow of the grave.

That Burns did not only not set himself to dissuade poor people from drinking, but that he indited "Rhapsodies" about "Scotch Drink," and "Earnest Cries," will not, then, seem at all surprising to poor people themselves, nor very culpable even in the eyes of the most sober among them: whatever may be the light in which some rich people regard such delinquencies, your more-in-sorrow-than-anger moralists, who are their own butlers, and sleep with the key of the wine-cellar under their pillow; his poetry is very dear to the people, and we venture to say, that they understand its spirit as well as the best of those for whom it was not written; for written it was for his own Order—the enlightened majority of Christian men. No fear of their being blind to its venial faults, its more serious imperfections, and, if there they be, its sins. There are austere eyes in workshops, and in the fields, intolerant of pollution; stern judges of themselves and others preside in those courts of conscience that are not open to the public; nevertheless, they have tender hearts, and they yearn with exceeding love towards those of their brethren who have brightened or elevated their common lot. Latent virtues in such poetry as Burns's are continually revealing themselves to readers, whose condition is felt to be uncertain, and their happiness to fluctuate with it; adversity puts to the test our opinions and beliefs, equally with our habits and our practices; and the most moral and religious man that ever worked from morning to night, that his family might have bread—daily from youth upwards till now he is threescore and ten—might approve of the sentiment of that Song, feel it in all its fervour, and express it in all its glee, in which age meeting with age, and again hand and heart linked together, the "trusty feres" bring

back the past in a sun-burst on the present, and, thoughtless of the future, pour out unblamed libations to the days "o' auld lang syne!"

It seems to us very doubtful if any poetry could become popular, of which the prevalent spirit is not in accordance with that of the people, as well in those qualities we grieve to call vices, as in those we are happy to pronounce virtues. It is not sufficient that they be moved for a time against their will, by some moral poet desirous, we shall suppose, of purifying and elevating their character, by the circulation of better sentiments than those with which they have been long familiar; it is necessary that the will shall go along with their sympathies to preserve them perhaps from being turned into antipathies; and that is not likely to happen, if violence be done to long-established customs and habits, which may have acquired not only the force, but something too of the sanctity, of nature.

But it is certain that to effect any happy change in the manners or the morals of a people—to be in any degree instrumental to the attainment or preservation of their dearest interests—a Poet must deal with them in the spirit of truth; and that he may do so, he must not only be conversant with their condition, but wise in knowledge, that he may understand what he sees, and whence it springs—the evil and the good. Without it, he can never help to remove a curse or establish a blessing; for a while his denunciations or his praises may seem to be working wonders—his genius may be extolled to the skies—and himself ranked among the benefactors of his people; but yet a little while, and it is seen that the miracle has not been wrought, the evil spirit has not been exorcised; the plague-spot is still on the bosom of his unhealed country; and the physician sinks away unobserved among men who have not taken a degree.

Look, for example, at the fate of that once fashionable, for we can hardly call it popular, tale—"Scotlan's Skaithe, or the History of Will and Jean," with its Supplement, "The Wae o' War." Hector Maeneil had taste and feeling—even genius—and will be remembered among Scottish poets.

Robin Burns, in mouy a ditty,
Lowly sings in whisky's praise;

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Sweet his sang! the mair's the pity
 E'er on it he war'd sic lays. spent such
 O' a' the ill's poor Caledonia
 E'er yet press'd, or e'er will taste, tasted
 Brew'd in hell's black Pandemonia—
 Whisky's ill will skaith her maist. harm most

So said Hector Macneil of Robert Burns, in verse not quite so vigorous as the "Earnest Cry." It would require a deeper voice to frighten the "dronthy" from "Scotch Drink," if it be "brewed in hell." "Impressed with the baneful consequences inseparable from an inordinate use of ardent spirits among the lower orders of society, and anxious to contribute something that might at least tend to retard the contagion of so dangerous an evil, it was conceived, in the ardour of philanthropy, that a natural, pathetic story, in verse, calculated to enforce moral truths, in the language of simplicity and passion, might probably interest the uncorrupted; and that a striking picture of the calamities incident to idle debauchery, contrasted with the blessings of industrious prosperity, might (altogether insufficient to reclaim abandoned vice) do something to strengthen and encourage endangered virtue. Visionary as these fond expectations may have been, it is pleasing to cherish the idea; and if we may be allowed to draw favourable inferences from the sale of *ten thousand copies in the short space of five months*, why should we despair of success?" The success, if we may trust to statistical tables, has, alas! been small; nor would it have been greater had a million copies been put into circulation. For the argument illustrated in the "History of Will and Jean" has no foundation in nature—and proceeds on an assumption grossly calumnious of the Scottish character. The following verses used once to ring in every ear:—

Wha was ance like Willie Garlace, once
 Wha in neiboring town or farm?
 Beauty's bloom shone in his fair face,
 Deadly strength was in his arm?
 Wha wi' Will could rin, or wrestle, run
 Throw the sledge, or toss the bar?
 Hap what would, he stood a castle,
 Or for safety or for war:
 Warm his heart, and mild as manna,
 Wi' the bauld he bauld wad be; bold would
 But to friends he had a 'bandfu',
 Purse and service aft were free.

He marries Jeanie Muir, a wife worthy of

him, and for three years they are good and happy in the blessing of God. What in a few months makes drunkards of them both? He happens to go *once* for refreshment, after a long walk, into a way-side public-house—and from that night he is a lost man. He is described as entering it on his way home from a Fair—and we never heard of a Fair where there was no whisky—drinks Meg's ale or porter, and eats her bread and cheese without incurring much blame from his biographer; but his companion prevails on him to taste "the widow's gill"—a thing this bold peasant seems never before to have heard of—and infatuated with the novel potion, Willie Garlace, after a few feeble struggles, in which he derives no support from his previous life of happiness, industry, sobriety, virtue, and religion, staggers to destruction. Jeanie, in despair, takes to drinking too; they are "rouped out;" she becomes a beggar, and he "a sodger." The verses run smoothly and rapidly, and there is both skill and power of narration, nor are touches of nature wanting, strokes of pathos that have drawn tears. But by what insidious witchcraft this frightful and fatal transformation was brought about, the uninspired story-teller gives no intimation—a few vulgar common-places constitute the whole of his philosophy—and he no more thinks of tracing the effects of whisky on the moral being—the heart—of poor Willie Garlace, than he would have thought of giving an account of the coats of his stomach, had he been poisoned to death by arsenic. His "hero" is not gradually changed into a beast, like the victims of Circe's enchantments; but rather resembles the Cyclops all at once maddened in his cave by the craft of Ulysses. This is an outrage against nature; not thus is the sting to be taken out of "Scotland's Skaith"—and a nation of drunkards to be changed into a nation of gentlemen. If no man be for a moment safe who "presses the widow's gill," the case is hopeless, and despair admits the inutility of Exercise. In the "Waes o' War"—the sequel of the story—Willie returns to Scotland with a pension and a wooden leg, and finds Jeanie with the children in a cottage given her by "the good Buccleugh." Both have become as sober as church-mice. The loss of a limb, and eight pounds a year for life, had

effectually reformed the husband; a cottage and one pound a quarter, tho wife: and *this* was good Hector Maeneil's idea of a Moral Poem!—a poem that was not absolutely to stay the plague, but to fortify the constitution against it; “and if we may be allowed to draw favourable inferences from the sale of ten thousand copies in the short space of five months, why should we despair of success?”

It is not from such poetry that any healthful influence can be exhaled over the vitiated habits of a people;

With other ministrations, thou, O Nature!
Honest thy wandering and distempered child;

had Burns written a Tale to exemplify a Curse, Nature would have told him of them all; nor would he have been in aught unfitted by the experiences that prompted many a genial and festive strain, but, on the contrary, the better qualified to give, in “thoughts that breathe and words that burn,” some solution of that appalling mystery, in which the souls of good men are often seen hurrying and hurried along paths they had long abhorred, and still abhor, as may be seen from their eyes, even when they are rejecting all offered means of salvation, human and divine, and have sold their Bibles to buy death. Nor would Burns have adopted the vulgar libel on the British army, that it was a receptacle for drunken husbands who had deserted their wives and children. There have been many such recruits; but his martial, loyal, and patriotic spirit would ill have brooked the thought of such a disgrace to the service, in an ideal picture, which his genius was at liberty to colour at its own will, and could have coloured brightly according to truth. “One summer evening he was at the inn at Brownhill with a couple of friends, when a poor way-worn soldier passed the window: of a sudden it struck the poet to call him in, and get the story of his adventures; after listening to which, he all at once fell into one of those fits of abstraction not unusual with him,” and perhaps, with the air of “*The mill, mill O*” in his heart, he composed the “Soldier’s Return.” It, too, speaks of the “woes of war;” and that poor way-worn soldier, we can well believe, had given no very flattering account of himself or his life, either before or after he had mounted the

cockade. Why had he left Scotland and Mill-mannoch on the sweet banks of the Coyle near Coylton Kirk? Burns cared not why; he loved his kind, and above all his own people; and his imagination immediately pictured a blissful meeting of long-parted lovers.

I left the lines and tented field,
Where long I’d been a lodger,
My humble knapsack a’ my wealth,
A poor and honest sodger.

A leal, light heart was in my breast;
My hand unstain’d wi’ plunder;
And for fair Scotia, hame again,
I cheery on did wander.
I thought upon the banks o’ Coll,
I thought upon my Nancy,
I thought upon the witching smile
That caught my youthful fancy.

At length I reach’d the bonnie glen,
Where early life I sported;
I pass’d the mill, and trysting thorn,
Where Nancy aft I courted:
Wha spied I but my ain dear maid,
Down by her mother’s dwelling!
And turn’d me round to hide the flood
That in my een was swelling.

The ballad is a very beautiful one, and throughout how true to nature! It is alive all over Scotland; that other is dead, or with suspended animation; not because the “Soldier’s Return” is a happy, and “Will and Jean” a miserable story; for the people’s heart is prone to pity, though their eyes are not much given to tears. But the people were told that “Will and Jean” had been written for their sakes, by a wise man made melancholy by the sight of their condition. The upper ranks were sorrowful exceedingly for the lower—all weeping over their wine for them over their whisky, and would not be comforted! For Hector Maeneil informs them that

Maggie’s club, wha could get me light
On some things that should be clear,
Fand ere long the fa’st, and ne night
Clubb’d and gat the Gazetteer.

The lower ranks read the Lamentation, for ever so many thousands were thrust into their hands; but though not insensible of their own infirmities, and willing to confess them, they rose up in indignation against a charge that swept their firesides of all that was most sacredly cherished there, asked who wrote the “Cotter’s Saturday Night?” and declared with one voice, and a loud one, that if they were to

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be bettered by poems, it should be by the poems of their own Robert Burns.

And here we are brought to speak of those satirical compositions which made Burns famous within the bounds of more than one Presbytery, before the world had heard his name. In boyhood and early youth he showed no symptoms of humour—he was no droll—dull even—from constitutional headaches, and heartquakes, and mysteries not to be understood—no laughing face had he—the lovers of mirth saw none of its sparkles in his dark, melancholy looking eyes. In his autobiographical sketch he tells us of no funny or facetious “chap-books;” his earliest reading was of “the tender and true,” the serious or the sublime. But from the first he had been just as susceptible and as observant of the comic as of the tragic—nature had given him a genius as powerful over smiles as tears—but as the sacred source lies deepest, its first inspirations were drawn thence in abstraction and silence, and not till it felt some assurance of its diviner strength did it delight to disport itself among the ludicrous images that, in innumerable varieties of form and colour—all representative of realities—may be seen, when we choose to look at them, mingling with the most solemn or pathetic shows that pass along in our dream of life. You remember his words, “Thus with me began Love and Poesy.” True; they grew together; but for a long time they were almost silent—seldom broke out into song. His earliest love verses but poorly express his love—nature was then too strong within him for art, which then was weak—and young passion, then pure but all-engrossing, was filling his whole soul with poetry that ere long was to find a tongue that would charm the world.

It was in the Humorous, the Comic, the Satirical, that he first tried and proved his strength. Exulting to find that a rush of words was ready at his will—that no sooner flashed his fancies than on the instant they were embodied, he wanted and revelled among the subjects that had always seemed to him the most risible, whatever might be the kind of laughter, simple or compound—pure mirth, or a mixture of mirth and contempt, even of indignation and scorn—mirth still being the chief ingredient that qualified the

whole—and these, as you know, were all included within the “Sanctimonious,” from which Burns believed the sacred to be excluded; but there lay the danger, and there the blame if he transgressed the holy bounds.

His satires were unsparingly directed against certain ministers of the gospel, whose Calvinism he thought was not Christianity; whose characters were to him odious, their persons ridiculous, their manners in the pulpit irreverent, and out of it absurd: and having frequent opportunities of seeing and hearing them in all their glory, he made studies of them *con amore* on the spot, and at home from abundant materials with a master's hand elaborated finished pictures—for some of them are no less—which, when hung out for public inspection in market places, brought the originals before crowds of gazers transported into applause. Was this wicked? Wicked we think too strong a word; but we cannot say that it was not reprehensible, for to all sweeping satire there must be some exception—and exaggeration cannot be truth. Burns by his irregularities had incurred ecclesiastical censure, and it has not unfairly been said that personal spite barbed the sting of his satire. Yet we fear such censure had been but too lightly regarded by him; and we are disposed to think that his ridicule, however blamable on other grounds, was free from malignity, and that his genius for the comic rioted in the pleasure of sympathy and the pride of power. To those who regard the persons he thus satirized as truly belonging to the old Covenanters, and saints of a more ancient time, such satires must seem shameful and sinful; to us who regard “Rumble John” and his brethren in no such light, they appear venial offences, and not so horrible as Hudibrastic. A good many years after Burns's death, in our boyhood we sometimes saw and heard more than one of those worthies, and cannot think his descriptions greatly overcharged. We remember walking one day—unknown to us, a fast-day—in the neighbourhood of an ancient fortress, and hearing a noise to be likened to nothing imaginable on this earth but the bellowing of a buffalo fallen into a trap upon a tiger, which as we came within half a mile of the castle we discerned to be the voice of a pastor engaged in public prayer. His physiognomy was little

less alarming than his voice, and his sermon corresponded with his looks and his lungs—the whole being indeed an extraordinary exhibition of divine worship. We never can think it sinful that Burns should have been humorous on such a pulpiteer; and if we shudder at some of the verses in which he seems yet alive, it is not at the satirist.

"From this time, I began to be known in the country as a maker of rhymes. 'Holy Willie's Prayer' next made its appearance, and alarmed the kirk-session so much, that they held several meetings to look over their spiritual artillery, and see if any of it might be pointed against profane rhymers;" "and to a place among *profane rhymers*," says Mr. Lockhart, in his masterly volume, "the author of this *terrible infliction* had unquestionably established his right." Sir Walter speaks of it as "a piece of satire *more exquisitely severe* than any which Burns ever afterwards wrote, but *unfortunately cast in a form too daringly profane* to be received into Dr. Currie's collection." We have no wish to say one word in opposition to the sentence pronounced by such judges; but has Burns here *dared* beyond Milton, Goethe, and Byron? He puts a Prayer to the Almighty into the mouth of one whom he believes to be one of the lowest of blasphemers. In that Prayer are impious supplications couched in shocking terms characteristic of the hypocrite who stands on a familiar footing with his Maker. Milton's blasphemer is a fallen angel, Goethe's a devil, Byron's the first murderer, and Burns's an elder of the kirk. All the four poets are alike guilty, or not guilty—unless there be in the case of one of them something peculiar that lifts him up above the rest, in the case of another something peculiar that leaves him alone a sinner. Let Milton then stand aloof, acquitted of the charge, not because of the grandeur and magnificence of his conception of Satan, but because its high significance cannot be misunderstood by the pious, and that out of the mouths of the dwellers in darkness, as well as of the Sons of the Morning, "he vindicates the ways of God to man." Byron's Cain blasphemes; does Byron? Many have thought so—for they saw, or seemed to see, in the character of the Cursed, as it glooms in soliloquies that are poetically sublime, some dark intention in its

delineator to inspire doubts of the justice of the Almighty One who inhabiteth eternity. Goethe in the "Prologue in Heaven" brings Mephistopheles face to face with God. But Goethe devoted many years to "his great poem Faust," and in it he too, as many of the wise and good believe, strove to show rising out of the blackness of darkness the attributes of Him whose eyes are too pure to behold iniquity. Be it even so; then, why blame Burns? You cannot justly do so, on account of the "daring profane form" in which "Holy Willie's Prayer" is cast, without utterly reproaching the "Prologue in Heaven."

Of the "Holy Fair" few have spoken with any very serious reprehension. Dr. Blair was so much taken with it that he suggested a well-known emendation—and for our own part we have no hesitation in saying, that we see no reason to lament that it should have been written by the writer of the "Cotter's Saturday Night." The title of the poem was no profane thought of his—it had arisen long before among the people themselves, and expressed the prevalent opinion respecting the use and wont that profaned the solemnization of the most awful of all religious rites. In many places, and in none more than in Mauchline, the administration of the Sacrament was hedged round about by the self-same practices that mark the character and make the enjoyment of a rural fair-day. Nobody doubts that in the midst of them all sat hundreds of pious people whose whole hearts and souls were in the divine service. Nobody doubts that even among those who took part in the open or hardly concealed indecencies which custom could never make harmless, though it made many insensible to their grossness, not a few were now and then visited with devout thoughts; nay, that some, in spite of their improprieties, which fell off from them unawares, or were by an act of pious volition dismissed, were privileged to partake of the communion elements. Nobody supposes that the heart of such an assemblage was to be judged from its outside—that there was no composed depth beneath that restless surface. But everybody knows that there was fatal desecration of the spirit that should have reigned there, and that the thoughts of this world were paramount at a time and place set apart, under sanctions and denunciations the

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We believe, then, that Burns was not guilty in this poem of any intentional irreverence toward the public ordinances of religion. It does not, in our opinion, afford any reason for supposing that he was among the number of those who regard such ordinances as of little or no avail, because they do not always exemplify the reverence which becomes men in the act of communing with their God. Such is the constitution of human nature that there are too many moments in the very article of these solemn occasions when the hearts of men are a prey to all their wonted cares and follies; and this shortcoming in the whole solemnity robs it to many a delicate and well-disposed, but not thoroughly instructed imagination, of all attraction. But there must be a worship by communities as well as by individuals; for in the regards of Providence, communities appear to have a personality as well as individuals; and how shall the worship of communities be conducted, but by forms and ceremonies, which, as they occur at stated times, whatever be the present frame of men's minds, must be often gone through with coldness. If those persons would duly consider the necessity of such ordinances, and their use in the conservation of religion, they would hold them sacred, in spite of the levity and hypocrisy that too often accompany their observance, nor would they wonder to see among the worshippers an unsuspected attention to the things of this world. But there was far more than this in the desecration which called for "the Holy Fair" from Burns. A divine ordinance had through unhallowed custom been overlaid by abuses, if not to the extinction, assuredly to the suppression, in numerous communicants, of the religious spirit essential to its efficacy; and in that fact we have to look for a defence of the audacity of his sarcasm; we are to believe that the Poet felt strong in the possession of a reverence far greater than that which he beheld, and in the conviction that nothing which he treated with levity could be otherwise than displeasing in the eye of God. We are far from seeking to place him, on this occasion, by the side of those men who, "strong in hatred of idolatry," become religious reformers, and while purifying Faith, unsparingly shat-

tered Forms, not without violence to the cherished emotions of many pious hearts. Yet their wit too was often aimed at faulty things standing in close connection with solemnities which wit cannot approach without danger. Could such scenes as those against which Burns directed the battery of his ridicule be *endured now*? Would they not be felt to be most *profane*? And may we not attribute the change in some measure to the Comic Muse?¹

Burns did not need to have subjects for poetry pointed out and enumerated to him, latent or patent in Scottish Life, as was considerably done in a series of dullish verses by that excellent person, Mr. Telford, Civil Engineer. Why, it has been asked, did he not compose a Sacred Poem on the administration of the Sacrament of our Lord's Last Supper? The answer is—how could he with such scenes before his eyes? Was he to shut them, and to describe it as if such scenes were not? Was he to introduce them, and give us a poem of a mixed kind, faithful to the truth? From such profanation his genius was guarded by his sense of religion, which though defective was fervent, and not unaccompanied with awe. Observe in what he has written, how he keeps aloof from the Communion Table. Not for one moment does he in thought enter the doors of the House of God. There is a total separation between the outer scene and the inner sanctuary—the administration of the sacrament is removed out of all those desecrating circumstances, and left to the imagination of the religious mind—by his silence. Would a great painter have dared to give us a picture of it? Harvey has painted, simply and sublimely, a "Hill Sacrament." But there all is solemn in the light of expiring day; the peace that passeth all understanding reposes on the heads of all the communicants; and in a spot sheltered from the persecutor by the solitude of sympathizing nature, the humble and the

¹ [The picture given in Burns's "Holy Fair" coincides wonderfully with a scene of the same kind vividly portrayed in prose, in a pamphlet—which doubtless the poet had seen—bearing date 1759, and purporting to be "A letter from a Blacksmith to the Ministers and Elders of the Church of Scotland, in which the manner of public worship in that church is considered," &c. So that Burns was not the first to draw attention to the improprieties attending such celebrations.]

contrite, in a ritual hallowed by their pious forefathers, draw near at his bidding to their Redeemer.

We must now return to Burns himself, but cannot allow him to leave Ellisland without dwelling for a little while longer on the happy life he led for three years and more on that pleasant farm. Now and then you hear him low-spirited in his letters, but generally cheerful; and though his affairs were not very prosperous, there was comfort in his household. There was peace and plenty; for Mrs. Burns was a good manager, and he was not a bad one; and one way and another the family enjoyed an honest livelihood. The house had been decently furnished, the farm well stocked; and they wanted nothing to satisfy their sober wishes. Three years after marriage, Burns, with his Jean at his side, writes to Mrs. Dunlop, "as fine a figure and face we can produce as any rank of life whatever; rustic, native grace; unaffected modesty, and unsullied purity; nature's mother-wit, and the rudiments of taste; a simplicity of soul, unsuspecting of, because unacquainted with, the ways of a selfish, interested, disingenuous world; and the dearest charm of all the rest, a yielding sweetness of disposition, and a most generous warmth of heart, grateful for love on our part, and ardently glowing with a more than equal return; these, with a healthy frame, a sound, vigorous constitution, which your higher ranks can scarcely ever hope to enjoy, are the charms of lovely woman in my humble walk of life." Josiah Walker, however, writing many years after, expresses his belief that Burns did not love his wife. "A discerning reader will perceive," says he, "that the letters in which he announces his marriage are written in that state, when the mind is pained by reflection on an unwelcome step; and finds relief to itself by seeking arguments to justify the deed, and lessen its disadvantages in the opinion of others. But the greater the change which the taste of Burns had undergone, and the more his hopes of pleasure must in consequence have been diminished, from rendering Miss Armour his only female companion, the more credit does he deserve for that rectitude of resolution, which prompted him to fulfil what he considered as an engagement, and to act as a necessary duty prescribed. We may be at the

same time permitted to lament the necessity which he had thus incurred. A marriage, from a sentiment of duty, may by circumstances be rendered indispensable; but as it is undeniably a duty, not to be accomplished by any temporary exertion, however great, but calling for a renewal of effort every year, every day, and every hour, it is putting the strength and constancy of our principles to the most severe and hazardous trial. Had Burns completed his marriage, before perceiving the interest which he had the power of creating in females, whose accomplishments of mind and manners Jean could never hope to equal: or had his duty and his pride permitted his alliance with one of that superior class, many of his subsequent deviations from sobriety and happiness might probably have been prevented. It was no fault of Mrs. Burns, that she was unable, from her education, to furnish what had grown, since the period of their first acquaintance, one of the poet's most exquisite enjoyments; and if a daily vacuity of interest at home exhausted his patience, and led him abroad in quest of exercise for the activity of his mind, those who can place themselves in a similar situation will not be inclined to judge too severely of his error."¹ Mrs. Burns, you know, was alive when this philosophical stuff was published, and she lived for more than twenty years after it, as exemplary a widow as she had been a wife. Its gross indelicacy—say rather wanton insult to all the feelings of a woman, is abhorrent to all the feelings of a man, and shows the monk. And we have quoted it now that you may see what vile liberties respectable libellers were long wont to take with Burns and all that belonged to him—because he was a Gauger. Who would have dared to write thus of the wife and widow of a—*Gentleman*—of one who was a *Lady*? Not Josiah Walker. Yet it passed for years unreprieved—the "Life" which contains it still circulates, and seems to be in some repute—and Josiah Walker on another occasion is cited to the rescue by George Thomson as a champion and vindicator of the truth. The insolent eulogist dared to say that Robert Burns in marrying Jean Armour "repaired seduction by the most precious sacrifice, short of life, which one human being can

¹ Life of Burns, by Josiah Walker, prefixed to Morison's edition of the poet's works, 1811.

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make to another!" To her, in express terms, he attributes her husband's misfortunes and misdoings—to her who soothed his sorrows, forgave his sins, inspired his songs, cheered his heart, blest his bed, educated his children, revered his memory, and held sacred his dust.

What do you think was, according to this biographer, the chief cause of the blameable life Burns led at Ellisland? *He knew not what to do with himself!* "When not occupied in the fields, *his time must have hung heavy on his hands!*" Just picture to yourself Burns peevishly pacing the "half-parlour half-kitchen" floor, with his hands in his breeches pockets, tormenting his dull brain to invent some employment by which he might be enabled to resist the temptation of going to bed in the forenoon in his clothes! But how is this? "When not occupied in the fields, his time must have hung heavy on his hands; *for we are not to infer*, from the literary eminence of Burns, that, like a person regularly trained to studious habits, he could render himself by study independent of society. *He could read and write* when occasion prompted; but he could not, like a professional scholar, become so interested in a daily course of lettered industry, as to find company an interruption rather than a relief." We cheerfully admit that Burns was not engaged at Ellisland on a History of the World. He had not sufficient books. Besides, he had to ride, in good smug-gling weather, two hundred miles a week. But we cannot admit that "to banish dejection, and to fill his vacant hours, it is not surprising that he should have resorted to such associates as his new neighbourhood, or the inns upon the road to Ayrshire could afford; and if these happened to be of a low description, that his constant ambition to render himself an important and interesting figure in every society, made him suit his conduct and conversation to their taste." When not on duty, the Exciseman was to be found at home like other farmers, and when not "occupied in the fields" with farm work, he might be seen playing with Sir William Wallace and other Scottish heroes in miniature, two or three pet sheep of the quadruped breed sharing in the vagaries of the bipeds; or striding along the Scaur with his Whangee rod in his fist, with which, had time hung heavy, he would have cracked the skull

of Old Chronos; or sitting on a divot-dyke with the ghost of Tam o' Shanter, Captain Henderson, and the Earl of Glencairn; or, so it is recorded, "on a rock projecting into the Nith (which we have looked for in vain) employed in angling, with a cap made of a fox's skin on his head, a loose greatcoat fixed round him by a belt, from which depended an enormous Highland broadsword;" or with his legs under the fir, with the famous Black Bow! sending up a Scotch mist in which were visible the wigs of two orthodox English clergymen, "to whose tastes his constant ambition to render himself an important and interesting figure in every society, made him suit his conduct and conversation;"—in such situations might Josiah Walker have stumbled upon Burns, and perhaps met with his own friend, "a clergyman from the south of England, who, on his return, talked with rapture of his reception, and of all that he had seen and heard in the cottage of Ellisland," or with Ramsay of Oughtertyre, who was so delighted "with Burns's *uxor Sabina qualis* and the poet's modest mansion, so unlike the habitation of ordinary rustics, the very evening the Bard suddenly bounced in upon us, and said as he entered, 'I come, to use the words of Shakspeare, *steved in haste*,'" and in a little while, such was the force and versatility of his genius, he made the tears run down Mr. S——'s [Dr. Stewart of Luss] cheeks, albeit unused to the poetic strain;" or who knows but the pedestrian might have found the poet engaged in religious exercises under the sylvan shade? For did he not write to Mrs. Dunlop, "I own myself so little of a Presbyterian, that I approve of set times and seasons of more than ordinary acts of devotion, for breaking in on that habituated routine of life and thought, which is so apt to reduce our existence to a kind of instinct, or even sometimes, and with some minds, to a state very little superior to mere machinery. This day (New-year-day morning); the first Sunday of May; a breezy, blue-skyed noon some time about the beginning, and a hoary morning and calm sunny day about the end, of autumn; these, time out of mind, have been with me a kind of holidays." Finally, Josiah might have made his salaam to the Exciseman just as he was folding up that letter in which he says, "We know nothing, or next to nothing, of the

substance or structure of our souls, so cannot account for those seeming caprices in them, that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favourite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain-daisy, the hare-bell, the fox-glove, 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 grey 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 woe beyond death and the grave."¹

Burns, however, found that an active gauger, with ten parishes to look after, could not be a successful farmer; and looking forward to promotion in the Excise, he gave up his lease, and on his appointment to another district removed into Dumfries. The greater part of his small capital had been sunk or scattered on the somewhat stony soil of Ellisland; but with his library and furniture—his wife and his children—his and their wearing apparel—a trifle in ready money—no debt—youth, health, and hope, and a salary of seventy pounds, he did not think himself poor. Such provision, he said, was luxury to what either he or his better-half had been born to—and the Flitting from Ellisland, accompanied as it was with the regrets and respect of the neighbourhood, displayed on the whole a cheerful cavalcade.

It is remarked by Mr. Lockhart that Burns's "four principal biographers, Heron, Currie, Walker, and Irving, concur in the general statement that his moral course, from the time when he settled in Dumfries, was downwards."

¹ Letter to Mrs. Dunlop, 1st Jan. 1789. See note to Lockhart's Life, vol. i. p. 90.

Mr. Lockhart has shown that they have one and all committed many serious errors in this "general statement," and we too shall examine it before we conclude. Meanwhile let us direct our attention not to his "moral course," but to the course of his genius. It continued to burn bright as ever, and if the character of the man corresponded in its main features with that of the poet, which we believe it did, its best vindication will be found in a right understanding of the spirit that animated his genius to the last, and gave birth to perhaps its finest effusions—HIS MATCHLESS SONGS.

In his earliest Journal, we find this beautiful passage:—

"There is a noble sublimity, a heart-melting tenderness, in some of these ancient fragments [of Scotch songs or ballads], which show them to be the work of a masterly hand; and it has often given me many a heart-ache to reflect, that such glorious old bards—bards who very probably owed all their talents to native genius, yet have described the exploits of heroes, the pangs of disappointment, and the meltings of love, with such fine strokes of nature—and (O how mortifying to a bard's vanity!) their very names are 'buried 'mongst the wreck of things which were.' O ye illustrious names unknown! who could feel so strongly and describe so well: the last, the meanest of the Muse's train—one who, though far inferior to your flights, yet eyes your path, and with trembling wing would sometimes soar after you—a poor rustic bard, unknown, pays this sympathetic pang to your memory! Some of you tell us, with all the charms of verse, that you have been unfortunate in the world—unfortunate in love: he too has felt the . . . loss of his little fortune, the loss of friends, and, worse than all, the loss of the woman he adored. Like you, all his consolation was his muse: she taught him in rustic measures to complain.—Happy could he have done it with your strength of imagination and flow of verse! May the turf rest lightly on your bones! and may you now enjoy that solace and rest which this world rarely gives to the heart tuned to all the feelings of poesy and love!"

The old nameless Song writers, buried centuries ago in kirk-yards that have themselves perhaps ceased to exist—yet one sees some-

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times lonesome burial-places among the hills, where man's dust continues to be deposited after the house of God has been removed elsewhere—the old nameless Song writers took hold out of their stored hearts of some single thought or remembrance surpassingly sweet at the moment over all others, and instantly words as sweet had being, and breathed themselves forth along with some accorlant melody of the still more olden time;—or when musical and poetical genius happily met together, both alike passion-inspired, then was born another new tune or air soon treasured within a thousand maidens' hearts, and soon flowing from lips that “murmured near the living brooks a music sweeter than their own.” Had boy or virgin faded away in untimely death, and the green mound that covered them, by the working of some secret power far within the heart, suddenly risen to fancy's eye, and then as suddenly sunk away into oblivion with all the wavering burial-place? Then was framed dirge, hymn, elegy, that, long after the mourned and the mourner were forgotten, continued to wail and lament up and down all the vales of Scotland—for what vale is unvisited by such sorrow—in one same monotonous melancholy air, varied only as each separate singer had her heart touched, and her face saddened, with fainter or stronger shade of pity or grief!—Had some great battle been lost and won, and to the shepherd on the braes had a faint and far off sound seemed on a sudden to touch the horizon like the echo of a trumpet? Then had some ballad its birth, heroic yet with dying falls, for the singer wept, even as his heart burned within him, over the princely head prostrated with all its plumes, haply near the lowly woodsman, whose horn had often startled the deer as together they trode the forest-chase, lying humble in death by his young lord's feet!—O, blue-eyed maiden, even more beloved than beautiful! how couldst thou ever find heart to desert thy minstrel, who for thy sake would have died without one sigh given to the disappearing happiness of sky and earth—and, witched by some evil spell, how couldst thou follow an outlaw to foreign lands, to find, alas! some day a burial in the great deep? Thus was enchaind in sounds the complaint of disappointed, defrauded, and despairing passion,

and another air filled the eyes of our Scottish maidens with a new luxury of tears—a low flat tune, surcharged throughout with one groan-like sigh, and acknowledged, even by the gayest heart, to be indeed the language of an incurable grief!—Or flashed the lover's raptured hour across the brain—yet an hour, in all its rapture, calm as the summer sea—or the level summit of a far flushing forest asleep in sunshine, when there is not a breath in heaven? Then thoughts that breathe, and words that burn—and, in that wedded verse and music, you feel that “love is heaven, and heaven is love!”—But affectionate, sober, sedate, and solemn, has its sudden and strong inspirations; sudden and strong as those of the wildest and most fiery passion. Hence the old grey-haired poet and musician, sitting haply blind in shade or sunshine, and bethinking him of the days of his youth, while the leading hand of his aged Alice gently touches his arm, and that voice of hers that once lilted like the linnet, is now like that of the dove in its lonely tree, mourns not for the past, but gladdens in the present, and sings a holy song like one of the songs of Zion—for both trust that, ere the sun brings another summer, their feet will be wandering by the waters of eternal life.

Thus haply might arise verse and air of Scotland's old pathetic melodies. And how her light and airy measures?

Streaks of sunshine come dancing down from heaven on the darkest days to bless and beautify the life of poverty dwelling in the wilderness. Labour, as he goes forth at morn from his rustic lodge, feels, to the small bird's twitter, his whole being filled with joy; and, as he quickens his pace to field or wood, breaks into a song.—Care is not always his black companion, but oft, at evening, hour—while innocence lingers half-afraid behind, yet still follows with thoughtful footsteps—Mirth leads him to the circular seat beneath the tree, among whose exterior branches swings, creaking to and fro in the wind, the sign-board teaching friendship by the close grasp of two emblematical hands. And thence the catel and troll, while “laughter holding both his sides,” sheds tears to song and ballad pathetic on the woes of married life, and all the ills that “our flesh is heir to.”—Fair, Rocking,

all the rest of the compositions to which they had long ago belonged, were sometimes adopted by him, almost unconsciously it might seem, in his finest inspirations; and oftener still sounded in his ear like a key-note, on which he pitched his own plaintive tune of the heart, till the voice and language of the old and new days were but as one; and the maiden who sung to herself the song by her wheel, or on the brae, quite lost in a wavering world of phantasy, could not, as she smiled, choose but also weep!

So far from detracting from the originality of his lyrics, this impulse to composition greatly increased it, while it gave to them a more touching character than perhaps ever could have belonged to them, had they not breathed at all of antiquity. Old but not obsolete, a word familiar to the lips of human beings who lived ages ago, but tinged with a slight shade of strangeness as it flows from our own, connects the speaker, or the singer, in a way, though "mournful, yet pleasant to the soul," with past generations, and awakens a love at once more tender and more imaginative towards "auld Scotland." We think, even at times when thus excited, of other Burnses who died without their fame; and, glorying in him and his name, we love his poetry the more deeply for the sake of him whose genius has given our native land a new title of honour among the nations. Assuredly Burns is felt to be a Scotchman *intus et in cute* in all his poetry; but not more even in his "Tam o' Shanter" and "Cotter's Saturday Night," his two longest and most elaborate compositions, than in one and all of his innumerable and inimitable songs, from "Dainty Davie," to "Thou lingering star." We know too that the composition of songs was to him a perfect happiness that continued to the close of life—an inspiration that shot its light and heat, it may be said, within the very borders of his grave.

In his Common-place or Scrap Book, begun in April, 1783, there are many fine reflections on Song-writing, besides that exquisite Invocation—showing how early Burns had studied it as an art. We have often heard some of his most popular songs found fault with for their imperfect rhymes—so imperfect, indeed, as not to be called rhymes at all; and

we acknowledge that we remember the time when we used reluctantly to yield a dissatisfied assent to such objections. Thus in "Highland Mary"—an impassioned strain of eight quatrains—strictly speaking there are no rhymes—*Montgomery, drumlie; tarry, Mary; blossom, bosom; dearie, Mary; tender, asunder; early, Mary; fondly, kindly; dearly, Mary.* It is not enough to say that here, and in other instances, Burns was imitating the manner of some of the old songs—indulging in the same license; for he would not have done so, had he thought it an imperfection. He felt that there must be a reason in nature why this was sometimes so pleasing—why it sometimes gave a grace beyond the reach of art. Those minnesingers had all musical ears, and were right in believing them. Their ears told them that such words as these—meeting on their tympana under the modifying influence of tune, were virtually rhymes; and as such they "slid into their souls." "There is," says Burns in a passage unaccountably omitted by Currie, and first given by Cromek—"a certain irregularity in the old Scotch songs, a redundancy of syllables with respect to the exactness of accent and measure that the English poetry requires, but which glides in, most melodiously, with the respective tunes to which they are set. For instance, the fine old song of '*The mill, mill, O,*' to give it a plain prosaic reading, it halts prodigiously out of measure: on the other hand, the song set to the same tune in Bremner's Collection of Scotch songs, which begins '*To Fanny fair could I impart, &c.*' it is most exact measure; and yet, let them both be sung before a real critic—one above the biases of prejudice, but a thorough judge of nature—how flat and spiritless will the last appear, how trite and lamely methodical, compared with the wild-warbling cadence, the heart-moving melody of the first! This particularly is the case with all those airs which end with a hypermetrical syllable. There is a degree of wild irregularity in many of the compositions and fragments which are daily sung to them by my compeers, the common people—a certain happy arrangement of old Scotch syllables, and yet, very frequently, nothing, not even *like* rhyme, or sameness of jingle, at the ends of the lines. This has made me sometimes imagine that, perhaps, it might

be possible for a Scotch poet, with a nice judicious ear, to set compositions to many of our most favourite airs, particularly the class of them mentioned above, independent of rhyme altogether."¹

It is a common mistake to suppose that the world is indebted for most of Burns's songs to George Thomson. He contributed to that gentleman sixty original songs, and a noble contribution it was; besides hints, suggestions, emendations, and restorations innumerable; but three times as many were written by him, emended or restored, for Johnson's *SCOTS MUSICAL MUSEUM*. He began to send songs to Johnson, with whom he had become intimately acquainted on his first visit to Edinburgh, early in 1787, and continued to send them till within a few days of his death. In November, 1788, he says to Johnson, "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." In the middle of 1796,—he died on the 21st July—he writes from Dumfries to the worthy music-seller in Edinburgh: "How are you, my dear friend, and how comes on your fifth volume? You may probably think that for some time past I have neglected you and your work; but alas, the hand of pain, and sorrow, and care, has these many months lain heavy on me! Personal and domestic affliction have almost entirely banished that alacrity and life with which I used to woo the rural Muse of Scotia. . . . You are a good, worthy, honest fellow, and have a good right to live in this world, because you deserve it. Many a merry meeting this publication has given us, and possibly it may give us more, though, alas! I fear it. This protracting, slow, consuming illness which hangs over me, will, I doubt much, my ever dear friend, arrest my sun before he has well reached his middle career, and will turn over the poet to far other and more important concerns than studying the brilliancy of wit, or the pathos of sentiment. However, *hope* is the cordial of the human heart, and I endeavour to cherish it

¹ Common-place Book,—Sept. 1785.

as well as I can. Let me hear from you as soon as convenient. Your work is a great one, and though now that it is near finished, I see, if we were to begin again, two or three things that might be mended; yet I will venture to prophesy, that to future ages your publication will be the text-book and standard of Scottish song and music. I am ashamed to ask another favour of you, because you have been so very good already; but my wife has a very particular friend of hers, a young lady who sings well, to whom she wishes to present the *Scots Musical Museum*. If you have a spare copy, will you be so obliging as to send it by the very first *Fly*, as I am anxious to have it soon."

Turn from James Johnson and his *Scots Musical Museum* for a moment to George Thomson and his Collection. In September, 1792, Mr. Thomson—who never personally knew Burns—tells him "for some years past I have, with a friend or two, employed many leisure hours in collating and collecting the most favourite of our national melodies for publication;" and says—"We shall esteem your poetical assistance a particular favour; besides *paying any reasonable price* you shall please to demand for it." Burns, spurning the thought of being "paid any reasonable price," closes at once with the proposal, "as the request you make will positively add to my enjoyments in complying with it, I shall enter into your undertaking with all the small portion of abilities I have, strained to their utmost exertion by the impulse of enthusiasm." That enthusiasm for more than three years seldom languished—it was in his heart when his hand could hardly obey its bidding; and on the 12th of July, 1796—shortly after he had written, in the terms you have just seen, to James Johnson for a copy of his *Scots Musical Museum*—he writes thus to George Thomson for five pounds, "After all my boasted independence, curst Necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds. A cruel scoundrel of a haberdasher, to whom I owe an account, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process, and will infallibly put me into jail. Do, for God's sake, send me that sum, and that by return of post. Forgive me this earnestness; but the horrors of a jail have made me half distracted. *I do not ask all this gratuitously; for upon returning health, I*

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herely promise and engage to furnish you with five pounds worth of the neatest song-genius you have seen. . . . FORGIVE, FORGIVE ME!"

Mr. Johnson, no doubt, sent a copy of the *Museum*; but we do not know if the *Fly* arrived before the BIER.¹ Mr. Thomson was prompt; and Dr. Currie, speaking of Burns's refusing to become a weekly contributor to the Poet's Corner in the *Morning Chronicle*, at a guinea a week, says, "Yet he had for several years furnished, and was at that time furnishing, the *Museum* of Johnson with his beautiful lyrics, without fee or reward, and was obstinately refusing all recompense for his assistance to the greater work of Mr. Thomson, which the justice and generosity of that gentleman was pressing upon him." That obstinacy gave way at last, not under the pressure of Mr. Thomson's generosity and justice, but under "the sense of his poverty, and of the approaching distress of his infant family which pressed," says Dr. Currie truly, "on Burns as he lay on the bed of death."

But we are anticipating; and desire at present to see Burns "in glory and in joy." "Whenever I want to be more than ordinary in song—to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs—do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation? *Tout au contraire*. I have a glorious recipe; the very one that for his own use was invented by the divinity of healing and poesy, when erst he piped to the flocks of Admetus. I put myself in the regimen of admiring a fine woman; and in proportion to the adorability of her charms, in proportion you are delighted with my verses. The lightning of her eye is the godhead of Parnassus; and the witchery of her smile, the divinity of Helicon."² We know the weak side of his character—the sin that most easily beset him—that did indeed "stain his name"—and made him for many seasons the prey of remorse. But though it is not allowed to genius to redeem—though it is falsely said, that "the light that leads astray is light from heaven"—and though Burns's transgressions must be judged as those of com-

mon men, and visited with the same moral reprobation—yet surely we may dismiss them with a sigh from our knowledge, for a while, as we feel the charm of the exquisite poetry originating in the inspiration of passion, purified by genius, and congenial with the utmost innocence of the virgin breast.

In his Love-Songs, all that is best in his own being delights to bring itself into communion with all that is best in theirs whom he visions walking before him in beauty. That beauty is made "still more beautiful" in the light of his genius, and the passion it then moves partakes of the same ethereal colour. If love inspired his poetry, poetry inspired his love, and not only inspired but elevated the whole nature of it. If the highest delights of his genius were in the conception and celebration of female loveliness, that trained sensibility was sure to produce extraordinary devotion to the ideal of that loveliness of which innocence is the very soul. If music refine the manners, how much more will it have that effect on him who studies its spirit, as Burns did that of the Scottish songs, in order to marry them to verse. "Until I am complete master of a tune, in my own singing (such as it is), I never can compose for it. My way is: I consider the poetic sentiment correspondent to my idea of the musical expression; then choose my theme; begin one stanza; when that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part of the business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for subjects in nature around me that are in unison and harmony with the cogitations of my fancy, and workings of my bosom; humming every now and then the air with the verses I have framed. When I feel my Muse beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary fireside of my study, and there commit my effusions to paper; swinging at intervals on the hind legs of my elbow chair, by way of calling forth my own critical strictures as my pen goes on. Seriously, this, at home, is almost invariably my way."³ Then we know that his Bonnie Jean was generally in his presence, engaged in house affairs, while he was thus on his inspiring swing, that she was amongst the first to hear each new song recited by her husband, and the first to sing it to him, that he might know if it had been

¹ [Jessie Lewars was the young lady for whom the *Museum* was intended. It duly arrived and was presented to her by the poet, with a poetical inscription dated June 26th, which will be found in vol. iii.]

² Letter to Thomson, 19th October, 1794.

³ Letter to Thomson, September, 1793.

produced to live.¹ He has said, that "musically speaking, conjugal love is an instrument of which the gamut is scanty and confined, but the tones inexpressibly sweet"—that Love, not so confined, "has powers equal to all the intellectual modulations of the human soul." But did not those "tones inexpressibly sweet" often mingle themselves unawares to the Poet with those "intellectual modulations?" And had he not once loved Jean Armour to distraction? His first experiences of the passion of love in its utmost sweetness and bitterness, had been for her sake, and the memories of those years came often of themselves unbidden into the very heart of his songs when his fancy was for the hour enamoured of other beauties.

With a versatility, not compatible perhaps with a capacity for the profoundest emotion, but in his case with extreme tenderness, he could instantly assume, and often on the slightest apparent impulse, some imagined character as completely as if it were his own, and realize its conditions. Or he could imagine himself out of all the circumstances by which his individual life was environed, and to all the emotions arising from that transmigration, give utterance as lively as the language inspired by his communion with his own familiar world. Even when he knew he was dying, he looked in Jessie Lewars' face, whom he loved as a father loves his daughter, and that he might reward her filial tenderness for him who was fast wearing away, by an immortal song, in his affection for her he feigned a hopeless passion, and imagined himself the victim of despair:—

Thou art sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet,
And soft as their parting tear—Jessy!

Although thou maun never be mine,
Although even hope is denied;

¹ [It would appear that while at Ellisland Burns had the advantage of another warbler on whom to try the quality of his lyrics. During one of his visits to Brownhill Inn he was told that a young woman named Christina Kirkpatrick, who lived near at hand, was a delightful singer of his songs. Burns expressed a wish to hear her, and was delighted with the way in which she lifted forth the products of his fancy. She had a voice of great compass, a capital ear, and a heartfelt appreciation of the old national music. Her talents were turned to good account by Burns; the songs that he penned in honour of Deborah Davies, Jean Lorimer, and his other heroines, being subjected by him to the ordeal of Kirsty Kirkpatrick's fine musical taste and rich voice.]

'Tis sweeter for thee despairing,
Than aught in the world beside—Jessy!

It was said by one who during a long life kept saying weighty things—old Hobbes—that "in great differences of persons, the greater have often fallen in love with the meaner; but not contrary." What Gilbert tells us of his brother might seem to corroborate that dictum—"His love rarely settled on persons who were higher than himself, or who had more consequence in life." This, however, could only apply to the early part of his life. Then he had few opportunities of fixing his affections on persons above him; and if he had had, their first risings would have been suppressed by his pride. But his after destination so far levelled the inequality that it was not unnatural to address his devotion to ladies of high degree. He then felt that he could command their benevolence, if not inspire their love; and elated by that consciousness, he feared not to use towards them the language of love, of unbounded passion. He believed, and he was not deceived in the belief, that he could exalt them in their own esteem, by hanging round their proud necks the ornaments of his genius. Therefore, sometimes, he seemed to turn himself away disdainfully from sunburnt bosoms in homespun covering, to pay his vows and adorations to the Queens of Beauty. The devoirs of a poet, whose genius was at their service, have been acceptable to many a high-born dame and damsel, as the submission of a conqueror. Innate superiority made him, in these hours, absolutely unable to comprehend the spirit of society as produced by artificial distinctions, and at all times unwilling to submit to it or pay it homage. "Perfection whisper'd, passing by, Behold the Lass o' Ballochmyle!" and Burns, too proud to change himself into a lord or squire, imagined what happiness might have been his if all those charms had budded and blown within a cottage like "a rose-tree full in bearing."

O, had she been a country maid,
And I the happy country swain,
Thro' sheltered in the lowest shed
That ever rose on Scotland's plain:
Thro' weary winter's wind and rain,
With joy, with rapture, I would toil;
And nightly to my bosom strain
The bonnie lass o' Ballochmyle!

He speaks less passionately of the charms of

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"bonnie Lesley, as she gaed o'er the border,"
for they had not taken him by surprise; he
was prepared to behold a queen, and with his
own hands he placed upon her head the crown.

To see her is to love her,
And love but her for ever;
For Nature made her what she is,
And never made another!

Thou art a queen, fair Lesley,
Thy subjects we, before thee:
Thou art divine, fair Lesley,
The hearts o' men adore thee.

Nay, evil spirits look in her face and almost
become good—while angels love her for her
likeness to themselves, and happy she must
be on earth in the eye of heaven. We know
not much about the "Lovely Davies;" but in
his stanzas she is the very Sovereign of Nature.

Each eye it cheers when she appears,
Like Phœbus in the morning,
When past the shower, and ev'ry flower
The garden is adorning.
As the wretch looks o'er Siberia's shore,
When winter-bound the wave is;
Sae droops our heart when we maun part
Frae charming, lovely Davies.

Her smile's a gift frae 'boon the lift, above sky
That maks us mair than princes;
A scepter'd hand, a king's command,
Is in her darting glances.
The man in arms 'gainst female charms,
Even he her willing slave is;
He hugs his chain, and owns the reign
Of conquering, lovely Davies.

The loveliest of one of the loveliest families
in Scotland he changed into a lowly lassie,
aye working "her mammie's wark," and her
lover into young Robie—who "gaed wi'
Jeanie to the tryste, and dane'd wi' Jeanie on
the down." In imagination he is still himself
the happy man—his loves are short and rap-
turous as his lyrics—and while his constancy
may be complained of, it is impossible to help
admiring the richness of his genius that keeps
for ever bringing fresh tribute to her whom he
happens to adore.

Her voice is the song of the morning,
That wakes thro' the green-spreading grove,
When Phœbus peeps over the mountains,
On music, and pleasure, and love.

That was the voice of one altogether lovely—
a lady elegant and accomplished—and adorn-
ing a higher condition than his own; but
though finer lines were never written, they are

not finer than these four inspired by the pass-
ing by of a young woman from the country, on
the High Street of Dumfries, with her shoes
and stockings in her hand, and her petticoats
frugally yet liberally kilted to her knee.

Her yellow hair, beyond compare,
Comes trickling down her swan-white neck;
And her two eyes, like stars in skies,
Would keep a sinking ship frae wreck.

It may be thought that such poetry is too
high for the people—the common people—
"beyond the reaches of their souls;" but Burns
knew better—and he knew that he who would
be their poet, must put forth all his powers.
There is not a single thought, feeling, or image
in all he ever wrote, that has not been com-
prehended in its full force by thousands and
tens of thousands in the very humblest con-
dition. They could not of themselves have
conceived them—nor given utterance to any
thing resembling them to our ears. How dull
of apprehension! how unlike gods! But let
them be spoken to, and they hear. Their
hearts, delighted with a strange sweet music
which by recognition they understand, are not
satisfied with listening, but yearn to respond;
and the whole land that for many years had
seemed but was not silent, in a few months is
overflowing with songs that had issued from
highest genius it is true, but from the same
source that is daily welling out its waters in
every human breast. The songs that establish
themselves among a people must indeed be
simple—but the simplest feelings are the
deepest, and once that they have received
adequate expression, then they die not—but
live for ever.

Many of his Love-songs are, as they ought
to be, untinged with earthly desire, and some
of these are about the most beautiful of any—
as

Wilt thou be my dearie?
When sorrow wrings thy gentle heart,
Wilt thou let me cheer thee?
By the treasure of my soul,
That's the love I bear thee!
I swear and vow that only thou
Shall ever be my dearie.
Only thou, I swear and vow,
Shall ever be my dearie.

Lassie, say thou lo'es me;
Or if thou wilt na be my ain
Say na thou'lt refuse me:
If it winna, canna be,

Thou for thine may choose me,
 Let me, lassie, quickly die,
 Trusting that thou lo'es me.
 Lassie, let me quickly die,
 Trusting that thou lo'es me.

Nothing can be more exquisitely tender—passionless from the excess of passion—pure from very despair—love yet hopes for love's confession, though it feels it can be but a word of pity to sweeten death.

In the most exquisite of his Songs, he connects and blends the tenderest and most passionate emotions with all appearances—animate and inanimate; in them all—and in some by a single touch—we are made to feel that we are in the midst of nature. A bird glints by, and we know we are in the woods—a primrose grows up, and we are among the braes—the mere name of a stream brings its banks before us—two or three words leave us our own choice of many waters.

Far dearer to me yon lone glen o' green breckan,
 W' the burn stealing under the lang yellow broom.

It has been thought that the eyes of "the labouring poor" are not very sensible—nay, that they are insensible to scenery—and that the pleasures thence derived are confined to persons of cultivated taste. True that the country girl, as she "lifts her leggin, and hies her away," is thinking more of her lover's face and figure—whom she hopes to meet in the evening—than of the trysting tree, or of the holm where the grey hawthorn has been standing for hundreds of years. Yet she knows right well that they are beautiful; and she feels their beauty in the old song she is singing to herself, that at dead of winter recalls the spring time and all the loveliness of the season of leaves. The people know little about painting—how should they?—for unacquainted with the laws of perspective, they cannot see the landscape-picture on which instructed eyes gaze till the imagination beholds a paradise. But the landscapes themselves they do see—and they love to look on them. The ploughman does so, as he "homeward plods his weary way;" the reaper as he looks at what Burns calls his own light—"the reaper's nightly beam, mild chequering through the trees." If it were not so, why should they call it "Bonnie Scotland"—why should they call him "Sweet Robbie Burns?"

In his Songs they think of the flowers as alive, and with hearts: "How blest the flowers that round thee bloom!" In his Songs, the birds they hear singing in common hours with common pleasure, or give them not a thought, without losing their own nature partake of theirs, and shun, share, or mock human passion. He is at once the most accurate and the most poetical of ornithologists. By a felicitous epithet he characterizes each tribe according to song, plumage, habits, or haunts; often introduces them for sake of their own happy selves; oftener as responsive to ours, in the expression of their own joys and griefs.

Oh stay, sweet warbling wood-lark, stay,
 Nor quit for me the trembling spray,
 A napless lover courts thy lay,
 Thy soothing fend complaining.

Again, again that tender part,
 That I may catch thy melting art:
 For surely that wad touch her heart,
 Wha kills me w' disdaining.

Say, was thy little mate unkind,
 And heard thee as the careless wind?
 Oh, nocht but love and sorrow join'd,
 Sic notes o' woe could waken.

Thou tells o' never-ending care;
 O' speechless grief, and dark despair;
 For pity's sake, sweet bird, nae mair!
 Or my poor heart is broken!

Who was Jeany Cruikshank? Only child "of my worthy friend, Mr. William Cruikshank of the High School, Edinburgh." Where did she live? On a floor at the top of a *common stair*, now marked No. 30, in James's Square. Burns lived for some time with her father—his room being one which has a window looking out from the gable of the house upon the green behind the Register Office. There was little on that green to look at—perhaps "a washing" laid out to dry. But the poet saw a vision—and many a maiden now often sees it too—whose face may be of the coarsest, and her hair not of the finest—but who, in spite of all that, strange to say, has an imagination and a heart.

A rose-bud by my early walk,
 Adown a corn-inclosed hawk, a path in a cornfield
 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,
Among the fresh green leaves bedew'd,
Awake the early morning.

So thou, dear bird, young Jeanie fair!
On trembling string, or vocal air,
Shall sweetly pay the tender care

That tends thy early morning.
So thou, sweet rose-bud, young and gay,
Shalt beauteous blaze upon the day,
And bless the parent's evening ray
That watch'd thy early morning.

Indeed, in all his poetry, what an overflowing of tenderness, pity, and affection towards all living creatures that inhabit the earth, the water, and the air! Of all men that ever lived, Burns was the least of a sentimentalist; he was your true Man of Feeling. He did not preach to Christian people the duty of humanity to animals; he spoke of them in winning words warm from a manliest breast, as his fellow-creatures, and made us feel what we owe. What child could well be cruel to a helpless animal who had read "The Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie"—or "The Two Dogs?" "The Auld Farmer's New-years'-day Address to his Auld Mare Maggie" has—we know—humanized the heart of a Gilmerton carter. "Not a mouse stirring," are gentle words at that hour from Shakspeare—when thinking of the ghost of a king; and he would have loved brother Burns for saying—"What makes thee startle at me, thy poor earth-born companion, *an' fellow-mortal!*" Safe-housed at fall of a stormy winter night, of whom does the poet think, along with the unfortunate, the erring, and the guilty of his own race?

List'n'ng the doors an' winnocks rattle, windows
I thought me on the curle cattle, shivering
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle short contest
O' winter war,
And thro' the drift, deep-lairing sprattle, scramble
Beneath a scaur, cliff
Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing, hopping
That, in the merry months o' spring
Delighted me to hear thee sing,

What comes o' thee?
Where wilt thou cower thy chattering wing, shivering
An' close thy ee?

The poet loved the sportsman; but lamenting in fancy "Tam Samson's Death"—he

could not help thinking, that "on his mouldering breast, some spitefu' muirfowl bigs her nest." When at Kirkoswald studying trigonometry, plane and spherical, he sometimes associated with smugglers but never with poachers. You cannot figure to yourself young Robert Burns stealing stoopingly along under cover of a hedge, with a long gun and a lurcher, to get a shot at a hare sitting, and perhaps washing her face with her paws. No trumper ever "coft fur" at Mossiel or Ellisland. He could have joined, had he liked, in the passionate ardour of the rod and the gun, the net and the leister; but he liked rather to think of all those creatures alive and well, "in their native element." In his love-song to "the charming fillette who overset his trigonometry," and incapacitated him from the taking of the sun's altitude, he says to her, on proposing to take a walk—

Now westlin winds and slaught'ring guns
Bring autumn's pleasant weather;
And the moorcock springs, on whirling wings,
Among the blooming heather.

The partridge loves the fruitful fells;
The jlover loves the mountains;
The woodcock hunts the lonely dells;
The searing hern the fountains;
Thro' lofty groves the cushat roves,
The path of man to shun it;
The hazel bush o'erhangs the thrush,
The spreading thorn the linnet.

Thus ev'ry kind their pleasure find,
The savage and the tender;
Some social join, and leagues combine;
Some solitary wander:
Avaunt, away, the cruel sway!
Tyrannic man's dominion;
The sportsman's joy, the murthering cry,
The flutt'ring, gory pinion!

Burns Water, in his Humble Petition to the Noble Duke of Athole, prays that his banks may be made sylvan, that shepherd, lover and bard may enjoy the shades; but chiefly for sake of the inferior creatures.

Delighted doubly then, my Lord,
You'll wander on my banks,
And listen many a grateful bird
Return you tuneful thanks.

The sober laverock—the gowdspink gay—the strong blackbird—the clear lintwhite—the mavis mild and mellow—they will all sing "God bless the Duke." And one mute creature will be more thankful than all the rest—

We believe that the most beautiful of his Songs are dearest to the people, and these are the passionate and the pathetic; but there are some connected in one way or other with the tender passion, great favourites too, from the light and lively up to the humorous and comic—yet among the broadest of that class there is seldom any coarseness—indeecency never—vulgar you may call some of them, if you please; they were not intended to be *genteel*.¹

Flirts and coquettes of both sexes are of every rank; in humble life the saucy and scornful toss their heads full high, or “go by like stourie;” “for sake o’ gowd she left me” is a complaint heard in all circles; “although the night be ne’er sae wet, and he be ne’er sae weary O,” a gentleman of a certain age will make himself ridiculous by dropping on the knees of his corduroy breeches; Auntie would fain become a mother and in order thereunto a wife, and waylays a hobblethoy; daughters, the most filial, think nothing of breaking their mothers’ hearts as their grandmothers’ were broken before them; innocents, with no other teaching but that of nature, in the conduct of intrigues in which verily there is neither shame nor sorrow, become systematic and consummate hypocrites not worthy to live—single; despairing swains are saved from suicide by peals of laughter from those for whom they fain would die, and so get noosed;—and surely here is a field—indicated and no more—wide enough for the Scottish Comic Muse, and would you know how productive to the hand of genius you have but to read Burns.

In one of his letters he says, “If I could, and I believe I do it as far as I can, I would wipe away all tears from all eyes.” His nature was indeed humane; and the tendernesses and kindlinesses apparent in every page of his poetry, and most of all in his Songs, cannot but have a humanizing influence on all those classes exposed by the necessities of their condition to many causes for ever at work to harden or shut up the heart. Burns does not keep continually holding up to them the evils of their lot, continually calling on them to endure or to redress; but while he stands up for his Order, its virtues and its rights, and

has bolts to hurl at the oppressor, his delight is to inspire contentment. In that solemn—“Dirge,”—a spiritual being, suddenly spied in the gloom, seems an Apparition, made sage by sufferings in the flesh, sent to instruct us and all who breathe that “Man was made to Mourn.”

Many and sharp the num’rons ills
Inwoven with our frame!
More pointed still we make ourselves
Regret, remorse, and shame!
And man, whose heaven-erected face
The smiles of love adorn,
Man’s inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn

See yonder poor o’erlaboured wight,
So abject, mean, and vile,
Who begs a brother of the earth
To give him leave to toil;
And see his lordly fellow-worm
The poor petition spurn,
Unmindful, tho’ a weeping wife
And helpless offspring mourn

But we shall suppose that “brother of the earth” rotten, and forgotten by the “bold peasantry their country’s pride,” who work without leave from worms. At his work we think we hear a stalwart tiller of the soil humming what must be a verse of Burns.

Is there for honest Poverty

That hings his head, and a’ that?
The coward-slave, we pass him by,
We dare be poor for a’ that!

What tho’ on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hoddin grey, and a’ that; coarse woollen cloth
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
A man’s a man for a’ that!

Then let us pray that come it may—

As come it will for a’ that—
That sense and worth, o’er a’ the earth.

May bear the gree, and a’ that! supremacy
For a’ that, and a’ that,
It’s coming yet for a’ that,
That man to man, the world o’er,
Shall brothers be for a’ that!

A spirit of Independence reigned alike in the Genius and the Character of Burns. And what is it but a strong sense of what is due to Worth apart altogether from the distinctions of society—the vindication of that Worth being what he felt to be the most honoured call upon himself in life? That sense once violated is destroyed, and therefore he guarded it as a sacred thing—only less sacred than Conscience. Yet it

¹ [Professor Wilson was probably not aware that Burns did write indecent songs, *sub rosa*, and for the perusal of special friends.]

belongs to Conscience, and is the prerogative of Man as Man. Sometimes it may seem as if he watched it with jealousy, and in jealousy there is always weakness, because there is fear. But it was not so; he felt assured that his footing was firm and that his back was on a rock. No blast could blow, no air could beguile him from the position he had taken up with his whole soul in "its pride of place." His words were justified by his actions, and his actions truly told his thoughts; his were a bold heart, a bold hand, and a bold tongue, for in the nobility of his nature he knew that though born and bred in a hovel he was the equal of the highest in the land; as he was—and no more—of the lowest, so that they too were MEN. For hear him speak—"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 of every thing dishonest, and the same scorn at every thing 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?"¹ He was indeed privileged to write that "Inscription for an Altar to Independence."

Thou of an independent mind,
With soul resolv'd, with soul resign'd;
Prepar'd Power's proudest frown to brave,
Who wilt not be, nor have a slave;
Virtue alone who dost revere,
Thy own reproach alone dost fear,
Approach this shrine, and worship here.

Scotland's adventurous sons are now as proud of this moral feature of his poetry as of all the pictures it contains of their native country. Bound up in one volume it is the *Manual of Independence*. Were they not possessed of the same spirit, they would be ashamed to open it; but what they wear they win, what they eat they earn, and if frugal they be—and that is the right word—it is that on their return they may build a house on the site of their father's hut, and, proud to remember that he was poor, live so as to deserve the blessings of the children of them who walked

¹ Letter to Margaret Chalmers, 16th Sept. 1788.

with them to daily labour on what was then no better than a wilderness, but has now been made to blossom like the rose. Ebenezer Elliot is no flatterer—and he said to a hundred and twenty Scotsmen in Sheffield, met to celebrate the birthday of Burns—

Stern Mother of the deathless dead!
Where stands a Scot, a freeman stands;
Self-stayed, if poor—self-clothed—self-fed;
Mind-mighty in all lands.

No wicked plunder need thy sons,
To save the wretch whom mercy spurns;
No classic lore thy little ones,
Who find a Bard in Burns.

Their path tho' dark, they may not miss;
Secure they tread on danger's brink;
They say "this shall be" and it is:
For ere they act, they think.

There are, it is true, some passages in his poetry, and more in his letters, in which this Spirit of Independence partakes too much of pride, and expresses itself in anger and scorn. These, however, were but passing moods, and he did not love to cherish them; no great blame had they been more frequent and permanent—for his noble nature was exposed to many causes of such irritation, but it triumphed over them all. A few indignant flashes broke out against the littleness of the great; but nothing so paltry as personal pique inspired him with feelings of hostility towards the highest orders. His was an imagination that clothed high rank with that dignity which some of the degenerate descendants of old houses had forgotten; and whenever true noblemen "reverenced the lyre," and grasped the hand of the peasant who had received it from nature as his patrimony, Burns felt it to be no wise inconsistent with the stubbornest independence that ever supported a son of the soil in his struggles with necessity, reverently to doff his bonnet, and bow his head in their presence with a proud humility. Jeffrey did himself honour by acknowledging that he had been at first misled by occasional splenetic passages, in his estimation of Burns's character, and by afterwards joining, in eloquent terms, in the praise bestowed by other kindred spirits on the dignity of its independence. "It is observed," says Campbell with his usual felicity, "that he boasts too much of his independence; but in reality this boast is neither frequent

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nor obtrusive; and it is in itself the expression of a noble and laudable feeling. So far from calling up disagreeable recollections of rusticity, his sentiments triumph, by their natural energy, over those false and artificial distinctions which the mind is but too apt to form in allotting its sympathies to the sensibilities of the rich and poor. He carries us into the humble scenes of life, not to make us dole out our tribute of charitable compassion to paupers and cottagers, but to make us feel with them on equal terms, to make us enter into their passions and interests, and share our hearts with them as brothers and sisters of the human species."

In nothing else is the sincerity of his soul more apparent than in his Friendships. All who had ever been kind to him he loved till the last. It mattered not to him what was their rank or condition—he returned, and more than returned, their affection—he was, with regard to such ties, indeed of the family of the faithful. The consciousness of his infinite superiority to the common race of men, and of his own fame and glory as a Poet, never for a moment made him forget the humble companions of his obscure life, or regard with a haughty eye any face that had ever worn towards him an expression of benevolence. The Smiths, the Muirs, the Browns, and the Parkers, were to him as the Aikens, the Ballantines, the Hamiltons, the Cunninghams, and the Ainslies—these as the Stewarts, the Gregorays, the Blairs, and the Mackenzies—these again as the Grahams and the Erskines—and these as the Daers, the Glencairns, and the other men of rank who were kind to him—all were his friends—his benefactors. His heart expanded towards them all, and throbbed with gratitude. His eldest son—and he has much of his father's intellectual power—bears his own Christian name—the others are *James Glencairn*, and *William Nicol*—so called respectively after a nobleman to whom he thought he owed all—and a schoolmaster to whom he owed nothing—yet equally entitled to bestow—or receive that honour.

There is a beautiful passage in his Second Common Place Book, showing how deeply he felt, and how truly he valued, the patronage which the worthy alone can bestow. "What pleasure is in the power of the fortunate and

the happy, by their notice and patronage, to brighten the countenance and glad the heart of depressed youth! I am not so angry with mankind for their deaf economy of the purse: the goods of this world cannot be divided without being lessened—but why be a niggard of that which bestows bliss on a fellow-creature, yet takes nothing from our own means of enjoyment? We wrap ourselves up in the cloak of our own better fortune, and turn away our eyes, lest the wants and woes of our brother-mortals should disturb the selfish apathy of our souls!"¹ What was the amount of all the kindness shown him by the Earl of Glencairn? That excellent nobleman at once saw that he was a great genius,—gave him the hand of friendship—and in conjunction with Sir John Whitefoord got the members of the Caledonian Hunt to subscribe for guinea instead of six shilling copies of his volume.² That was all—and it was well. For that Burns was as grateful as for the preservation of life.

The bridegroom may forget the bride
Was made his wedded wife yestreen;
The monarch may forget the crown
That on his head an hour has been;
The mother may forget the child
That smiles so sweetly on her knee;
But I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
And a' that thou hast done for me!

He went into mourning on the death of his benefactor, and desired to know where he was to be buried, that he might attend the funeral and drop a tear into his grave.

The "Lament for Glencairn" is one of the finest of Elegies. We cannot agree with those critics—some of them of deserved reputation—who have objected to the form in which the poet chose to give expression to his grief. Imagination, touched by human sorrow, loves to idealize; because thereby it purifies, elevates, and ennobles realities, without impairing the pathos belonging to them in nature. Many great poets—nor do we fear now to mention Milton among the number—have in such strains

¹[This passage occurs in a letter to Crauford Taft, 15th Oct. 1790.]

²[So Burns himself said in a letter to Ballantine, but he made a mistake. What the Hunt did was to direct "Mr. Hagart . . . to subscribe for one hundred copies, in their name, for which he should pay to Mr. Burns twenty-five pounds, upon the publication of his book."]

celebrated the beloved dead. They have gone out, along with the object of their desire, from the real living world in which they had been united, and shadowed forth in imagery that bears a high similitude to it, all that was most spiritual in the communion now broken in upon by the mystery of death. So it is in the *Lyceidas*—and so it is in this “Lament.” Burns imagined an aged Bard giving vent to his sorrow for his noble master’s untimely death, among the “fading yellow woods that wav’d o’er Lugar’s winding stream.” That name at once awakens in us the thought of his own dawning genius; and though his head was yet dark as the raven’s wing, and “the locks were bleached white wi’ time” of the Apparition evoked with his wailing harp among “the winds lamenting thro’ their caves,” yet we feel on the instant that the imaginary mourner is one and the same with the real—that the old and the young are inspired with the same passion, and have but one heart. We are taken out of the present time, and placed in one far remote—yet by such removal the personality of the poet, so far from being weakened, is enveloped in a melancholy light that shows it more endearingly to our eyes—the harp of other years sounds with the sorrow that never dies—the words heard are the everlasting language of affection—and is not the object of such lamentation aggrandized by thus being lifted into the domain of poetry?

I’ve seen sae mony changefu’ years,
On earth I am a stranger grown;
I wander in the ways of men,
Alike unknowing and unknown:
Unheard, unpitied, unreliev’d,
I bear alone my lade o’ care,
For silent, low, on beds of dust,
Lie a’ that would my sorrows share.

And last (the sum of a’ my griefs!)
My noble master lies in clay;
THE FLOW’R AMANG OUR BARONS BOLD,
HIS COUNTRY’S PRIDE, HIS COUNTRY’S STAY.

We go along with such a mourner in the exaltation of the character of the mourner!—great must have been the goodness to generate such gratitude—that which would have been felt to be exaggeration, if expressed in a form not thus imaginative, is here brought within our unquestioning sympathy—and we are prepared to return to the event in its reality, with undiminished fervour, when Burns re-appears in

his own character without any disguise, and exclaims—

Awake thy last sad voice, my harp!
The voice of woe and wild despair;
Awake, resound thy latest lay,
Then sleep in silence everma!—
And thou, my last, best, only friend,
That fillest an mutually tomb,
Accept this tribute from the Bard
Thou brought from fortune’s darkest gloom.

In poverty’s low, barren vale,
Thick mists, obscure, involv’d me round;
Though oft I turn’d the wistful eye,
Nae ray of fame was to be found:
Thou found’st me, like the morning sun
That melts the fogs in limpid air,
The friendless bard and rustic song,
Became alike thy fostering care.

The “Elegy on Captain Matthew Henderson”—of whom little or nothing is now known—is a wonderfully fine flight of imagination, but it wants, we think, the deep feeling of the “Lament.” It may be called a Rapture. Burns says, “It is a tribute to a man I loved much;” and in “The Epitaph” which follows it, he draws his character—and a noble one it is—in many points resembling his own. With the exception of the opening and concluding stanzas, the Elegy consists entirely of a supplication to Nature to join with him in lamenting the death of the “ae best fellow e’er was born;” and though to our ears there is something grating in that term, yet the disagreeableness of it is done away by the words immediately following:

Thee, Matthew, Nature’s sel’ shall mourn
By wood and wild,
Where, haply, Pity strays forlorn,
Frae man exil’d.

The poet is no sooner on the wing than he rejoices in his strength of pinion, and with equal ease soars and stoops. We know not where to look, in the whole range of poetry, for an Invocation to the great and fair objects of the external world, so rich and various in imagery, and throughout so sustained; and here again we do not fear to refer to the “*Lyceidas*”—and to say that Robert Burns will stand a comparison with John Milton.

But oh, the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone, and never must return!
Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods, and desert caves,
With wild thyme, and the gadding vine o’ergrown,
And all their echoes mourn:

The willows and the hazel copses green
 Shall now no more be seen
 Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
 As killing as the canker to the rose,
 Or taint-worm to the weanling-herds that graze,
 Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,
 When first the white-thorn blows;
 Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.

Return, Sicilian Muse,
 And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
 Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues.
 Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
 Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
 On whose fresh lap the swart-star sparsely looks,
 Throw hither all your quaint enamell'd eyes,
 That on the green turf suck the honied showers,
 And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
 Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
 The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
 The white pink, and the pansy freak'd with jet,
 The glowing violet,
 The musk-rose, and the well-attir'd woodbine,
 With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
 And every flower that sad embroidery wears:
 Bid amarantus all his beauty shed,
 And daffodillies fill their cups with tears,
 To strew the laureat herse where Lycid lies.

All who know the "Lycidas," know how impossible it is to detach any one single passage from the rest, without marring its beauty of relationship—without depriving it of the charm consisting in the rise and fall—the undulation—in which the whole divine poem now gently and now magnificently fluctuates. But even when thus detached, the poetry of these passages is exquisite—the expression is perfect—consummate art has crowned the conceptions of inspired genius—and shall we dare to set by their side stanzas written by a ploughman? We shall. But first hear Wordsworth. In the "Excursion," the Pedlar says—and the Exciseman corroborates its truth—

The poets in their elegies and hymns
 Lamenting the departed, call the groves;
 They call upon the hills and streams to mourn;
 And senseless rocks; nor idly: for they speak
 In these their invocations with a voice
 Of human passion.

You have heard Milton—hear Burns—

Ye hills, near neighbours o' the starns, stars
 That proudly cock your cresting cairns!
 Ye cliffs, the haunts of sailing eagles, eagles
 Where echo slumbers!
 Come join, ye Nature's sturdiest bairns,
 My wailing numbers!
 Mourn, like grove the enshat kens! wood-pigeon
 Ye hazel shaws and briery dens! wooded dells

Ye burnies, wimplin' down your glens,
 Wl' toddlin' din,
 Or foaming strang, wl' hasty stens,
 Frae Ilan to Ilan.

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Mourn, little harebells o'er the lea;
 Ye stately foxgloves, fair to see,
 Ye woodbines, hanging bonnille
 In scented bow'rs,
 Ye roses on your thorny tree,
 The first o' flow'rs.

At dawn, when ev'ry grassy blade
 Droops with a diamond at his head,
 At ev'n, when beams their fragrance shed,
 I th' rustling gale,
 Ye mankins, whiddin' thro' the glade, hares skipping
 Come join my wail.

Mourn, ye wee songsters o' the wood;
 Ye grouse that crop the heather bud;
 Ye curlews calling thro' a clud;
 Ye whistling plover;
 And mourn, ye whirling pattrick brood; partridge
 He's gane for ever!

Mourn, sooty coots, and speckled teals;
 Ye fisher herons, watching eels;
 Ye duck and drake, wi' airy wheels
 Circling the lake;
 Ye bitterns, till the quagmire reels, roar
 Rair for his sake.

Mourn, clam'ring crails at close o' day,
 'Mang fields o' flow'ring clover gay;
 And when ye wing your annual way
 Frae our cauld shore,
 Tell thae far worlds, wha lies in clay, those
 Wham we deplore.

Ye houlets, frae your ivy bow'r, owls
 In some auld tree, or eldritch tow'r, fear-inspirin'
 What time the moon, wi' silent glow'r, stare
 Sets up her horn,
 Wail thro' the dreary midnight hour
 Till waukrife morn! wakeful

O, rivers, forests, hills, and plains!
 Oft have ye heard my canty strains; cheerful
 But now, what else for me remains
 But tales of woe;
 And frae my een the drapping rains
 Maun ever flow.

Mourn, spring, thou darling of the year!
 Hk cowslip cup shall keep a tear: catch
 Thou, simmer, while each corny spear
 Shoots up its head,
 Thy gay, green, flow'ry tresses shear,
 'Or him that's dead!

Thou, autumn, wi' thy yellow hair,
 In grief thy sallow mantle tear!
 Thou, winter, hurling thro' the air
 The roaring blast,
 Wide o'er the naked world declare
 The worth we've lost!

Mourn him, thou Sun, great source of light !
 Mourn, Empress of the silent night !
 And you, ye twinkling starries, bright,
 My Matthew mourn !
 For thro' your orbs he's ta'en his flight,
 Ne'er to return.

Of all Burns's friends the most efficient was Graham of Fintry. To him he owed Excise-man's *diploma*—settlement as a gauger in the District of Ten Parishes, when he was gudeman at Ellisland—translation as a gauger to Dumfries—support against insidious foes despicable yet not to be despised with rumour at their head—vindication at the Excise Board—*pro loco et tempore* supervisorship—and though he knew not of it, security from dreaded degradation on his death-bed. His first “Epistle to Mr. Graham of Fintry,” is in the style, shall we say it, of Dryden and Pope? It is a noble composition; and these fine, vigorous, rough, and racy lines truly and duly express at once his independence and his gratitude:

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, abash'd 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 timeful 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 injur'd merit !
 Seek not the proofs in private life to find;
 Pity the best of words should be but wind !
 So, to heaven's gates 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, patronize their tinsel lays—
 They persecute you all their future days !
 Ere my poor soul such deep damnation stain,
 My horny fist assume the plough again;
 The piebald jacket let me patch once more;
 On eighteen pence a week I've liv'd before.
 Tho' thanks to Heaven, I dare even that last shift,
 I trust meantime my boon is in thy gift:
 That, plac'd by thee upon the wish'd-for height,
 Where, man and nature fairer in her sight,
 My Muse may imp her wing for some sublimer flight.

Read over again the last three lines! The favour requested was removal from the laborious and extensive district which he surveyed for the Excise at Ellisland to one of smaller dimensions at Dumfries. In another Epistle

he renews the request, and says most affectingly—

I dread thee, Fate, relentless and severe,
 With all a poet's, husband's, father's fear !
 Already one strong hold of hope is lost,
 Glencairn, the truly noble, lies in dust;
 (Fled, like the sun eclips'd as noon appears,
 And left us darkling in a world of tears;)
 Oh! hear my ardent, grateful, selfish pray'r!
 Fintry, my other stay, long bless and spare!
 Thro' a long life his hopes and wishes crown,
 And bright in cloudless skies his sun go down !
 May bliss domestic smooth his private path,
 Give energy to life, and soothe his latest breath,
 With many a filial tear circling the bed of death !

The favour was granted—and in another Epistle was requited with immortal thanks:

I call no goddess to inspire my strains,
 A fabled muse may suit a bard that feigns;
 Friend of my life ! my ardent spirit burns,
 And all the tribute of my heart returns,
 For boons accorded, goodness ever new,
 The gift still dearer, as the giver you.
 Thou orb of day ! thou other paler light !
 And all the other sparkling stars of night;
 If aught that giver from my mind efface,
 If I that giver's bounty e'er disgrace;
 Then roll to me, along your wandering spheres,
 Only to number out a villain's years !

Love, Friendship, Independence, Patriotism—these were the perpetual inspirers of his genius, even when they did not form the theme of his effusions. His religious feelings, his resentment against hypocrisy, and other occasional inspirations, availed only to the occasion on which they appear. But these influence him at all times, even while there is not a whisper about them, and when himself is unconscious of their operation. Every thing most distinctive of his character will be found to appertain to them, whether we regard him as a poet or a man. His patriotism was of the true poetic kind—intense—exclusive; Scotland and the climate of Scotland were in his eyes the dearest to nature—Scotland and the people of Scotland the mother and the children of liberty. In his exaltation, when a thought of foreign land crossed his fancy, he asked, “What are they?” the parents of the tyrant and slave.” This was neither philosophical nor philanthropical; in this Burns was a bigot. And the cosmopolite may well laugh to hear the cottager proclaiming that “the brave Caledonian views with disdain” spicy forests and gold-bubbling fountains with their ore and

their nutmegs—and blessing himself in scant apparel on “cauld Caledonia’s blast on the wave.” The doctrine will not stand the scrutiny of judgment; but with what concentrated power of poetry does the prejudice burst forth? Let all lands have each its own prejudiced, bigoted, patriotic poets, blind and deaf to what lies beyond their own horizon, and thus shall the whole habitable world in due time be glorified. Shakspeare himself was never so happy as when setting up England, in power, in beauty, and in majesty above all the kingdoms of the earth.

In times of national security the feeling of Patriotism among the masses is so quiescent that it seems hardly to exist; in their case national glory or national danger awakens it, and it leaps up armed *cap-a-pie*. But the sacred fire is never extinct in a nation, and in tranquil times it is kept alive in the hearts of those who are called to high functions in the public service—by none is it *heated* so surely as by the poets. It is the identification of individual feeling and interest with those of a community; and so natural to the human soul is this enlarged act of sympathy, that when not called forth by some great pursuit, peril, or success, it applies itself intensely to internal policy; and hence the animosities and rancour of parties, which are evidences, nay forms, though degenerate ones, of the Patriotic Feeling; and this is proved by the fact that on the approach of common danger, party differences in a great measure cease, and are transmuted into the one harmonious elemental Love of our native Land. Burns was said at one time to have been a Jacobin as well as a Jacobite; and it must have required even all his genius to effect such a junction. He certainly wrote some so-so verses to the Tree of Liberty, and like Cowper, Wordsworth, and other great and good men, rejoiced when down fell the Bastille. But when there was a talk of taking our Island, he soon evinced the nature of his affection for the French.

Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?
Then let the lions beware, Sir;
There’s wooden walls upon our seas,
And volunteers on shore, Sir.
The Nith shall run to Corsineon,
And Criffel sink in Solway,
Ere we permit a foreign foe
On British ground to rally.

O let us not, like snarling tykes,
In wrangling be dividet;
Till, slap! come in an unco loun’ foreign
And wi’ a rung decide it. bludgeon
Be Britain still to Britain true,
Amang oursel’s united;
For never but by British hands
Mann British wrangs be righted. must
The kettle o’ the Kirk and State,
Perhaps a clout may fail in’t; patch
But dell a foreign tinkler loun tinkler
Shall ever ea’ a nail in’t. drive
Our fathers’ bluid the kettle bought,
And wha wad dare to spoil it,
By Heavens! the sacrilegious dog
Shall fuel be to boil it.
The wretch that wad a tyrant own,
And the wretch, his true-born brother,
Who would set the *mob* aboon the *throne*, above
May they be damn’d together!
Who will not sing “God save the King,”
Shall hang as high’s the steeple;
But while we sing “God save the King,”
We’ll ne’er forget the People.

These are far from being “elegant” stanzas—there is even a rudeness about them—but ’tis the rudeness of the Scottish Thistle—a paraphrase of “*nemo me impune lacesset*.” The staple of the war-song is home-grown and home-spun. It flouts the air like a banner *not* idly spread, whereon “the ruddy Lion ramps in gold.” Not all the orators of the day, in Parliament or out of it, in all their speeches put together embodied more political wisdom, or appealed with more effective power to the noblest principles of patriotism in the British heart.

“A gentleman of birth and talents”¹ thus writes, in 1835, to Allan Cunningham, “I was at the play in Dumfries, October 1792, the Caledonian Hunt being then in town—the play was ‘As you like it’—Miss Fontenelle, Rosalind—when ‘God save the king’ was called for and sung; we all stood up uncovered, but Burns sat still in the middle of the pit, with his hat on his head. There was a great tumult, with shouts of ‘turn him out, and ‘shame Burns!’ which continued a good while, at last he was either expelled or forced to take off his hat—I *forget which*.” And a lady with whom Robert Chambers once conversed, “remembered being present at the theatre of Dumfries, during the heat of the Revolution, when Burns entered the pit somewhat affected

¹ Mr. C. K. Sharpe of Hoddam.

by liquor. On *God save the king* being struck up, the audience rose as usual, all except the intemperate poet, who cried for *Ca ira*.¹ A tumult was the consequence, and Burns was compelled to leave the house." We cannot believe that Burns ever was guilty of such vulgar insolence—such brutality; nothing else at all like it is recorded of him—and the worthy story-tellers are not at one as to the facts. The gentleman's memory is defective; but had he himself been the offender, surely he would not have forgot whether he had been compelled to take off his hat, or had been jostled, perhaps only kicked out of the play-house. The lady's eyes and ears were sharper—for she saw "Burns enter the pit somewhat affected by liquor," and then heard him "cry for *Ca ira*." By what means he was "compelled to leave the house," she does not say; but as he was "sitting in the middle of the pit" he must have been walked out very gently, so as not to have attracted the attention of the male narrator.² If this public outrage on all decorum, decency, and loyalty, had been perpetrated by Burns, in *October*, one is at a loss to comprehend how, in *December*, he could have been "surprised, confounded, and distracted by Mr. Mitchell, the Collector, telling me that he has received an order for your Board to inquire into my political conduct, and blaming me as a person disaffected to government." The fact we believe to be this—that Burns, whose loyalty was suspected, had been rudely commanded to take off his hat by some vociferous time-servers—just as he was going to do so—that the row arose from his declining to uncover on compulsion, and subsided on his disdainfully dotting his beaver of his own accord. Had he cried for *Ca ira*, he would have deserved dismissal from the Excise; and in his own opinion, translation to another post—"Who will not sing *God save the King*, shall hang as high's the steeple." *The year before*, "during the heat of the French Revolution," Burns composed his grand war-song—"Farewell, thou fair day, thou green earth, and ye skies," and sent it to Mrs. Dunlop with these words: "I have just finished

the following song, which, to a lady, the descendant of Wallace, and many heroes of his truly illustrious line—and herself the mother of several soldiers, needs neither preface nor apology." And *the year after*, he composed "The Poor and Honest Sodger," "which was sung," says Allan Cunningham, "in every cottage, village, and town. Yet the man who wrote it was supposed by the mean and the spiteful to be no well-wisher to his country!" Why, as men, who have any hearts at all, love their parents in any circumstances, so they love their country, be it great or small, poor or wealthy, learned or ignorant, free or enslaved; and even disgrace and degradation will not quench their filial affection to it. But Scotsmen have good reason to be proud of their country; not so much for any particular event, as for her whole historical progress. Particular events, however, are thought of by them as the landmarks of that progress; and these are the great points of history "conspicuous in the nation's eye." Earlier times present "the unconquered Caledonian spear;" later, the unequal but generally victorious struggles with the sister country, issuing in national independence; and later still, the holy devotion of the soul of the people to their own profound religious Faith, and its simple Forms. Would that Burns had pondered more on that warfare! That he had sung its final triumph! But we must be contented with his "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled;" and with repeating after it with him, "So may God defend the cause of truth and liberty, as he did that day! Amen!"

Mr. Syme tells us that Burns composed this ode on the 31st of July, 1793, on the moor road between Kenmure and Gatehouse. "The sky was sympathetic with the wretchedness of the soil; it became lowering and dark—the winds sighed hollow—the lightning gleamed—the thunders rolled. The poet enjoyed the awful scene—he spoke not a word—but seemed wrapt in meditation. In a little while the rain began to fall—it poured in floods upon us. For three hours did the wild elements rumble their bellyful upon our defenceless heads." That is very fine indeed; and "what do you think," asks Mr. Syme, "Burns was about? He was charging the English Army along with Bruce at Bannockburn." On the second of

¹ [Burns seems to refer to this incident in letter to Mr. Graham of Finty, 5th January, 1793.]

² [We have elsewhere remarked that the two stories may refer to different occurrences.]

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August—when the weather was more sedate—on their return from St. Mary's Isle to Dumfries “he was engaged in the same manner;” and it appears from one of his own letters, that he returned to the charge one evening in September. The thoughts, and feelings, and images, came rushing upon him during the storm—they formed themselves into stanzas, like so many awkward squads of raw levies, during the serene state of the atmosphere—and under the harvest moon, firm as the measured tread of marching men, with admirable precision they wheeled into line. This account of the composition of the Ode would seem to clear Mr. Syme from a charge nothing short of falsehood brought against him by Allan Cunningham. Mr. Syme's words are, “I said that, in the midst of the storm, on the wilds of Kennure, Burns was wrapt in meditation. What do you think he was about? He was charging the English Army along with Bruce at Bannockburn. He was engaged in the same manner in our ride home from St. Mary's Isle, and I did not disturb him. *Next day he produced me the Address of Bruce to his troops, and gave me a copy to Dalzell.*” Nothing can be more circumstantial; and if not true, it is a thumper. Allan says, “Two or three plain words, and a stubborn date or two, will go far I fear to raise this pleasing legend into the regions of romance. The Galloway adventure, according to Syme, happened in July; but in the succeeding September, the poet announced the song to Thomson in these words: “There is a tradition which I have met with in many places in Scotland that the air of ‘*Hey tuttie tuttie*’ was Robert Bruce's march at the Battle of Bannockburn. This thought, in my *yesternight's evening walk*, warmed me to a pitch of enthusiasm on the theme of liberty and independence, which I threw into a kind of Scottish ode—that one might suppose to be the royal Scot's address to his heroic followers on that eventful morning. I showed the air to Urban, who was greatly pleased with it, and begged me to make soft verses for it, but I had no idea of giving myself any trouble on the subject till the accidental recollection of that glorious struggle for freedom, associated with the glowing idea of some other struggles of the same nature, not quite so ancient, roused

up my rhyming mania?” Currie, to make the letter agree with the legend, altered *yesternight's evening walk* into “solitary wanderings.” Burns was indeed a remarkable man, and yielded no doubt to strange impulses; but to compose a song “in thunder, lightning, and in rain,” intimates such self-possession as few possess. We can more readily believe that Burns wrote “*yesternight's evening walk*,” to save himself the trouble of entering into any detail of his previous study of the subject, than that Syme told a downright lie. As to composing a song in a thunder storm, Cunningham—who is himself “a remarkable man,” and has composed some songs worthy of being classed with those of Burns,—would find it one of the easiest and pleasantest of feats; for lightning is among the most harmless vagaries of the electric fluid, and in a hilly country, seldom sings but worsted stockings and sheep.

Burns sent the Address in its perfection to George Thomson—recommending it to be set to the old air—“*Hey tuttie tuttie*”—according to Tradition,—who cannot, however, be reasonably expected to speak “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,”—Robert Bruce's march at the battle of Bannockburn. A committee of taste sat on “*Hey tuttie tuttie*,” and pronounced it execrable. “I happened to dine yesterday,” says Mr. Thomson, “with a party of your friends, to whom I read it. They were all charmed with it; entreated me to find out a suitable air for it, and reprobated the idea of giving it a tune so totally devoid of interest or grandeur as ‘*Hey tuttie tuttie*.’ Assuredly your partiality for this tune must arise from the ideas associated in your mind by the tradition concerning it, for I never heard any person—and I have conversed again and again with the greatest enthusiasts for Scottish airs—I say, I never heard any one speak of it as worthy of notice. I have been running over the whole hundred airs—of which I have lately sent you the list—and I think Lewie Gordon is most happily adapted to your ode, at least with a very slight alteration of the fourth line, which I shall presently submit to you. Now the variation I have to suggest upon the last line of each verse, the only line too short for the air, is as follows: Verse 1st, Or to glorious victory. 2d, Chains—chains and slavery. 3rd, Let him, let him

turn and flee. 4th, Let him *bravely* follow me. 5th, But *they shall*, they shall be free. 6th, Let us, *let us* do or die." "Glorious" and "bravely," bad as they are, especially "bravely," which is indeed most bitter bad, might have been borne; but just suppose for a moment, that Robert Bruce had, on addressing his army "on the morning of that eventful day," come over again in that odd way every word he uttered, "chains—chains;" "let him—let him;" "they shall—they shall;" "let us—let us;" why the army would have thought him a Bauldy! Action, unquestionably, is the main point in oratory, and Bruce might have imposed on many by the peculiar style in which it is known he handled his battle-axe, but we do not hesitate to assert that had he stuttered in that style, the English would have won the day. Burns winced sorely, but did what he could to accommodate Lewie Gordon.

"The only line," said Mr. T., "which I dislike in the whole of the song is 'Welcome to your gory bed.' Would not another word be preferable to 'welcome?'" Mr. T. proposed "honour's bed;" but Burns replied, "your idea of 'honour's bed' is, though a beautiful, a hackneyed idea; so if you please we will let the line stand as it is." But Mr. T. was tenacious—"one word more with regard to your heroic ode. I think, with great deference to the poet, that a prudent general would avoid saying any thing to his soldiers which might tend to make death more frightful than it is. 'Gory' presents a disagreeable image to the mind; and to tell them 'Welcome to your gory bed,' seems rather a discouraging address, notwithstanding the alternative which follows. I have shown the song to three friends of excellent taste, and each of them objected to this line, which emboldens me to use the freedom of bringing it again under your notice. I would suggest 'Now prepare for honour's bed, or for glorious victory.'" Quoth Burns grimly—"My ode pleases me so much that I cannot alter it. Your proposed alteration would, in my opinion, make it tame. I have scrutinized it over and over again, and to the world, some way or other, it shall go as it is." That four Scotsmen, taken *seriatim et separatim*—in the martial ardour of their patriotic souls should object to 'Welcome to your gory bed,' from an uncommunicated apprehension common to the

nature of them all, and operating like an instinct, that it was fitted to frighten Robert Bruce's army, and make it take to its heels, leaving the cause of Liberty and Independence to shift for itself, is a coincidence that sets at defiance the doctrine of chances, proves history to be indeed an old almanac, and national character an empty name.

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led;
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to victorie!

Now's the day, and now's the hour;
See the front o' battle lower;
See approach proud Edward's power—
Chains and slavery!

Wha will be a traitor-knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha see base as he a slave?
Let him turn and flee!

Wha for Scotland's king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freeman stand, or freeman fa',
Let him on wi' me!

By oppression's woes and pains!
By your sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free!

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!—
Let us do, or die!

All Scotsmen at home and abroad swear this is the grandest Ode out of the Bible. What if it be not an Ode at all? An Ode, however, let it be; then, wherein lies the power it possesses of stirring up into a devouring fire the *perfervidium ingenium Scotorum*? The two armies suddenly stand before us in order of battle—and in the grim repose preceding the tempest we hear but the voice of Bruce. The whole Scottish army hears it—now standing on their feet—risen from their knees as the Abbot of Inchaffray had blessed them and the Banner of Scotland with its roots of Stone. At the first six words a hollow murmur is in that wood of spears. "Welcome to your gory bed!" a shout that shakes the sky. Hush! hear the king. At *Edward's* name what a yell! "Wha will be a traitor-knave?" Muttering thunder growls reply. The inspired Host in each appeal anticipates the Leader—yet shudders with fresh wrath, as if each reminded it of some intolerable wrong. "Let us do, or die"

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VIEW OF HAWAIIAN COAST
FROM THE "HILL"

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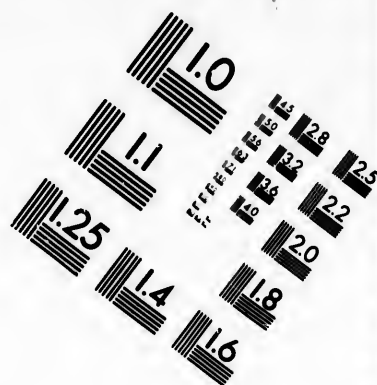
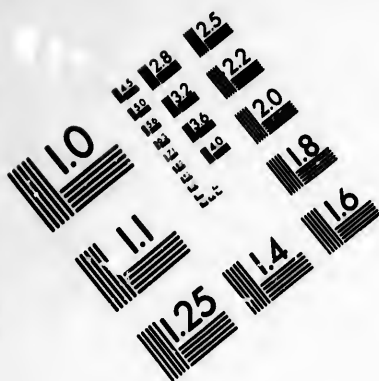
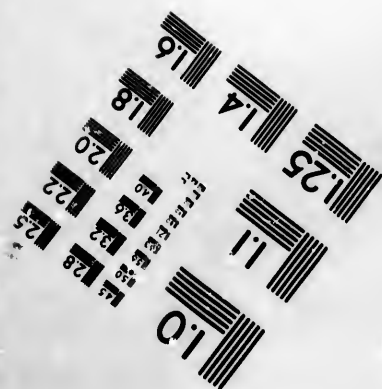
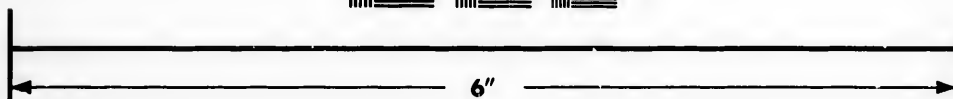
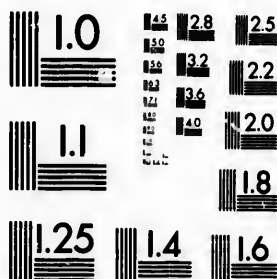
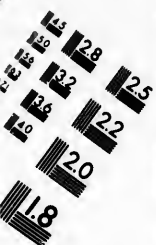


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—the English are overthrown—and Scotland is free.

That is a very Scottish critique indeed—but none the worse for that; so our English friends must forgive it, and be consoled by Flodden. The Ode is sublime. Death and Life at that hour are one and the same to the heroes. So that Scotland but survive, what is breath or blood to them? Their being is in their country's liberty, and with it secured they will live for ever.

Our critique is getting more and more Scottish still; so to rid ourselves of nationality, we request such of you as think we overlaud the Ode to point out one word in it that would be better away. You cannot. Then pray have the goodness to point out one word missing that ought to have been there—please to insert a desiderated stanza. You cannot. Then let the bands of all the Scottish regiments play "Hey tuttie taittie;" and the two Dun-Edins salute one another with a salvo that shall startle the echoes from Berwick-Law to Benmore.

Of the delight with which Burns laboured for Mr. Thomson's Collection, his letters contain some lively description. "You cannot imagine," says he, 7th April, 1793, "how much this business has added to my enjoyments. What with my early attachment to ballads, your book and ballad-making are now as completely my hobby-horse as ever fortification was uncle Toby's; so I'll e'en canter it away till I come to the limit of my race (God grant I may take the right side of the winning post), and then, cheerfully looking back on the honest folks with whom I have been happy, I shall say or sing, 'Sae merry as we a' hae been,' and raising my last looks to the whole human race, the last words of Coila shall be, 'Good night, and joy be wi' you a!'" James Gray was the first, who, independently of every other argument, proved the impossibility of the charges that had too long been suffered to circulate without refutation against Burns's character and conduct during his later years, by pointing to these almost daily effusions of his clear and unclouded genius. His innumerable Letters furnish the same best proof; and when we consider how much of his time was occupied by his professional duties, how much by perpetual

interruption of visitors from all lands, how much by blameless social intercourse with all classes in Dumfries and its neighbourhood, and how frequently he suffered under constitutional ailments affecting the very seat and source of life, we cannot help despising the unreflecting credulity of his biographers who with such *products* before their eyes, such a display of feeling, fancy, imagination, and intellect continually alive and on the alert, could keep one after another, for twenty years, in doleful dissertations deploring over his *habits*—most of them at the close of their wearisome moralizing anxious to huddle all up, that his countrymen might not be obliged to turn away their faces in shame from the last scene in the Tragedy of the Life of Robert Burns.

During the four years Burns lived in Dumfries he was never known for one hour to be negligent of his professional duties. We are but imperfectly acquainted with the details of the business of a gauger, but the calling must be irksome; and he was an active, steady, correct, courageous officer—to be relied on equally in his conduct and his accounts. Josiah Walker, who was himself, if we mistake not, for a good many years in the Customs or Excise at Perth, will not allow him to have been a good gauger. In descanting on the unfortunate circumstances of his situation, he says with a voice of authority, "his superiors were bound to attend to no qualification, but such as was conducive to the benefit of the revenue; and it would have been equally criminal in them to pardon any incorrectness on account of his literary genius, as on account of his dexterity in ploughing. The merchant or attorney who acts for himself alone, is free to overlook some errors of his clerk, for the sake of merits totally unconnected with business; but the Board of Excise had no power to indulge their poetical taste, or their tenderness for him by whom it had been gratified, at the expense of the public. Burns was therefore in a place where he could turn his peculiar endowments to little advantage; and where he could not, without injustice, be preferred to the most obtuse and uninteresting of his brethren, who surpassed him in the humble recommendation of exactness, vigilance, and sobriety. Attention to these circumstances

might have prevented insinuations against the liberality of his superior officers, for showing so little desire to advance him, and so little indulgence to those eccentricities for which the natural temperament of genius could be pleaded. For two years, however, Burns stood sufficiently high in the opinion of the Board, and it is surely by no means improper, that where professional pretensions are nearly balanced, the additional claims of literary talent should be permitted to turn the scale. Such was the reasoning of a particular member of the Board—whose taste and munificence were of corresponding extent, and who saw no injustice in giving some preference to an officer who could write permits as well as any other, and poems much better.”¹ Not for worlds would we say a single syllable derogatory from the merits of the Board of Excise. We respect the character of the defunct; and did we not, still we should have the most delicate regard to the feelings of its descendants, many of whom are probably now prosperous gentlemen. It was a Board that richly deserved, in all its dealings, the utmost eulogies with which the genius and gratitude of Josiah Walker could brighten its green cloth. Most criminal indeed would it have been in such a Board—most wicked and most sinful—“to pardon any incorrectness on account of Burns’s literary genius, as on account of his dexterity in ploughing.” Deeply impressed with a sense—approaching to that of awe—of the responsibility of the Board to its conscience and its country, we feel that it is better late than never, thus to declare before the whole world, A.D. 1840, that from winter, 1791, to summer, 1796, the Board “had no power to indulge their poetical taste, or their tenderness for him by whom it had been gratified, at the expense of the public.” The Board, we doubt not, had a true innate poetical taste, and must have derived a far higher and deeper delight from the poems than the permits of Burns; nay, we are willing to believe that it was itself the author of a volume of poetry, and editor of a literary journal.

But surpassing even Josiah Walker in our veneration of the Board, we ask what has all this to do with the character of Burns? Its desire and its impotency to promote him are

¹Life prefixed to Morison’s edition of Burns, 1811.

granted; but of what incorrectness had Burns been guilty, which it would have been criminal in the Board to pardon? By whom, among the “most obtuse and uninteresting of his brethren,” had he been surpassed “in the humble recommendation of exactness, vigilance, and sobriety?” Not by a single one. Mr. Findlater, who was Burns’s supervisor from his admission into the Excise, and *said by him the night before he died*, says, “In all that time, the superintendence of his behaviour as an officer of the revenue was a branch of my especial province, and it may be supposed I would not be an inattentive observer of the general conduct of a man and a poet so celebrated by his countrymen. In the former capacity . . . he was exemplary in his attention, . . . and was even jealous of the least imputation on his vigilance. . . . It was not till near the latter end of his days that there was any falling off in this respect, and this was amply accounted for in the pressure of disease and accumulating infirmities. . . . I will farther avow that I never saw him, which was very frequently while he lived at Ellisland, and still more so, almost every day, after he removed to Dumfries, but in hours of business he was quite himself, and capable of discharging the duties of his office; nor was he ever known to drink by himself or seen to indulge in the use of liquor in a forenoon. . . . I have seen Burns in all his various phases—in his convivial moments, in his sober moods, and in the bosom of his family; indeed, I believe I saw more of him than any other individual had occasion to see, after he became an excise officer; and I never beheld any thing like the gross enormities with which he is now charged. That when set down in an evening with a few friends whom he liked, he was apt to prolong the social hour beyond the bounds which prudence would dictate, is unquestionable; but in his family, I will venture to say, he was never seen otherwise than attentive and affectionate to a high degree.” Such is the testimony of the supervisor respecting the gauger; and in that capacity Burns stands up one of its very best servants before the Board. There was no call, therefore, for Josiah’s Jeremiad. But our words have not been wasted; for Burns’s character has suffered far more from such aspersions as these, which, easily as they can

¹[Burns Life, vol.

he wiped away, were too long left as admitted stains on his memory, than from definite and direct charges of specific facts; and it is still the duty of every man who writes about him, to apply the sponge. Nothing, we repeat, shall tempt us to blame or abuse the Board. But we venture humbly to confess that we do not clearly see that the Board would have been "gratifying its tenderness at the expense of the public," had it, when told by Burns that he was dying, and disabled by the hand of God from performing actively the duties of his temporary supervisorship, requested *its maker* to continue to him for a few months his full salary—seventy pounds a-year—instead of reducing it in the proportion of one half—not because he was a genius, a poet, and the author of many immortal productions—but merely because he was a man and an excise-man, and moreover the father of a few mortal children, who with their mother were in want of bread.¹

Gray, whom we knew well and highly esteemed, was a very superior man to honest Findlater—a man of poetical taste and feeling, and a scholar—on all accounts well entitled to speak of the character of Burns; and though there were no bounds to his enthusiasm when poets and poetry were the themes of his discourse, he was a worshipper of truth, and rightly believed that it was best seen in the light of love and admiration. Compare his bold, generous, and impassioned eulogy on the noble qualities and dispositions of his illustrious friend, with the timid, guarded, and repressed praise for ever bordering on censure, of biographers who never saw the poet's face, and yet have dared to draw his character with the same assurance of certainty in their delineations as if they had been of the number of his familiars, and had looked a thousand times, by night and day, into the saddest secrets of his heart. Far better, surely, in a world like this, to do more rather than less than justice to the goodness of great men. No fear that the world, in its final judgment, will not make sufficient deductions from the land, if it be exaggerated, which love, inspired by admiration and pity, delights to bestow, as the sole tribute now in its power, on the virtues of

departed genius. Calumny may last for ages—we had almost said for ever; lies have life even in their graves, and centuries after they have been interred they will burst their cements, and walk up and down, in the face of day, undistinguishable to the weak eyes of mortals from truths—till they touch; and then the truths expand, and the lies shrivel up, but after a season to reappear, and to be welcomed back again by the dwellers in this delusive world.

"He was courted," says Gray, "by all classes of men for the fascinating powers of his conversation, but over his social scene uncontrolled passion never presided. Over the social bowl, his wit flashed for hours together, penetrating whatever it struck, like the fire from heaven; but even in the hour of thoughtless gaiety and merriment I never knew it tainted by indecency. It was playful or caustic by turns, following an allusion through all its windings; astonishing by its rapidity, or amusing by its wild originality, and grotesque, yet natural combinations, but never, within my observation, disgusting by its grossness. In his morning hours I never saw him like one suffering from the effects of last night's intemperance. He appeared then clear and unclouded. He was the eloquent advocate of humanity, justice, and political freedom. From his paintings, virtue appeared more lovely, and piety assumed a more celestial mien. While his keen eye was pregnant with fancy and feeling, and his voice attuned to the very passion which he wished to communicate, it would hardly have been possible to conceive any being more interesting and delightful. . . . The men with whom he generally associated, were not of the lowest order. He numbered among his intimate friends many of the most respectable inhabitants of Dumfries and the vicinity. Several of those were attached to him by ties that the hand of calumny, busy as it was, could never snap asunder. They admired the poet for his genius, and loved the man for the candour, generosity, and kindness of his nature. His early friends clung to him through good and bad report, with a zeal and fidelity that prove their disbelief of the malicious stories circulated to his disadvantage. Among them were some of the most distinguished characters in

¹[Burns did not suffer this reduction. See note to *Life*, vol. I. p. 128.]

this country, and not a few females, eminent for delicacy, taste, and genius. They were proud of his friendship, and cherished him to the last moment of his existence. He was endeared to them even by his misfortunes, and they still retain for his memory that affectionate veneration which virtue alone inspires."¹

Gray tells us too that it came under his own view professionally, that Burns superintended the education of his children—and promising children they were, nor has that promise been disappointed—with a degree of care that he had never known surpassed by any parent whatever; that to see him in the happiest light you had to see him, as he often did, in his own house, and that nothing could exceed the mutual affection between husband and wife in that lowly tenement. Yet of this man, Josiah Walker, who claims to have been his friend as well as James Gray, writes, "soured by disappointment, and stung with occasional remorse, *impatient of finding little to interest him at home*, and rendered inconstant from returns of his hypochondriacal ailment, multiplied by his irregular life, he saw the difficulty of keeping terms with the world, and *abandoned the attempt in a rash and regardless despair!*"

It may be thought by some that we have referred too frequently to Walker's Memoir, perhaps that we have spoken of it with too much asperity, and that so respectable a person merited tenderer treatment at our hands. He was a respectable person, and for that very reason, we hope by our strictures to set him aside for ever as a biographer of Burns. He had been occasionally in company with the Poet in Edinburgh, in 1787, and had seen him during his short visit at Athol house. "Circumstances led him to Scotland in November, 1795,² after an absence of eight years, and he felt strongly prompted" to visit his old friend: for your common-place man immediately becomes hand and glove with your man of genius, to whom he has introduced himself, and ever after the first interview designates him by that flattering appellation "my friend." "For this

purpose I went to Dumfries, and called upon him early in the forenoon. I found him in a small house of one storey. He was sitting in a window-seat reading, with the doors open, and the family arrangements going on in his presence, and altogether without that appearance of snugness and seclusion which a student requires. After conversing with him for some time, he proposed a walk, and promised to conduct me through some of his favourite haunts. We accordingly quitted the town, and wandered a considerable way up the beautiful banks of the Nith. Here he gave me an account of his latest productions, and repeated some satirical ballads which he had composed to favour one of the candidates at the last borough election. These I thought inferior to his other pieces, though they had some lines in which dignity compensated for coarseness. He repeated also his fragment of an "Ode to Liberty," with marked and peculiar energy, and showed a disposition, which, however, was easily repressed, to throw out political remarks of the same nature with those for which he had been reprehended. On finishing our walk, he passed some time with me at the inn, and I left him early in the evening, to make another visit at some distance from Dumfries. On the second morning after I returned with a friend—who was acquainted with the poet—and we found him ready to pass a part of the day with us at the inn. On this occasion I did not think him quite so interesting as he had appeared at his outset. His conversation was too elaborate, and his expression weakened by a frequent endeavour to give it artificial strength. He had been accustomed to speak for applause in the circles which he frequented, and seemed to think it necessary, in making the most common remark, to depart a little from the ordinary simplicity of language, and to couch it in something of epigrammatic point. In his praise and censure he was so decisive, as to render a dissent from his judgment difficult to be reconciled with the laws of good breeding. His wit was not more licentious than is unhappily too venial in higher circles, though I thought him rather unnecessarily free in the avowal of his excesses. Such were the clouds by which the pleasures of the evening were partially shaded, but frequent conversations of genius were visible between them. When it

¹ [Gray's Letter to Gilbert Burns. See Appendix to Lockhart's *Life*.]

² [Mr. Walker probably went wrong by a year in making this statement. The true date of his visit seems rather to have been 1794.]

began to grow late, he showed no disposition to retire, but called for fresh supplies of liquor with a freedom which might be excusable, as we were in an inn, and no condition had been distinctly made, though it might easily have been inferred, had the inference been welcome, that he was to consider himself as our guest; nor was it till he saw us worn out, that he departed about three in the morning with a reluctance, which probably proceeded less from being deprived of our company, than from being confined to his own. Upon the whole, I found this last interview not quite so gratifying as I had expected; although I discovered in his conduct no errors which I had not seen in men who stand high in the favour of society, or sufficient to account for the mysterious insinuations which I heard against his character. He on this occasion drank freely without being intoxicated—a circumstance from which I concluded, not only that his constitution was still unbroken, but that he was not addicted to solitary cordials; for if he had tasted liquor in the morning, he must have easily yielded to the excess of the evening. He did not, however, always escape so well. About two months after, returning at the same unseasonable hour from a similar revel, in which he was probably better supported by his companion, he was so much disordered as to occasion a considerable delay in getting home, where he arrived with the chill of cold without, added to the fever of ebriety within," &c.

And for this the devotee had made what is called "a pilgrimage to the shrine of genius" as far as Dumfries! Is this the spirit in which people with strong propensities for poetry are privileged to write of poets, long after they have been gathered to their rest? No tenderness—no pity—no respect—no admiration—no gratitude—no softening of heart—no kindling of spirit—on recollection of his final farewell to Robert Burns! If the interview had not been satisfactory, he was bound in friendship to have left no record of it. Silence in that case was a duty especially incumbent on him who had known Burns in happier times, when "dukes, and lords, and mighty earls" were proud to receive the ploughman. He might not know it then, but he knew it soon afterwards, that Burns was much broken down in body and in spirit.

Those two days should have worn to him in retrospect a mournful complexion; and the more so, that he believed Burns to have been then a ruined man in character, which he had once prized above life. He calls upon him early in the forenoon, and finds him "in a small house of one storey, (it happened to have two) . . . on a window-seat reading, with the doors open, and the family arrangements going on in his presence." After eight years' absence from Scotland, did not his heart leap at the sight of her greatest son sitting thus happy in his own humble household? Twenty years after, did not his heart melt at the rising up of the sanctified image? No—for the room was "altogether *without that appearance of snugness and seclusion which a student requires!*" The Poet conducted him through some of his beautiful haunts, and for his amusement let off some of his electioneering squibs, which are among the very best ever composed, and Whiggish as they are, might have tickled a Tory as they jogged along; but Jos thought them "inferior to his other pieces," and so no doubt they were to the "Cotter's Saturday Night," and "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled." Perhaps they walked as far as Lincluden—and the bard repeated his famous fragment of an "Ode to Liberty"—with "marked and peculiar energy." The listener ought to have lost his wits, and to have leapt sky-high. But he who was destined to "The Defence of Order,"¹ felt himself called by the voice that sent him on that mission, to rebuke the bard on the banks of his own river—for he "showed a disposition, which, however, was easily repressed, to throw out political remarks of the same nature with those for which he had been reprehended," three years before by the Board of Exeise! Mr. Walker was not a Commissioner. Burns, it is true, had been told "not to think;" but here was a favourable opportunity for violating with safety that imperial mandate. Woods have ears, but in their whispers they betray no secrets—had Burns talked treason, 'twould have been pity to stop his tongue. The world is yet rather in the dark as to "the political remarks for which he had been reprehended," and as he "threw

¹ [The Defence of Order: a Poem. Three parts. By Josiah Walker, M.A., Professor of Humanity in the University of Glasgow. 8vo. Edin. 1803.]

out some of the same nature," why was the world allowed to remain unenlightened? What right had Josiah Walker to repress any remarks made in the confidence of friendship by Robert Burns? And what power? Had Burns chosen it, he could as easily have *sequestrated* Josiah as thrown him into the Nith. He was not to be put down by fifty such: he may have refrained, but he was not repressed, and in courtesy to his companion, treated him with an old wife's song.

The record of the second day is shameful. To ask any person, however insignificant, to your inn, and then find fault with him in a private letter for keeping you out of bed, would not be gentlemanly; but of such offence twenty years after his death publicly to accuse Burns! No mention is made of dinner—and we shrewdly suspect Burns dined at home. However, he gave up two days to the service of his friend, and his friend's friend, and such was his reward. Why did not this dignified personage "repress" Burns's licentious wit as well as his political opinions? If it was "not more licentious than is unhappily too venial in higher circles," why mention it at all? What were the "excesses" of which he was unnecessarily free in the avowal? They could not have regarded unlawful intercourse with the sex—for "they were not sufficient to account for the mysterious insinuations against his character," all of which related to women. Yet this wretched mixture of meanness, worldliness, and morality, interlarded with some liberal sentiment, and spiced with spite, absolutely seems intended for a vindication!

There are generally two ways at least of telling the same story; and 'tis pity we have not Burns's own account of that long *sedesunt*. It is clear that before midnight he had made the discovery that his right and his left hand assessor were a couple of solemn blockheads, and that to relieve the tedium, he kept plying them with all manner of *bams*. Both gentlemen were probably in black, and though laymen, decorous as deacons on religion and morality—defenders of the faith—sententious champions of Church and State. It must have been amusing to see them gape. Nobody ever denied that Burns always conducted himself with the utmost propriety in presence of those whom he respected for their genius, their

learning, or their worth. Without sacrificing an atom of his independence, how deferential, nay, how reverential was he in his behaviour to Dugald Stewart! Had he and Dr. Blair entertained Burns as their guest in that inn, how delightful had been the evening's record! No such "licentious wit as is unhappily too venial in higher circles," would have flowed from his lips—no "unnecessarily free avowal of his excesses." He would have delighted the philosopher and the divine with his noble sentiments as he had done of old—the illustrious Professor would have remembered and heard again the beautiful eloquence that charmed him on the Braid-hills. There can be nothing unfair surely in the conjecture, that these gentlemen occasionally contributed a sentence or two to the stock of conversation. They were *entertaining* Burns, and good manners must have induced them now and then "here to interpose" with a small smart remark—sentiment facete—or unctuous anecdote. Having lived in "higher circles," and heard much of "the licentious wit unhappily too venial there," we do not well see how they could have avoided giving their guest a few specimens of it. Grave men are often gross—and they were both grave as ever was earthen ware. Such wit is the most contagious of any; and "budge doctors of the Stoic fur," then express "Fancies" that are any thing but "Chaste and Noble." Who knows but that they were driven into indecency by the desperation of self-defence—took refuge in repartee—and fought the gauger with his own rod? That Burns, in the dead silence that ever and anon occurred, should have called for "fresh supplies of liquor," is nothing extraordinary. For there is not in nature or in art a sadder spectacle than an empty bottle standing in the centre of a circle, equidistant from three friends, one of whom had returned to his native land after a yearning absence of eight years, another anonymous, and the third the author of "Scotch Drink" and the "Earnest Cry." Josiah more than insinuates that he himself shy'd the bottle. We more than doubt it—we believe that for some hours he turned up his little finger as frequently as Burns. He did right to desist as soon as he had got his dose, and of that he was not only the best but the only judge; he appears to have been sewn up

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"when it began to grow late;" Burns was sober as a lark "about three in the morning." It is likely enough that "about two months after, Burns was better supported by his companions at a *similar revel*"—so much better indeed in every way that the *revel was dissimilar*; but still we cling to our first belief, that the two gentlemen in black drank as much as could have been reasonably expected of them—that is, as much as they could hold;—had they attempted more, there is no saying what might have been the consequences. And we still continue to think, too, that none but a heartless man, or a man whose heart had been pulled up like a bladder with vanity, would have tagged to the tail of his pitiful tale of that night, that cruel statement about "cold without, and ebriety within," which was but the tittle-tattle of gossiping tradition, and most probably a lie.

This is the proper way to treat all such *memorabilia*—with the ridicule of contempt and scorn. Refute falsehood first, and then lash the fools that utter it. Much of the obloquy that so long rested on the memory of our great National Poet originated in frivolous hearsays of his life and conversation, which in every telling lost some portion of whatever truth might have once belonged to them, and acquired at least an equal portion of falsehood, till they became unmixed calumnies—many of them of the blackest kind—got into print, which is implicitly believed by the million—till the simple story, which, as first told, had illustrated some interesting trait of his character or genius, as last told, redounded to his disgrace, and was listened to by the totally abstinent with uplifted eyes, hands, and shoulders, as an anecdote of the dreadful debaucheries of Robert Burns.

That he did sometimes associate, while in Edinburgh, with persons not altogether worthy of him, need not be denied, nor wondered at, for it was inevitable. He was not for ever beset with the consciousness of his own supereminence. Prudence he did not despise, and he has said some strong things in her praise; but she was not, in his system of morality, the Queen of Virtues. His genius, so far from separating him from any portion of his kind, impelled him towards humanity, without fear and without suspicion. No saint or prude

was he to shun the society of "Jolly companions every one." Though never addicted to drinking, he had often set the table in a roar at Tarbolton, Mauchline, Kirkoswald, Irvine, and Ayr, and was he all at once to appear in the character of dry Quaker in Edinburgh? Were the joys that circle round the flowing bowl to be interdicted to him alone, the wittyest, the brightest, the most original, and the most eloquent of all the men of his day? At Ellisland we know for certain, that his domestic life was temperate and sober; and that beyond his own doors, his convivialities among "gentle and simple," though not unfrequent, were not excessive, and left his character without any of those deeper stains with which it has been since said to have been sullied. It is for ever to be lamented that he was more dissipated at Dumfries—how much more—and under what stronger temptations can be told in not many words. But every glass of wine "or stouter cheer" he drank—like mere ordinary men too fond of the festive hour—seems to have been set down against him as a separate sin; and the world of fashion, and of philosophy too, we fear, both of which used him rather scurvily at last, would not be satisfied unless Burns could be made out—a drunkard! Had he not been such a wonderful man in conversation, he might have enjoyed unhurt the fame of his poetry. But what was reading his poetry, full as it is of mirth and pathos, to hearing the Poet! When all were desirous of the company of a man of such genius and such dispositions, was it in human nature to be always judicious in the selection or rejection of associates? His deepest and best feelings he for the most part kept sacred for communion with those who were held by him in honour as well as love. But few were utterly excluded from the cordiality of one who, in the largeness of his heart, could sympathize with all, provided he could but bring out, by the stroke of the keen-tempered steel of his own nature, some latent spark of humanity from the flint of theirs; and it is easy to see with what dangers he thus must have been surrounded, when his genius and humour, his mirth and glee, his fun and frolic, and all the outrageous merriment of his exhilarated or maddened imagination came to be considered almost as common property by all who chose

to introduce themselves to Robert Burns, and thought themselves entitled to do so because they could prove they had his poems by heart. They sent for the gauger and the gauger came. A prouder man breathed not, but he had never been subjected to the ceremonial of manners, the rule of artificial life and he was ready, at all times, to grasp the hand held out in friendship, to go when a message said come, for he knew that his "low roof'd house" was honoured because by his genius he had greatly glorified his people.

We have seen, from one characteristic instance, how shamefully his condescension must often have been abused; and no doubt but that sometimes he behaved imprudently in such parties, and incurred the blame of intemperance. Frequently must he have joined them with a heavy heart! How little did many not among the worst of those who stupidly stared at the "wondrous guest," understand of his real character! How often must they have required mirth from him in his melancholy, delight in his despair! The coarse buffoon ambitions to show off before the author of "Tam o' Shanter" and "The Holy Fair"—how could it enter into his fat heart to conceive, in the midst of his own roaring ribaldry, that the fire-eyed son of genius was a hypochondriac, sick of life! Why such a fellow would think nothing next morning of impudently telling his cronies that on the whole he had been disappointed in the Poet. Or in another key, forgetting that the Poet, who continued to sit late at a tavern table, need own no relationship but that of time and place with the prosier who was lying resignedly under it, the drunkard boasts all over the city of the glorious night he had had with Burns.

But of the multitudes who thus sought the society of Burns, there must have been many in every way qualified to enjoy it. His fame had crossed the Tweed; and though a knowledge of his poetry could not then have been prevalent over England, he had ardent admirers among the most cultivated classes, before whose eyes, shadowed in a language but imperfectly understood, had dawned a new and beautiful world of rustic life. Young men of generous birth, and among such lovers of genius some doubtless themselves endowed with the precious gift, acquainted with the clod-hoppers of

their own country, longed to behold the prodigy who had stalked between the stils of the plough in moods of tenderest or loftiest inspiration; and it is pleasing to think that the Poet was not seldom made happy by such visitors—that they carried back with them to their own noblest land a still deeper impression of the exalted worth of the genius of Caledonia. Nor did the gold coin of the genius of Burns sustain any depreciation during his life time in his own country. He had that to comfort him—that to glory in till the last; and in his sorest poverty, it must have been his exceeding great reward. Ebenezer Elliot has nobly expressed that belief—and coupled with it—as we have often done—the best vindication of Scotland—

BUT SHALL IT OF OUR SIREN BE TOLD
THAT THEY THEIR BROTHER POOR FORSOOK?
NO! FOR THEY GAVE HIM MORE THAN GOLD;
THEY READ THE BRAVE MAN'S BOOK.

What happens during their life—more or less—to all eminent men—happened to Burns. Thinking on such things, one sometimes cannot help believing that man hates to honour man, till the power in which miracles have been wrought is extinguished or withdrawn—and then, when jealousy, envy, and all uncharitableness of necessity cease, we confess its grandeur, bow down to it, and worship it. But who were they who in his own country continued most steadfastly to honour his genius and himself—all through what have been called—truly in some respects—falsely in others—his dark days in Dumfries—and on to his death? Not lords and earls—not lawyers and wits—not philosophers and doctors—though among the nobility and gentry—among the classes of leisure and of learning he had friends who wished him well, and were not indisposed to serve him; not the male generation of critics—not the literary prigs epicene—not of decided sex the blues celestial—though many periods were rounded among them upon the Ayrshire ploughman; but the MEN OF HIS OWN ORDER, with their wives and daughters—shepherds, and herdsmen, and ploughmen—delvers and ditchers—hewers of wood and drawers of water—soldiers and sailors—whether regulars, militia, fencibles, volunteers—on board king's or merchants' ship "far far at sea" or dirt gabbert—within a few yards of the

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land on either side of the Clyde or the Cart—the WORKING PEOPLE—who’ve the instrument of their toil—they patronized Burns then—they patronize him now—they would not have hurt a hair of his head—they will not hear of any dishonour to his dust—they know well what it is to endure, to yield, to enjoy, and to suffer—and the memory of their own bard will be hallowed for ever among the brotherhood like a religion.

In Dumfries—as in every other considerable town in Scotland—and we might add England—it was then customary, you know, with the respectable inhabitants, to pass a convivial hour or two of an evening in some decent tavern or other—and Burns’s *hoof* was the Globe, kept by honest Mrs. Hyslop, who had a sonsie sister, “Anna wi’ the gowden locks,” the heroine of what in his fond deceit he thought was the best of all his songs.¹ The worthy towns-folk did not frequent bar, or parlour, or club-room—at least they did not think they did—from a desire for drink; though doubtless they often took a glass more than they intended, nay sometimes even two; and the prevalence of such a system of social life, for it was no less, must have given rise, with others beside the predisposed, to very hurtful habits. They met to expatiate and confer on state affairs—to read the newspapers—to talk a little scandal—and so forth—and the result was, we have been told, considerable dissipation. The system was not excellent; dangerous to a man whose face was always more than welcome; without whom there was wanting the evening or the morning star. Burns latterly indulged too much in such computations, and sometimes drank more than was good for him; *but not a man now alive in Dumfries ever saw him intoxicated*; and the survivors all unite in declaring that he cared not whether the stoup were full or empty, so that there were *conversation*—argumentative or declamatory, narrative or anecdotal, grave or gay, satirical or sermonic; nor would any of them have hoped to see the sun rise again in this world, had Burns portentously fallen asleep. They had much better been, one and all of them, even on the soberest nights, at their own firesides, or in their beds, and orgies that seemed moderation itself in a *hoof*, would

¹ [“Anna” was a niece of Mrs. Hyslop’s, not her sister.]

have been felt outrageous at home. But the blame, whatever be its amount, must not be heaped on the head of Burns, while not a syllable has ever been said of the same enormities steadily practised for a series of years by the dignitaries of the borough, who by themselves and friends were opined to have been from youth upwards among the most sober of the children of Adam. Does any body suppose that Burns would have addicted himself to any meetings considered disreputable—or that, had he lived now, he would have frequented any tavern, except perhaps some not unfavourable one in the airy realms of imagination, and built among the clouds?

Malicious people would not have ventured during his lifetime, in underhand and undertoned insinuations, to whisper away Burns’s moral character, nor would certain memorialists have been so lavish of their lamentations and regrets over his evil habits, had not his political principles during his later years been such as to render him with many an object of suspicion equivalent, in troubled times, to fear and hatred. A revolution that shook the foundations on which so many old evils and abuses rested, and promised to restore to millions their natural liberties, and by that restoration to benefit all mankind, must have agitated his imagination to a pitch of enthusiasm far beyond the reach of ordinary minds to conceive, who nevertheless thought it no presumption on their part to decide dogmatically on the highest questions in political science, the solution of which, issuing in terrible practice, had upset one of the most ancient, and as it had been thought, one of the firmest of thrones. No wonder that with his eager and earnest spirit for ever on his lips, he came to be reputed a Democrat. Dumfries was a Tory town, and could not tolerate a revolutionary—the term was not in use then—a Radical Excise-man. And to say the truth, the idea must have been not a little alarming to weak nerves, of Burns as a demagogue. With such eyes and such a tongue he would have proved a formidable Man of the People. It is certain that he spoke and wrote rashly and reprehensibly—and deserved a caution from the Board. But not such tyrannical reproof; and perhaps it was about as absurd in the Board to order Burns not to think, as it

would have been in him to order it to think, for thinking comes of nature, and not of institution, and 'tis about as difficult to control as to create it. He defended himself boldly, and like a man conscious of harbouring in his bosom no evil wish to the State. "In my defence to their accusations, I said, that whatever might be my sentiments of republics, ancient or modern, as to Britain, I abjured the idea:—that a CONSTITUTION, which, in its original principles, experience had proved to be every way fitted for our happiness in society, it would be insanity to sacrifice to an untried visionary theory:—that in consideration of my being situated in a department, however humble, immediately in the hands of people in power, I had forborne taking any active part, either personally, or as an author, in the present business of REFORM; but that, where I must declare my sentiments, I would say there existed a system of corruption between the executive power and the representative part of the legislature, which boled no good to our glorious CONSTITUTION; and which every patriotic Briton must wish to see amended."¹ His biographers have had difficulty in forming their opinion as to the effect on Burns's mind of the expression of the Board's sovereign will and displeasure. Scott, without due consideration, thought it so preyed on his peace as to render him desperate—and has said that "from the moment his hopes of promotion were utterly blasted, his tendency to dissipation hurried him precipitately into those excesses which shortened his life." Lockhart on the authority of Mr. Findlater dissents from that statement—Allan Cunningham thinks it in essentials true, and that Burns's letter to Mr. Erskine of Mar, "covers the Board of Excise and the British Government of that day with eternal shame." Whatever may have been the effect of those proceedings on Burns's mind, it is certain that the freedom with which he gave utterance to his political opinions and sentiments seriously injured him in the estimation of multitudes of excellent people, who thought them akin to doctrines subversive of all government but that of the mob. Nor till he joined the Dumfries Volunteers, and as their Laureate issued his popular song, that flew over the land like

¹ Letter to John Francis Erskine of Mar, 13th April, 1793.

wild-fire, "Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?" was he generally regarded as a loyal subject. For two or three years he had been looked on with evil eyes, and spoken of in evil whispers by too many of the good—and he had himself in no small measure to blame for their false judgment of his character. Here are a few of his lines to "The Tree of Liberty:"

But vicious folks aye hate to see
The works o' Virtue thrive, man,
The courtly vermin's bann'd the tree, curs'd
And grut to see it thrive, man; wept
King Loul' thought to cut it down,
When it was unco' snaw, man; very
For this the watchmen crack'd his crown,
Cut aff his head and a', man.

Let Britain boast her hardy oak,
Her poplar and her pine, man,
Auld Britain ance could crack her joke,
And o'er her neighbour shine, man.
But seek the forest round and round,
And soon 'twill be agreed, man,
That sic a tree cannot be found,
Twixt London and the Tweed, man.

Wae worth the loon wha wadna eat Woe befall the
Her poplar and her pine, man, [roque that
Sic halesome daluty cheer, man; such [would not
I'd gie my shoon frae aff my feet,
To taste sic fruit, I swear, man. such
Syne let us pray, auld England may then
Sure plant this far-fan'd tree, man;
And blythe we'll sing, and hail the day
That gave us liberty, man.

So sunk in slavery at this time was Scotland, that England could not sleep in her bed till she had set her sister free—and sent down some liberators who narrowly escaped getting hanged by this most ungrateful country. Such "perilous stuff" as the above might have been indited by Palmer, Gerald, or Margatot—how all unworthy of the noble Burns? Of all men in the world, the author of "The Cotter's Saturday Night" was by nature the least of a Jacobin. We cannot help thinking that, like Byron, he loved at times to astonish dull people by daring things, to see how they looked with their hair on end; and dull people—who are not seldom malignant—taking him at his word, had their revenge in charging him with all manner of profligacy, and fabricating vile stories to his disgrace; there being nothing too gross for the swallow of political rancour.

It is proved by many very strong expressions in his correspondence that the reproof he received from the Board of Excise sorely troubled

him; and no doubt it had an evil influence on public opinion that did not subside till it was feared he was dying, and that ceased for a time only with his death. We have expressed our indignation—our contempt of that tyrannical treatment; and have not withheld our respect—our admiration—from the characteristic manliness with which he repelled the accusations some insidious enemies had secretly sent in to the quarter where they knew fatal injury might be done to all his prospects in life. But was it possible that his most unguarded, rash, and we do not for a moment hesitate to say, blamable expression of political opinions adverse to those maintained by all men friendly to the government, could be permitted to pass without notice? He had no right to encourage what the government sought to put down, while he was "their servant in a very humble department;" and though he successfully repelled the slanders of the despicable creatures who strove to destroy him, even in his high-spirited letter to Erskine there is enough to show that he had entered into such an expostulation with the Board as must have excited strong displeasure and disapproval, which no person of sense, looking back on those most dangerous times, can either wonder at or blame. He says in his defence before the Board, "I stated that, where I must declare my sentiments, I would say there existed a system of corruption between the executive power and the representative part of the legislature, which boded no good to our glorious CONSTITUTION, and which every patriotic Briton must wish to see amended." From a person in his situation even such a declaration was not prudent, and prudence was a duty; but it is manifest from what he adds for Erskine's own ear, that something more lay concealed in those generalities than the mere words seem to imply. "I have three sons, who I see already, have brought into the world souls ill qualified to inhabit the bodies of SLAVES.—Can I look tamely on, and see any machination to wrest from them the birthright of my boys,—the little independent BARONS, in whose veins runs my own blood?—No! I will not! should my heart's blood stream around my attempt to defend it! Does any man tell me, that my feeble efforts can be of no service; and that it does not belong to my humble station to meddle with the

concern of a people?" Right or wrong—and we think they were right—the government of the country had resolved to uphold principles, to which the man who could not refrain from thus fiercely declaring himself, at the very time all that was dearest to him was in peril, could not but be held hostile; and so far from its being their duty to overlook such opinions, because they were the opinions of Burns, it was just because they were the opinions of Burns that it was their duty to restrain and reprove them. He continued too long after this to be by far too outspoken—as we have seen; but that his Scottish soul had in aught become Frenchified, we never shall believe, but while we live shall attribute the obstinacy with which he persisted to sing and say the praises of that people, after they had murdered their king and their queen, and had been guilty of all enormities, in a great measure to a haughtiness, that could not brook to retract opinions he had offensively declared before the faces of many whom, not without reason, he despised—to a horror of the idea of any sacrifice of that independent spirit which was the very life of his life. Burns had been insulted by those who were at once his superiors and his inferiors, and shall Burns truckle to "the powers that be?" At any bidding but that of his own conviction swerve a hair's breadth from his political creed? No: not even though his reason had told him that some of its articles were based in delusion, and if carried into practice among his own countrymen, pursuant to the plots of traitors, who were indeed aliens in soul to the land he loved, would have led to the destruction of that liberty for which he, by the side, or at the head of his cottage compatriots, would have gladly died.

The evil consequences of all this to Burns were worse than you may have imagined, for over and above the lies springing up like puddock-stools from domestic middens, an ephemeral brood indeed, but by succession perennial, and that even now when you grasp them in your hand, spatter vileness in your eyes, like so many devil's snuff-boxes—think how injurious to the happiness of such a soul as his, to all its natural habitudes, must have been the feuds carried on all around him, and in which he with his commanding powers too largely mingled, between political parties in a

provincial town, contending as they thought, the one for hearths and altars, the other for regeneration of those principles, decayed or dead, which alone make hearths and altars sacred, and their defence worth the tears and the blood of brave men who would fain be free. His sympathy was "wide and general as the casing air;" and not without violence could it be contracted "within the circle none dared tread but they" who thought William Pitt the reproach, and Charles Fox the paragon of animals. Within that circle he met with many good men, the Herons, Millers, Riddells, Maxwell, Symes, and so forth; within it too he forgathered with many "a fool and something more." Now up to "the golden exhalation of the dawn" of his gangership, Burns had been a Tory, and he heard in "the whisper of a faction" a word unpleasing to a Whiggish ear, turncoat. The charge was false, and he disdained it; but disdain in eyes that when kindled up burned like carriage lamps in a dark night, frightened the whispering faction into such animosity, that a more than usual sumph produced an avenging epigram upon him and two other traitors, in which the artist committed a mistake of workmanship no subsequent care could rectify. 'ead of hitting the right nail on the head, why he hit the wrong nail on the point, so no wooden mallet could drive it home. From how much social pleasure must not Burns have thus been wilfully self-debarred! From how many happy friendships! By nature he was not vindictive, yet occasionally he seemed to be so, visiting slight offence with severe punishment, sometimes imagining offence when there was none, and in a few instances, we fear, satirizing in savage verses not only the innocent, but the virtuous; the very beings whom, had he but known them as he might, he would have loved and revered—celebrated them living or dead in odes, elegies, and hymns—thereby doing holy service to goodness in holding up shining examples to all who longed to do well. Most of his intolerant scorn of high rank had the same origin—not in his own nature, which was noble, but in prejudices thus superinduced upon it, which in their virulence were mean—though his genius could clothe them in magnificent diction, and so justify them to the proud poet's heart.

It is seldom indeed that Lockhart misses the mark; but in one instance—an anecdote—where it is intended to present the pathetic, our eye perceives but the picturesque—we allude to the tale told him by David Macculloch, son of the Laird of Ardwell. "He told me that he was seldom more grieved than when, riding into Dumfries one fine summer's evening to attend a county ball, he saw Burns walking alone on the shady side of the principal street of the town, while the opposite part was gay with successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, all drawn together for the festivities of the night, not one of whom appeared willing to recognize him. The horseman dismounted and joined Burns, who on his proposing to him to cross the street, said, 'Nay, my young friend, that is all over now,' and quoted, after a pause, some verses of Lady Grizell Baillie's pathetic ballad beginning, 'The bonnet stood aye sae fair on his brow,' and ending '*And were na my heart tight I wad die.*' It was little in Burns's character to let his feelings on certain subjects escape in this fashion. He immediately after citing these verses, assumed the sprightliness of his most pleasing manner; and taking his young friend home with him, entertained him very agreeably until the hour of the ball arrived, with a bowl of his usual potation, and Bonnie Jean's singing of some verses which he had recently composed." 'Tis a pretty picture in the style of Watteau. "The opposite part gay with successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, all drawn together for the festivities of the night." What were they about, and where were they going? Were they as yet in their ordinary clothes, colts and fillies alike, taking their exercise preparatory to the country dances of some thirty or forty couple, that in those days used to try the wind of both sexes? If so, they might have chosen better training-ground along the banks of the Nith. Were they all in full fig, the females with feathers on their heads, the males with chapeaux bras—"stepping westward" arm in arm, in successive groups, to the Assembly-room? In whichever of these two pleasant predicaments they were placed, it showed rare perspicacity in Daintie Davie, to discern that not one of them appeared willing to recognize Burns—more especially as he was walking on the other and shady side of the street, and Davie on

horseback. By what secret signs did the fair free-masons—for such there be—express to their mounted brother their unwillingness to recognize from the sunshine of their promenade, the ganger walking alone in the shade of his? Was flirtation at so low an ebb in Dumfries-shire, that the flower of her beaux and belles, “in successive groups, drawn together for the festivities of the night,” could find eyes for a disagreeable object so many yards of causeway remote? And if Burns observed that they gave him the cold shoulder—cut him across the street—on what recondite principle of conduct did he continue to walk there, in place of stalking off with a frown to his *Howf*? And is it high Galloway to propose to a friend to cross the street to do the civil “to successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, not one of whom had appeared willing to recognize him?” However, it was gallant under such discouragement to patronize the ganger: and we trust that the “wicked wee bowl,” while it detained from, and disinclined to, did not incapacitate for the Ball.

But whence all those expressions so frequent in his correspondence, and not rare in his poetry, of self-reproach and rueful remorse? From a source that lay deeper than our eyes can reach. We know his worst sins, but cannot know his sorrows. The war between the spirit and the flesh often raged in his nature—as in that of the best of beings who are made—and no Christian, without humblest self-abasement, will ever read his Confessions.

Is there a whim-inspired fool,
Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool, *bashful*
Let him draw near; *(cringe abjectly)*
And owre this grassy heap slug dool, *lament*
And drap a tear.

Is there a bard of rustic song,
Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,
That weekly this arena throng,
O, pass not by!
But, with a frater-feeling strong,
Here, heave a sigh.

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

The poor inhabitant below
Was quick to learn, and wise to know,

And keenly felt the friendly glow,
And softer flame;
But thoughtless follies laid him low,
And stain'd his name.

Reader, attend—whether thy soul
Sours fancy's flights beyond the pole,
Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,
In low pursuit;
Know, prudent, cautious self-control
Is wisdom's root.

A Bard's Epitaph! Such his character drawn by himself in deepest despondency—in distraction—in despair calmed while he was composing it by the tranquillizing power that ever accompanies the action of genius. And shall we judge him as severely as he judged himself, and think worse of him than of common men, because he has immortalized his frailties in his contrition? The sins of common men are not remembered in their epitaphs. Silence is a privilege of the grave few seek to disturb. If there must be no enlogium, our name and age suffice for that stone—and whatever may have been thought of us, there are some to drop a tear on our “forlorn hic jacet.” Burns wrote those lines in the very prime of youthful manhood. You know what produced them—his miserable attachment to her who became his wife. He was then indeed most miserable—afterwards most happy; he cared not then though he should die—all his other offences rose against him in that agony; and how humbly he speaks of his high endowments, under a sense of the sins by which they had been debased! He repented, and sinned again and again; for his repentance—though sincere—was not permanent; yet who shall say that it was not accepted at last? “Owre this grassy heap sing dool, and drap a tear,” is an injunction that has been obeyed by many a pitying heart. Yet a little while, and his Jean buried him in such a grave. A few years more, and a mausoleum was erected by the nation for his honoured dust. Now husband and wife lie side by side—“in hopes of a joyful resurrection.”

Burns belonged to that order of prevailing poets, with whom “all thoughts, all passions, all delights” possess not that entire satisfaction nature intends, till they effuse themselves abroad, for sake of the sympathy that binds them, even in uttermost solitude, to the brotherhood of man. No secrets have they

that words can reveal. They desire that the whole race shall see their very souls—shall hear the very beatings of their hearts. Thus they hope to live for ever in kindred bosoms. They feel that a great power is given them in their miseries—for what miseries has any man ever harboured in the recesses of his spirit, that he has not shared, and will share, with “numbers without number numberless” till the Judgment Day!

Who reads unmoved such sentences as these? “The fates and characters of the rhyming tribe often employ my thoughts when I am disposed to be melancholy. There is not among all the martyrologies that ever were penned, so rueful a narrative as the lives of the poets.—In the comparative view of wretches, the criterion is not what they are doomed to suffer, but how they are formed to bear.”¹ Long before the light of heaven had ever been darkened or obscured in his conscience by evil thoughts or evil deeds, when the bold bright boy, with his thick black clustering hair ennobling his ample forehead, was slaving for his parents’ sakes—Robert used often to lie by Gilbert’s side all night long without ever closing an eye in sleep; for that large heart of his, that loved all his eyes looked upon of nature’s works living or dead, perfect as was its mechanism for the play of all lofty passions, would get suddenly disarranged, as if approached the very hour of death. Who will say that many more years were likely to have fallen to the lot of one so framed, had he all life long drunk, as in youth, but of the well-water—“lain down with the dove, and risen with the lark?” If excesses in which there was vice and therefore blame, did injure his health, how far more those other excesses in which there was so much virtue, and on which there should be praise for ever! Over-anxious, over-working hours beneath the mid-day sun, and sometimes too to save a scanty crop beneath the midnight moon, to which he looked up without knowing it with a poet’s eyes, as he kept forking the sheaves on the high laden cart that “Hesperus, who led the starry host,” beheld crashing into the barn-yard among shouts of “Harvest Home.”

It has been thought that there are not a

¹ Letter to Miss Craik of Arbigland, August, 1790.

few prominent points of character common to Burns and Byron; and though no formal comparison between them has been drawn that we know of, nor would it be worth one’s while attempting it, as not much would come of it, we suspect, without violent stretching and bending of materials, and that free play of fancy which makes no bones of facts, still there is this resemblance, that they both give unreserved expositions of their most secret feelings, undeterred by any fear of offending others, or of bringing censure on themselves by such revelations of the inner man. Byron as a moral being was below Burns; and there is too often much affectation and insincerity in his Confessions. “Fare thee well, and if for ever, still for ever fare thee well,” is not elegiac, but satirical; a complaint in which the bitterness is not of grief, but of gall; how unlike “The Lament on the unfortunate issue of a Friend’s Amour” overflowing with the expression of every passion cognate with love’s despair! Do not be startled by our asking you to think for a little while of Robert Burns along with—SAMUEL JOHNSON. Listen to him, and you hear as wise and good a man as earth ever saw for ever reproaching himself with his wickedness; “from almost the earliest time he could remember he had been forming schemes for a better life.” Select from his notes, prayers, and diaries, and from the authentic records of his oral discourse, all acknowledgments of his evil thoughts, practices, and habits—all charges brought against him by conscience, of sins of omission and commission—all declarations, exclamations, and interjections of agonizing remorse and gloomy despair—from *them* write his character in his epitaph—and look *there* on the Christian Sage! God forbid! that saving truths should be so changed into destroying falsehoods. Slothful—selfish—sensual—envious—uncharitable—undutiful to his parents—thoughtless of Him who died to save sinners—and living without God in the world;—*That* is the wretched being named Samuel Johnson—in the eyes of his idolatrous countrymen only a little lower than the angels—in his own a worm! Slothful! yet how various his knowledge! acquired by fits and snatches—book in hand, and poring as if nearly sand-blind—yet with eyes in their own range of vision, keen as the lynx’s or the

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eagle's—on pages no better than blanks to common minds, to his hieroglyphical of wisest secrets—or in long assiduity of continuous studies, of which a month to him avail more than to you or us a year—or all we have had of life.—Selfish! with obscure people, about whom nobody cared, provided for out of his slender means within doors, paupers though they thought it not, and though meanly endowed by nature as by fortune, admitted into the friendship of a Sage simple as a child—out of doors, pensioners waiting for him at the corners of streets of whom he knew little, but that they were hungry and wanted bread, and probably had been brought by sin to sorrow.—Sensual! Because his big body, getting old, “needed repairs,” and because though *Russels Prince of Abyssinia* had been written on an empty stomach, which happened when he was comparatively young and could not help it, now that he had reached his grand climacteric, he was determined to show not to the whole world, but to large parties, that all the fat of the earth was not meant for the mouths of blockheads.—Envious! of David Garrick? Poh! poh! Pshaw! pshaw!—Uncharitable? We have disposed of that clause of the verse in our commentary on “selfish.”—Undutiful to his parents? He did all man could to support his mother—and having once disobliged his father by sulkily refusing to assist at his book-stall, half a century afterwards, more or less, when at the head of English literature, and the friend of Burke and Beauchamp, he stood bare headed for an hour in the rain on the site of said book-stall, in the market-place of Lichfield, in penance for that great sin. As to the last two charges in the indictment—if he was not a Christian, who can hope for salvation in the Cross?—If his life was that of an atheist, who of woman born ever walked with God? Yet it is true he was a great sinner. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” [1 John i. 8, 9].

Burns died in his thirty-eighth year. At that age what had Johnson done to be for ever remembered? He had written *Irene, London*, and the *Life of Savage*. Of *Irene* the world

makes little account—it contains many just and noble sentiments—but it is a Tragedy without tears. The life is an eloquent lie, told in the delusion of a friendship sealed by participated sorrows. *London* is a satire of the true moral vein—more sincerely indignant with the vices it withers than its prototype in Juvenal—with all the vigour, without any of the coarseness of Dryden—with “the pointed propriety of Pope,” and versification almost as musical as his, while not so monotonous—an immortal strain. But had he died in 1747, how slight had been our knowledge—our interest how dull—in the *Life and Writings of Samuel Johnson*! How slight our knowledge! We should never have known that in childhood he showed symptoms “of that jealous independence of spirit and impetuosity of temper which never forsook him”—as Burns in the same season had showed that “stubborn sturdy something in his disposition” which was there to the last;—That he displayed then “that power of memory for which he was all his life eminent to a degree almost incredible”—as Burns possessed that faculty—so thought Murdoch—in more strength than imagination;—That he never joined the other boys in their ordinary diversions “but would wander away into the fields talking to himself”—like Burns walking miles “to pay his respects to the Leglen wood;”—That when a boy he was immoderately fond of reading romances of chivalry—as Burns was of *Blind Harry*;—That he fell into “an inattention to religion or an indifference about it in his ninth year,” and that after his fourteenth “became a sort of lax talker against religion, for he did not much think about it, and this lasted till he went to Oxford where it would not be suffered”—just as the child Burns was remarkable for an “enthusiastic idiot piety,” and had pleasure during some years of his youth in puzzling his companions on points in divinity, till he saw his folly, and without getting his mouth shut, was mute;—That on his return home from Stourbridge school in his eighteenth year “he had no settled plan of life, nor looked forward at all, but merely lived from day to day”—like Burns who, when a year or two older, in his perplexity writes to his father that he knows not what to do, and is sick of life;—That his love of literature was excited by accidentally

finding a folio Petrarch—as Burns's love of poetry was by an octavo Shenstone;—That he thereon became a gluttonous book-devourer—as Burns did—“no book being so voluminous as to slacken his industry, or so antiquated as to damp his researches;”—That in his twentieth year he felt himself “overwhelmed with a horrible hypochondria, with perpetual irritation, fretfulness, and impatience, and with a dejection, gloom, and despair which rendered existence misery”—as Burns tells us he was afflicted—even earlier—and to the last—“with a constitutional melancholy or hypochondriasm that made me fly to solitude”—with horrid flutterings and stoppages of the heart that often almost choked him, so that he had to fall out of bed into a tub of water to allay the anguish;—That he was at Pembroke College “caressed and loved by all about him as a gay and frolicsome fellow”—while “ah! Sir, I was mad and violent—it was bitterness which they mistook for frolic”—just as Burns was thought to be “with his strong appetite for sociality as well from native hilarity as from a pride of observation and remark,” though when left alone desponding and distracted;—“That he was generally seen lounging at the College gate, with a circle of young students around him, whom he was entertaining with wit, and keeping from their studies, if not spiriting them up to rebellion against the College discipline, which in his maturer years he so much extolled”—as Burns was sometimes seen at the door of a Public ridiculing the candles of the Auld Light, and even spiriting the callants against the Kirk itself, which we trust he looked on more kindly in future years;—That he had to quit college on his father's bankruptcy soon followed by death, as Burns in similar circumstances had to quit Lochlea;—“That in the forlorn state of his circumstances, *Ætat*. 23, he accepted of an offer to be employed as usher in the school of Market-Bosworth,” where he was miserable—just as Burns was at the same age, not indeed flogging boys but flogging barns, “a poor, insignificant devil, unnoticed and unknown, and stalking up and down fairs and markets;”—That soon after “he published proposals for printing by subscription the Latin Poems of Politian at two shillings and sixpence, but that there were not subscribers

enough to secure a sufficient sale, so the work never appeared, and probably never was executed”—as Burns soon after issued proposals for printing by subscription on terms rather higher “among others the Ordination, Scotch Drink, the Cotter's Saturday Night, and an Address to the Deil,” which volume ere long was published accordingly and had a great sale;—That he had, “from early youth, been sensible to the influence of female charms, and when at Stourbridge school was much enamoured of Olivia Lloyd, a young Quaker, to whom he wrote a copy of verses”—just as Burns was—and did—in the case of Margaret Thomson, in the kale-yard at Kirkoswald, and of many others;—That “his juvenile attachments to the fair sex were however very transient; and it is certain that he formed no criminal connection whatsoever. Mr. Hector, who lived with him in his younger days in the utmost intimacy and social freedom, has assured me that even at that ardent season his conduct was strictly virtuous in that respect”—just so with Burns who fell in love with every lass he saw “come wading barefoot all alane,” while his brother Gilbert gives us the same assurance of his continence in all his youthful loves;—That “in a man whom religious education has saved from licentious indulgencies, the passion of love when once it has seized him is exceeding strong;” and “this was experienced by Johnson when he became the fervent admirer of Mrs. Porter after her first husband's death”—as it was unfortunately too much the case with Burns, though he did not marry a widow double his own age—but one who was a Maid till she met Rob Mossiel—and some six [eight] years younger than himself;—That unable to find subsistence in his native place, or any where else, he was driven by want to try his fortune in London, “the great field of genius and exertion, where talents of every kind have the fullest scope, and the highest encouragement,” on his way thither, “riding and tying” with Davie Garrick—just as Burns was impelled to make an experiment on Edinburgh, journeying thither on foot,¹ but without any companion in his adventure;—That after getting on there indifferently well, he returned “in the course of the next summer to Lichfield, where he had left Mrs. Johnson,”

¹ [See note, vol. iv. p. 39.]

and staid there three weeks, his mother asking him whether, when in London, "He was one of those who gave the wall or those who took it"—just as Burns returned to Mauchline, where he had left Mrs. Burns, and remained in the neighbourhood about the same period of time, his mother having said to him on his return, "Oh, Robert;"—That he took his wife back with him to London, resolving to support her the best way he could, by the cultivation of the fields of literature, and chiefly through an engagement as ganger and supervisor to Cave's Magazine—as Burns, with similar purposes, and not dissimilar means, brought his wife to Ellisland, then to Dumfries;—That partly from necessity and partly from inclination, he used to perambulate the streets of the city at all hours of the night, and was far from being prim or precise in his company, associating much with one Savage at least who had rubbed shoulders with the gallows—just as Burns on Jenny Geddes and her successor kept skirting the country at all hours, though we do not hear of any of his companions having been stabbers in brothel-brawls;—That on the publication of his *London*, that city rang with applause, and Pope pronounced the author—yet anonymous—a true poet, who would soon be "*déterré*," while General Oglethorpe became his patron, and such a prodigious sensation did his genius make, that in the fulness of his fame, Earl Gower did what he could to set him on the way of being elevated to a schoolmastership in some small village in Shropshire or Staffordshire, "of which the certain salary was *sixty pounds a year, which would make him happy for life*"—so said English Earl Gower to an Irish Dean called Jonathan Swift—just as Burns soon after the publication of "*Tam o' Shanter*," was in great favour with Captain Grose—though there was then no need for any poet to tell the world he was one, as he had been "*déterré*" a year or two before, and by the unexampled exertions of Graham of Fintry, the Earl of Glencairn being oblivious or dead, was translated to the diocese of Dumfries, where he died in the thirty-eighth year of his age; the very year, we believe, of *his*, in which Johnson issued the prospectus of his Dictionary;—and here we leave the Lexicographer for a moment to himself, and let our mind again

be occupied for a moment exclusively by the Exciseman.

You will not suppose that we seriously insist on this parallel as if the lines throughout ran straight; or that we are not well aware that there was far from being in reality such complete correspondence of the circumstances—much less the characters of the men. But both had to struggle for their very lives—it was sink or swim—and by their own buoyancy they were borne up. In Johnson's case, there is not one dark stain on the story of all those melancholy and memorable years. Hawkins indeed more than insinuates that there was a separation between him and his wife, at the time he associated with Savage, and used with that profligate to stroll the streets; and that she was "harboured by a friend near the Tower;" but Croker justly remarks—"That there never has existed any human being, all the details of whose life, all the motives of whose actions, all the thoughts of whose mind, have been so unreservedly brought before the public; even his prayers, his most secret meditations, and his most scrupulous self-reproaches, have been laid before the world; and there is not to be found, in all the unparalleled information thus laid before us, a single trace to justify the accusation which Hawkins so wantonly and so odiously, and, it may be assumed, so falsely makes." However, he walked in the midst of evil—he was familiar with the faces of the wicked—the guilty, as they were passing by, he did not always shun, as if they were lepers; he had a word for them—poor as he was, a small coin—for they were all of the unfortunate and forlorn, and his heart was pitiful. So was that of Burns. Very many years Heaven allotted to the Sage, that virtue might be instructed by wisdom—all the good acknowledgment that he is great—and his memory is hallowed for evermore in the gratitude of Christendom. In his prime, it pleased God to cut off the Poet—but his genius too has left a blessing to his own people—and has diffused noble thoughts, generous sentiments, and tender feelings over many lands, and most of all among them who more especially feel that they are his brethren, the Poor who make the Rich, and like him are happy, in spite of its hardships, in their own condition. Let the imperfections of his char-

acter then be spared, if it be even for sake of his genius; on higher grounds let it be honoured; for if there was much weakness, its strength was mighty, and his *religious* country is privileged to forget his frailties, in humble trust that they are forgiven.

We have said but little hitherto of Burns's religion. Some have denied that he had any religion at all—a rash and cruel denial—made in face of his genius, his character, and his life. What man in his senses ever lived without religion? “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God”—was Burns an atheist? We do not fear to say that he was religious far beyond the common run of men, even them who may have had a more consistent and better considered creed. The lessons he received in the “auld clay biggin” were not forgotten through life. He speaks—and we believe him—of his “early ingrained piety” having been long remembered to good purpose—what he called his “idiot piety”—not meaning thereby to disparage it, but merely that it was in childhood an instinct. “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name!” is breathed from the lips of infancy with the same feeling at its heart that beats towards its father on earth, as it kneels in prayer by his side. No one surely will doubt his sincerity when he writes from Irvine to his father—“Honoured Sir— . . . I am quite transported at the thought, that ere long, perhaps very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains, and uneasiness, and disquietudes of this weary life; for I assure you I am heartily tired of it; and if I do not very much deceive myself, I could contentedly and gladly resign it. It is for this reason I am more pleased with the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses of the 7th chapter of Revelations, than with any ten times as many verses in the whole Bible, and would not exchange the noble enthusiasm with which they inspire me, for all that this world has to offer.” These verses run as follows: “15. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. 16. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 17. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall

lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” When he gives lessons to a young man for his conduct in life, one of them is, “The great Creator to adore;” when he consoles a friend on the death of a relative, “he points the brimful grief-worn eyes to scenes beyond the grave;” when he expresses benevolence to a distressed family, he beseeches the aid of Him “who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb;” when he feels the need of aid to control his passions, he implores that of the “Great Governor of all below;” when in sickness, he has a prayer for the pardon of his errors, and an expression of confidence in the goodness of God; when suffering from the ills of life, he asks for the grace of resignation, “because they are thy will;” when he observes the sufferings of the virtuous, he remembers a rectifying futurity;—he is religious not only when surprised by occasions such as these, but also on set occasions; he had regular worship in his family while at Ellisland—we know not how it was at Dumfries, but we do know that there he catechised his children every Sabbath evening;—Nay, he does not enter a Druidical circle without a prayer to God.

He viewed the Creator chiefly in his attributes of love, goodness, and mercy. “In proportion as we are wrung with grief, or distracted with anxiety, the ideas of a superintending Deity, an Almighty protector, are doubly dear.” Him he never lost sight of or confidence in, even in the depths of his remorse. An avenging God was too seldom in his contemplations—from the little severity in his own character—from a philosophical view of the inscrutable causes of human frailty—and most of all, from a diseased aversion to what was so much the theme of the sour Calvinism around him; but which would have risen up an appalling truth in such a soul as his, had it been habituated to profounder thought on the mysterious corruption of our fallen nature.

Sceptical thoughts as to revealed religion had assailed his mind, while with expanding powers it “communed with the glorious universe;” and in 1787 he writes from Edinburgh to a “Mr. James Candlish, student in physie, Glasgow College,” who had favoured him with a long argumentative infidel letter, “I, likewise, since you and I were first acquainted,

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in the pride of despising old women's stories, ventured in 'the daring path Spinoza trod;' but experience of the weakness, not the strength of human powers, *made me glad to grasp at revealed religion.*" When at Ellisland he writes to Mrs. Dunlop, "My idle reasonings sometimes make me a little sceptical, but the necessities of my heart always give the cold philosophizings 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." And again, next year, from the same place to the same correspondent, "That there is an incomprehensible Great Being, to whom I owe my existence, and that he must be intimately acquainted with the operations and progress of the internal machinery and consequent outward deportment of this creature which he has made—these are, I think, self-evident propositions. That there is a real and eternal distinction between virtue and vice, and consequently, that I am an accountable creature; that from the seeming nature of the human mind, as well as from the evident imperfection, nay positive injustice, in the administration of affairs, both in the natural and moral worlds, there must be a retributive scene of existence beyond the grave; must, I think, be allowed by every one who will give himself a moment's reflection. I will go farther and affirm, that from the sublimity, excellence, and purity of his doctrine and precepts, unparalleled by all the aggregated wisdom and learning of many preceding ages, though to *appearance* he himself was the obscurest and most illiterate of our species; therefore Jesus was from God." Indeed, all his best letters to Mrs. Dunlop are full of the expression of religious feeling and religious faith; though it must be confessed with pain, that he speaks with more confidence in the truth of natural than of revealed religion, and too often lets sentiments inadvertently escape him, that, taken by themselves, would imply that his religious belief was but a Christianized

Theism. Of the immortality of the soul, he never expresses any serious doubt, though now and then his expressions, though beautiful, want their usual force, as if he felt the inadequacy of the human mind to the magnitude of the theme. "Ye venerable sages, and holy flamens, is there probability in your conjectures, truth in your stories of another world beyond death; or are they all alike baseless visions and fabricated fables? If there is another life, it must be only for the just, the amiable, and the humane. What a flattering idea this of the world to come! Would to God I as firmly believed it as I ardently wish it."

How then could honour'd Thomas Carlyle bring himself to affirm, "that Burns had no religion?" His religion was in much imperfect—but its incompleteness you discern only on a survey of all his effusions, and by inference; for his particular expressions of a religious kind are genuine, and as acknowledgments of the superabundant goodness and greatness of God, they are in unison with the sentiments of the devoutest Christian. But remorse never suggests to him the inevitable corruption of man; Christian humility he too seldom dwells on, though without it there cannot be Christian faith; and he is silent on the need of reconciliation between the divine attributes of Justice and Mercy. The absence of all this might pass unnoticed, were not the religious sentiment so prevalent in his confidential communications with his friends in his most serious and solemn moods. In them there is frequent, habitual recognition of the Creator; and who that finds joy and beauty in nature has not the same? It may be well supposed that if common men are more ideal in religion than in other things, so would be Burns. He who lent the colours of his fancy to common things, would not withhold them from divine. Something—he knew not what—he would exact of man—more impressively reverential than any thing he is wont to offer to God, or perhaps can offer in the way of institution—in temples made with hands. The *heartfelt* adoration always has a grace for him—in the silent bosom—in the lonely cottage—in any place where circumstances are a pledge of its reality; but the moment it ceases to be *heartfelt*, and visibly so, it loses his respect, it seems as profanation. "Mine is the religion of the

breast;" and if it be not, what is it worth? But it must also revive a right spirit within us; and there may be gratitude for goodness without such change as is required of us in the gospel. He was too buoyant with immortal spirit within him, not to credit its immortal destination; he was too thoughtful in his human love not to feel how different must be our affections if they are towards flowers which the blast of death may wither, or towards spirits which are but beginning to live in our sight, and are gathering good and evil here for an eternal life. Burns believed that by his own unassisted understanding, and his own unassisted heart, he saw and felt those great truths, forgetful of this great truth, that he had been taught them in the Written Word. Had all he learned in the "auld clay biggin" become a blank—all the knowledge inspired into his heart during the evenings, when "the sire turned o'er, wi' patriarchal grace, the big ha'bible, ance his father's pride," how little or how much would he then have known of God and Immortality? In that delusion he shared more or less with one and all—whether poets or philosophers—who have put their trust in natural Theology. As to the glooms in which his sceptical reason had been involved, they do not seem to have been so thick—so dense—as in the case of men without number who have by the blessing of God become true Christians. Of his levities on certain celebrations of religious rites, we before ventured an explanation; and while it is to be lamented that he did not more frequently dedicate the genius that shed so holy a lustre over "The Cotter's Saturday Night," to the service of religion, let it be remembered how few poets have done so—alas! too few—that he, like his tuneful brethren, must often have been deterred by a sense of his own unworthiness from approaching its awful mysteries—and above all, that he was called to his account before he had attained his thoughtful prime.

And now that we are approaching the close of our Memoir, it may be well for a little while clearly to consider Burns's position in this world of ours, where we humans often find ourselves, we cannot tell how, in strange positions; and where there are on all hands so many unintelligible things going on, that in all languages an active existence is assumed

of such powers as Chance, Fortune, and Fate. Was he more unhappy than the generality of gifted men? In what did that unhappiness consist? How far was it owing to himself or others?

We have seen that up to early manhood his life was virtuous, and therefore must have been happy—that by magnanimously enduring a hard lot, he made it veritably a light one—and that though subject "to a constitutional melancholy or hypochondriasm that made him fly to solitude," he enjoyed the society of his own humble sphere with proportionate enthusiasm, and even then derived deep delight from his genius. That genius quickly waxed strong, and very suddenly he was in full power as a poet. No sooner was passion indulged than it prevailed—and he who had so often felt during his abstinent sore-toiled youth that "a blink of rest's a sweet enjoyment," had now often to rue the self-brought trouble that banishes rest even from the bed of labour, whose sleep would otherwise be without a dream. "I have for some time been pining under secret wretchedness, from causes which you pretty well know—the pang of disappointment, the sting of pride, with some wandering stabs of remorse, which never fail to settle on my vitals like vultures, when attention is not called away by the calls of society, or the vagaries of the muse."¹ These agonies had a well-known particular cause, but his errors were frequent, and to his own eyes flagrant—yet he was no irreligious person—and exclaimed—"O, thou great unknown Power!—thou Almighty God! who hast lighted up reason in my breast, and blest me with immortality!—I have frequently wandered from that order and regularity necessary for the perfection of thy works, yet thou hast never left me nor forsaken me!"² What signified it to him that he was then very poor? The worst evils of poverty are moral evils, and them he then knew not; nay in that school he was trained to many virtues, which might not have been so conspicuous even in his noble nature, but for that severest nurture. Shall we ask, what signified it to him that he was very poor to the last? Alas! it signified much; for when a poor man becomes a husband and a father, a new heart is created within him, and he

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¹ Letter to Robt. Aiken, October, 1786. ² The same.

often finds himself trembling in fits of unendurable, because unavailing fears. Of such anxieties Burns suffered much; yet better men than Burns—better because sober and more religious—have suffered far more; nor in their humility and resignation did they say even unto themselves “that God had given their share.” His worst sufferings had their source in a region impenetrable to the visitations of mere worldly calamities; and might have been even more direful, had his life basked in the beams of fortune, in place of being chilled in its shade. “My mind my kingdom is”—few men have had better title to make that boast than Burns; but sometimes raged there *ut quam civilit bella*—and on the rebellious passions, no longer subjects, at times it seemed as if he cared not to impose peace.

Why, then, such clamour about his condition—such outcry about his circumstances—such horror of his Excisemanship? Why should Scotland, on whose “brow shame is ashamed to sit,” hang down her head when bethinking her of how she treated him? Hers the glory of having *produced him*; where lies the blame of his penury, his soul’s trouble, his living body’s emaciation, its untimely death?

His country cried, “All hail, mine own inspired Bard!” and his heart was in heaven. But heaven on earth is a mid-region not unvisited by storms. Divine indeed must be the descending light, but the ascending gloom may be dismal; in imagination’s airy realms the Poet cannot forget he is a Man—his passions pursue him thither—and “that mystical roof fretted with golden fire, why it appears no other thing to them than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours.” The primeval curse is felt through all the regions of being; and he who in the desire of fame having merged all other desires, finds himself on a sudden in its blaze, is disappointed of his spirit’s corresponding transport, without which it is but a glare; and remembering the sweet calm of his obscurity, when it was enlivened not disturbed by soaring aspirations, would fain fly back to its secluded shades, and be again his own lowly natural self in the privacy of his own humble birth-place. Something of this kind happened to Burns. He was soon sick of the dust and din that attended him on his illumined path; and felt that he had been happier at

Moss-giel than he ever was in the Metropolis—when but to relieve his heart of its pathos, he sung in the solitary field to the mountain daisy, than when to win applause on the crowded street he chaunted in ambitious strains—

Edna! Scotia’s darling seat!
All hail thy palaces and towers,
Where once beneath a monarch’s feet
Sat Legislation’s sov’reign powers!
From marking wildly-scatter’d flowers,
As on the banks of Ayr I stray’d,
And slinging, lone, the lug’ring hours,
I shelter in thy honour’d shade.

He returned to his natural condition when he settled at Ellisland. Nor can we see what some have seen, any strong desire in him after preferment to a higher sphere. Such thoughts sometimes must have entered his mind, but found no permanent dwelling there; and he fell back, not only without pain, but with more than pleasure, on all the remembrances of his humble life. He resolved to pursue it in the same scenes, and the same occupations, and to continue to be what he had always been—a Farmer.

And why should the Caledonian Hunt have wished to divert or prevent him? Why should Scotland? What patronage, pray tell us, ought the Million and Two Thirds to have bestowed on their poet? With five hundred pounds in the pockets of his buckskin breeches, perhaps he was about as rich as yourself—and then he had a mine—which we hope you have too—in his brain. Something no doubt *might* have been done for him,—and if you insist that something *should*, we are not in the humour of argumentation, and shall merely observe that the opportunities to serve him were somewhat narrowed by the want of special preparation for any profession; but supposing that nobody thought of promoting him, it was simply because every body was thinking of getting promoted himself; and though selfishness is very odious, not more so surely in Scotsmen than in other people, except indeed that more is expected from them on account of their superior intelligence and virtue.

Burns’s great calling here below was to illustrate the peasant life of Scotland. Ages may pass without another arising fit for that task; meanwhile the whole pageant of Scottish life has passed away without a record. Let him

remain, therefore, in the place which best fits him for the task, though it may not be the best for his personal comfort. If an individual can serve his country at the expense of his comfort, he *must*, and others should not hinder him; if self-sacrifice is required of him, they must not be blamed for permitting it. Burns followed his calling to the last, with more lets and hindrances than the friends of humanity could have wished; but with a power that might have been weakened by his removal from what he loved and gloried in—by the disruption of his heart from its habits, and the breaking up of that custom which with many men becomes second nature, but which with him was corroboration and sanctification of the first, both being but one agency—its products how beautiful! Like the flower and fruit of a tree that grows well only in its own soil and by its own river.

But a *Gauger*! What do we say to that? Was it not most unworthy? We ask, unworthy what? You answer, his genius. But who expects the employments by which men live to be entirely worthy of their genius—congenial with their dispositions—suited to the structure of their souls? It sometimes happens—but far oftener not—rarely in the case of poets—and most rarely of all in the case of such a poet as Burns. It is a law of nature that the things of the world come by honest industry, and that genius is its own reward, in the pleasure of its exertions and its applause. But who made Burns a gauger? Himself. It was his own choice. "I have been feeling all the various rotations and movements within, respecting the excise," he writes to Aiken soon after the Kilmarnock edition. "There are many things plead strongly against it," he adds, but these were all connected with his unfortunate private affairs—to the calling itself he had no repugnance—what he most feared was "the uncertainty of getting soon into business." To Graham of Fintry he writes, a year after the Edinburgh edition, "You know, I dare say, of an application I lately made to your Board to be admitted an officer of Excise. I have, according to form, been examined by a supervisor, and to-day I 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 patronizing friend.

Propriety of conduct as a man, and fidelity and attention as an officer, I dare engage for; *but with any thing like business, except manual labour*, I am totally unequalled. . . . 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 the independence so dear to my soul, but which has been too often so distant from my situation." To Miss Chalmers he writes, "You will condemn me for the next step I have taken. I have entered into the Excise. . . . 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 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." To Dr. Moore he writes, "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. . . . 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." It is needless to multiply quotations to the same effect. Burns with his usual good sense took into account, in his own estimate of such a calling, not his genius, which had really nothing to do with it, but all his early circumstances, and his present prospects—nor does it seem at any time to have been a source of much discomfort to himself—on the contrary, he looks forward to an increase of his emoluments with hope and satisfaction. We are not now speaking of the disappointment of his hopes of rising in the profession, but of the profession itself—"A supervisor's income varies," he says, in a letter to Heron of that ilk, "from about a hundred and twenty to two hundred a year; but the business is an incessant drudgery, and would be nearly a complete bar to every species of literary pursuit. The moment I am appointed supervisor, in the common routine I may be nominated on the collector's list; and this is always a business purely of

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political patronage. A Collectorship varies much, from better than two hundred a year to near a thousand. They also come forward by precedence on the list; and have, besides a handsome income, a life of complete leisure. A life of literary leisure, with a decent competency, is the summit of my wishes." With such views, Burns became a gauger as well as a farmer—we can see no degradation in his having done so—no reason why whimpering cockneys should continually cry, "Shame! shame! on Scotland" for having let "Burns"—as they pronounce him—adopt his own mode of life. Allan Cunningham informs us that the officers of excise on the Nith were then a very superior set of men indeed to those who now ply on the Thames. Burns saw nothing to despise in honest men who did their duty—he could pick and choose among them—and you do not imagine that he was obliged to associate exclusively or intimately with ushers of the rod. Gaugers are gregarious, but not so gregarious as barristers and bagmen. The Club is composed of gauger, shop-keeper, schoolmaster, surgeon, retired merchant, minister, assistant-and-successor, elevant militia captain, one of the heroes of the Peninsula with a wooden leg, and haply a horse-marine. These are the ordinary members; but among the honorary you find men of high degree, squires of some thousands, and baronets of some hundreds a year. The rise in that department has been sometimes so sudden as to astonish the unexcised. A gauger, of a very few years' standing, has been known, after a quarter's supervisorship, to ascend the collector's—and ere this planet had performed another revolution round the sun—the Comptroller's chair—from which he might well look down on the Chancellor of England.

Let it not be thought that we are running counter to the common feeling in what we have now been saying, nor blame us for speaking in a tone of levity on a serious subject. We cannot bear to hear people at one hour scorning the distinctions of rank, and acknowledging none but of worth; and at another whining for the sake of worth without rank, and estimating a man's happiness—which is something more than his respectability—by the amount of his income, or according to the calling from which it is derived. Such persons

cannot have read Burns. Or do they think that such sentiments as "The rank is but the guinea's stamp, the man's the gowd for a' that," are all very fine in verse, but have no place in the prose of life—no application among men of sense to its concerns? But in how many departments have not men to addict themselves almost all their lives to the performance of duties, which merely as acts or occupations, are in themselves as unintellectual as polishing a pin? Why, a pin-polisher may be a poet—who rounds its head an orator—who sharpens its point a metaphysician. Wait his time, and you hear the first slinging like a nightingale in the autumnal season; the second roaring like a bull, and no mistake; the third, in wandering mazes lost, like a prisoner trying to thread the Cretan labyrinth without his clue. Let a man but have something that he must do or starve, not be nice about its nature; and be ye under no alarm about the degradation of his soul. Let him even be a tailor—nay, that is carrying the principle too far; but any other handicraft let him for short hours—ten out of the eighteen (six he may sleep) for three score years and ten assiduously cultivate, or if fate have placed him in a ropery, doggedly pursue; and if nature have given him genius, he will find time to instruct or enchant the world—if but goodness, time to benefit it by his example, "though never heard of half a mile from home."

Who in this country, if you except an occasional statesman, take their places at once in the highest grade of their calling? In the learned professions, what obscurest toil must not the brightest go through! Under what a pressure of mean observances the proudest stoop their heads! The colour-ensign in a black regiment has risen to be colonel in the Riflebrigade. The middy in a gun-brig on the African station has commanded a three-decker at Trafalgar. Through successive grades they must all go—the armed and the gowned alike; the great law of advancement holds among men of noble and of ignoble birth—not without exceptions indeed in favour of family, and of fortune too, more or less frequent, more or less flagrant—but talent, and integrity, and honour, and learning, and genius, are not often heard complaining of foul play—if you deny it, their triumph is the more glorious, for

generally they win the day, and when they have won it—that is, risen in their profession—what becomes of them then? Soldiers or civilians, they must go where they are ordered—in obedience to the same great law; they appeal to their services when insisting on being sent—and in some pestilential climate swift death benumbs

Hands that the rod of empire might have sway'd—
Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre.

It is drudgery to sit six, or eight, or ten hours a day as a clerk in the India-house; but Charles Lamb endured it for forty years, not without much headache and heartache too, we dare say; but Ella shows us how the unwearied flame of genius can please itself by playing in the thickest gloom—how fancy can people dreariest vacancy with rarest creatures holding communion in quaintest converse with the finest feelings of the thoughtful heart—how eyes dim with poring all day on a ledger, can gladden through the evening, and far on into the night, with those alternate visitings of humour and of pathos that for a while come and go as if from regions in the spirit separate and apart, but ere long by their quiet blending persuade us to believe that their sources are close adjacent, and that the streams, when left to themselves, often love to unite their courses, and to flow on together with merry or melancholy music, just as we choose to think it, as smiles may be the order of the hour, or as we may be commanded by the touch of some unknown power within us to indulge the luxury of tears.

Why, then, we ask again, such lamentation for the fate of Burns? Why should not he have been left to make his own way in life like other men gifted or ungifted? A man of great genius in the prime of life is poor. But his poverty did not for any long time necessarily affect the welfare or even comfort of the poet, and therefore created no obligation on his country to interfere with his lot. He was born and bred in an humble station—but such as it was, it did not impede his culture, fame, or service to his people, or, rightly considered, his own happiness; let him remain in it, or leave it as he will and can, but there was no obligation on others to take him out of it. He had already risen superior to circumstances—

and would do so still; his glory availed much in having conquered them; give him better, and the peculiar species of his glory will depart. Give him better, and it may be, that he achieves no more glory of any kind. For nothing is more uncertain than the effects of circumstances on character. Some men, we know, are specially adapted to adverse circumstances, rising thereby as the kite rises to the adverse breeze, and falling when the adversity ceases. Such was probably Burns's nature—his genius being piqued to activity by the contradictions of his fortune.

Suppose that some generous rich man had accidentally become acquainted with the lad Robert Burns, and grieving to think that such a mind should continue boorish among boors, had, much to his credit, taken him from the plough, sent him to College, and given him a complete education. Doubtless he would have excelled; for he was "quick to learn, and wise to know." But he would not have been SCOTLAND'S BURNS. The prodigy had not been exhibited of a poet of the first order in that rank of life. It is an instructive spectacle for the world, and let the instruction take effect by the continuance of the spectacle for its natural period. Let the poet work at that calling which is clearly meant for him—he is "native and endued to the element" of his situation—there is no appearance of his being alien or strange to it—he professes proudly that his ambition is to illustrate the very life he exists in—his happiest moments are in doing so—and he is reconciled to it by its being thus blended with the happiest exertions of his genius. We must look at his lot as a whole—from beginning to end—and so looked at it was not unsuitable—but the reverse; for as to its later afflictions they were not such as of necessity belonged to it, were partly owing to himself, partly to others, partly to evil influences peculiar not to his calling, but to the times.

If Burns had not been prematurely cut off, it is not to be doubted that he would have got promotion either by favour, or in the ordinary course; and had that happened he would not have had much cause for complaint, nor would he have complained that like other men he had to wait events, and reach competence or affluence by the usual routine. He would,

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like other men, have then looked back on his narrow circumstances, and their privations, as conditions which, from the first, he knew must precede preferment, and would no more have thought such hardships peculiar to his lot, than the first Lieutenant of a frigate, the rough work he had to perform, on small pay, and no delicate mess between decks, when he was a mate, though then perhaps a better seaman than the Commodore.

With these sentiments we do not expect that all who honour this Memoir with a perusal will entirely sympathize; but imperfect as it is, we have no fear of its favourable reception by our friends, on the score of its pervading spirit. As to the poor creatures who purse up their unmeaning mouths, trying too without the necessary feature to sport the supercilious—and instead of speaking daggers, pip pins against the “Scotch”—they are just the very vermin who used to bite Burns, and one would pause for a moment in the middle of a sentence to impale a dozen of them on one’s pen, if they happened to crawl across one’s paper. But our Southern brethren—the noble English—who may not share these sentiments of ours—will think “more in sorrow than in anger” of Burns’s fate, and for his sake will be loth to blame his mother land. They must think with a sigh of their own Bloomfield and Clare! Our Burns indeed was a greater far; but they will call to mind the calamities of their men of genius, of discoverers in science, who advanced the wealth of nations, and died of hunger—of musicians who taught the souls of the people in angelic harmonies to commerce with heaven, and dropt unhonoured into a hole of earth—of painters who glorified the very sunrise and sunset, and were buried in places for a long time obscure as the shadow of oblivion—and surpassing glory and shame of all—

“OF MIGHTY POETS IN THEIR MISERY DEAD.”

We never think of the closing years of Burns’s life, without feeling what not many seem to have felt, that much more of their unhappiness is to be attributed to the most mistaken notion he had unfortunately taken up, of there being something degrading to genius in writing for money, than perhaps to all other causes put together, certainly far more than to his

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professional calling, however unsuitable that may have been to a poet. By persisting in a line of conduct pursuant to that persuasion, he kept himself in perpetual poverty; and though it is not possible to blame him severely for such a fault, originating as it did in the generous enthusiasm of the poetical character, a most serious fault it was, and its consequences were most lamentable. So far from being an extravagant man, in the common concerns of life he observed a proper parsimony; and they must have been careless readers indeed, both of his prose and verse, who have taxed him with lending the colours of his genius to set off with a false lustre that profligate profuseness, habitual only with the selfish, and irreconcilable with any steadfast domestic virtue.

To catch dame Fortune’s golden snail,
Assiduous wait upon her;
And gather gear by ev’ry wile
That’s justified by honour;
Not for to hide it in a hedge,
Nor for a train-attendant,
BUT FOR THE GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE
OF BEING INDEPENDENT.

Such was the advice he gave to a young friend in 1786, and in 1788, in a letter to Robert Ainslie, he says, “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 own 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.” Similar sentiments will recur to every one familiar with his writings—all through them till the very end. His very songs are full of them—many of the best impressively preaching in sweetest numbers industry and thrift. So was he privileged to indulge in poetic transports—to picture, without reproach, the genial hours in the poor man’s life, alas! but too unfrequent, and therefore to be enjoyed with a lawful revelry, at once obedient to the iron-tongued knell that commands it to cease. So was he

justified in scorning the close-fisted niggardliness that forces up one finger after another, as if *chirked* by a screw, and then shows to the pauper a palm with a doit. "Take care of the pennies, and the pounds will take care of themselves," is an excellent maxim; but we do not look for illustrations of it in poetry; perhaps it is too importunate in prose. Full-grown moralists and political economists, eager to promote the virtue and the wealth of nations, can study it scientifically in Adam Smith—but the boy must have two buttons to his fob and a clasp, who would seek for it in Robert Burns. The bias of poor human nature seems to lean sufficiently to self, and to require something to balance it the other way; what more effectual than the touch of a poet's finger? We cannot relieve every wretch we meet—yet if we "take care of the pennies," how shall the hunger that beseeches us on the street get a bap? If we let "the pounds take care of themselves," how shall we answer to God at the great day of judgment—remembering how often we had let "unpitied want retire to die—" the white-faced widow pass us unrelieved, in faded weeds that seemed as if they were woven of dust?

In his poetry, Burns taught love and pity; in his life he practised them. Nay, though seldom free from the pressure of poverty, so ignorant was he of the science of duty, that to the very last he was a notorious giver of alms. Many an impostor must have preyed on his meal-girnel at Ellisland; perhaps the old sick sailor was one, who nevertheless repaid several weeks' board and lodging with a cutter one-foot keel, and six pound burden, which young Bobby Burns—such is this uncertain world—*grat* one Sabbath to see a total wreck far off in the mid-eddies of the mighty Nith. But the idiot who got his dole from the poet's own hand, as often as he chose to come churming up the Vennel, he was no impostor, and though he had lost his wits, retained a sense of gratitude, and returned a blessing in such phrase as they can articulate "whose lives are hidden with God."

How happened it, then, that such a man was so neglectful of his wife and family, as to let their hearts often ache while he was in possession of a productive genius that might so easily have procured for them all the neces-

saries, and conveniences, and some even of the luxuries of life? By the Edinburgh edition of his poems, and the copy-right to Creech, he had made a little fortune, and we know how well he used it. From the day of his final settlement with that money-making, storytelling, magisterial bibliopole, who rejoiced for many years in the name of Provost—to the week before his death, his poetry, and that, too, sorely against his will, brought him in—*ten pounds!* Had he thereby annually earned fifty—what happy faces at that fire-side! how different that household! comparatively how calm that troubled life!

All the poetry, by which he was suddenly made so famous, had been written, as you know, without the thought of *money* having so much as flitted across his mind. The delight of embodying in verse the visions of his inspired fancy—of awakening the sympathies of the few rustic auditors in his own narrow circle, whose hearts he well knew throbbed with the same emotions that are dearest to humanity all over the wide world—that had been at first all in all to him—the young poet exulting in his power and in the proof of his power—till, as the assurance of his soul in its divine endowment waxed stronger and stronger, he beheld his country's muse with the holly-wreath in her hand, and bowed his head to receive the everlasting halo—"And wear thou *this*, she solemn said"—and "in the auld clay biggin" he was happy to the full measure of his large heart's desire. His poems grew up like flowers before his tread—they came out like singing birds from the thickets—they grew like clouds on the sky—there they were in their beauty, and he hardly knew they were his own—so quiet had been their creation, so like the process of nature among her material loveliness, in the season of spring when life is again evolved out of death, and the renovation seems as if it would never more need the Almighty hand, in that immortal union of earth and heaven.

You will not think these words extravagant, if you have well considered the *ecstasy* in which the spirit of the poet was *traced* up above the carking cares of his toilsome life, by the consciousness of the genius that had been given him to idealize it. "My heart rejoiced in Nature's joy," he says, remembering the beau-

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tiful happiness of a summer day reposing on the woods; and from that line we know how intimate had been his communion with Nature long before he had indited to her a single lay of love. And still as he wandered among her secret haunts he thought of her poets—with a fearful hope that he might one day be of the number—and most of all of Fergusson and Ramsay, because they belonged to Scotland, were Scottish in all their looks, and all their language, in the very habits of their bodies, and in the very frame of their souls—humble names now indeed compared with his own, but to the end sacred in his generous and grateful bosom; for at “The Farmer’s Ingle” his imagination had kindled into the “Cotter’s Saturday Night;” in the “Gentle Shepherd” he had seen many a happy sight that had furnished the matter, we had almost said inspired the emotion, of some of his sweetest and most gladsome songs. In his own every-day working world he walked as a man contented with the pleasure arising in his mere human heart; but that world the poet could purify and elevate at will into a celestial sphere, still lightened by Scottish skies, still melodious with Scottish streams, still inhabited by Scottish life—sweet as reality—dear as truth—yet visionary as fiction’s dream, and felt to be in part the work of his own creation. Proudly, therefore, on that poorest soil the peasant poet had speed the plough—proudly he stooped his shoulders to the sack of corn, itself a cart-load—proudly he swept the seythe that swathed the flowery herbage—proudly he grasped the sickle—but tenderly too he “turned the weeder-clips aside, and spared the symbol dear.”

Well was he entitled to say to his friend Aiken, in the dedicatory stanza of the “Cotter’s Saturday Night:”

My lov’d, my honour’d, much respected friend !
No mercenary bard his homage pays;
With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end,
My dearest need, a friend’s esteem and praise.

All that he hoped to make by the Kilmarnock edition was twenty pounds to carry him to the West Indies, heedless of the yellow fever. At Edinburgh fortune hand in hand with fame descended on the bard in a shower of gold; but he had not courted “the smiles of the fickle goddess,” and she soon wheeled away with scornful laughter out of his sight for ever

and a day. His poetry had been composed in the fields, with not a plack in the pocket of the poet; and we verily believe that he thought no more of the circulating medium than did the poor mouse in whose fate he saw his own—but more unfortunate!

Still thou art blest, compar’d wi’ me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But, och! I backward cast my ee
On prospects drear!
An’ forward, tho’ I canna see,
I guess an’ fear.

At Ellisland his colley bore on his collar, “Robert Burns, poet;” and on his removal to Dumfries, we know that he indulged the dream of devoting all his leisure time to poetry—a dream how imperfectly realized! Poor Johnson, an old Edinburgh friend, begged in his poverty help to his *Museum*, and Thomson, not even an old Edinburgh acquaintance, in his pride—no ignoble pride—solicited it for his “Collection;” and fired by the thought of embellishing the body of Scottish song, he spurned the gentle and guarded proffer of remuneration in money, and set to work as he had done of yore in the spirit of love, assured from sweet experience that inspiration was its own reward. Sell a song! as well sell a wild-flower plucked from a spring-bank at sun-rise. The one pervading feeling does indeed expand itself in a song, like a wild-flower in the breath and dew of morning, which before was but a bud, and we are touched with a new sense of beauty at the full disclosure. As a song should always be simple, the flower we liken it to is the lily or the violet. The leaves of the lily are white, but it is not a monotonous whiteness—the leaves of the violet, sometimes “dim as the lids of Cytherea’s eyes”—for Shakspeare has said so—are, when well and happy, blue as her eyes themselves, while they looked languishingly on Adonis. Yet the exquisite colour seems of different shades in its rarest richness; and even so as lily or violet shiftingly the same, should be a song in its simplicity, variously tinged with fine distinctions of the one colour of that pervading feeling—now brighter, now dimmer, as open and shut the valves of that mystery, the heart. Sell a song! No—no—said Burns—“You shall have hundreds for nothing—and we shall all sail down the stream of time together, now to merry,

and now to sorrowful music, and the dwellers on its banks, as we glide by, shall bless us by name, and call us of the Immortals."

It was in this way that Burns was beguiled by the remembrance of the inspirations of his youthful prime, into the belief that it would be absolutely sordid to write songs for money; and thus he continued for years to enrich others by the choicest products of his genius, himself remaining all the while, alas! too poor. The richest man in the town was not more regular in the settlement of his accounts, but sometimes on Saturday nights he had not wherewithal to pay the expenses of the week's subsistence, and had to borrow a pound note. He was more ready to lend one, and you know he died out of debt. But his family suffered privations it is sad to think of—though to be sure the children were too young to grieve, and soon fell asleep, and Jean was a cheerful creature, strong at heart, and proud of her famous Robin, the Poet of Scotland, whom the whole world admired, but she alone loved, and so far from ever upbraiding him, welcomed him at all hours to her arms and to her heart. It is all very fine talking about the delight he enjoyed in the composition of his matchless lyrics, and the restoration of all those faded and broken songs of other ages, burnished by a few touches of his hand to surpassing beauty; but what we lament is, that with the Poet it was not "No song, no supper," but "No supper for any song"—that with an infatuation singular even in the history of the poetic tribe, he adhered to what he had resolved, in the face of distress which, had he chosen it, he could have changed into comfort, and by merely doing as all others did, have secured a competency to his wife and children. Infatuation! It is too strong a word—therefore substitute some other weaker in expression of blame—nay, let it be—if so you will—some gentle term of praise and of pity; for in this most selfish world, 'tis so rare to be of self utterly regardless, that the scorn of self may for a moment be thought a virtue, even when indulged to the loss of the tenderly beloved. Yet the great natural affections have their duties superior over all others between man and man; and he who sets them aside, in the generosity or the joy of genius, must frequently feel that by such dereliction he has become

amenable to conscience, and in hours when enthusiasm is tamed by reflection, can at escape the tooth of remorse.

How it would have kindled all his highest powers, to have felt assured that by their exercise in the Poet's own vocation he could not only keep want from his door "with stern alarum banishing sweet sleep," but clothe, lodge, and board "the wife and weans," as sumptuously as if he had been an absolute supervisor! In one article alone was he a man of expensive habits—it was quite a craze with him to have his Jean dressed *genteelly*—for she had a fine figure, and as she stepped along the green, you might have taken the matron for a maid, so light her foot, so animated her bearing, as if care had never imposed any burden on her not ungraceful shoulders heavier than the milk-pail she had learned at Mossiel to bear on her head. 'Tis said that she was the first in her rank at Dumfries to sport a gingham gown, and Burns's taste in ribbons had been instructed by the rainbow. To such a pitch of extravagance had he carried his craze that, when dressed for church, Mrs. Burns, it was conjectured, could not have had on her person much less than the value of two pounds sterling money, and the boys, from their dress and demeanour, you might have mistaken for a gentleman's sons. Then he resolved they should have the best education going; and the Hon. the Provost, the Bailies, and Town Council, he petitioned thus: "The literary taste and liberal spirit of your good town has so ably filled the various departments of your schools, as to make it a very great object for a parent to have his children educated in them. Still, to me, a stranger, with my large family, and very stinted income, to give my young ones that education I wish, at the high-school fees which a stranger pays, will bear hard upon me. . . . Some years ago your good town did me the honour of making me an honorary Burgess. —Will you then allow me to request that this mark of distinction may extend so far, as to put me on a footing of a real freeman of the town in the schools?" Had not "his income been so stinted," we know how he would have spent it.

Then the world—the gracious and grateful world—"wondered and of her wondering found no end," how and why it happened that

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Burns was publishing no more poems. What was he about? Had his genius deserted him? Was the vein wrought out? of fine ore indeed, but thin, and now there was but rubbish. His contributions to Johnson were not much known, and but some six of his songs in the first half part of Thomson appeared during his life. But what if he had himself given to the world, through the channel of the regular trade, and for his own behoof, in Parts, or all at once, THOSE TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY SONGS—new and old—original and restored—with all those disquisitions, annotations, and ever so many more, themselves often very poetry indeed—what would the world have felt, thought, said, and done then? She would at least not have believed that the author of the "Cotter's Saturday Night" was—a drunkard. And what would Burns have felt, thought, said, and done then? He would have felt that he was turning his divine gift to a sacred purpose—he would have thought well of himself, and in that just appreciation there would have been peace—he would have said thousands on thousands of high and noble sentiments in discourses and in letters, with an untroubled voice and a steady pen, the sweet persuasive eloquence of the happy—he would have done greater things than it had before entered into his heart to conceive—his drama of the Bruce would have come forth magnificent from an imagination elevated by the joy that was in his heart—his Scottish Georgics would have written themselves, and would have been pure Virgilian—Tale upon Tale, each a day's work or a week's, would have taken the shine out of "Tam o' Shanter."

And here it is incumbent on us to record our sentiments regarding Mr. Thomson's conduct towards Burns in his worst extremity, which has not only been assailed by "anonymous scribblers," whom perhaps he may rightly regard with contempt; but as he says in his letter to his esteemed friend, the ingenious and energetic Robert Chambers, to "his great surprise, by some writers who might have been expected to possess sufficient judgment to see the matter in its true light."

In the "melancholy letter received through Mrs. Hyslop," as Mr. Thomson well calls it, dated April, Burns writes, "Alas! my dear Thomson, I fear it will be some time before I

tune my lyre again! 'By Babel streams,' &c. Almost ever since I wrote you last (in February when he thanked Mr. Thomson for 'a handsome elegant present to Mrs. B——,' we believe a worsted shawl), I have only known existence by the pressure of the heavy hand of Sickness, and have counted time but by the repercussions of pain! Rheumatism, cold, and fever have formed to me a terrible Trinity in Unity, which makes me close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope." In his answer to that letter, dated 4th of May, Mr. Thomson writes, "I need not tell you, my good Sir, what concern the receipt of your last gave me, and how much I sympathize in your sufferings. But do not, I beseech you, give yourself up to despondency, nor speak the language of despair. The vigour of your constitution I trust will soon set you on your feet again; *and then it is to be hoped you will see the wisdom and necessity of taking due care of a life so valuable to your family, to your friends, and to the world.* Trusting that your next will bring agreeable accounts of your convalescence and returning good spirits, I remain, with sincere regard, yours." This is kind, as it should be; and the advice given to Burns is good, though perhaps, under the circumstances, it might just as well have been spared. In a subsequent letter without date, Burns writes, "I have great hopes that the genial influence of the approaching summer will set me to rights, but as yet I cannot boast of returning health. I have now reason to believe that my complaint is a flying gout: a sad business." Then comes that most heart-rending letter, in which the dying Burns, in terror of a jail implores the loan of five pounds—and the well-known reply. "Ever since I received your melancholy letter by Mrs. Hyslop, I have been ruminating in what manner I could endeavour to alleviate your sufferings," and so on. Shorter rumination than of *three months* might, one would think, have sufficed to mature some plan for the alleviation of such sufferings, and human ingenuity has been more severely taxed than it would have been in devising means to carry it into effect. The recollection of a letter written *three years before*, when the Poet was in high health and spirits, needed not to have stayed his hand. "The fear of offending your independent spirit" seems a bugbear indeed.

"With great pleasure I enclose a draft for the very sum I proposed sending!! Would I were CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER but for one day for your sake!!!"

Josiah Walker, however, to whom Mr. Thomson gratefully refers, says, "a few days before Burns expired he applied to Mr. Thomson for a loan of £5, in a note which showed the irritable and distracted state of his mind, and his commendable judgment instantly remitted the precise sum, foreseeing that had he, at that moment, presumed to exceed that request, he would have exasperated the irritation and resentment of the haughty invalid, and done him more injury, by agitating his passions, than could be repaired by administering more largely to his wants." Haughty invalid! Alas! he was humble enough now. "After all my boasted independence, stern necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds!" Call not that a pang of pride. It is the outcry of a wounded spirit shrinking from the last, worst arrow of affliction. In one breath he implores succour and forgiveness from the man to whom he had been a benefactor. "*Forgive me this earnestness—but the horrors of a jail have made me half-distracted. . . . Forgive, FORGIVE ME!*" He asks no gift—he but begs to borrow—and trusts to the genius God had given him for ability to repay the loan; nay, he encloses his *last song*, "Fairest Maid on Devon's Banks," as in part payment! But oh! save Robert Burns from dying in prison. What hauteur! And with so "haughty an invalid" how shall a musical brother deal, so as not "to exasperate his irritation and resentment," and do him more injury "by agitating his passions, than could be repaired by administering more largely to his wants?" *More largely!* Faugh! faugh! Foreseeing that he who was half-mad at the horrors of a jail, would go wholly mad were ten pounds sent to him instead of five, which was all "the haughty invalid" had implored, "with commendable judgment," according to Josiah Walker's philosophy of human life, George Thomson sent "the precise sum!" And supposing it had gone into the pocket of the merciless haberdasher, on what did Josiah Walker think would "the haughty invalid" have subsisted *then*—how paid for lodging without board by the melancholy Solway-side?

Mr. Thomson's champion proceeds to say—"Burns had all the unmanageable pride of Samuel Johnson, and if the latter threw away with indignation the new shoes which had been placed at his chamber door, secretly and collectively, by his companions, the former would have been still more ready to resent any pecuniary donation with which a single individual, after his peremptory prohibition, should avowedly have dared to insult him with." In Boswell we read—"Mr. Bateman's lectures were so excellent that Johnson used to come and get them at second-hand from Taylor, till his poverty being so extreme, that his shoes were worn out, and his feet appeared through them, he saw that his humiliating condition was perceived by the Christ-Church men, and he came no more. He was too proud to accept of money, and somebody having set a pair of new shoes at his door, he threw them away with indignation." Hall, Master of Pembroke, in a note on this passage, expresses strong doubts of Johnson's poverty at college having been extreme; and Croker, with his usual accuracy, says, "authoritatively and circumstantially as this story is told, there is good reason for disbelieving it altogether. Taylor was admitted Commoner of Christ Church, June 27, 1730; Johnson left Oxford six months before." Suppose it true. Had Johnson found the impudent cub in the act of depositing the eleemosynary shoes, he infallibly would have knocked him down with fist or folio as clean as he afterwards did Osborne. But Mr. Thomson was no such cub, nor did he stand relatively to Burns in the same position as such cub to Johnson. He owed Burns much money, though Burns would not allow himself to think so; and had he expostulated with open heart and hand with the Bard, on his obstinate—he might have kindly said foolish and worse than foolish—disregard not only of his own interest, but of the comfort of his wife and family; had he gone to Dumfries for the sole purpose—who can doubt that "his justice and generosity" would have been crowned with success? Who but Josiah Walker could have said, that Burns would have *then* thought himself insulted? Resent a "pecuniary donation" indeed! What is a donation? Johnson tells us in the words of South: "After donation there is an absolute change and alienation

made of the property of the thing given; which being alienated, a man has no more to do with it than with a thing bought with another's money." It was Burns who made a donation to Thomson of a hundred and twenty songs.

All mankind must agree with Mr. Lockhart when he says—"Why Burns, who was of opinion, when he wrote his letter to Mr. Carfrae, that 'no profits are more honourable than those of the labours of a man of genius,' and whose own notions of independence had sustained no shock in the receipt of hundreds of pounds from Creech, should have spurned the suggestion of pecuniary recompense from Mr. Thomson, it is no easy matter to explain; nor do I profess to understand why Mr. Thomson took so little pains to argue the matter *in limine* with the poet, and convince him, that the time which he himself considered as fairly entitled to be paid for by a common bookseller, ought of right to be valued and acknowledged on similar terms by the editor and proprietor of a book containing both songs and music." We are not so much blaming the backwardness of Thomson in the matter of the songs, as we are exposing the *blather* of Walker in the story of the shoes. Yet something there is in the nature of the whole transaction that nobody can stomach. We think we have in a great measure explained how it happened that Burns "spurned the suggestion of pecuniary recompense;" and bearing our remarks in mind, look for a moment at the circumstances of the case. Mr. Thomson, in his first letter, September, 1792, says, "*Profit is quite a secondary consideration with us, and we are resolved to spare neither pains nor expense on the publication.*" "We shall esteem your poetical assistance a particular favour, besides paying *any reasonable price* you shall please to demand for it." And would Robert Burns condescend to receive money for his contributions to a work in honour of Scotland, undertaken by men with whom "profit was quite a secondary consideration?" Impossible. In July, 1793, when Burns had been for nine months enthusiastically co-operating in a great national work, and had proved that he would carry it on to a triumphant close, Mr. Thomson writes—"I cannot express how much I am obliged to you for the exquisite new songs you are sending me; but thanks, my friend, are a poor

return for what you have done. As I shall be benefited by the publication, you must suffer me to enclose a small mark of my gratitude, and to repeat it afterwards *when I find it convenient*. Do not return it, for, by Heaven, if you do, *our correspondence is at an end.*" A bank-note for five pounds! "In the name of the prophet—Figs!" Burns, with a proper feeling, retained the trifle, but forbade the repetition of it; and every body must see, at a glance, that such a man could not have done otherwise—for it would have been most degrading indeed had he shown himself ready to accept a five-pound note when it might happen to suit the convenience of an editor. His domicile was not in Grub Street.

Mr. Walker, still further to soothe Mr. Thomson's feelings, sent him an extract from a letter of Lord Woodhouselee's—"I am glad you have embraced the occasion which lay in your way of doing full justice to Mr. George Thomson, who, I agree with you in thinking, was most harshly and illiberally treated by an anonymous dull calumniator. I have always regarded Mr. Thomson as a man of great worth and most respectable character; and I have every reason to believe that poor Burns felt *himself as much indebted to his good counsels and active friendship as a man, as the public is sensible he was to his good taste and judgment as a critic.*" Mr. Thomson, in now giving, for the first time, this extract to the public, says, "Of the unbiassed opinion of such a highly respectable gentleman and accomplished writer as Lord Woodhouselee, I certainly feel not a little proud. It is of itself more than sufficient to silence the calumnies by which I have been assailed, first anonymously, and afterwards, to my great surprise, by some writers who might have been expected to possess sufficient judgment to see the matter in its true light." He has reason to feel proud of his Lordship's good opinion, and on the ground of his private character he deserved it. But the assertions contained in the extract have no bearing whatever on the question, and they are entirely untrue. Lord Woodhouselee could have had no authority for believing, "that poor Burns felt himself indebted to Mr. Thomson's good counsels and active friendship as a man." Mr. Thomson, a person of no influence or account, had it not in his power to

exert any "active friendship" for Burns—and as to "good counsels," it is not to be believed for a moment, that a modest man like him, who had never interchanged a word with Burns, would have presumed to become his Mentor. This is putting him forward in the high character of Burns's benefactor, not only in his worldly concerns, but in his moral well-being; a position which of himself he never could have dreamt of claiming, and from which he must, on a moment's consideration, with pain inexorable recoil. Neither is "the public sensible" that Burns was "indebted to his good taste and judgment as a critic." The public kindly regard Mr. Thomson, and think that in his correspondence with Burns he makes a respectable figure. But Burns repudiated most of his critical strictures; and the worthy Clerk of the Board of Trustees does indeed frequently fall into sad mistakes, concerning alike poetry, music, and painting. Lord Woodhouselee's "unbiassed opinion," then, so far from being of itself "sufficient to silence the calumnies of ignorant assailants," &c., is not worth a straw.

Mr. Thomson, in his five pound letter of July, 1796, asks—"Pray, my good sir, is it not possible for you to *muster a volume of poetry?*" Why, with the assistance of Messrs. Johnson and Thomson, it would have been possible; and then Burns might have called in his "Jolly Beggars." "If too much trouble to you," continues Mr. Thomson, "in the present state of your health, some literary friend might be found here who would select and arrange your manuscripts, and take upon him the *task of editor*. In the meantime, it could be advertised to be published by subscription. Do not shun this mode of obtaining the value of your labour; remember Pope published the 'Iliad' by subscription." Why, had not Burns published his own poems by subscription! All this seems the strangest mockery ever heard of; yet there can be no doubt that it was written not only with a serious face, but with a kind heart. But George Thomson at that time was almost as poor a man as Robert Burns. Allan Cunningham, a man of genius and virtue, in his interesting *Life of Burns*, has in his characteristic straight-forward style, put the matter—in so far as it regards the money remittance—in its true light, and all Mr. Thomson's friends should be thankful to him—

"Thomson instantly complied with the request of Burns; he borrowed a five-pound note from Cunningham (a draft), and sent it saying, he had made up his mind to inclose the identical sum the poet had asked for, when he received his letter. For this he has been sharply censured; and his defence is, that he was afraid of sending more, lest he should offend the pride of the poet, who was uncommonly sensitive in pecuniary matters. A better defence is Thomson's own poverty; only one volume of his splendid work was then published; his outlay had been beyond his means, and very small sums of money had come in to cover his large expenditure. Had he been richer, his defence would have been a difficult matter. When Burns made the stipulation, his hopes were high, and the dread of hunger or of the jail was far from his thoughts; he imagined that it became genius to refuse money in a work of national importance. But his situation grew gloomier as he wrote; he had lost nearly his all in Ellisland, and was obliged to borrow small sums, which he found a difficulty in repaying. That he was in poor circumstances was well known to the world; and had money been at Thomson's disposal, a way might have been found of doing the poet good by stealth; he sent five pounds, because he could not send ten, and it would have saved him from some sarcastic remarks, and some pang of heart, had he said so at once."

Mr. Thomson has attempted a defence of himself about once every seven years, but has always made the matter worse, by putting it on wrong grounds. In a letter to that other Arcadian, Josiah Walker, he says—many years ago—"Now, the fact is, that, notwithstanding the united labours of all the men of genius who have enriched my Collection, I am not even yet compensated for the precious time consumed by me in poring over musty volumes, and in corresponding with every amateur and poet, by whose means I expected to make any valuable addition to our national music and song;—for the exertion and money it cost me to obtain accompaniments from the greatest masters of harmony in Vienna; and for the sums paid to engravers, printers, and others." Let us separate the items of this account. The money laid out by him must stand by itself—and for that outlay, he had then been

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compensated by the profits of the sale of the Collection. Those profits, we do not doubt, had been much exaggerated by public opinion, but they had then been considerable, and have since been great. Our undivided attention has therefore to be turned to, "his precious time consumed," and to its inadequate compensation. And the first question that naturally occurs to every reader to ask himself is—"in what sense are we to take the terms 'time,' 'precious,' and 'consumed?'" Inasmuch as "time" is only another word for life, it is equally "precious" to all men. Take it then to mean leisure hours, in which men seek for relaxation and enjoyment. Mr. Thomson tells us that he was from early youth an enthusiast in music and in poetry; and it puzzles us to conceive what he means by talking on "his precious time being consumed" in such studies. To an enthusiast, a "musty volume" is a treasure beyond the wealth of Ind—to pore over "musty volumes" sweet as to gaze on melting eyes—he hugs them to his heart. They are their own exceeding great reward—and we cannot listen to any claim for pecuniary compensation. Then, who ever heard, before or since, of an enthusiast in poetry avowing before the world, that he had not been sufficiently compensated in money, "for the precious time consumed by him in corresponding with Poets?" Poets are proverbially an irritable race; still there is something about them that makes them very engaging—and we cannot bring ourselves to think that George Thomson's "precious time consumed" in corresponding with Sir Walter Scott, Thomas Campbell, Joanna Baillie, and the Ettrick Shepherd, deserved "compensation." As to amateurs, we mournfully grant they are burthensome; yet even that burthen may uncomplainingly be borne by an Editor who "expects by their means to make any valuable addition to our national music and song;" and it cannot be denied, that the creatures have often good ears, and turn off tolerable verses. Finally, if by "precious" he means valuable, in a Politico-Economical sense, we do not see how Mr. Thomson's time could have been consumed more productively to himself; nor indeed how he could have made any money at all by a different employment of it. In every sense, therefore, in which the words are construed,

they are equally absurd; and all who read them are forced to think of one whose "precious time was indeed consumed"—to his fatal loss—the too generous, the self-devoted Burns—but for whose "uncompensated exertions," "The Melodies of Scotland" would have been to the Editor a ruinous concern, in place of one which for nearly half a century must have been yielding him a greater annual income than the Poet would have enjoyed had he been even a Supervisor.

Mr. Thomson has further put forth in his letter to Robert Chambers, and not now for the first time, this most injudicious defence. "Had I been a selfish or avaricious man, I had a fair opportunity, upon the death of the poet, to put money in my pocket; for I might then have published, for my own behoof, all the beautiful lyrics he had written for me, the original manuscripts of which were in my possession. But instead of doing this, I was no sooner informed that the friends of the poet's family had come to a resolution to collect his works, and to publish them for the benefit of the family, and that they thought it of importance to include my MSS. as being likely, from their number, their novelty, and their beauty, to prove an attraction to subscribers, than I felt it my duty to put them at once in possession of all the songs, and of the correspondence between the poet and myself; and accordingly, through Mr. John Syme of Ryedale, I transmitted the whole to Dr. Currie, who had been prevailed on, immensely to the advantage of Mrs. Burns and her children, to take on himself the task of editor. For this surrendering the manuscripts, I received, both verbally and in writing, the warm thanks of the trustees for the family—Mr. John Syme and Mr. Gilbert Burns—who considered what I had done as a fair return for the poet's generosity of conduct to me." Of course he retained the exclusive right of publishing the songs with the music in his Collection. Now, what if he had refused to surrender the manuscripts? The whole world would have accused him of robbing the widow and orphan, and he would have been hooted out of Scotland. George Thomson, rather than have done so, would have suffered himself to be pressed to death between two mill-stones; and yet he not only instances his having "surrendered

the MSS." as a proof of the calumnious nature of the abuse with which he had been assailed by anonymous scribblers, but is proud of the thanks of "the trustees of the family, who considered what I had done as a *fair return* for the poet's generosity of conduct to me." Setting aside, then, "the calumnies of anonymous scribblers," with one and all of which we are unacquainted, we have shown that Josiah Walker, in his foolish remarks on this affair, whereby he outraged the common feelings of humanity, left his friend just where he stood before—that Lord Woodhouslee knew nothing whatever about the matter, and in his good nature has made assertions absurdly untrue—that Mr. Thomson's own defence of himself is in all respects an utter failure, and mainly depends on the supposition of a ease unexampled in a Christian land—that Lockhart with unerring finger has indicated where the fault lay—and that Cunningham has accounted for it by a reason that with candid judges must serve to reduce it to one of a very pardonable kind; the avowal of which from the first would have saved a worthy man from some unjust obloquy, and at least as much undeserved commendation—the truth being now apparent to all, that "his poverty, not his will consented" to secure on the terms of non-payment, a hundred and twenty songs from the greatest lyric poet of his country, who during the years he was thus lavishing away the effusions of his matchless genius, without fee or reward, was in a state bordering on destitution, and as the pen dropped from his hand, did not leave sufficient to defray the expenses of a decent funeral.

We come now to contemplate his dying days; and mournful as the contemplation is, the close of many an illustrious life has been far more distressing, involved in far thicker darkness, and far heavier storms. From youth he had been visited—we shall not say haunted—by presentiments of an early death; he knew well that the profound melancholy that often settled down upon his whole being, suddenly changing day into night, arose from his organization;—and it seems as if the finest still bordered on disease—disease in his case perhaps hereditary—for his father was often sadder than even "the toil-worm cotter" needed to be, and looked like a man subject to inward

trouble. His character was somewhat stern, and we can believe that in his austerity he found a safeguard against passion, that nevertheless may shake the life it cannot wreck. But the son wanted the father's firmness; and in his veins there coursed more impetuous blood. The very fire of genius consumed him, coming and going in fitful flashes; his genius itself may almost be called a passion, so vehement was it, and so turbulent—though it had its scenes of blissful quietude; his heart too seldom suffered itself to be at rest; many a fever travelled through his veins; his calmest nights were liable to be broken in upon by the worst of dreams—waking dreams from which there is no deliverance in a sudden start—of which the misery is felt to be no delusion—which are not dispelled by the morning light, but accompany their victim as he walks out into the day, and among the dew, and, surrounded as he is with the beauty of rejoicing nature, tempt him to curse the day he was born.

Yet let us not call the life of Burns unhappy—nor at its close shut our eyes to the manifold blessings showered by heaven on the Poet's lot. Many of the mental sufferings that helped most to wear him out, originated in his own restless nature—"by prudent, cautious, self-control" he might have subdued some and tempered others—better regulation was within his power—and, like all men, he paid the penalty of neglect of duty, or of its violation. But what loss is hardest to bear? The loss of the beloved. All other wounds are slight to those of the affections. Let Fortune do her worst—so that Death be merciful. Burns went to his own grave without having been commanded to look down into another's where all was buried. "I have lately drunk deep of the cup of affliction. The autumn robbed me of my only daughter and darling child, and that at a distance too, and so rapidly, as to put it out of my power to pay the last duties to her."¹ The flower withered, and he wept—but his four pretty boys were soon dancing again in their glee—their mother's heart was soon composed again to cheerfulness—and her face without a shadow. Anxiety for their sakes did indeed keep preying on his heart;—but what would that anxiety have

¹ Letter to Mrs. Dunlop, 31st January, 1796.

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seemed to him, had he been called upon to look back upon it in anguish *because they were not?*

Burns had not been well for a twelvemonth; and though nobody seems even then to have thought him dying, on the return of spring, which brought him no strength, he knew that his days were numbered. Intense thought, so it be calm, is salutary to life. It is emotion that shortens our days by hurrying life's pulsations—till the heart can no more, and runs down like a disordered time-piece. We said nobody seems to have thought him dying;—yet, after the event, every body, on looking back on it, remembered seeing death in his face. It is when thinking of those many months of decline and decay, that we feel pity and sorrow for his fate, and that along with them other emotions will arise, without our well knowing towards whom, or by what name they should be called, but partaking of indignation, and shame, and reproach, as if some great wrong had been done, and might have been rectified before death came to close the account. Not without blame somewhere could such a man have been so neglected—so forgotten—so left alone to sicken and die.

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!

For whom my warmest wish to heaven is sent!

Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil,

Be bless'd with health, and peace, and sweet content!

No son of Scotland did ever regard her with more filial affection—did ever in strains so sweet sing of the scenes “that made her loved at home, revered abroad”—and yet his mother stretches not out her hand to sustain—when it was too late to save—her own Poet as he was sinking into an untimely grave. But the dying man complained not of her ingratitude—he loved her too well to the last to suspect her of such sin—there was nothing for him to forgive—and he knew that he would for ever have a place in her memory. Her rulers were occupied with great concerns—in which *all thoughts of self were merged!* and therefore well might she forget her Poet, who was but a cottar's son and a gauger. In such forgetfulness they were what other rulers have been, and will be,—and Coleridge lived to know that the great ones of his own land could be as heartless in his own case as the “Scotch nobility” in that of Burns, for whose brows his youthful genius wove a wreath of scorn. “The

wrapt one of the godlike forehead, the heaven-eyed creature sleeps in earth”—but who among them all cared for the long self-seclusion of the white-headed sage—for his sick bed, or his grave?

Turn we then from the Impersonation named Scotland—from her rulers—from her nobility and gentry—to the personal friends of Burns. Could they have served him in his straits? And how? If they could, then were they bound to do so by a stricter obligation than lay upon any other party; and if they had the will as well as the power, 'twould have been easy to find a way. The duties of friendship are plain, simple, sacred—and to perform them is delightful; yet so far as we can see, they were not performed here—if they were, let us have the names of the beneficent who visited Burns every other day during the months disease had deprived him of all power to follow his calling? Who insisted on helping to keep the family in comfort till his strength might be restored? For example, to pay his house rent for a year? Mr. Syme of Ryedale told Dr. Currie, that Burns had “many firm friends in Dumfries,” who would not have suffered the haberdasher to put him into jail, and that his were the fears of a man in delirium. Did not those “firm friends” know that he was of necessity very poor? And did any one of them offer to lend him thirty shillings to pay for his three weeks' lodgings at the Brow? He was not in delirium—till within two days of his death. Small sums he had occasionally borrowed and repaid—but from people as poor as himself—such as kind Craig, the schoolmaster, to whom, at his death, he owed a pound—never from the more opulent townfolk or the gentry in the neighbourhood, of not one of whom is it recorded that he or she accommodated the dying Poet with a loan sufficient to pay for a week's porridge and milk.¹ Let us have no more disgusting palaver about his pride. His heart would have melted within him at any act of considerate friendship done to his family; and so far from feeling that by accepting it he had become a pauper, he would

¹ (Clarke, the schoolmaster (not Craig as in the text), was Burns's debtor, not his creditor. What Wilson understands to be the borrowing of a pound from Clarke is a request for part payment of a debt which had been standing for some time. See letter 26th June, 1796.)

have recognized in the doer of it a brother, and taken him into his heart. And had he not in all the earth, one single such Friend? His brother Gilbert was struggling with severe difficulties at Mossiel, and was then unable to assist him; and his excellent cousin at Montrose had enough to do to maintain his own family; but as soon as he knew how matters stood, he showed that the true Burns's blood was in his heart, and after the Poet's death, was as kind as man could be to his widow and children.

What had come over Mrs. Dunlop that she should have seemed to have forgotten or forsaken him? "*These many months* you have been two packets in my debt—what sin of ignorance I have committed against so highly valued a friend I am utterly at a loss to guess. Alas! Madam, ill can I afford, at this time, to be deprived of any of the small remnant of my pleasures. . . . I had scarcely begun to recover from that shock (the death of his little daughter), when I became myself the victim of a most severe rheumatic fever, and long the die spun doubtful; until, after many weeks of a sick bed, it seems to have turned up life, and I am beginning to crawl across my room, and once, indeed, have been before my own door in the street."¹ No answer came; and three [six] months after he wrote from the Brow: "Madam—I have written you so often without receiving any answer, that I would not trouble you again but for the circumstances in which I am. An illness which has long hung about me, in all probability will speedily send me beyond that *bourne whence no traveller returns*. Your friendship, with which for many years you honoured me, was a friendship dearest to my soul. Your conversation, and especially your correspondence, were at once highly entertaining and instructive. With what pleasure did I use to break up the seal! The remembrance yet adds one pulse more to my poor palpitating heart. Farewell!!! R. B." Currie says, "Burns had the pleasure of receiving a satisfactory explanation of his friend's silence, and an assurance of the continuance of her friendship to his widow and children; an assurance that has been amply fulfilled." That "satisfactory explanation" should have been given to the world—it should

¹ Letter, 31st January, 1796.

be given yet—for without it such incomprehensible silence must continue to seem cruel; and it is due to the memory of one whom Burns loved and honoured to the last to vindicate on her part the faithfulness of the friendship which preserves her name.

Maria Riddell, a lady of fine talents and accomplishments, and though somewhat envious in the consciousness of her mental and personal attractions, yet of most amiable dispositions, and of an affectionate and tender heart, was so little aware of the condition of the Poet, whose genius she could so well appreciate, that only a few weeks before his death, when he could hardly crawl, he had by letter to decline acceding to her "desire, that he would go to the birth-day assembly, on the 4th of June, to *show his loyalty*;" Alas! he was fast "wearin' awa to the land o' the leal;" and after the lapse of a few weeks, that lady gay, herself in poor health, and saddened out of such vanities by sincerest sorrow, was struck with his appearance on entering the room. "The stamp of death was imprinted on his features. He seemed already touching the brink of eternity. His first salutation was—"Well, Madam, have you any commands for the next world?" The best men have indulged in such sallies on the brink of the grave. Nor has the utterance of words like these, as life's taper was flickering in the socket, been felt to denote a mood of levity unbecoming a creature about to go to his account. On the contrary, there is something very affecting in the application of such formulas of speech as had been of familiar use all his days, on his passage through the shadow of time, now that his being is about to be liberated into the light of eternity, where our mortal language is heard not, and spirit communicates with spirit through organs not made of clay, having dropt the body like a garment.

In that interview, the last recorded, and it is recorded well—pity so much should have been suppressed—"he spoke of his death without any of the ostentation of philosophy, but with firmness as well as feeling, as an event likely to happen very soon, and which gave him concern chiefly from leaving his four children so young and unprotected, and his wife in so interesting a situation, in hourly expectation of lying in of a fifth." Yet, during the

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whole afternoon, he was cheerful, even gay, and disposed for pleasantry; such is the power of the human voice and the human eye over the human heart, almost to the resuscitation of drowned hope, when they are both suffused with affection, when tones are as tender as tears, yet can better hide the pity that ever and anon will be gushing from the lids of grief. He expressed deep contrition for having been betrayed by his inferior nature and vicious sympathy with the dissolute, into impurities in verse, which he knew were floating about among people of loose lives, and might on his death be collected to the hurt of his moral character. Never had Burns been "hired minstrel of voluptuous blandishment," nor by such unguarded freedom of speech had he ever sought to corrupt; but in emulating the ribald wit and coarse humour of some of the worst old ballads current among the lower orders of the people, of whom the moral and religious are often tolerant of indecencies to a strange degree, he felt that he had sinned against his genius. A miscreant, aware of his poverty, had made him an offer of fifty pounds for a collection, which he repelled with the horror of remorse. Such things can hardly be said to have existence—the polluted perishes—or shovelled aside from the socialities of mirthful men, are nearly obsolete, except among those whose thoughtlessness is so great as to be sinful, among whom the distinction ceases between the weak and the wicked. From such painful thoughts he turned to his poetry, that had every year been becoming dearer and dearer to the people, and he had comfort in the assurance that it was pure and good; and he wished to live a little longer that he might amend his Songs, for through them he felt he would survive in the hearts of the dwellers in cottage-homes all over Scotland—and in the fond imagination of his heart Scotland to him was all the world.

"He spoke of his death without any of the ostentation of philosophy," and perhaps without any reference to religion; for dying men often keep their profoundest thoughts to themselves, except in the chamber in which they believe they are about to have their last look of the objects of their earthly love, and there they give them utterance in a few words of hope and trust. While yet walking about in

the open air, and visiting their friends, they continue to converse about the things of this life in language so full of animation, that you might think, but for something about their eyes, that they are unconscious of their doom—and so at times they are; for the customary pleasure of social intercourse does not desert them; the sight of others well and happy beguiles them of the mournful knowledge that their own term has nearly expired, and in that oblivion they are cheerful as the persons seem to be who for their sakes assume a smiling aspect, in spite of struggling tears. So was it with Burns at the Brow. But he had his Bible with him in his lodgings, and he read it almost continually—often when seated on a bank, from which he had difficulty in rising without assistance, for his weakness was extreme, and in his emaciation he was like a ghost. The fire of his eyes was not dimmed—indeed fever had lighted it up beyond even its natural brightness; and though his voice, once so various, was now hollow, his discourse was still that of a Poet. To the last he loved the sunshine, the grass, and the flowers—to the last he had a kind look and word for the passers-by, who all knew it was Burns. Labouring men, on their way from work, would step aside to the two or three houses called the Brow, to know if there was any hope of his life; and it is not to be doubted that devout people remembered him who had written the "Cotter's Saturday Night" in their prayers. His sceptical doubts no longer troubled him—they had never been more than shadows—and he had at last the faith of a confiding Christian. We are not even to suppose that his heart was always disquieted within him because of the helpless condition of his widow and orphans. That must have been indeed with him a dismal day on which he wrote three letters about them so full of anguish; but to give vent to grief in passionate outcries usually assuages it, and tranquillity sometimes steals upon despair. His belief that he was so sunk in debt was a delusion—not of delirium—but of the fear that is in love. And comfort must have come to him in the conviction that his country would not suffer the family of her Poet to be in want. As long as he had health they were happy, though poor—as long as he was alive, they were not utterly destitute. That on his

death they would be paupers, was a dread that could have had no abiding place in a heart that knew how it had beat for Scotland, and in the power of genius had poured out all its love on her fields and her people. His heart was pierced with the same wounds that extort lamentations from the death-beds of ordinary men, thinking of what will become of wife and children; but like the pouring of oil upon them by some gracious hand, must have been the frequent recurrence of the belief—"On my death people will pity them, and care for them for my name's sake." Some little matter of money he knew he should leave behind him—the two hundred pounds he had lent to his brother; and it sorely grieved him to think that Gilbert might be ruined by having to return it. What brotherly affection was there! They had not met for a good many years; but personal intercourse was not required to sustain their friendship. At the Brow often must the dying Poet have remembered Mossiel.

On the near approach of death he returned to his own house, in a spring-cart—and having left it at the foot of the street, he could just totter up to his door. The last words his hand had strength to put on paper were to his wife's father, and were written probably within an hour of his return home. "My dear Sir,—Do, for heaven's sake, send Mrs. Armour here immediately. My wife is hourly expected to be put to bed. Good God! what a situation for her to be in, poor girl, without a friend! I returned from sea-bathing quarters to-day; and my medical friends would almost persuade me that I am better; but I think and feel that my strength is so gone, that the disorder will prove fatal to me. Your son-in-law, R. B." That is not the letter of a man in delirium—nor was the letter written a few days before from the Brow to "my dearest love." But next day he was delirious, and the day after too, though on being spoken to he roused himself into collected and composed thought, and was, ever and anon, for a few minutes himself—Robert Burns. In his delirium there was nothing to distress the listeners and the lookers on—words were heard that to them had no meaning—mistakings made by the parting spirit among its language now in confusion breaking up—and sometimes words of trifling import about trifling things—about incidents

and events unnoticed in their happening, but now strangely cared for in their final repassing before the closed eyes just ere the dissolution of the dream of a dream. Nor did his death-bed want for affectionate and faithful service. The few who were privileged to tend it did so tenderly and reverently—now by the side of the sick wife, and now by that of the dying husband. Maxwell, a kind physician, came often to gaze in sadness where no skill could relieve. Findlater—supervisor of exchequer—sat by his bedside the night before he died; and Jessie Lewars—daughter and sister of a gauger—was his sick nurse. Had he been her own father she could not have done her duty with a more perfect devotion of her whole filial heart—and her name will never die, "here eternized on earth" by the genius of the Poet who for all her Christian kindness to him and his had long cherished towards her the tenderest gratitude. His children had been taken care of by friends, and were led in to be near him now that his hour was come. His wife in her own bed knew it, as soon as her Robert was taken from her; and the great Poet of the Scottish people, who had been born "in the auld clay biggin" on a stormy winter night, died in an humble tenement on a bright summer morning, among humble folk, who composed his body, and according to custom strewed around it flowers brought from their own gardens.

Great was the grief of the people for their Poet's death. They felt that they had lost their greatest man; and it is no exaggeration to say that Scotland was saddened on the day of his funeral. It is seldom that tears are shed even close to the grave beyond the inner circle that narrows round it; but that day there were tears in the eyes of many far off at their work, and that night there was silence in thousands of cottages that had so often heard his songs—how sweeter far than any other, whether mournfully or merrily to old accordant melodies they won their way into the heart! The people had always loved him; they best understood his character, its strength and its weakness. Not among them at any time had it been harshly judged, and they allowed him now the sacred privileges of the grave. The religious have done so ever since, pitying more than condemning, nor afraid to praise; for

they have confessed to themselves, that had there been a window in their breasts as there was in that of Burns, worse sights might have been seen—a darker revelation. His country charged herself with the care of them he had loved so well, and the spirit in which she performed her duty is the best proof that her neglect—if neglect at any time there were—of her Poet's well-being had not been wilful, but is to be numbered with those omissions incident to all human affairs, more to be lamented than blamed, and if not to be forgotten, surely to be forgiven, even by the nations who may have nothing to reproach themselves with in their conduct towards any of their great poets. England, "the foremost land of all this world," was not slack to join in her sister's sorrow, and proved the sincerity of her own, not by barren words, but fruitful deeds, and best of all by fervent love and admiration of the poetry that had opened up so many delightful views into the character and condition of our "bold peasantry, their country's pride," worthy compatriots with her own, and exhibiting in different Manners the same national Virtues.

No doubt wonder at a prodigy had mingled in many minds with admiration of the ploughman's poetry; and when they of their wondering found an end, such persons began to talk with abated enthusiasm of his genius, and increased severity of his character, so that, during intervals of silence, an under current of detraction was frequently heard brawling with an ugly noise. But the main stream soon ran itself clear; and Burns has no abusers now out of the superannuated list; out of it—better still—he has no patrons. In our youth we

have heard him spoken of by the big-wigs with exceeding condescension; now the tallest men know that to see his features rightly they must look up. Shakspeare, Spenser, and Milton, are unapproachable; but the present era is the most splendid in the history of our poetry—in England beginning with Cowper, in Scotland with Burns. Original and racy, each in his own land is yet unexcelled; immoveably they both keep their places—their inheritance is sure. Changes wide and deep, for better and for worse, have been long going on in town and country. There is now among the people more education—more knowledge than in any former day. Their worldly condition is more prosperous, while there is still among them a deep religious spirit. By that spirit alone can they be secured in the good, and saved from the evil of knowledge; but the spirit of poetry is akin to that of religion, and the union of the two is in no human composition more powerful than in "The Cotter's Saturday Night." "Let who may have the making of the laws, give me the making of the ballads of a people," is a profound saying; and the truth it somewhat paradoxically expresses is in much as applicable to a cultivated and intellectual as to a rude and imaginative age. From our old traditional ballads we know what was dearest to the hearts and souls of the people. How much deeper must be the power over them of the poems and songs of such a man as Burns, of himself alone superior in genius to all those nameless minstrels, and of a nobler nature; and yet more endeared to them by pity for the sorrows that clouded the close of his life.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH GEORGE THOMSON

REGARDING THE SONGS CONTRIBUTED

TO HIS COLLECTION OF SCOTTISH MELODIES.

NOTICE OF GEORGE THOMSON,

AND HIS CONNECTION WITH BURNS.

In 1792 Mr. George Thomson, Clerk to the Honourable Board of Trustees for the Encouragement of Art and Manufactures in Scotland, and distinguished in Edinburgh as a musical amateur, projected a work, entitled, "A Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs for the Voice: to which are added Introductory and Concluding Symphonies and Accompaniments for the Pianoforte and Violin, by Pleyel and Kozeluch, with Select and Characteristic Verses by the most admired Scottish Poets."¹ Although personally unacquainted with Burns, Mr. Thomson's thoughts naturally turned to the great living master of Scottish Song, and he applied to him, by letter, explaining the nature of his publication, and begging to know if he could furnish him with "twenty or twenty-five songs" suited to "particular melodies," and otherwise assist in improving the words usually appended to many favourite Scottish airs. "Profit," Mr. Thomson avowed to be "quite a secondary consideration" in his projected work, but he was willing to pay the poet "any reasonable price" he should "please to demand." Burns, although contributing at the time to Johnson's *Musical Museum* entered with promptitude, and even enthusiasm, into

Mr. Thomson's views; and from the above period till within a week of his death, he continued a zealous correspondent of the musician's, furnishing him with, in all, ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY SONGS, more than one half of which were wholly original, and the rest improvements on old verses or verses of his own which had previously appeared in the *Museum*. "As to any remuneration," said the poet in his first letter, "you may think my songs either *above* or *below* price; for they shall absolutely be the one or the other. In the honest enthusiasm with which I embark in your undertaking, to talk of money, wages, fee, hire, &c., would be downright sodomy of soul!"

It has surprised many how Burns, who had no hesitation in accepting the profits accruing from the early editions of his poems, should have taken up this generous crotchet of giving his services gratis, especially to an individual with whom he was personally unacquainted; but the two cases were evidently viewed in very different lights by the poet. Although he had received a large sum of money from the Edinburgh edition of his works, he had never penned a single line with the object of gain in view; all his pieces were written from the genuine impulses of his heart, without the shadow of remuneration ever for a moment flitting across his page; and nothing was more repulsive to him than the idea that his muse should be considered as either a fawning or a mercenary one. Thomson's work was one which in an essential manner roused the patriotic feelings of the poet; it was a speculation professedly entered into from no pecuniary motives on the part of the proprietors; and the services at first required of him were doubtless held by himself to be of very light import,

¹ Mr. Thomson's work was completed in five folio volumes, issued at the following dates:—first half-volume, 1793 (the only instalment the poet lived to see); second half-volume, August, 1798; volume second, July, 1799; volume third, December, 1801 (preface date); volume fourth, 1805; volume fifth, 1818. An octavo edition, in six volumes, was published, 1822-25. A reprinted and re-engraved edition of the folio collection (with title somewhat altered) was subsequently issued in six volumes, bearing a dedication to Queen Adelaide, dated 30th March, 1831.

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JAMES THOMSON.

AUTHOR OF THE METEORS OF SCOTLAND.

Blackie & Son, Glasgow & Edinburgh.

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as well as of a very agreeable nature. From these considerations, we do not wonder that Burns—who never was, or dreamt of being, a professional author, or dependent on the pen for his bread—should refuse to receive recompense:—the labour, if labour at all, was one of love; and he felt that the very idea of “pay” for embarking in a cause so sacred in his eyes as the restoration of Scottish song, would tame his fancy and chill his heart. In short, the conduct of Burns on this point, though much to be lamented, can scarcely be pronounced unaccountable or extraordinary: it was, at least, in perfect keeping with the whole character of the man.

But the conduct of Thomson on the same point is less easy of solution, and has been the subject of much cavil. It has been objected to him, that he too readily acquiesced in the generous self-sacrifice of the poet, and that when the latter, on his death-bed, with the fear of a jail, real or imaginary, before his eyes, implored the loan of five pounds, Thomson sent him *the exact sum, and no more*. These five pounds, with other five forwarded at an early stage of the correspondence, together with some presents of books, a shawl for Mrs. Burns, and a drawing by David Allan, representing the family-worship scene in the “Cotter’s Saturday Night,” were all that the poet ever received for his invaluable services; and certainly, looking back to the past, with our whole feelings roused in favour of the unhappy bard, the transaction bears on the face of it a very questionable aspect. But it is quite unfair to judge of what should have been done, *after* an event, which could not have been anticipated, has taken place:—to arrive at a just conclusion, it is necessary to bear in mind the circumstances of the case *as they existed at the time* before death had for ever put his seal on the fate of the poet, and awakened the sympathies of the world to a contemplation of his brilliant yet sad career. When Thomson projected his musical collection, he was without capital, and living on a salary from the Board of Trustees, little better, we believe, than Burns was receiving from the Board of Excise. His work was of a nature which involved much outlay for the mere mechanical department of it, and any pecuniary returns which it pro-

mised were, at the best, in the far perspective. It is not, therefore, greatly to be wondered at, that he should at first have silently received the poet’s offer of gratuitous services; and when, notwithstanding, he *did*, on one occasion, some time afterwards, inclose a five-pound note with the first half-volume of his Collection, it is still less to be wondered at, that the manner in which the money was taken should have frightened him from rashly repeating a similar offence. “As to any more traffic of that debtor and creditor kind,” says the Poet, “I swear by that HONOUR which crowns the upright statue of ROBERT BURNS’S INTEGRITY,—on the least motion of it, I will indignantly spurn the by-past transaction, and from that moment commence entire stranger to you!” This objurament of course put a veto on any further pecuniary remittance, but it did not prevent Thomson from forwarding, now and then, some little present, such as those already referred to. At length, ill-health drove the poet to look with despair on his circumstances, and in agony of mind he besought an advance of five pounds. Thomson promptly answered the request, but he sent no more than the sum asked. Six days afterwards, the Poet was beyond all earthly help, hope, or care! It has been urged in Thomson’s defence, that had he sent more than the sum specified, he would have run the risk of offending the feelings of the poet; but this view of the matter is not borne out by the letter accompanying the remittance, in which the writer acknowledges that the sum requested was just *the very amount* which he had been long intending to send. When it is known that Thomson was, at the best, far from being rich—that, up to the period of Burns’s death, only *six* of his songs had been published in the Collection, the six, namely, which appeared in the first half-volume—and that no profits as yet had been realized from the work—we are disposed to consider it rather the misfortune than the fault of the musician that he was not more munificent in his pecuniary dealings with the poet.

The following autobiographical communication from the pen of Mr. Thomson, in which the nature of his connection with the poet is dwelt on at large, originally appeared in *The Land of Burns*. We reprint it here,

without comment, merely referring to what Professor Wilson has said regarding it, towards the close of the essay "On the Genius, Character, and Writings of the Poet," which graces the present publication—an essay not more distinguished for its eloquence and humour, than for the soundness of judgment and generosity of sentiment which it displays from beginning to end. The communication was addressed to Robert Chambers, as editor of *The Land of Burns*, published by Messrs. Blackie & Son.

"TRUSTEES' OFFICE, Edinburgh, 29th March, 1838.

"DEAR SIR,

"I have been favoured with your note, in regard to a work which you tell me is about to appear, relative to *The Land of Burns*, in which it is proposed to give some memoirs of the poet's friends, and of me among the rest. To your request, that I should furnish you with a few particulars respecting my personal history, I really know not well what to say, because my life has been too unimportant to merit much notice. It is in connection with national music and song, and my correspondence on that subject with Burns, chiefly, that I can have any reasonable hope of being occasionally spoken of; and I presume it is chiefly on my connection with the poet, that you wish me to speak. I shall therefore content myself with a brief sketch of what belongs to my personal history, and then proceed to the subject of Scottish music and Burns.

"I was born at Limekilns, in Fife, about the year 1759, as I was *informed*, for I can scarce believe I am so old. My father taught a school there, and having been invited in that capacity to the town of Banff, he carried me thither in my very early years, instructed me in the elementary branches of knowledge, and sent me to learn the dead languages at what was called the grammar school. He had a hard struggle to maintain an increasing family, and, after trying some mercantile means of enlarging his income, without success, he moved with his family to Edinburgh, when I was about seventeen. In a short time I got into a writer to the signet's office as a clerk, and remained in that capacity with him and another W. S., till the year 1780, when, through the influence of Mr. John Home,

author of *Douglas*, with one of the members of the honourable Board of Trustees, I was recommended to that board, and became their junior clerk. Not long after, upon the death of their principal clerk, I succeeded to his situation, Mr. Robert Arbuthnot being then their secretary; under whom, and afterwards under Sir William, his son and successor, I have served the board for half a century; enjoying their fullest confidence, and the entire approbation of both secretaries, whose gentlemanly manners and kind dispositions were such, (for I never saw a frown on their brows, or heard an angry word escape from their lips,) that I can say, with heartfelt gratitude to their memory, and to all my superiors, in this the 58th year of my clerkship, that I never have felt the word servitude to mean anything in the least mortifying or unpleasant, but quite the reverse.

"In my 25th year I married Miss Miller, whose father was a lieutenant in the 50th regiment, and her mother the daughter of a most respectable gentleman in Berwickshire, George Peter, Esq. of Chapel; and this was the wisest act of my life. She is happily still living, and has presented me with six daughters, and two sons, the elder of the two being now a Lieutenant-colonel of Engineers, and the other an Assistant Commissary-general.

"From my boyhood I had a passion for the sister arts of Music and Painting, which I have ever since continued to cherish, in the society of the ablest professors of both arts. Having studied the violin, it was my custom, after the hours of business, to con over our Scotch melodies, and to devour the choruses of Handel's oratorios; in which, when performed at St. Cecilia's hall, I generally took a part, along with a few other gentlemen, Mr. Alexander Wight, one of the most eminent counsel at the bar, Mr. Gilbert Innes of Stow, Mr. John Russel, W. S., Mr. John Hutton, &c., it being then not uncommon for grave amateurs to assist at the St. Cecilia concerts, one of the most interesting and liberal musical institutions that ever existed in Scotland, or indeed in any country. I had so much delight in singing those matchless choruses, and in practising the violin quartettes of Pleyel and Haydn, that it was with joy I hailed the hour when, like the young amateur in the good old

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Scotch song, I could hie me home to my Cremona, and enjoy Haydn's admirable fancies.

I still was pleas'd where'er I went, and when I was alone
I screw'd my pegs and pleas'd myself with John o' Badenyon.

"At the St. Cecilia concerts I heard Scottish songs sung in a style of excellence far surpassing any idea which I previously had of their beauty, and that too from *Italians*, Signor Tenducci the one, and Signora Domenica Corri the other. Tenducci's 'I'll never leave thee,' and 'Braes of Ballenden,' and the Signora's 'Ewe bughts, Marion,' and 'Waly, waly,' so delighted every hearer, that in the most crowded room not a whisper was to be heard, so entirely did they rivet the attention and admiration of the audience. Tenducci's singing was full of passion, feeling, and taste; and, what we hear very rarely from singers, his articulation of the words was no less perfect than his expression of the music. It was in consequence of my hearing him and Signora Corri sing a number of our songs so charmingly, that I conceived the idea of collecting all our best melodies and songs, and of obtaining accompaniments to them worthy of their merit.

"On examining with great attention the various collections on which I could by any means lay my hand, I found them all more or less exceptionable, a sad mixture of good and evil, the pure and the impure. The melodies in general were without any symphonies to introduce and conclude them; and the accompaniments (for the piano only) meagre and commonplace;—while the verses united with the melodies were in a great many instances coarse and vulgar, the productions of a rude age, and such as could not be tolerated or sung in good society.

"Many copies of the same melody, both in print and manuscript, differing more or less from each other, came under my view; and after a minute comparison of copies, and hearing them sung over and over by such of my fair friends as I knew to be most conversant with them, I chose that set or copy of each air which I found the most simple and beautiful.

"For obtaining accompaniments to the airs, and also symphonies to introduce and conclude each air—a most interesting appendage to the airs that had not before graced any of

the collections—I turned my eyes first on Pleyel, whose compositions were remarkably popular and pleasing: and afterwards, when I had resolved to extend my work into a complete collection of all the airs that were worthy of preservation, I divided them in different portions, and sent them, from time to time, to Haydn, to Beethoven, to Weber, Hummel, &c., the greatest musicians then flourishing in Europe. These artists, to my inexpressible satisfaction, proceeded *con amore* with their respective portions of the work; and in the symphonies, *which are original and characteristic creations of their own*, as well as in their judicious and delicate accompaniments for the pianoforte, and for the violin, flute, and violoncello, they exceeded my most sanguine expectations, and obtained the decided approval of the best judges. Their compositions have been pronounced by the *Edinburgh Review* to be wholly unrivalled for originality and beauty.

"The poetry became next the subject of my anxious consideration, and engaged me in a far more extensive correspondence than I had ever anticipated, which occupied nearly the whole of my leisure for many years. For although a small portion of the melodies had long been united with excellent songs, yet a much greater number stood matched with such unworthy associates as to render a divorce, and a new union, absolutely necessary.

"Fortunately for the melodies, I turned my eyes towards Robert Burns, who no sooner was informed of my plan and wishes, than, with all the frankness, generosity, and enthusiasm which marked his character, he undertook to write whatever songs I wanted for my work; but in answer to my promise of remuneration, he declared, in the most emphatic terms, that he would receive nothing of the kind! He proceeded with the utmost alacrity to execute what he had undertaken, and from the year 1792, till the time of his death in 1796, I continued to receive his exquisitely beautiful compositions for the melodies I had sent him from time to time: and, in order that nothing should be wanting which might suit my work, he empowered me to make use of all the other songs that he had written for Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum*, &c. My work thus contains above 120 of his inimitable songs; besides many of uncommon beauty that

I obtained from Thomas Campbell, Professor Smyth, Sir Walter Scott, Joanna Baillie, and other admired Poets: together with the best songs of the olden time.

"Upon my publishing the first 25 melodies, with Pleyel's symphonies and accompaniments, and songs by different authors, six of Burns' songs being of the number, (and those six were all I published in his life time,) I, of course, sent a copy of this half volume to the poet; and, as a mark of my gratitude for his excessive kindness, I ventured, with all possible delicacy, to send him a small pecuniary present, notwithstanding what he had said on that subject. He retained it after much hesitation, but wrote me (July, 1793) that if I presumed to repeat it, he would, on the least motion of it, indignantly spurn what was past, and commence entire stranger to me.

"Who that reads the letter above referred to, and the first one which the Poet sent me, can think I have deserved the abuse which anonymous scribblers have poured upon me for not endeavouring to remunerate the Poet? If I had dared to go farther than I did, in sending him money, is it not perfectly clear that he would have deemed it an insult, and ceased to write another song for me?

"Had I been a selfish or avaricious man, I had a fair opportunity, upon the death of the Poet, to put money in my pocket; for I might then have published, for my own behoof, all the beautiful Lyrics he had written for me, the original manuscripts of which were in my possession. But instead of doing this, I was no sooner informed that the friends of the Poet's family had come to a resolution to collect his works, and to publish them for the benefit of the family, and that they thought it of importance to include my MSS., as being likely from their number, their novelty, and beauty, to prove an attraction to subscribers, than I felt it my duty to put them at once in possession of all the songs and of the correspondence between the Poet and myself: and accordingly, through Mr. John Syme of Ryedale, I transmitted the whole to Dr. Currie, who had been prevailed on, immensely for the advantage of Mrs. Burns and her children, to take on himself the task of editor.

"For thus surrendering the manuscripts, I received, both verbally and in writing the

warm thanks of the trustees for the family, Mr. John Syme, and Mr. Gilbert Burns; who considered what I had done as a fair return for the Poet's generosity of conduct to me.

"If anything more were wanting to set me right with respect to the anonymous calumnies circulated to my prejudice, in regard to the Poet, I have it in my power to refer to a most respectable testimonial, which, to my very agreeable surprise, was sent me by professor Josiah Walker, one of the Poet's biographers: and had I not been reluctant to obtrude myself on the public, I should long since have given it publicity.—The Professor wrote me as follows: 'PERTH, 14th April, 1811. DEAR SIR,—Before I left Edinburgh I sent a copy of my account of Burns to *Lord Woodhouselee*; and since my return, I have had a letter from his Lordship, which, among other passages, contains one that I cannot withhold from you. He writes thus,—"I am glad that you have embraced the occasion which lay in your way of doing full justice to Mr. George Thomson, who, I agree with you in thinking, was most harshly and illiberally treated by an anonymous dull calumniator. I have always regarded Mr. Thomson as a man of great worth and most respectable character: and I have every reason to believe that poor Burns felt himself as much indebted to his good counsels and active friendship as a man, as the public is sensible he was to his good taste and judgment as a critic." Of the unbiassed opinion of such a highly respectable gentleman and accomplished scholar as Lord Woodhouselee, I certainly feel not a little proud: it is of itself more than sufficient to silence the calumnies by which I have been assailed, first anonymously, and afterwards, to my great surprise, by some writers who might have been expected to possess sufficient judgment to see the matter in its true light.

"To ROBERT CHAMBERS, Esq., Waterloo Place."

We may supplement the above autobiographical sketch with a few notes. In 1814 Georgina, one of Mr. Thomson's daughters, married George Hogarth, W.S., a daughter of which marriage became the wife of Charles Dickens. In 1839 Mr. Thomson resigned his clerkship, a post he had held for nearly sixty years. On the 3d of March, 1847, he was presented with

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a handsome silver vase, subscribed for by one hundred of his fellow-citizens, in testimony of their esteem for his honourable character. In a speech delivered on that occasion, Lord Cockburn made an eloquent defence of Mr. Thomson's transactions with Burns:—"As to the imputations on Mr. Thomson in connection with the history of Burns, I have long ago studied the matter with as much candour as any man could apply to a subject in which he had no personal interest, and my clear conviction is, not only that all those imputations are groundless, but that, if Mr. Thomson were now placed in the same situation in which he was then, nothing different or better could be done."—Mr. Thomson died on the 11th February 1851, having thus, according to his own statement, reached the great age of ninety-two.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, Sept. 1792.

SIR,

For some years past, I have, with a friend or two,¹ employed many leisure hours in selecting and collating the most favourite of our national melodies for publication. We have engaged Pleyel, the most agreeable composer living, to put accompaniments to these, and also to compose an instrumental prelude and conclusion to each air, the better to fit them for concerts, both public and private. To render this work perfect, we are desirous to have the poetry improved, wherever it seems unworthy of the music; and that it is so in many instances, is allowed by every one conversant with our musical collections. The editors of these seem in general to have depended on the music proving an excuse for the verses; and hence, some charming melodies are united to mere nonsense and doggerel, while others are accommodated with rhymes so loose and indelicate, as cannot be sung in decent company. To remove this reproach would be an easy task to the author of "The

¹ We believe one of the friends was the Honourable Andrew Erskine, brother of the Earl of Kelly, also a musical enthusiast. Ten months later we find Thomson writing to Burns that the business of selecting, &c., for publication now rested entirely on himself, "the gentlemen who originally agreed to join the speculation having requested to be off."

Cotter's Saturday Night;" and, for the honour of Caledonia, I would fain hope he may be induced to take up the pen. If so, we shall be enabled to present the public with a collection infinitely more interesting than any that has yet appeared, and acceptable to all persons of taste, whether they wish for correct melodies, delicate accompaniments, or characteristic verses.

We shall esteem your poetical assistance a particular favour, besides paying any reasonable price you shall please to demand for it. Profit is quite a secondary consideration with us, and we are resolved to spare neither pains nor expense on the publication. Tell me frankly then, whether you will devote your leisure to writing twenty or twenty-five songs suitable to the particular melodies which I am prepared to send you. A few songs, exceptionable only in some of their verses, I will likewise submit to your consideration; leaving it to you, either to mend these, or make new songs in their stead. It is superfluous to assure you, that I have no intention to displace any of the sterling old songs; those only will be removed, which appear quite silly, or absolutely indecent. Even these shall all be examined by Mr. Burns, and if he is of opinion that any of them are deserving of the music, in such cases no divorce shall take place.

Relying on the letter accompanying this,² to be forgiven for the liberty I have taken in addressing you, I am, with great esteem, Sir, your most obedient humble servant,

G. THOMSON.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

DUMFRIES, 16th Sept. 1792.

SIR,

I have just this moment got your letter. As the request you make to me will positively add to my enjoyments in complying with it, I shall enter into your undertaking with all the small portion of abilities I have, strained to their utmost exertion by the impulse of enthusiasm. Only, don't hurry me: "Deil tak

² Alexander Cunningham, an Edinburgh friend of Burns, had given Thomson a letter of introduction to the poet.

the hindmost," is by no means the *cri de guerre* of my muse. Will you, as I am inferior to none of you in enthusiastic attachment to the poetry and music of old Caledonia, and, since you request it, have cheerfully promised my mite of assistance—will you let me have a list of your airs, with the first line of the printed verses you intend for them, that I may have an opportunity of suggesting any alteration that may occur to me? You know 'tis in the way of my trade; still leaving you gentlemen the undoubted right of publishers, to approve, or reject, at your pleasure, for your own publication. A propos! if you are for English verses, there is, on my part, an end of the matter. Whether in the simplicity of the ballad, or the pathos of the song, I can only hope to please myself in being allowed at least a sprinkling of our native tongue. English verses, particularly the works of Scotsmen, that have merit, are certainly very eligible. "Tweedside;" "Ah! the poor shepherd's mournful fate!" "Ah! Chloris, could I now but sit," except (excuse my vanity) you should to Gilderoy prefer my own song, "From thee, Eliza, I must go," &c. you cannot mend; but such insipid stuff as, "To Fanny fair could I impart," &c. usually set to "The Mill, Mill O," is a disgrace to the collections in which it has already appeared, and would doubly disgrace a collection that will have the very superior merit of yours. But more of this in the farther prosecution of the business, if I am called on for my strictures and amendments—I say, amendments; for I will not *alter* except where I myself at least think that I *amend*.

As to any remuneration, you may think my songs either *above* or *below* price; for they shall absolutely be the one or the other. In the honest enthusiasm with which I embark in your undertaking, to talk of money, wages, fee, hire, &c., would be downright sodomy¹ of soul! A proof of each of the songs that I compose or amend, I shall receive as a favour. In the rustic phrase of the season, "God speed the wark!"

I am, Sir, your very humble servant,

R. BURNS.

P. S. I have some particular reasons for wishing my interference to be known as little as possible.

¹ Currie softened down this to "prostitution."

THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 13th Oct. 1792.

DEAR SIR,

I received with much satisfaction your pleasant and obliging letter, and now return my warmest acknowledgments for the enthusiasm with which you have entered into our undertaking. We have now no doubt of being able to produce a collection highly deserving of public attention in all respects.

I agree with you in thinking English verses, that have merit, very eligible, wherever new verses are necessary; because the English becomes every year more and more the language of Scotland; but if you mean that no English verses, except those by Scottish authors, ought to be admitted, I am half inclined to differ from you. I should consider it unpardonable to sacrifice one good song in the Scottish dialect, to make room for English verses; but, if we can select a few excellent ones suited to the unprovided or ill-provided airs, would it not be the very bigotry of literary patriotism to reject such, merely because the authors were born south of the Tweed? Our sweet air, "My Nannie O," which in the collections is joined to the poorest stuff that Allan Ramsay ever wrote, beginning, "While some for pleasure pawn their health," answers so finely to Dr. Percy's beautiful song, "O Nancy wilt thou go with me," that one would think he wrote it on purpose for the air. However, it is not at all our wish to confine you to English verses; you shall freely be allowed a sprinkling of your native tongue, as you elegantly express it; and moreover, we will patiently wait your own time. One thing only I beg, which is, that, however gay and sportive the muse may be, she may always be decent. Let her not write what beauty would blush to speak, nor wound that charming delicacy which forms the most precious dowry of our daughters. I do not conceive the song to be the most proper vehicle for witty and brilliant conceits; simplicity, I believe, should be its prominent feature; but, in some of our songs, the writers have confounded simplicity with coarseness and vulgarity; although between the one and the other, as Dr. Beattie well observes, there is as great a difference, as between a plain suit of clothes and a bundle of rags. The

humorous ballad, or pathetic complaint, is best suited to our artless melodies; and more interesting, indeed, in all songs, than the most pointed wit, dazzling descriptions, and flowery fancies.

With these trite observations, I send you eleven of the songs, for which it is my wish to substitute others of your writing. I shall soon transmit the rest, and, at the same time, a prospectus of the whole collection: and you may believe we will receive any hints that you are so kind as to give for improving the work, with the greatest pleasure and thankfulness.

I remain, dear Sir, &c.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

DUMFRIES, 26th Oct. 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,

Let me tell you that you are too fastidious in your ideas of songs and ballads. I own that your criticisms are just; the songs you specify in your list¹ have, all but one, the faults you remark in them; but who shall mend the matter? Who shall rise up and say—Go to, I will make a better? For instance, on reading over the “Lea-rig,” I immediately set about trying my hand on it, and, after all, I could make nothing more of it than the following, which, Heaven knows, is poore enough:—

MY AIN KIND DEARIE, O.

When o'er the hill the eastern star,
Tells bughtin'-time is near, my jo;
And owsen frae the furrow'd field,
Return sae dowf and weary, O. &c.

[Vol. iii. p. 130.]

Your observation, as to the aptitude of Dr. Percy's ballad to the air “Nannie O,” is just. It is besides, perhaps, the most beautiful ballad in the English language. But let me remark to you, that, in the sentiment and style of our Scottish airs, there is a pastoral simplicity, a something that one may call the Doric style and dialect of vocal music, to which a dash of our native tongue and manners is particularly, nay peculiarly, apposite. For this reason, and, upon my honour, for this reason alone, I am of

¹ This list, drawn up by Thomson, with his notes, has never been found.

opinion (but, as I told you before, my opinion is yours, freely yours, to approve, or reject, as you please) that my ballad of “Nannie O” might, perhaps, do for one set of verses to the tune. Now don't let it enter into your head that you are under any necessity of taking my verses. I have long ago made up my mind as to my own reputation in the business of authorship; and have nothing to be pleased or offended at in your adoption or rejection of my verses. Though you should reject one half of what I give you, I shall be pleased with your adopting t'other half, and shall continue to serve you with the same assiduity.

In the printed copy of my “Nannie O,” the name of the river is horridly prosaic.² I will alter it,

Behind yon hills where {Girvan } flows.
 {Lugar }

“Girvan” is the name of the river that suits the idea of the stanza best, but “Lugar” is the most agreeable modulation of syllables.

I intended to have given you, and will soon give you a great many more remarks on this business; but I have just now an opportunity of conveying you this scrawl, free of postage, an expense that it is ill able to pay: so, with my best compliments to honest Allan³, Good bye to you, &c.

Friday Night.

Remember me to the first and dearest of my friends, Alex. Cunningham, who, I understand, is a coadjutor in this business.

Saturday Morning.

I find that I have still an hour to spare this morning before my conveyance goes away: I will give you “Nannie O,” at length. [See vol. i. p. 216.]

Your remarks on “Ewe-bughts, Marion,” are just: still it has obtained a place among our more classical Scottish songs; and, what with many beauties in its composition, and more prejudices in its favour, you will not find it easy to supplant it.

In my very early years, when I was thinking of going to the West Indies, I took the following farewell of a dear girl. It is quite trifling,

² “Stinehar” was the name originally used.

³ No doubt Allan Masterton of the Edinburgh High School, Burns's friend, and, being a musician, probably a friend of Thomson's too. Burns calls him “honest Allan” in a note to “Willie brew'd a peck o' maut.”

and has nothing of the merits of "Ewe-bughts;" but it will fill up this page. You must know, that all my earlier love-songs were the breathings of ardent passion, and though it might have been easy in after-times to have given them a polish, yet that polish to me, whose they were, and who perhaps alone cared for them, would have defaced the legend of the heart, which was so faithfully inscribed on them. Their uncouth simplicity was, as they say of wines, their race.

WILL YE GO TO THE INDIES, MY MARY.¹

Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
And leave auld Scotia's shore?
Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
Across th' Atlantic's roar? &c.

[See p. 145, vol. II.]

"Gala Water," and "Auld Rob Morris," I think, will most probably be the next subject of my musings. However, even on my verses, speak out your criticisms with equal frankness. My wish is, not to stand aloof, the uncomplaining bigot of *opiniùtreté*, but cordially to join issue² with you in the furtherance of the work! Gude speed the wark! Amen.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

DUMFRIES, Nov. 8th, 1792.

If you mean, my dear Sir, that all the songs in your collection shall be poetry of the first merit, I am afraid you will find difficulty in the undertaking more than you are aware of. There is a peculiar rhythmus in many of our airs, a necessity of adapting syllables to the emphasis, or what I would call the feature-notes of the tune, that cramps the poet, and lays him under almost insuperable difficulties. For instance, in the air, "My wife's a wanton wee thing," if a few lines, *smooth and pretty*, can be adapted to it, it is all that you can expect. The following I made extempore to it; and though, on further study, I might give you something more profound, yet it might not suit the light-horse gallop of the air so well as this *random clink*.

¹ The "Mary" of this song is Mary Campbell (Highland Mary). See Life, chapter III., and Appendix to Life.

² This is an inaccurate use of a legal term; to join issue is for one of the parties to take a positive and the other the negative position on a question in debate. Burns means simply "join."

MY WIFE'S A WINSOME WEE THING.

She is a winsome wee thing,
She is a handsome wee thing,
She is a loesome³ wee thing,
This dear wee wife o' mine, &c.

[See p. 130, vol. III.]

I have just been looking over the "Collier's bonny Dochter;" and if the following rhapsody, which I composed the other day, on a charming Ayrshire girl, Miss Lesley Baillic, as she passed through this place to England, will suit your taste better than the "Collier Lassie,"—full on and welcome:—

O SAW YE BONNIE LESLEY.⁴

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

[See p. 128, vol. III.]

Every seventh line ends with three syllables, in place of the two in the other lines; but you will see in the sixth bar of the second part, the place where these three syllables will always recur, and that the four semiquavers usually sung as one syllable will, with the greatest propriety, divide into two, thus:—



For Na - ture made her what she is, And,

I have hitherto deferred the sublimer, more pathetic airs, until more leisure, as they will take, and deserve, a greater effort. However, they are all put into thy hands, as clay into the hands of the potter, to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour. Farewell, &c.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

HIGHLAND MARY.⁵

Ye banks, and braes, and streams around
The castle o' Montgomery,
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
Your waters never drumlie! &c.

[See p. 131, vol. III.]

14th Nov. 1792.

DEAR SIR,

I agree with you that the song, *K. Ogie*, is very poor stuff, and unworthy, altogether un-

³ Variations in the MSS., "bonnie" and "winsome," for "loesome;" "sweet" for "dear."

⁴ Burns has elsewhere described the circumstances attending the composition of this song. See letter to Mrs. Dunlop, 22d August, 1792.

⁵ Particulars regarding Highland Mary will be found elsewhere. See Life, chapter III., and Appendix.

worthy, of so beautiful an air. I tried to mend it, but the awkward sound "Ogle" recurring so often in the rhyme, spoils every attempt at introducing *sentiment* into the piece. The foregoing song pleases myself; I think it is in my happiest manner; you will see at first glance that it suits the air. The subject of the song is one of the most interesting passages of my youthful days; and I own that I would be much flattered to see the verses set to an air which would insure celebrity. Perhaps, after all, 'tis the still glowing prejudice of my heart, that throws a borrowed lustre over the merits of the composition.

I have partly taken your idea of "Auld Rob Morris." I have adopted the two first verses, and am going on with the song on a new plan, which promises pretty well. I take up one or another, just as the bee of the moment buzzes in my bonnet-lug; and do you, *sans ceremonie*, make what use you choose of the productions. Adieu, &c.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, Nov., 1792.

DEAR SIR,

I was just going to write to you, that on meeting with your Nannie, I had fallen violently in love with her. I thank you, therefore, for sending the charming rustic to me, in the dress you wish her to appear before the public. She does you great credit, and will soon be admitted into the best company.¹

I regret that your song for the "Lea-rig" is so short; the air is easy, soon sung, and very pleasing; so that, if the singer stops at the end of two stanzas, it is a pleasure lost ere it is well possessed.

Although a dash of our native tongue and manners is doubtless peculiarly congenial and appropriate to our melodies, yet I shall be able to present a considerable number of the very flowers of English song, well adapted to those melodies, which, in England at least, will be the means of recommending them to still greater attention than they have procured there. But

¹ The song alluded to, "My Nannie, O," had, however, been introduced to very good company before, viz., in the Edinburgh edition of the poet's works (1787), and before the date of this letter had been an established favourite among the singers of Scotland.

you will observe, my plan is, that every air shall, in the first place, have verses wholly by Scottish poets; and that those of English writers shall follow as additional songs, for the choice of the singer.

What you say of the "Eve-bughts" is just; I admire it, and never meant to supplant it. All I requested was, that you would try your hand on some of the inferior stanzas, which are apparently no part of the original song: but this I do not urge, because the song is of sufficient length, though those inferior stanzas be omitted, as they will be by the singer of taste. You must not think I expect all the songs to be of superlative merit: that were an unreasonable expectation. I am sensible that no poet can sit down doggedly to pen verses, and succeed well at all times.

I am highly pleased with your humorous and amorous rhapsody on "Bonnie Lesley:" it is a thousand times better than the "Collier's Lassie!" "The deil he couldna seaith thee," &c. is an eccentric and happy thought. Do you not think, however, that the names of such old heroes as Alexander sound rather queer, unless in pompous or mere burlesque verse? Instead of the line, "And never made anither," I would humbly suggest, "And ne'er made sic anither;" and I would fain have you substitute some other line for "Return to Caledonie," in the last verse, because I think this alteration of the orthography, and of the sound of Caledonia, disfigures the word, and renders it Hudibrastic.

Of the other song, "My wife's a winsome wee thing," I think the first eight lines very good, but I do not admire the other eight, because four of them are a bare repetition of the first verse. I have been trying to spin a stanza, but could make nothing better than the following: do you mend it, or as Yorick did with the love-letter, whip it up in your own way.

O leeze me on my wee thing,
My bonnie blythesome wee thing;
Sae lang's I hae my wee thing,
I'll think my lot divine.

Tho' world's care we share o't,
And may see meikle mair o't:
Wi' her I'll blythely bear it,
And ne'er a word repine.²

² The complete song as it is usually sung is Burns's version without these mendings, and will be found at p. 150, vol. iii.

You perceive, my dear Sir, I avail myself of the liberty which you condescend to allow me, by speaking freely what I think. Be assured it is not my disposition to pick out the faults of any poem or picture I see: my first and chief object is to discover and be delighted with the beauties of the piece. If I sit down to examine critically, and at leisure, what perhaps you have written in haste, I may happen to observe careless lines, the re-perusal of which might lead you to improve them. The wren will often see what has been overlooked by the eagle.

I remain yours faithfully, &c.

P.S. Your verses upon Highland Mary are just come to hand: they breathe the genuine spirit of poetry, and, like the music, will last for ever. Such verses united to such an air, with the delicate harmony of Pleyel super-added, might form a treat worthy of being presented to Apollo himself.¹ I have heard the sad story of your Mary; you always seem inspired when you write of her.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

DUMFRIES, 1st Dec. 1792.

Your alterations of my "Nannie O" are perfectly right. So are those of "My wife's a wanton wee thing." Your alteration of the second stanza is a positive improvement. Now, my dear Sir, with the freedom which characterises our correspondence, I must not, cannot alter "Bonnie Lesley." You are right, the word "Alexander," makes the line a little uncouth, but I think the thought is pretty. Of Alexander, beyond all other heroes, it may be said in the sublime language of Scripture, that "he went forth conquering and to conquer."

For Nature made her *what she is*,
And never made anither; (such a person as she is.)

This is, in my opinion, more poetical than "Ne'er made sic anither." However, it is immaterial: make it either way.² "Caledonie,"

¹ In Thomson's collection itself, however, the music is arranged as a duet with an accompaniment by Kozeluch.

² Mr. Thomson decided on "Ne'er made sic anither." The original reading has, however, been restored in the text.

I agree with you, is not so good a word as could be wished, though it is sanctioned in three or four instances by Allan Ramsay; but I cannot help it. In short, that species of stanza is the most difficult that I have ever tried.

The "Lea-rig" is as follows: [Here are introduced the complete version of "My Ain Kind Dearie," the first two stanzas of which had been given in letter of 26th Oct. See vol. iii. p. 130.]

I am interrupted.

Yours, &c.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

AULD ROB MORRIS.

There's auld Rob Morris that wons in you glen,
He's the king o' guid fellows and wale of auld men.
&c. [See p. 134, vol. iii.]

DUNCAN GRAY.

Duncan Gray cam here to woo,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't,
On blythe Yule-night when we were fou,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't. &c.

[See p. 135, vol. iii.]

4th Dec. 1792.

The foregoing I submit, my dear Sir, to your judgment. Acquit them or condemn them, as seemeth good in your sight. Duncan Gray is that kind of light-horse gallop of an air, which precludes sentiment. The ludicrous is its ruling feature.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

O POORTITH CAULD AND RESTLESS LOVE.

O poortith cauld and restless love,
Ye wreck my peace between ye;
Yet poortith a' I could forgive,
An' twere na for my Jennie. &c.

[See p. 138, vol. iii.]

GALA WATER.

Braw, braw lads on Yarrow braces,
They rove among the blooming heather;
But Yarrow braces, nor Ettrick shaws,
Can match the lads o' Gala Water. &c.

[See p. 139, vol. iii.]

DUMFRIES, Jan. 1793.

Many returns of the season to you, my dear Sir. How comes on your publication? will these two foregoing be of any service to you? Dispose of them as seemeth good in thy sight.

If you are begun with the work, I could like to see one of your proofs, merely from curiosity, and, perhaps, to try to get you a subscriber or two. I should like to know what other songs you print to each tune, besides the verses to which it is set. In short, I would wish to give you my opinion on all the poetry you publish. You know it is my trade, and a man in the way of his trade may suggest useful hints that escape men of much superior parts and endowments in other things.

If you meet with my dear and much-valued Cunningham, greet him in my name, with the compliments of the season.

Yours, &c.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 20th Jan. 1793.

You make me happy, my dear Sir, and thousands will be happy to see the charming songs you have sent me. Many merry returns of the season to you, and may you long continue, among the sons and daughters of Caledonia, to delight them and to honour yourself.

The four last songs with which you favoured me, viz. "Auld Rob Morris," "Duncan Gray," "Gala Water," and "Cauld Kail," are admirable. Duncan is indeed a lad of grace, and his humour will endure him to everybody. The distracted lover in "Auld Rob," and the happy shepherdess in "Gala Water," exhibit an excellent contrast: they speak from genuine feeling, and powerfully touch the heart.

The number of songs which I had originally in view, was limited; but I now resolve to include every Scotch air and song worth singing, leaving none behind but mere gleanings, to which the publishers of *omegatherum* are welcome. I would rather be the editor of a collection from which nothing could be taken away, than of one to which nothing could be added. We intend presenting the subscribers with two beautiful stroke engravings; the one characteristic of the plaintive, and the other of the lively songs; and I have Dr. Beattie's promise of an essay upon the subject of our national music, if his health will permit him to write it. As a number of our songs have doubtless been called forth by particular events, or by the charms of peerless damsels, there

must be many curious anecdotes relating to them.

The late Mr. Tytler of Woodhouselee, I believe, knew more of this than anybody, for he joined to the pursuits of an antiquary, a taste for poetry, besides being a man of the world, and possessing an enthusiasm for music beyond most of his contemporaries. He was quite pleased with this plan of mine, for I may say it has been solely managed by me, and we had several long conversations about it when it was in embryo. If I could simply mention the name of the heroine of each song, and the incident which occasioned the verses, it would be gratifying. Pray, will you send me any information of this sort, as well with regard to your own songs, as the old ones?

To all the favourite songs of the plaintive or pastoral kind, will be joined the delicate accompaniments, &c. of Pleyel. To those of the comic and humorous class, I think accompaniments scarcely necessary; they are chiefly fitted for the conviviality of the festive board, and a tuneful voice, with a proper delivery of the words, renders them perfect. Nevertheless, to these I propose adding bass accompaniments, because then they are fitted either for singing, or for instrumental performance, when there happens to be no singer. I mean to employ our right trusty friend Mr. Clarke, to set the bass to these, which he assures me he will do *con amore*, and with much greater attention than he ever bestowed on anything of the kind.¹ But for this last class of airs I will not attempt to find more than one set of verses.

That eccentric bard, Peter Pindar, has started I know not how many difficulties, about writing for the airs I sent to him, because of the peculiarity of their measure, and the trammels they impose on his flying Pegasus. I subjoin for your perusal the only one I have yet got from him, being for the fine air "Lord Gregory." The Scots verses, printed with that air, are taken from the middle of an old ballad, called "The Lass of Lochryan," which I do not admire.² I have set down the air,

¹ Clarke's name is not, however, attached to any of the arrangements in the work. About half of them were composed by Haydn, while a good number of the remainder came from the hands of Beethoven, Weber, Hummel, Pleyel, Kozeluch, &c.

² "The Lass of Lochryan" is generally allowed to be one of our very finest ballads.

therefore, as a creditor of yours. Many of the Jacobite songs are replete with wit and humour; might not the best of these be included in our volume of comic songs?

POSTSCRIPT, FROM THE HON. A. ERSKINE.¹
—Mr. Thomson has been so obliging as to give me a perusal of your songs. "Highland Mary" is most enchantingly pathetic, and "Duncan Gray" possesses native genuine humour: "Spak o' lowpin o'er a linn," is a line of itself that should make you immortal. I sometimes hear of you from our mutual friend Cunningham, who is a most excellent fellow, and possesses, above all men I know, the charm of a most obliging disposition. You kindly promised me, about a year ago, a collection of your unpublished productions, religious and amorous:² I know from experience how irksome it is to copy. If you will get any trusty person in Dumfries to write them over fair, I will give Peter Hill whatever money he asks for his trouble, and I certainly shall not betray your confidence. I am, your hearty admirer,

ANDREW ERSKINE.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

20th Jan. 1793.

I approve greatly, my dear Sir, of your plans. Dr. Beattie's essay will of itself be a treasure. On my part, I mean to draw up an appendix to the Doctor's essay, containing my stock of anecdotes, &c. of our Scots airs and songs. All the late Mr. Tytler's anecdotes I have by me, taken down in the course of my acquaintance with him from his own mouth. I am such an enthusiast, that, in the course of my several

¹ The Hon. Andrew Erskine was a younger brother of "the musical Earl of Kellie," and was originally in the army. He was one of the contributors to *Donaldson's Collection of Original Poems by Scottish Gentlemen*, and the author in part of a curious and rare volume, entitled, *Letters between the Hon. Andrew Erskine and James Boswell, Esq.*—Johnson's Boswell. He wrote one or two pieces for the Edinburgh stage, and was author of a satirical production called *Town Eclogues*. Mr. Erskine was found drowned in the Forth in the autumn of this year, 1793—a victim to his fondness for play. He figures among Kay's portraits.

² These "religious and amorous" pieces would be such as were fitted for a place in the collection mentioned in note to p. 228, vol. iv.

peregrinations through Scotland, I made a pilgrimage to the individual spot from which every song took its rise; "Lochaber" and the "Braes of Ballenden," excepted. So far as the locality, either from the title of the air, or the tenor of the song, could be ascertained, I have paid my devotions at the particular shrine of every Scots muse.

I don't doubt but you might make a very valuable collection of Jacobite songs; but would it give no offence? In the mean time, do not you think that some of them, particularly "The Sow's Tail to Geordie," as an air, with other words, might be well worth a place in your collection of lively songs?

If it were possible to procure songs of merit, it would be proper to have one set of Scots words to every air, and that the set of words to which the notes ought to be set. There is a *naïveté*, a pastoral simplicity, in a slight intermixture of Scots words and phraseology, which is more in unison (at least to my taste, and I will add to every genuine Caledonian taste) with the simple pathos, or rustic sprightliness of our native music, than any English verses whatever. For instance, in my "Auld Rob Morris" you propose instead of the word "deserving" to substitute the word "all-telling," which would spoil the rusticity—the pastoral of the stanza.

The very name of Peter Pindar is an acquisition to your work. His "Gregory" is beautiful. I have tried to give you a set of stanzas in Scots, on the same subject, which are at your service. Not that I intend to enter the lists with Peter; that would be presumption indeed. My song, though much inferior in poetic merit, has, I think, more of the ballad simplicity in it.

LORD GREGORY.

O mirk, mirk is this midnight hour,
And loud the tempest's roar;
A waefu' wanderer seeks thy tow'r,
Lord Gregory, ope thy door. &c.

[See p. 140, vol. iii.]

Your remark on the first stanza of my "Highland Mary" is just; but I cannot alter it without injuring the poetry, in proportion as I mend the perspicuity; so, if you please we will let it stand as it is. My other songs—you will see what alterations I have made in them.

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If you think that my name can be of any service to your advertisement, you are welcome. My most respectable compliments to the honourable gentleman who favoured me with a postscript in your last. He shall hear from me and receive his MSS. soon.

I do not know whether this song be really mended.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 2nd April, 1793.

I will not recognise the title you give yourself, "the Prince of *indolent* correspondents;" but if the adjective were taken away, I think the title would fit you exactly. It gives me pleasure to find you can furnish anecdotes with respect to most of the songs: these will be a literary curiosity.

I now send you my list of the songs, which I believe will be found nearly complete. I have put down the first lines of all the English songs which I propose giving in addition to the Scotch verses. If any others occur to you, better adapted to the character of the airs, pray mention them, when you favour me with your strictures upon every thing else relating to the work.

Pleyel has lately sent me a number of the songs, with his symphonies and accompaniments added to them. I wish you were here, that I might serve up some of them to you with your own verses, by way of dessert after dinner. There is so much delightful fancy in the symphonies, and such a delicate simplicity in the accompaniments—they are, indeed, beyond all praise.

I am very much pleased with the several last productions of your muse: your "Lord Gregory," in my estimation, is more interesting than Peter's, beautiful as his is! Your "Here awa, Willie," must undergo some alterations to suit the air. Mr. Erskine and I have been conning it over; he will suggest what is necessary to make them a fit match.¹

The gentleman I have mentioned, whose fine taste you are no stranger to, is so well-pleased both with the musical and poetical part of our work, that he has volunteered his assistance, and has already written four songs for it, which by his own desire I send for your perusal.

¹ See the three versions of the song given at pp. 141, 142, vol. iii.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

20th March, 1793.

MARY MORISON.

O Mary, at thy window be,
It is the wish'd, the trysted hour!
Those smiles and glances let me see,
That make the miser's treasure poor! &c.
[See p. 200, vol. I.]

MY DEAR SIR,

The song prefixed is one of my juvenile works. I leave it among your hands. I do not think it very remarkable, either for its merits or demerits. It is impossible (at least I feel it so in my stinted powers) to be always original, entertaining, and witty.

What is become of the list, &c. of your songs? I shall be out of all temper with you by-and-by. I have always looked upon myself as the prince of indolent correspondents, and valued myself accordingly; and I will not, cannot bear rivalry from you, nor any body else. I wish much to have the list, and to hear how you come on.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

[March, 1793.]

WANDERING WILLIE.

Here awa', there awa', wandering Willie,
Now tired with wandering, haud awa' hame!
Come to my bosom, my ae only dearie,
And tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same. &c.
[See p. 141, vol. iii.]

I leave it to you, my dear Sir, to determine whether the above, or the old "Thro' the lang Muir," be the best.

OPEN THE DOOR TO ME, OH.

(WITH ALTERATIONS.)

Oh, open the door, some pity to show,
If love it may not be, Oh!
Tho' thou hast been false, I'll ever prove true,
Oh, open the door to me, Oh! &c.
[See vol. iii. p. 143.]

BURNS TO THOMSON.

7th April, 1793.

Thank you, my dear Sir, for your packet. You cannot imagine how much this business of composing for your publication has added to my enjoyments. What with my early attachment to ballads, your book, &c., ballad-making is now as completely my hobby-horse as ever fortification was Uncle Toby's; so I'll e'en canter it away till I come to the limit of my race, (God grant that I may take the right side of the winning-post!) and then cheerfully looking back on the honest folks with whom I have been happy, I shall say or sing, "Sae merry as we a' hae been!" and raising my last looks to the whole human race, the last words of the voice of "Coila," shall be, "Good night, and joy be wi' you a'!" So much for my last words; now for a few present remarks, as they have occurred at random on looking over your list.

The first lines of "The last time I came o'er the moor," and several other lines in it, are beautiful; but in my opinion—pardon me, revered shade of Ramsay!—the song is unworthy of the divine air. I shall try to make or mend. "For ever, Fortune, wilt thou prove," is a charming song, but "Logan burn and Logan braes," is sweetly susceptible of rural imagery: I'll try that likewise, and, if I succeed, the other song may class among the English ones. I remember two ending lines of a verse in some of the old songs of "Logan Water" (for I know a good many different ones) which I think pretty:—

Now my dear lad maun face his faes,
Far, far frae me and Logan braes.

"My Patie is a lover gay," is unequal. "His mind is never muddy," is a muddy expression indeed.

Then I'll resign and marry Pate,
And syne my cockernony. &c.

This is surely far unworthy of Ramsay, or your book. My song, "Rigs of Barley," to the same tune does not altogether please me; but if I can mend it, and thrash a few loose sentiments out of it, I will submit it to your consideration. I need not here repeat that I leave you, without the smallest partiality or constraint, to reject or approve anything of mine.

"The Lass o' Patie's Mill," is one of Ramsay's best songs; but there is one loose sentiment in it, which my much-valued friend Mr. Erskine, who has so well improved "Down the burn, Davie, lad," will take into his critical care and consideration. In Sir J. Sinclair's statistical volumes, are two claims, one, I think, from Aberdeenshire, and the other from Ayrshire, for the honour of this song. The following anecdote, which I had from the present Sir William Cunningham of Robertland, who had it of the late John, Earl of Loudoun, I can, on such authorities, believe:—

Allan Ramsay was residing at Loudoun Castle with the then Earl, father to Earl John; and one forenoon, riding, or walking out together, his Lordship and Allan passed a sweet romantic spot on Irvine Water, still called "Patie's Mill," where a bonnie lass was "tedding hay, bare-headed on the green." My Lord observed to Allan, that it would be a fine theme for a song. Ramsay took the hint, and lingering behind, he composed the first sketch of it, which he produced at dinner.

"The Yellow-haired Laddie" deserves the best verses that were ever composed, but I dare not venture on it. The verses you intend, though good, are not quite worthy of it.

"I wish I were where Helen lies." The only tolerable set of this song that I know is in Pinkerton's collection.

"One day I heard Mary say," is a fine song; but for consistency's sake, alter the name "Adonis." Was there ever such banns published, as a purpose of marriage between Adonis and Mary? I agree with you that my song, "There's nought but care on every hand," is much superior to "Poortith cauld." The original song, "The Mill, Mill, O," though excellent, is, on account of delicacy, inadmissible: still I like the title, and think a Scottish song would suit the notes best; and let your chosen song, which is very pretty, follow as an English set.

Though I gave Johnson one edition of my songs, that does not give away the copyright, so you may take "Thou lingering star, with less'ning ray," to the tune of "Hughie Graham," or other songs of mine. "Ye gallants bright, I rede ye right," &c. is my composition.

"Banks of the Dee," is, you know, literally "Langolee," to slow time. The song is well

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enough, but has some false imagery in it: for instance,

And sweetly the *nightingale* sung from the tree.

In the first place, the nightingale sings in a low bush, but never from a tree; and in the second place, there never was a nightingale seen, or heard, on the banks of the Dee, or any other river in Scotland. Exotic rural imagery is always comparatively flat. If I could hit on another stanza, equal to "The small birds rejoice," &c., I do myself honestly avow, that I think it a superior song.¹

"John Anderson, my Jo"—the song to this tune in Johnson's *Museum*, is my composition, and I think it not my worst; if it suit you, take it and welcome. Your collection of sentimental and pathetic songs, is, in my opinion, very complete; but not so your comic ones. Where are "Tullochgorum," "Lamps o' puddin'," "Tibbie Fowler," "Up, and warn a', Willie," and several others, which, in my humble opinion, are well worth preservation? There is also one sentimental song of mine, the first in the 4th Vol. of the *Museum*, which never was known out of the immediate neighbourhood, until I got it taken down from a country girl's singing. It is called "Craigieburn Wood;" and in the opinion of Mr. Clarke, is one of our sweetest Scottish songs. He is quite an enthusiast about it: and I would take his taste in Scottish music against the taste of most connoisseurs.

You are quite right in inserting the last five in your list, though they are certainly Irish. "Shepherds, I have lost my love!" is to me a heavenly air—what would you think of a set of Scottish verses to it? I have made one to it a good while ago, which I think is the best love song I ever composed in my life, but in its original state is not quite a lady's song. I enclose the original, which please present with my best compliments to Mr. Erskine, and I also enclose an *altered*, not *amended* copy for you, if you choose to set the tune to it, and let the Irish verses follow.²

¹ "It will be found, in the course of this correspondence, that the bard produced a second stanza of the "Chevalier's Lament," (to which he here alludes,) worthy of the first."—CURRIE.

² Mr. Thomson, it appears, did not approve of this song ("Yestreen I had a pint of wine"), even in its altered state, no copy of which is known to exist. The original will be found in vol. iii. p. 68.

You shall hear from me again, and have your songs. Mr. Erskine's are all pretty, but his "Lone Vale" is divine. I have one criticism to make on a line in his song to "I wish my love were in a mire," but more of this when I return your parcel.

Yours, &c.

Let me know just how you like these random hints.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, April, 1793.

I rejoice to find, my dear Sir, that ballad-making continues to be your hobby-horse. Great pity 'twould be were it otherwise. I hope you will amble it away for many a year, and "witch the world with your horsemanship."

I know there are a good many lively songs of merit that I have not put down in the list sent you; but I have them all in my eye. "My Patie is a lover gay," though a little unequal, is a natural and very pleasing song, and I humbly think we ought not to displace or alter it, except the last stanza. . . .³

BURNS TO THOMSON.

April, 1793.

I have yours, my dear Sir, this moment. I shall answer it and your former letter, in my desultory way of saying whatever comes uppermost. I am decidedly against setting "The gloomy night is gathering fast," to the air, "My Nannie, O." Musical expression is, as you said in one of your late letters, very ambiguous; but, whatever a few cognoscenti may think, you will find that eight out of ten of your Scots subscribers would prefer for that air, my own "My Nannie, O," though an inferior composition to "The gloomy night," &c. Besides, "The Banks of Ayr" has been set by a Mr. Dastl to an original melody, and being a favourite song with Sutherland's com-

³ "The original letter from Mr. Thomson contains many observations on Scottish songs, and on the manner of adapting the words to the music, which, at his desire, are suppressed. The subsequent letter of Burns refers to several of these observations."—CURRIE.

pany of strolling comedians, it is now a well-known popular air over the West and South of Scotland.

That business of many of our tunes wanting, at the beginning, what fiddlers call the starting-note, is often a rub to us poor rhymers.

There's braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
That wander thro' the blooming heather,

you may alter to

Braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
They rove amang the blooming heather.

My song, "Here awa', there awa'," as amended by Mr. Erskine I entirely approve of, and return you.¹ The "Yellow-hair'd Laddie" I would dispose of thus:—I would set the air to the oldest of the songs to that tune:—

The yellow-hair'd laddie sat on yon burn brae.

and place in letter-press after it, as an English set,

In April when primroses paint the sweet plain.

Give me leave to criticise your taste in the only thing in which it is, in my opinion reprehensible. You know I ought to know something of my own trade. Of pathos, sentiment, and point, you are a complete judge; but there is a quality more necessary than either in a song, and which is the very essence of a ballad, I mean simplicity; now, if I mistake not, this last feature you are a little apt to sacrifice to the foregoing.

Ramsay, like every other poet, has not been always equally happy in his pieces; still I cannot approve of taking such liberties with an author as Mr. Walker proposes doing with "The last time I came o'er the moor." Let a poet, if he chooses, take up the idea of another, and work it into a piece of his own; but to mangle the works of the poor bard, whose tuneful tongue is now mute for ever in the dark and narrow house, by Heaven, 'twould be sacrilege! I grant that Mr. Walker's version is an improvement; but I know Mr. Walker well and esteem him much; let him mend the song as the Highlander mended his gun:—he gave it a new stock, a new lock, and a new barrel.

¹ "The reader has already seen that Burns did not finally adopt all of Mr. Erskine's alterations."—CURRIE.

I do not, by this, object to leaving out improper stanzas, where that can be done without spoiling the whole. One stanza in "The lass o' Patie's Mill," must be left out: the song will be nothing worse for it. I am not sure if we can take the same liberty with "Corn rigs are bonnie." Perhaps it might want the last stanza, and be the better for it. I shall be extremely sorry if you set any other song to the air "She rose and loot me in," except the song of that title. It would be cruel to spoil the allusion in poor, unfortunate M'Donald's pretty ode.

Could you spare me for a while "My Lodging is on the Cold Ground?"—I mean, could you defer it until the latest period of your publication, and I will try to make a new song to it.

I would be happy to be favoured with a list of the twenty-five you mean to publish first. Remember that on these will, in a great measure, depend the fate of your work with the public; for that reason it will be necessary to select and arrange them with double circumspection. "Cauld kail in Aberdeen," you must leave with me yet a while. I have vowed to have a song to that air, on the lady whom I attempted to celebrate in the verses, "Poortith cauld and restless love." At any rate, my other song, "Green grow the rashties," will never suit. The song is current in Scotland under the old title, and to the merry old tune of that name, which of course would mar the progress of your song to celebrity. Your book will be the standard of Scots songs for the future: let this idea ever keep your judgment on the alarm.

I send you a song on a celebrated fashionable toast in this country, to suit "Bonnie Dundee." These verses suit the tune exactly as it is in the *Museum*. There is a syllable wanting at the beginning of the first line of the second stanza, but I suppose it will make little odds. There is so little of the Scots language in the composition that the mere English singer will find no difficulty in the song.

YOUNG JESSIE.

True hearted was he, the sad swain o' the Yarrow,
And fair are the maids on the banks o' the Ayr,
But by the sweet side of the Nith's winding river,
Are lovers as faithful, and maidens as fair, &c.

(See p. 144, vol. iii.)

I send you also a ballad to the "Mill, Mill,
O."

THE SOLDIER'S RETURN.

When wild war's deadly blast was blawn,
And gentle peace returning,
Wl' mony a sweet babe fatherless,
And mony a widow mourning. &c.

[See p. 145, vol. iii.]

"The last time I came o'er the moor," I would fain attempt to make a Scots song for, and let Ramsay's be the English set. You shall hear from me soon. When you go to London on this business, can you come by Dumfries? I have still several MS. Scots airs by me, which I have picked up, mostly from the singing of country lassies. They please me vastly; but your learned lugs would perhaps be displeased with the very feature for which I like them. I call them simple; you would pronounce them silly. Do you know a fine air called "Jackie Hume's Lament?" I have a song of considerable merit to that air beginning:

"O ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?"

I'll inclose you both the song and tune, as I had them ready to send to Johnson's *Museum*. I send you likewise, to me, a beautiful little air, which I had taken down from *viva voce*. On the other page I will give you a stanza or two of the ballad to it.

BONNIE JEAN.

There was a lass, and she was fair,
At kirk and market to be seen,
When a' the fairest maids were met,
The fairest maid was Bonnie Jean. &c.
[See p. 136, below.]

MEG O' THE MILL.

O ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?
An' ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?
She has gotten a coof wi' a clant o' siller,
And broken the heart o' the barley Miller.
[See p. 144, vol. iii.]

I know these songs are not to have the luck to please you, else you might be welcome to them. Preserve them carefully and return them to me, as I have no other copy.

Adieu.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

April, 1793.

THE LAST TIME I CAME O'ER THE MOOR.

The last time I came o'er the moor,
And left Maria's dwelling,
What throes, what tortures passing cure,
Were in my bosom swelling. &c.

[See p. 149, vol. iii.]

MY DEAR SIR,

I had scarcely put my last letter into the post office, when I took up the subject of "The last time I came o'er the moor," and ere I slept, drew the outlines of the foregoing. How far I have succeeded, I leave on this, as on every other occasion, to you to decide on. I own my vanity is flattered, when you give my songs a place in your elegant and superb collection; but to be of service to the work is my first wish. As I have often told you, I do not in a single instance wish you, out of compliment to me, to insert any thing of mine. If you can send me, as I said in my last hotch-potch epistle, a list of your twenty-five songs, I will add the authors' names, and return you the list. One hint only let me give you, where you have, as in "Katharine Ogie," set another song to the air, it will be proper also to prefix the old name of the tune thus:—

HIGHLAND MARY.

Tune, *Katharine Ogie*.

Another hint you will forgive—whatever Mr. Pleyel does, let him not alter one iota of the original Scots air—I mean in the song department; our friend Clarke, than whom you know there is not a better judge of the subject, complains that in the air "Lea Rig" the accent is altered. But let our national music preserve its native features. They are, I own, frequently wild, and irreducible to the modern rule; but on that very eccentricity, perhaps, depends a great part of their effect.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 26th April, 1793.

I heartily thank you, my dear Sir, for your last two letters, and the songs which accompanied them. I am always both instructed and entertained by your observations; and the

frankness with which you speak out your mind, is to me highly agreeable. It is very possible I may not have the true idea of simplicity in composition. I confess there are several songs, of Allan Ramsay's for example, that I think silly enough, which another person more conversant than I have been with country people, would perhaps call simple and natural. But the lowest scenes of simple nature will not please generally, if copied precisely as they are. The poet, like the painter, must select what will form an agreeable as well as a natural picture. On this subject it were easy to enlarge; but, at present, suffice it to say, that I consider simplicity, rightly understood, as a most essential quality in composition, and the groundwork of beauty in all the arts. I will gladly appropriate your most interesting new ballad, "When wild war's deadly blast," &c. to the "Mill, Mill, O," as well as the two other songs to their respective airs; but the third and fourth lines of the first verse must undergo some little alteration in order to suit the music. Playel does not alter a single note of the songs. That would be absurd indeed! With the airs which he introduces into the sonatas, I allow him to take such liberties as he pleases; but that has nothing to do with the songs. . . .

P.S.—I wish you would do as you proposed with your "Rigs o' Barley." If the loose sentiments are thrashed out of it, I will find an air for it; but as to this there is no hurry.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

[June, 1793.]

When I tell you, my dear Sir, that a friend of mine, in whom I am much interested, has fallen a sacrifice to these accursed times, you will easily allow that it might unhinge me for doing any good among ballads. My own loss, as to pecuniary matters, is trifling; but the total ruin of a much-loved friend, is a loss indeed. Pardon my seeming inattention to your last commands.

I cannot alter the disputed lines in the "Mill, Mill, O."¹ What you think a defect,

¹ "The lines were the third and fourth,—

Wi' mony a sweet babe fatherless,
And mony a widow mourning.

"As our poet had maintained a long silence, and the

I esteem as a positive beauty: so you see how doctors differ. I shall now, with as much alacrity as I can muster, go on with your commands.

You know Fraser, the hautboy-player in Edinburgh—he is here, instructing a band of music for a fencible corps quartered in this country. Among many of his airs that please me, there is one well known as a reel by the name of "The Quaker's Wife," and which I remember a grand-aunt of mine used to sing by the name of "Liggeram Cosh my bonnie wee lass." Mr. Fraser plays it slow, and with an expression that quite charms me. I got such an enthusiast in it, that I made a song for it, which I here subjoin, and inclose Fraser's set of the tune. If they hit your fancy, they are at your service; if not, return me the tune, and I will put it in Johnson's *Museum*. I think the song is not in my worst manner.

BLYTHE HAE I BEEN.

Blythe hae I been on yon hill,
As the lambs before me;
Careless ilka thought and free,
As the breeze flew o'er me. &c.
[See p. 149, vol. iii.]

I should wish to hear how this pleases you.
Yours,

BURNS TO THOMSON.

25th June, 1793.

Have you ever, my dear Sir, felt your bosom ready to burst with indignation on reading of those mighty villains who divide kingdom against kingdom, desolate provinces, and lay nations waste, out of the wantonness of ambition, or often from still more ignoble passions? In a mood of this kind to-day, I recollected the air of "Logan Water;" and it occurred to me that its querulous melody probably had its origin from the plaintive indignation of some swelling, suffering heart, fired at the tyrannic

first number of Mr. Thomson's musical work was in the press, this gentleman ventured, by Mr. Erskine's advice, to substitute for them, in that publication,

And eyes again with pleasure beam'd
That had been bleared with mourning.

Though better suited to the music these lines are inferior to the original."—CURRIE. In the last edition of Thomson's Collection, the poet's own lines were restored.

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strides of some Public Destroyer, and overwhelmed with private distress—the consequence of a country's ruin. If I have done any thing at all like justice to my feelings, the following song, composed in three quarters of an hour's lueubrations in my elbow-chair, ought to have some merit:—

LOGAN BRAES.

O Logan, sweetly didst thou glide,
That day I was my Willie's bride!
And years shinsyne hae o'er us run,
Like Logan to the slimmer sun. &c.

(See p. 150, vol. iii.)

Do you know the following beautiful little fragment, in Witherspoon's collection of Scots songs?

Tune—"Hughie Graham."

O gin my love were yon red rose,
That grows upon the castle wa'
And I mysel' a drap o' dew,
Into her bonnie breast to fa'

Oh, there beyond expression blest,
I'd feast on beauty a' the night;
Seal'd on her silk-saft faulds to rest,
Till they'd awa by Phoebus' light.

This thought is inexpressibly beautiful; and quite, so far as I know, original. It is too short for a song, else I would forswear you altogether unless you gave it a place. I have often tried to cke a stanza to it, but in vain. After balancing myself for a musing five minutes, on the hind-legs of my elbow-chair, I produced the following.

The verses are far inferior to the foregoing, I frankly confess; but if worthy of insertion at all, they might be first in place:¹ as every poet, who knows any thing of his trade, will husband his best thoughts for a concluding stroke.

O were my love you lilae fair,
Wi' purple blossoms to the spring;
And I, a bird to shelter there,
When weary on my little wing!

How I wad mourn, when it was torn,
By autumn wild, and winter rude!
But I woud sing on wanton wing,
When youthful May its bloom renew'd.²

¹ We give the lyric printed as Burns suggests among the Songs Altered.

² The fragment which Burns thus cked out will be found in Herd's collection, of which John Witherspoon alluded to in the letter was the printer.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

MONDAY, 1st July, 1793.

I am extremely sorry, my good Sir, that any thing should happen to unhinge you. The times are terribly out of tune; and when harmony will be restored, Heaven knows.

My first book of songs, just published, will be despatched to you along with this. Let me be favoured with your opinion of it frankly and freely.

I shall certainly give a place to the song you have written for the "Quaker's Wife;" it is quite enchanting. Pray will you return the list of songs, with such airs added to it as you think ought to be included. The business now rests entirely on myself, the gentlemen who originally agreed to join the speculation having requested to be off. No matter, a loser I cannot be. The superior excellence of the work will create a general demand for it as soon as it is properly known. And were the sale even slower than it promises to be, I should be somewhat compensated for my labour, by the pleasure I shall receive from the music. I cannot express how much I am obliged to you for the exquisite new songs you are sending me; but thanks, my friend, are a poor return for what you have done: as I will be benefited by the publication, you must suffer me to inclose a small mark of my gratitude,³ and to repeat it afterwards when I find it convenient. Do not return it, for, by Heaven, if you do, our correspondence is at an end: and though this would be no loss to you, it would mar the publication, which under your auspices cannot fail to be respectable and interesting. . . .

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

I thank you for your delicate additional verses to the old fragment, and for your excellent song to "Logan Water;" Thomson's truly elegant one will follow for the English singer. Your apostrophe to statesmen is admirable; but I am not sure if it is quite suitable to the supposed gentle character of the fair mourner who speaks it.

³ A five-penny bank-note.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

MY DEAR SIR,

2d July, 1793.

I have just finished the following ballad, and, as I do think it in my best style, I send it you (you had the tune with a verse or two of the song from me a while ago). Mr. Clarke, who wrote down the air from Mrs. Burns' wood-note wild, is very fond of it, and has given it a celebrity by teaching it to some young ladies of the first fashion here. If you do not like the air enough to give it a place in your collection, please return me the music.¹ The song you may keep, as I remember it.

BONNIE JEAN.

There was a lass, and she was fair,
At kirk or market to be seen,
When a' our fairest maids were met,
The fairest maid was Bonnie Jean. &c.

[See vol. iii. p. 151.]

I have some thoughts of inserting in your index, or in my notes, the names of the fair ones, the themes of my songs. I do not mean the name at full; but dashes or asterisks, so as ingenuity may find them out.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

July, 1793.

I assure you, my dear Sir, that you truly hurt me with your pecuniary parcel. It degrades me in my own eyes. However, to return it would savour of bombast affectation; but as to any more traffic of that debtor and creditor kind, I swear by that Honour which crowns the upright statue of ROBERT BURNS'S INTEGRITY—on the least motion of it, I will indignantly spurn the by-past transaction, and from that moment commence entire stranger to you! BURNS'S character for generosity of sentiment and independence of mind, will, I trust, long outlive any of his wants which the cold unfeeling ore can supply; at least, I will take care that such a character he shall deserve.

Thank you for my copy of your publication. Never did my eyes behold, in any musical

¹ Thomson, however, did not set the ballad to the air sent, which has been lost, and held back the publication of the song till his 4th volume, where it appeared set to the tune of "Willie was a Wanton Wag," twenty years after Burns's death.

work, such elegance and correctness. Your preface, too, is admirably written; only your partiality to me has made you say too much; however, it will bind me down to double every effort in the future progress of the work. Now for business—must I return you the list? The following are a few remarks on it. I never copy what I write to you, so I may be often tautological, or perhaps contradictory.

"The Flowers of the Forest" is charming as a poem, and should be, and must be, set to the notes; but, though out of your rule, the three stanzas, beginning,

I have seen the smiling o' fortune beguiling,

are worthy of a place, were it but to immortalize the author of them, who is an old lady of my acquaintance, and at this moment living in Edinburgh. She is a Mrs. Cockburn; I forget of what place; but from Roxburghshire.² What a charming apostrophe is

O fickle fortune, why this cruel sport,
Why, why torment us—poor sons of a day!

The old ballad, "I wish I were where Helen lies," is silly to contemptibility.³ My alteration in *Johnson* is not much better. Mr. Pinkerton, in his, what he calls, ancient ballads, (many of them notorious, though beautiful enough, forgeries,) has the best set. It is full of his own interpolations,—but no matter.

In the "Lea Rig" I have altered my mind as to the first line, and will, if you please, have it as at first:—

When o'er the hills the eastern star.

It is much more poetical.

² Mrs. Allison or Alice Cockburn was daughter to Robert Rutherford, Esq., of Fernielee in Selkirkshire. She died in 1794, at an advanced age. A turret in the old house of Fernielee is said to have been the place where the poem was written. Mrs. Cockburn so successfully imitated the style of the old ballad in the poem here referred to, that Sir Walter Scott (whose mother was a relation of Mrs. Cockburn) declares it required the most direct evidence to convince him it was a modern composition.

³ "There is a copy of this ballad given in the account of the Parish of Kirkpatrick-Eleehing, (which contains the tomb of fair Helen Irvine,) in the Statistics of Sir John Sinclair, vol. xli. p. 275, to which this character is certainly not applicable."—CERRIE—Various versions of this ballad, however, were floating about the south country, some of them containing very indifferent verses.

The verses of the "Bonnie Brucket Lassie" are poor. They, I believe, are the production of that odd being "Balloon Tytler." The air deserves fine verses.

The measure of "Hughie Graham" will answer exactly to my favourite fragment, "O, if my Love were yon red Rose." Will the expression suit?

The Jacobite verses, "There'll never be Peace till Jamie comes Hame," are mine, made on the idea suggested by the title of the air. If you object to their sentiments there is another song of mine (*Museum*, vol. iv. No. 331) which will suit the measure. It is a little irregular in the flow of the lines, but where two short syllables, that is to say, one syllable more than regular feet—if these two syllables fall to the space of one, crochet time, composed of two different quavers under a slur; it has, I think, no bad effect to divide them. Thus it may flow:—

"Yon wild mossy mountains," &c.

"That nurse," &c.,

"Where the grouse through the heath lead their coveys to feed,
And the shepherd," &c.

After all perhaps the expression of this air requires something more solemn.

If you look into the *Museum*, vol. iv. No. 311, you will see an altered set of the ballad, "O let me in this ae night." Apropos, in Oswald, under the name of "Will ye lend me your Loom, Lass," you will meet with a different set, and perhaps a better one than in Johnson's *Museum*.

In my next I will suggest to your consideration a few songs which may have escaped your hurried notice. In the mean time, allow me to congratulate you now, as a brother of the quill. You have committed your character and fame; which will now be tried, for ages to come, by the illustrious jury of the SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF TASTE—all whom poesy can please, or music charm. Being a bard of nature, I have some pretensions to second sight; and I am warranted by the spirit to foretell and affirm, that your great-grand child will hold up your volumes, and say with honest pride, "This so much admired selection was the work of my ancestor."

P.S. Robt. Riddell, Esq. of Glenriddell, subscribed to me for the songs; send him a copy

to my care the first opportunity. Walter Riddell, of Woodley Park, is a subscriber for the whole work, but he is at present out of the country. John M'Murdo, Esq. of Drumlanrig, is, I believe another subscriber for the whole work; and also, I think Patrick Miller of Dalswinton; but Mr. Clarke, our friend who is at present teaching in both families—I will write or speak to him about it. However, all your subscribers here are determined to transmit you the full price without the intervention of those harpies, the booksellers.

Do not forget Glenriddell's copy of the songs.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDIN., 1st August, 1703.

DEAR SIR,

I had the pleasure of receiving your last two letters, and am happy to find you are quite pleased with the appearance of the first book. When you come to hear the songs sung and accompanied, you will be charmed with them.

"The bonnie brucket Lassie," certainly deserves better verses, and I hope you will match her. "Cauld Kail in Aberdeen,"—"Let me in this ae night," and several of the livelier airs, wait the Muse's pleasure: these are peculiarly worthy of her choice gifts: besides, you'll notice, that in airs of this sort, the singer can always do greater justice to the poet, than in the slower airs of "The bush aboon Traquair," "Lord Gregory," and the like; for in the manner the latter were frequently sung, you must be contented with the sound, without the sense. Indeed both the airs and words are disguised by the very slow, languid, psalm-singing style in which they are too often performed: they lose animation and expression altogether, and instead of speaking to the mind, or touching the heart, they cloy upon the ear, and set us a-yawning!

Your ballad, "There was a lass, and she was fair," is simple and beautiful, and shall undoubtedly grace my collection.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

August, 1793.

MY DEAR THOMSON,

I hold the pen for your friend Clarke,¹ who at present is studying the music of the spheres at my elbow. The Georgium Sidus he thinks is rather out of tune; so until he rectify that matter, he cannot stoop to terrestrial affairs.

He sends you six of the Rondo subjects, and if more are wanted, he says you shall have them.

D—n your long stairs!

S. CLARKE.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

August, 1793.

Your objection, my dear Sir, to the passages in my song of "Logan Water," is right in one instance; the phrase "cruel joys" is there improper; but it is difficult to mend it; if I can I will. The other passage you object to does not appear in the same light to me.

The phrase "mammy's work" universally among the peasantry, signifies "mother's work;" if you think this last better you may adopt it. Your other objection to this song will vanish, when you consider that I have not painted Miss M'— in the rank which she holds in life, but in the dress and character of a cottager; consequently the utmost simplicity of thought and expression was necessary.

Had you not better send me a list of the next parcel of songs which you intend to publish? As to the large list you sent me, it is so blurred and blotted that nobody besides myself could make any better of it.

I have looked over "There'll never be peace till Jamie," &c., but I cannot make any better of it.

I was yesterday night in a composing humour, and behold the fruits of it:—

SONG—LET ME IN THIS AE NIGHT.²

¹ Stephen Clarke, organist of the Episcopal church, Cowgate, Edinburgh, teacher and composer of music. He superintended the musical department of Johnson's *Museum*.

² Here followed a lyric of six stanzas founded on an old song having the same title. This composite production was thought so indifferently of by Currie that he did not print it, and succeeding editors have followed his example.

I need not hint to you that the chorus goes to the high part of the tune.

I likewise tried my hand on "Robin Adair," and you will probably think, with little success; but it is such a damned, crump, out-of-the-way measure, that I despair of doing any thing better to it.

PHILLIS THE FAIR.

While larks with little wing, fann'd the pure air,
Tasting the breathing spring, forth I did fare;
Gay the sun's golden eye,
Peep'd o'er the mountains high;
Such thy morn! did I cry, Phillis the fair.

[See p. 155, vol. III.]

So much for namby-pamby. I may, after all, try my hand on it, in Scots verse. There I always find myself most at home.

I have just put the last hand to the song I meant for "Cauld kail in Aberdeen."³ If it suits you to insert it, I shall be pleased, as the heroine is a favourite of mine; if not, I shall also be pleased; because I wish, and will be glad, to see you act decidedly on the business. 'Tis a tribute as a man of taste, and as an editor, which you owe yourself.

Among your subscribers is, for the songs, the Hon. John Gordon of Kenmore; send his to my care. For the songs and sonatas both, Walter Riddell, Esq. of Woodley Park, send to the care of Mrs. Riddell, Dumfries.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

August, 1793.

MY GOOD SIR,

I consider it one of the most agreeable circumstances attending this publication of mine, that it has procured me so many of your much-valued epistles. Pray make my acknowledgments to St. Stephen⁴ for the tunes; tell him I admit the justness of his complaint on my stair-case, conveyed in his laconic postscript to your *jeu d'esprit*, which I perused more than once, without discovering exactly whether your discussion was music, astronomy, or politics; though a sagacious friend, acquainted with the convivial habits of the poet and the musician, offered me a bet of two to one, you were just

³ The song alluded to is "O poortith cam'd."

⁴ Stephen Clarke, the musician, mentioned in a previous letter.

drowning care together; that an empty bowl was the only thing that would deeply affect you, and the only matter you could then study how to remedy!

I shall be glad to see you give "Robin Adair" a Scottish dress. Peter is furnishing him with an English suit for a change, and you are well matched together. Robin's air is excellent, though he certainly has an out-of-the-way measure as ever poor Parnassian wight was plagued with. I wish you would invoke the muse for a single elegant stanza to be substituted for the concluding objectionable verses of "Down the burn, Davie," so that this most exquisite song may no longer be excluded from good company.

Mr. Allan has made an inimitable drawing from your "John Anderson, my Jo," which I am to have engraved as a frontispiece to the humorous class of songs; you will be quite charmed with it, I promise you. The old couple are seated by the fireside. Mrs. Anderson in great good humour is clapping John's shoulders, while he smiles and looks at her with such glee, as to show that he fully recollects the pleasant days and nights when they were "first acquaint." The drawing would do honour to the pencil of Teniers.¹

BURNS TO THOMSON.

August, 1793.

That crinkum-erankum tune, "Robin Adair," has run so in my head, and I succeeded so ill in my last attempt, that I have ventured in this morning's walk, one essay more. You, my dear Sir, will remember an unfortunate part of our worthy friend Cunningham's story, which happened about three years ago.² That

¹ This praise of David Allan, the painter, appears now extravagant and unmerited. He was the Wilkie of his day, but so immeasurably did the latter artist surpass him in the illustration of Scottish characters, that the productions of Allan appear to modern eyes tame, ineffective, and *bizarre*.—Allan was a native of Alton, and born in 1744. He was for many years master and director of the academy established by the Board of Trustees at Edinburgh for manufactures and improvements. He illustrated the "Gentle Shepherd," and left a series of sketches designed for the poems of Burns. He died on the 6th August, 1796, just a fortnight after the poet's own decease.

² More correctly speaking, over four and a half years ago. See letter to Alex. Cunningham, dated 24th January, 1789.

struck my fancy, and I endeavoured to do the idea justice as follows:—

HAD I A CAVE.

Had I a cave on some wild, distant shore,
Where the winds howl to the waves' dashing roar:
There would I weep my woes,
There seek my last repose, &c.

[See p. 155, vol. III.]

By the way, I have met with a musical Highlander in Breadalbane's Fencibles, which are quartered here, who assures me that he well remembers his mother's singing Gaelic songs to both "Robin Adair," and "Gramachree." They certainly have more of the Scotch than Irish taste in them.

This man comes from the vicinity of Inverness: so it could not be any intercourse with Ireland that could bring them:—except what, I shrewdly suspect to be the case, the wandering minstrels, harpers, or pipers, used to go frequently errant through the wilds both of Scotland and Ireland, and so some favourite airs might be common to both. A case in point—they have lately, in Ireland, with great pomp, published an Irish air, as they say, called "Caun du delish." The fact is, in a publication of Corri's, a great while ago, you will find the same air, called a Highland one, with a Gaelic song set to it. Its name there, I think, is "Oran Gaoil," and a fine air it is. Do ask honest Allan,³ or the Rev. Gaelic parson,⁴ about these matters.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

August, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,

"Let me in this ae night," I shall overlook. I am glad that you are pleased with my song, "Had I a cave," &c. as I liked it myself.

I walked out yesterday evening with a volume of the *Museum* in my hand, when, turning up "Allan Water," "What numbers shall the muse repeat," &c. it appeared to me rather

³ Probably Allan Masterton. See note to letter of 26th Oct., 1792.

⁴ The Gaelic parson here referred to, was the Rev. Joseph Robertson Macgregor, the first minister of the first Gaelic chapel in Edinburgh, which was erected on the Castlehill in 1769. He died in 1801. A portrait and account of him will be found in Kay's *Portraits*.

unworthy of so fine an air, and recollecting that it is on your list, I sat and raved under the shade of an old thorn, till I wrote one to suit the measure. I may be wrong; but I think it not in my worst style. You must know, that in Ramsay's Tea-table, where the modern song first appeared, the ancient name of the tune, Allan says, is "Allan Water," or "My love Annie's very bonnie." This last has certainly been a line of the original song: so I took up the idea, and, as you will see, have introduced the line in its place, which I presume it formerly occupied: though I likewise give you a choosing line, if it should not hit the cut of your fancy:—

BY ALLAN STREAM.

By Allan stream I chane'd to rove,
While Phœbus sank beyond Benledi;
The winds were whispering thro' the grove,
The yellow corn was waving ready. &c.
(See p. 156, vol. III.)

Bravo! say I; it is a good song. Should you think so too, (not else,) you can set the music to it, and let the other follow as English verses.

I cannot touch "Down the Burn, Davie."—"The last time I came o'er the muir" I shall have in my eye.

Autumn is my propitious season. I make more verses in it than all the year else.

God bless you!

THOMSON TO BURNS.¹

EDINBURGH, 20th August, 1793.

Bravissimo! I say. It is an excellent song. There is not a single line that could be altered. Of the two lines—"O my love Annie's very bonnie!" and "O dearly do I love thee, Annie!" I prefer the latter decidedly. Till I received this song I had half resolved not to include "Allan Water" in the collection, and for this reason, that it bears such a near resemblance to a much finer air—at least, a greater favourite of mine—*Galashiels*, or "Ah, the poor shepherd's mournful fate;" the beginning is almost quite the same.

¹ The above letter was published for the first time in Paterson's Library Edition of Burns (Edn. 1870), being printed from a holograph in the possession of the publisher. It is the only original of Thomson's letters to Burns that is known to exist.

I have made up a correct list of my 100 airs, of which I shall send you a copy in the course of a few weeks. It is my fixed intention not to exceed that number; by going farther, I should only be induced to take a number of trifling airs, and so swell both the size and price of the book beyond bounds. And I find my list contains every fine air that is known of the serious and pastoral kind, besides two or three never before published—all diamonds of the first water.

I stand pledged to furnish English verses along with every Scottish song, and I must fulfil what I have promised; but I certainly have got into a scrape if you do not stand my friend. A couple of stanzas to each air will do as well as half a dozen; and to an imagination so infinitely fruitful as yours this will not be a Herculean labour. The airs too are all so perfectly familiar to you, and the original verses so much your favourites, that no poet living is qualified to add congenial stanzas, even in English, so much as you are.

I am very glad that you are to revise "Let me in this ae night." I put a much greater value upon this beautiful air than either "Allan Water," or "Logan Water." So it is also with "Cauld Kail in Aberdeen," I have always considered it among the most pleasing of our melodies. When you first sent me "O Poet-tith cauld," I took the liberty to observe that I thought it too querulous and despondent for the air. I would very fain have something in your best manner for it. There is not an air existing better calculated for telling a pretty tale of love; and therefore I hope that in this propitious season you will think of it some evening under the thorn tree that witnessed the birth of your "Allan Water." Remember also, when the Muse and you are "in fit retreats for wooing," that fine ballad tune, "Laddie, lie near me."

I am sorry you cannot think of furnishing a sweet concluding stanza or two for "Down the burn, Davie;" you will surely allow that however pleasing the description beginning "Till baith at length impatient grown" is altogether improper for publication; more particularly in a collection that assumes to itself the merit of purification.

I have sent by the Dumfries carrier (carriage paid) a parcel addressed to you containing a

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you give these
first-named) and
venience.

Your

P.S.—I think
is a beautiful thing
and propose a
verses, "Since
dear."

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O WHISTLE

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O whistle, a
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¹ The tune to
more popular)
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set of the sonatas and songs for Mr. Riddell of Woodley Park; the same for a Mr. Boyd who wrote some weeks ago to Mr. Hill about them; a set of the songs to Mr. Gordon, and a set of both for our friend Mr. Clarke. Will you give these to a porter (I mean the two first-named) and send the others at your convenience.

Yours cordially, &c.

P.S.—I think as you do, that *Oran gaoil* is a beautiful tune. I have put it in my list, and propose attaching it to Dr. Blacklock's verses, "Since robbed of all my soul holds dear."

BURNS TO THOMSON.

August, 1793.

You may readily trust, my dear Sir, that any exertion in my power is heartily at your service. But one thing I must hint to you: the very name of Peter Pindar is of great service to your publication; so get a verse from him now and then, though I have no objection, as well as I can, to bear the burden of the business.

Is "Whistle and I'll come to you, my lad," one of your airs? I admire it much; and yesterday I set the following verses to it. Urbani, whom I have met with here, begged them of me, as he admires the air much; but as I understand that he looks with rather an evil eye on your work, I did not choose to comply. However, if the song does not suit your taste, I may possibly send it him. He is, *entre nous*, a narrow contracted creature; but he sings so delightfully that whatever he introduces at your concert must have immediate celebrity. The set of the air which I had in my eye is in Johnson's *Museum*, No. 106.

O WHISTLE, AND I'LL COME TO YOU.

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

[See p. 156, vol. iii.]

Another favourite air of mine is, "The Muckin' o' Geordie's Byre."¹ When sung slow

¹ The tune to which "Tam Glen," another (and more popular) of Burns's songs, is now universally sung.

with expression, I have wished that it had better poetry: that I have endeavoured to supply as follows:—

ADOWN WINDING NITH.²

Adown winding Nith I did wander,
To mark the sweet flowers as they spring;
Adown winding Nith I did wander,
Of Phillis to muse and to shug. &c.

[Vol. iii. p. 157.]

Mr. Clarke begs you to give Miss Phillis a corner in your book, as she is a particular flame of his. She is a Miss Phillis M'Murdo, sister to "Bonnie Jean." They are both pupils of his. Clarke begs compts. to you, and will send you some more airs in a few days. You shall hear from me, the very first grist I get from my rhyming-mill.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

[28th] August, 1793.

That tune, "Cauld Kail," is such a favourite of yours that I once more roved out yesterday evening for a gloamin shot at the Muses;³ when the Muse that presides o'er the shores of Nith, or rather my old inspiring dearest nymph, Coila, whispered me the following. I have two reasons for thinking that it was my early, sweet simple inspirer that was by my elbow, "smooth gliding without step," and pouring the song on my glowing fancy. In the first place, since I left Coila's native haunts, not a fragment of a poet has arisen to cheer her solitary musings, by catching inspiration from her; so I more than suspect that she has followed me hither, or at least makes me occasional visits; secondly, the last stanza of this song I send you, is the very words that Coila taught

² We give a view on this river which is celebrated by Burns in several of his poems. The objects here presented are not, as it happens, referred to by name in the poet's lays, but they combine to form one of the finest views which the vale anywhere presents, and one which is, in some measure, characteristic of the whole. The spectator stands on the north bank of the river; the bridge shown is Auldgirth Bridge (erected 1784), and not far from it is Blackwood House, with Blackwood Hill rising above it and commanding a fine view both up and down the Nith. Another view on this river is given in connection with the poem beginning, "The Thames flows proudly."

³ Gloamin shot. "A twilight interval which workmen within doors take before using lights."—JAMESON.

me many years ago, and which I set to an old Scots reel in Johnson's *Museum*.

COME, LET ME TAKE THEE.

Come, let me take thee to my breast,
And pledge we ne'er shall sunder;
And I shall spurn as vilest dust
The world's wealth and grandeur. &c.

[See p. 158, vol. iii.]

If you think the above will suit your idea of your favourite air, I shall be highly pleased. "The last time I came o'er the moor," I cannot meddle with, as to mending it; and the musical world have been so long accustomed to Ramsay's words, that a different song, though positively superior, would not be so well received. I am not fond of choruses to songs, so I have not made one for the foregoing.

Apropos there is a song of mine in the 3rd vol. of the *Museum* which would suit "Dainty Davie." Tell me how it will suit. It begins, "O were I on Parnassus Hill."

Let me have the list of your first hundred songs as soon as possible. I am ever, my dear sir, yours sincerely.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

[28th] August, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have written you already by to-day's post, where I hinted at a song of mine which might suit "Dainty Davie." I have been looking over another and a better song of mine in the *Museum*, which I have altered as follows, and which, I am persuaded, will please you. The words "Dainty Davie" glide so sweetly in the air, that, to a Scots ear, any song to it, without *Davie* being the hero, would have a lame effect.

DAINTY DAVIE.

Now rosy May comes in wi' flowers,
To deck her gay, green-spreading bowers;
And now comes in my happy hours,
To wander wi' my Davie. &c.

[See p. 159, vol. iii.]

So much for Davie. The chorus, you know, is to the low part of the tune. See Clarke's set of it in the *Museum*.

N.B. In the *Museum* they have drawled out the tune to twelve lines of poetry, which is d—d nonsense. Four lines of song, and four of chorus, is the way.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

31st Aug. 1793.

I dare say, my dear Sir, that you will begin to think my correspondence is persecution. No matter, I can't help it; a ballad is my hobby-horse; which, though otherwise a simple sort of harmless idiotical beast enough, has yet this blessed headstrong property, that when once it has fairly made off with a hapless wight, it gets so enamoured with the tinkle-gingle, tinkle-gingle of its own bells, that it is sure to run poor pilgarric, the bedlam-jockey, quite beyond any useful point or post in the common race of men.

The following song I have composed for "Oran-gaol," the Highland air, that, you tell me in your last, you have resolved to give a place to in your book. I have this moment finished the song, so you have it glowing from the mint. If it suit you, well!—if not, 'tis also well!

BEHOLD THE HOUR.

Behold the hour, the boat arrive;
Thou goest, thou darling of my heart!
Sever'd from thee can I survive?
But Fate has will'd, and we must part. &c.

[See p. 254, vol. iii.]

THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 1st Sept. 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,

Since writing you last, I have received half a dozen songs, with which I am delighted beyond expression. The humour and fancy of "Whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad," will render it nearly as great a favourite as "Duncan Gray." "Come, let me take thee to my breast,"—"Adown winding Nith," and "By Allan stream," &c., are full of imagination and feeling, and sweetly suit the airs for which they are intended. "Had I a cave on some wild distant shore," is a striking and affecting composition. Our friend, to whose story it refers, read it with a swelling heart, I assure you. The union we are now forming, I think, can never be broken; these songs of yours will descend with the music to the latest posterity, and will be fondly cherished so long as genius, taste, and sensibility exist in our island.

While the muse seems so propitious, I think

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it right to inclose a list of all the favours I have to ask of her,—no fewer than twenty and three! I have burdened the pleasant Peter with as many as it is probable he will attend to: most of the remaining airs would puzzle the English poet not a little; they are of that peculiar measure and rhythm, that they must be familiar to him who writes for them.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

[1st Sept. 1793.]

You know that my pretensions to musical taste are merely a few of Nature's instincts, untaught and untutored by art. For this reason, many musical compositions, particularly where much of the merit lies in counterpoint, however they may transport and ravish the ears of you connoisseurs, affect my simple lug no otherwise than merely as melodious din. On the other hand, by way of amends, I am delighted with many little melodies which the learned musician despises as silly and insipid. I do not know whether the old air, "Hey, tuttie taitie," may rank among this number; but well I know that, with Fraser's hantboy, it has often filled my eyes with tears. There is a tradition, which I have met with in many places in Scotland, that it was Robert Bruce's march at the battle of Bannockburn. This thought, in my yesternight's evening walk,¹ warmed me to a pitch of enthusiasm on the theme of liberty and independence, which I threw into a kind of Scottish ode, fitted to the air, that one might suppose to be the gallant Royal Scot's address to his heroic followers on that eventful morning.

BRUCE'S ADDRESS TO HIS ARMY AT BANNOCKBURN.

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has often led;
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to victorie!

[Vol. III. p. 160.]

¹ Currie altered "yesternight's evening walk," to "solitary wanderings," in order, it is presumed, to make it harmonize with Mr. Syme's narrative regarding the composition of this ode, wherein it is said that Burns made it during a storm of thunder and rain among the Glenkens in Galloway. In the "Essay on the Genius and Character of Burns," by Professor Wilson, prefixed to the present volume, the point as to the period of the composition of the ode is handled by the professor with his usual humour and acumen.

So may God ever defend the cause of truth and liberty, as he did that day!—Amen.

P.S. I showed the air to Urbani, who was highly pleased with it, and begged me to make soft verses for it; but I had no idea of giving myself any trouble on the subject, till the accidental recollection of that glorious struggle for freedom, associated with the glowing ideas of some other struggles of the same nature, *not quite so ancient*,² roused my rhyming mania. Clarke's set of the tune, with his bass, you will find in the *Museum*; though I am afraid that the air is not what will entitle it to a place in your elegant selection.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 5th Sept. 1793.

I believe it is generally allowed that the greatest modesty is the sure attendant of the greatest merit. While you are sending me verses that even Shakspeare might be proud to own, you speak of them as if they were ordinary productions! Your heroic ode is to me the noblest composition of the kind in the Scottish language. I happened to dine yesterday with a party of your friends, to whom I read it. They were all charmed with it; entreated me to find out a suitable air for it, and reprobated the idea of giving it a tune so totally devoid of interest or grandeur as "Hey, tuttie taitie." Assuredly your partiality for this tune must arise from the ideas associated in your mind by the tradition concerning it, for I never heard any person, and I have conversed again and again with the greatest enthusiasts for Scottish airs, I say, I never heard any one speak of it as worthy of notice.

I have been running over the whole hundred airs, of which I lately sent you the list; and I think "Lewie Gordon" is most happily adapted to your ode: at least with a very slight variation of the fourth line, which I shall presently submit to you. There is in "Lewie Gordon" more of the grand than the plaintive, particularly when it is sung with a degree of spirit, which your words would oblige the singer to give it. I would have no scruple about substituting your ode in the room of "Lewie Gor-

² No doubt the struggles of the French republicans.

don," which has neither the interest, the grandeur, nor the poetry that characterize your verses. Now the variation I have to suggest upon the last line of each verse, the only line too short for the air, is as follows:

- Verse 1st, Or to glorious victorie.
 2d, Chains—chains and slavery.
 3d, Let him, *let him* turn and flee.
 4th, Let him *bravely* follow me.
 5th, But *they shall*, they shall be free.
 6th, Let us, *let us* do, or die.

If you connect each line with its own verse, I do not think you will find that either the sentiment or the expression loses any of its energy. The only line which I dislike in the whole of the song is, "Welcome to your gory bed." Would not another word be preferable to "welcome?" In your next I will expect to be informed whether you agree to what I have proposed. The little alterations I submit with the greatest deference.¹

The beauty of the verses you have made for "Oran-gaoil" will ensure celebrity to the air.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

Sept. 1793.

I have received your list, my dear Sir, and here go my observations on it.

No. 1. "An thou wert my ain." I have not Pinkerton,² but before me is Witherspoon's first vol. (entitled "Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs and Heroic Ballads"). I have three songs to this air and with the same chorus:—

- 1st, "Of race dlvine thou needst must be."
 2nd, "Like bees that suck the morning dew."
 3rd, "As round the elm th' enamour'd vine."

Of these, all of them good, the first, in my opinion, is the best. The English song, "Ah, Dear Marcella," &c. is not in my copy of the "Charmer."

No. 2. "Down the burn Davie." I have this moment tried an alteration, leaving out

¹ The reader is referred to what is said by Professor Wilson, in his Essay, on the subject of Burns's Ode and Thomson's criticisms on it. The acute and lucid judgment which the professor displays on this point, is only equalled by the exuberant and irresistible humour which he intermingles with the discussion.

² *Select Scottish Ballads*, 2 vols. 1783, edited by John Pinkerton the historian and antiquary.

the last half of the third stanza, and the first half of the last stanza, thus:

- As down the burn they took their way,
 And thro' the bowery dale:
 His cheek to hers he aft did lay,
 And love was aye the tale,
 With "Mary, when shall we return,
 Sic pleasure to renew?"
 Quoth Mary, "Love, I like the burn,
 And aye shall follow you."

No. 3. Nothing to remark.

No. 4. "Katherine Ogie." I should like to see this in your next number.

No. 5. "Low down in the Broom," in my opinion deserves more properly a place among your lively and humorous songs. I shall by and by point out some in this last list which rather belong to the first.

No. 6. "Lewie Gordon." "Jamie Dawson" is a beautiful ballad, but is of great length; cannot you, for sake of economy in the press-work, substitute a short one?

No. 7. Nothing.

No. 8. "Cowden-knowes." Remember in your index that the song in pure English to this tune, beginning,

"When summer comes, the swains on Tweed,"

is the production of Crawford. Robert was his Christian name.

Nos. 9 and 10. Nothing.

No. 11. "Bonnie Dundee." Your objection of the stiff line is just; but mending my colouring would spoil the likeness; so the picture must stand as it is. [See song beginning True hearted was he, vol. iii. p. 144.]

No. 12. "The last time I came o'er the moor." Why encumber yourself with another English song to this tune? Ramsay's is English already to your hand.

No. 13. "Flowers of the Forest." The verses, "I've seen the smiling," &c., with a few trifling alterations, putting "no more" for "nae mair," and the word "turbid" in a note at the bottom of the page, to show the meaning of the word "drumly," the song will serve you for an English set. A small sprinkling of Scottishisms is no objection to an English reader.

No. 14. Nothing, except that "Despairing

³ The concluding eight lines of Crawford's song, "Down the burn," were considered objectionable on the point of delicacy, and the above alteration by Burns is now substituted for them in all collections of Scottish songs where the piece appears.

beside a clear stream," is a popular song to its own tune. Would it not be better to have another in the same measure (there are plenty of them) which has never been set to music?

No. 15. Nothing.

No. 16. "Thro' the wood, laddie." I am decidedly of opinion that both in this, and "There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame," the second or high part of the tune, being a repetition of the first part an octave higher, is only for instrumental music, and would be much better omitted in singing.

No. 17. "Lord Gregory." Please insert mine in your next number; two or three copies of the song have got into the world, and I am afraid lest they find their way to some pilferers.

No. 18. "Thou are gane awa' frae me, Mary." See the best set of this song in the *Museum*.

Nos. 19, 20, 21. Nothing.

No. 22. "Peggy, I must love thee." Please let me take this into consideration. It will do for your third number.

No. 24. "Logan Water" shall wait my review; only one passage I think faulty, "Cruel joys" is a d—d stupid expression.

Nos. 25, 26, 27. Nothing.

No. 28. "My Lodging is on the cold ground." Please let it wait your third number to gain time.

No. 29, 30. Nothing.

No. 31. "Fair Helen" is not an air that charms me.

No. 32. "Bonnie Jean [of Aberdeen]," a song by Allan Ramsay. Nothing.

No. 33. "Bonnie Jean," the second. Change the name to "There was a lass, and she was fair," which, by the by, is the old name of the air. Do make a point of publishing this song to its own tune, and in your next number, you will highly oblige me by it. Please, likewise, insert No. 11 ("Bonnie Dundee") in your next number.

No. 34. "Gil Morrice," I am unalterably for leaving out altogether. It is a plaguety length, which will put you to great press expense; the air itself is never sung, and its place can well be supplied with one of two fine songs which are not at all in your list, "Craigieburn Wood," and "Roy's Wife." The first, besides its intrinsic merit, has novelty; and the last has high merit as well as great celeb-

riety; of the last I have the original, set as well as written by the lady who composed it,¹ and it is superior to any edition of the song which the public has yet seen.

No. 35. Nothing.

No. 36. Is the real tune of "Hughie Graham," as sung in some places; in others it is sung to a different and very pleasing little air, yet unknown to the world. I neglected to take down the notes when I met with it, and now it is out of my power. This air you will find in Oswald's Collection, Book 8th, under the title "Drimen Duff."

No. 37. "Laddie, lie near me," must lie by me for some time. I do not know the air; and until I am complete master of a tune, in my own singing (such as it is,) I can never compose for it. My way is: I consider the poetic sentiment correspondent to my idea of the musical expression; then choose my theme; begin one stanza; when that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part of the business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for objects in nature around me that are in unison and harmony with the cogitations of my fancy, and workings of my bosom; humming every now and then the air with the verses I have framed. When I feel my muse beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary fire-side of my study, and there commit my effusions to paper; swinging at intervals on the hind legs of my elbow-chair, by way of calling forth my own critical strictures, as my pen goes on. Seriously, this, at home, is almost invariably my way. What damn'd egotism!

No. 38. Nothing.

No. 39. "Highland-laddie." The old set will please a mere Scots car best; and the new an Italianized one. There is a third, and what Oswald calls the old "Highland-laddie," which pleases me more than either of them. It is sometimes called "Jinglin Johnnie;" it being the air of an old humorous bawdy song of that name. You will find it in the *Museum*, "I hae been at Crookieden," &c. I would advise you, in this musical quandary, to offer up your prayers to the muses for inspiring direction; and in the meantime, waiting for this direction, bestow a libation to Bacchus; and there is not a doubt but you will hit on a judicious choice. *Probatum est.*

¹ Mrs. Grant's Carron, Strathspey.

No. 40. Nothing.

No. 41. "O bonnie Lass will ye lie in a Barrack" must infallibly have Scots verses.

No. 42. Unknown.

No. 43. "Wae's my heart that we should sunder." Do you know a song in the *Museum* "Go fetech to me a pint o' wine, and fill it in a silver tassel?" It is a song of mine, and I think not a bad one. It precisely suits the measure of this air [No. 131 in the *Museum*]; you might set it to this, and for an English song take either "With broken words," &c., or "Speak on, speak thus," &c.: this last is the best; but remember I am no dictator: *ad libitum* is the word.

No. 44 to 50. Nothing.

No. 51. "The Bonnie Brucklet Lassie." I enclose you a song to it, as I think it should be set, and with a better effect than the modulation in the *Museum* where it first appeared, and whence everybody else has borrowed it. The tune is a very early acquaintance of mine. The verses if they deserve the name (in the *Museum*) are the work of a gentleman, known by the name of "Balloon Tytler."

No. 52. Nothing.

No. 53. "Banks of the Dee." Leave it out entirely; 'tis rank Irish; every other Irish air you have adopted is in the Scots taste; but, Langolee!—why, it is no more like a Scots air than Lunardi's balloon is like Diogenes' tub. I grant you that it is pretty; but why don't you take also the "Humours of Glen," "Captain O'Kean," "Coolim," and many other Irish airs much more beautiful than it. Let me recommend to you, in place of this black-guard Irish jig, our beautiful Scots air "Saw ye na my Peggy," a tune worth ten thousand of it; or "Fy! let us a' to the Bridal" worth twenty thousand of it.

No. 54. Nothing.

No. 55. "White Cockade." I have forgotten the Cantata you allude to ["The Jolly Beggars"], as I kept no copy, and indeed did not know that it was in existence; however, I remember that none of the songs pleased myself, except the last—something about:—

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

But there is another song of mine, a composition of early life, in the *Museum*, beginning,

"Nae gentle dames, tho' e'er sae fair," which suits the measure and has tolerable merit.

No. 56. It suits best to make it "Whistle, and I'll come t'ye, my lad."

No. 57. "Auld Sir Simon," I must beg you to keep out, and put in its place "The Quaker's Wife."

No. 59. "Dainty Davie," I have heard sung nineteen thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine times, and always with the chorus to the low part of the tune; and nothing (since a Highland wench in the Cowgate once bore me three bastards at a birth) has surprised me so much as your opinion on this subject. If it will not suit as I proposed, we will lay two of the stanzas together, and then make the chorus follow.

No. 60. "Fee him, Father"—I enclose you Fraser's set of this tune; when he plays it slow, in fact, he makes it the language of despair.¹ I shall here give you two stanzas, in that style; merely to try if it will be any improvement. Were it possible, in singing, to give it half the pathos which Fraser gives it in playing, it would make an admirably pathetic song. I do not give these verses for any merit they have. I composed them at the time in which "Pattie Allen's mither dee'd"—that was about the back o' midnight," and by the lee-side of a bowl of punch, which had overset every mortal in company except the *Hautbois* and the Muse.

THOU HAST LEFT ME EVER.

Thou hast left me ever, Jamie!

Thou hast left me ever. &c.

[See p. 159, vol. iii.]

No. 61. "Jockie and Jenny" I would discard, and in its place would put "There's nae luck about the house," which has a very pleasant air, and which is positively the finest love-ballad in that style in the Scots or perhaps in any other language. "When she came ben she bobbit," as an air, is more beautiful than either, and in the *andante* way would unite with a charming sentimental ballad.

¹ "I had the pleasure of hearing Mr. Fraser play 'Fee him, Father,' in the exquisite style above described, at his benefit in the theatre-royal, Edinburgh, 1822. After having for many years occupied the station of hautbois player at the orchestra of that place of amusement, he died in 1825, with the character of having been the very best performer . . . of his time in Scotland."—ROBERT CHAMBERS.

No. 62.

No. 63.

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Nos. 64

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No. 62. Nothing.

No. 63. "Maggie Launder" is a good tune; but there is—I don't know what, of vulgarity about it; at least to me it has always that effect. There is an English song to it which is set in the *Museum*. (No. 98.)

Nos. 64, 65, and 66. Nothing.

No. 67. "Saw ye my Father?" is one of my greatest favourites. The evening before last I wandered out, and began a tender song in what I think is its native style. I must premise, that the old way, and the way to give most effect, is to have no starting note, as the fiddlers call it, but to burst at once into the pathos. Every country girl sings—"Saw ye my father?" &c. So also in line third, "I saw not your," &c. This last, to be sure, hurts the poetry ("I saw," instead of "I saw"), but I am speaking of the air. My song is but just begun; and I should like, before I proceed, to know your opinion of it. I have sprinkled it with the Scots dialect, but it may be easily turned into correct English.¹

No. 68. Nothing.

No. 69. "Todlin hame." Urbani mentioned an idea of his, which has long been mine, that this air is highly susceptible of pathos: accordingly, you will soon hear him at your concert try it to a song of mine in the *Museum*; "Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon." Clarke has told me what a creature he is; but if he will bring any more of our tunes from darkness into light, I will be pleased.

No. 70. Nothing.

No. 71. "Geordie's Byre." Call the tune so, for decency's sake. I agree with you that the song will be better to want the stanza "The primrose is o'er for the season." I'll rather write a new song altogether than make this English! The sprinkling of Scotch in it, while it is but a sprinkling, gives it an air of rustic *naïveté* which time will rather increase than diminish.

Nos. 72, 73. Nothing.

No. 74, and last. "Tranent Moor" I am altogether averse to. The song is fine, and eke the tune; but it is not of a piece with the

rest of your pieces. Instead of it, allow me to mention a particular favourite of mine which you will find in the *Museum*: "I had a horse and I had na mair." It is a charming song, and I know the story of the ballad. One song more and I have done: "Auld lang syne." The air is but mediocre; but the following song, the old song of the olden times, and which has never been in print, nor even in manuscript, until I took it down from an old man's singing, is enough to recommend any air.²

AULD LANG SYNE.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And auld lang syne? &c.

[See p. 11, vol. III.]

Now, I suppose I have tired your patience fairly. You must, after all is over, have a number of ballads, properly so called. "Gil Morice," "Tranent Muir," "McPherson's Farewell," "Battle of Sheriff Muir," or "We ran and they ran," (I know the author of this charming ballad, and his history,) "Hardiknute," "Barbara Allan," (I can furnish a finer set of this tune than any that has yet appeared;) and besides, do you know that I really have the old tune to which "The Cherry and the Slae" was sung, and which is mentioned as a well-known air in *Scotland's Complaint*, a book published

² Notwithstanding what the poet says here, and a similar statement to Mrs. Dunlop, the song "Auld lang syne," with the exception of the title and first line, is generally regarded as his own. See note to the song in vol. III.

We subjoin two stanzas of an "Auld Lang Syne" from a broadside printed before 1700. This song, however, bears no relation, beyond the title and refrain, to the production of Burns.

AULD LANG SYNE.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never thought upon,
The flames of love extinguished,
And freely past and gone;
Is thy kind heart, now grown so cold,
In that loving breast of thine,
That thou canst never once reflect
On auld lang syne?

Where are thy protestations—
Thy vows and oaths, my dear,
Thou made to me, and I to thee,
In register yet clear:
Is faith and truth so violate
To the immortal gods divine,
That thou canst never once reflect
On auld lang syne?

In Ramsay's *Tea-table Miscellany* there is an "Auld Lang Syne" which also resembles Burns's only in the first and last line of each stanza.

¹ This song is alluded to in a succeeding page, the poet having then completed it by giving it a fifth verse, and leaving out the few Scotticisms it contained. It begins:

Where are the joys I have met in the morning.

before poor Mary's days. It was then called "The Banks o' Helicon:" an old poem which Pinkerton has brought to light. You will see all this in Tytler's history of Scots music. The tune, to a learned ear, may have no great merit; but it is a great curiosity. I have a good many original things of this kind. Good bye to ye!

BURNS TO THOMSON.

[Sept. 1798.]

I am happy, my dear Sir, that my ode pleases you so much. Your idea, "honour's bed,"¹ is, though a beautiful, a hackneyed idea; so, if you please, we will let the line stand as it is. I have altered the song as follows:

BRUCE'S ADDRESS.

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled;
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led;
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to glorious victorie! &c.²

[See p. 100, vol. III.]

N. B.—I have borrowed the last stanza from the common stall edition of Wallace:—

A false usurper sinks in every foe,
And liberty returns with every blow.

A couplet worthy of Homer. Yesterday you had enough of my correspondence.³ The post goes, and my head aches miserably. One comfort! I suffer so much, just now, in this world, for last night's debauch, that I shall escape scot-free for it in the world to come. Amen.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

12th Sept. 1793.

A thousand thanks to you, my dear Sir, for your observations on the list of my songs. I am happy to find your ideas so much in unison

¹ This "idea" of Thomson's has not as yet appeared in the correspondence, though we find it in his next letter, to which the present should perhaps be regarded as an answer. But it is doubtful if we possess all that passed between Thomson and the poet in regard to this poem.

² This new version differed from the original only in the lengthening of the last line of each stanza. See p. 100, vol. III.

³ Probably referring to the preceding long communication, which, however, would not be written all at once.

with my own respecting the generality of the airs, as well as the verses. About some of them we differ, but there is no disputing about hobby-horses. I shall not fail to profit by the remarks you make, and to reconsider the whole with attention.

"Dainty Davie" must be sung, two stanzas together, and then the chorus: 'tis the proper way. I agree with you, that there may be something of pathos, or tenderness at least, in the air of "Fee him, Father," when performed with feeling; but a tender cast may be given almost to any lively air, if you sing it very slowly, expressively, and with serious words. I am, however, clearly and invariably for retaining the cheerful tunes joined to their own humorous verses, wherever the verses are passable. But the sweet song for "Fee him, Father," which you began about the back of midnight, I will publish as an additional one. Mr. James Balfour, the king of good-fellows, and the best singer of the lively Scottish ballads that ever existed, has charmed thousands of companies with "Fee him, Father," and with "Tollin' hame" also, to the old words, which never should be disunited from either of these airs.—Some bacchanals I would wish to discard. "Fy, let us a' to the Bridal," for instance, is so coarse and vulgar, that I think it fit only to be sung in a company of drunken colliers; and "Saw ye my Father?" appears to me both indelicate and silly.

One word more with regard to your heroic ode. I think, with great deference to the poet, that a prudent general would avoid saying any thing to his soldiers which might tend to make death more frightful than it is. "Gory" presents a disagreeable image to the mind; and to tell them "Welcome to your gory bed," seems rather a discouraging address, notwithstanding the alternative which follows. I have shown the song to three friends of excellent taste, and each of them objected to this line, which emboldens me to use the freedom of bringing it again under your notice.⁴ I would suggest,

Now prepare for honour's bed,
Or for glorious victorie.

⁴ "That four Scotsmen, taken *seriatim et separatim*—in the martial ardour of their patriotic souls should object to 'Welcome to your gory bed,' from an uncommunicated apprehension common to the nature of all and operating like an instinct, that it was fitted

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BURNS TO THOMSON.

Sept. 1793.

"Who shall decide when doctors disagree?" My ode pleases me so much that I cannot alter it. Your proposed alterations would, in my opinion, make it tame. I am exceedingly obliged to you for putting me on reconsidering it; as I think I have much improved it. Instead of "soger! hero!" I will have it "Caledonian! on wi' me!"

I have scrutinized it over and over; and to the world, some way or other, it shall go as it is.¹ At the same time it will not in the least hurt me, should you leave it out altogether, and adhere to your first intention of adopting Logan's verses.

to frighten Robert Bruce's army, and make it take to its heels, leaving the cause of Liberty and Independence to shift for itself, is a coincidence that sets at defiance the doctrine of chances, proves history to be indeed an old almanack, and national character an empty name!"—PROFESSOR WILSON. (*See Essay.*)

"The reader will have observed, that Burns adopted the alterations proposed by his friend and correspondent in former instances, with great readiness; perhaps, indeed, on all indifferent occasions. In this present instance, however, he rejected them, though repeatedly urged, with determined resolution. With every respect for the judgment of Mr. Thomson and his friends, we may be satisfied that he did so. He who in preparing for an engagement, attempts to withdraw his imagination from images of death, will probably have but imperfect success, and is not fitted to stand in the ranks of battle, where the liberties of a kingdom are at issue. Of such men the conquerors of Bannockburn were not composed. Bruce's troops were hured to war, and familiar with all its sufferings and dangers. On the eve of that memorable day, their spirits were without doubt wound up to a pitch of enthusiasm suited to the occasion, —a pitch of enthusiasm at which danger becomes attractive and the most terrible forms of death are no longer terrible. Such a strain of sentiment, this heroic 'welcome' may be supposed well calculated to elevate,—to raise their hearts high above fear, and to nerve their arms to the utmost pitch of moral exertion."—CURRIE.

Mr. Thomson afterwards, in the third volume of his collection, adopted the poet's original suggestion, of uniting the ode to the old tune of "Hey, Tutt! Tattle." "The poet," he says, "originally intended this noble strain for the air of 'Hey, Tutt! Tattle;' but on a suggestion from the editor, who then thought 'Lewie Gordon' a better tune for the words, they were united together, and published in the preceding volume. The editor, however, having since examined the air, 'Hey, Tutt! Tattle,' with more particular attention, frankly owns that he has changed his opinion; and that he thinks it much better adapted for giving energy to the poetry than the air of 'Lewie Gordon.' He therefore sent it to Haydn, who has entered into the spirit of it with a felicity peculiar

I have finished my song to "Saw ye my Father?" and in English, as you will see. That there is a syllable too much for the expression of the air, is true; but allow me to say, that the mere dividing of a dotted crotchet into a crotchet and a quaver, is not a great matter; however, in that I have no pretensions to cope in judgment with you. Of the poetry I speak with confidence; but the music is a business where I hint my ideas with the utmost diffidence.

The old verses have merit, though unequal, and are popular: my advice is to set the air to the old words, and let mine follow as English verses. Here they are:—

FAIR JENNY.

Where are the joys I have met in the morning,
That danc'd to the lark's early song?
Where is the peace that awaited my wand'ring,
At evening the wild woods among? &c.

[See p. 162, vol. iii.]

Adieu, my dear Sir! The post goes, so I shall defer some other remarks until more leisure.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

September, 1793.

I have been turning over some volumes of English songs, to find verses whose measures would suit the airs for which you have allotted me to find English songs. The following I picked up in an old collection, which will suit very well for "Nancy's to the Greenwood gane." You must not, my dear Sir, expect all your English songs to have superlative merit; 'tis enough if they are passable!

The other night, with all her charms,
My ardent passion crowning,
My Celia sank within my arms,
An equal transport owning. &c.²

As for the air "Whistle and I'll come to you, my lad," there is a fine English song in Ramsay's *Tea-table Miscellany*, beginning "Oh Chloe! thou treasure, thou joy of my breast."

to himself; his inimitable symphonies and accompaniments render it completely martial and highly characteristic of the heroic verses." This appears to be among the oldest Scottish airs.

² The rest of this rather luxurious ditty is to be found in D'Urfrey's *Pills to Purge Melancholy*. Thomson noted the piece as "Unpublishable surely!"

For "John Anderson, my jo" you have also in Ramsay's *Miscellany* an excellent song beginning, "What means this niceness now of late." In the same *Miscellany* is not a bad song by Crawford to "Peggy, I must love thee," beginning, "Beneath a beech's grateful shade." As for English verses to "Geordie's byre," take the following, altered a little from Ramsay:—

O Mary, thy graces and glances,
Thy smiles so enchantingly gay,
And converse bewitchingly charming,
Bright wit and good humour display. &c.

Since I am in the way of amending and abridging, let me recommend the following abridgment of a beautiful poem of Hamilton's, to suit "Tak your auld cloak about ye:"

Alas! the sunny hours are past,
The cheating scene it will not last;
Let not the flatt'ring Hope persuade;
Ah, must I say, that it will fade. &c.

For "Willie was a wanton wag," you have a song made on purpose, also by Hamilton, which you will find in Ramsay's *Miscellany*, beginning, "Willy, ne'er enquire what end." English verses for "The tither morn, as I forlorn," you have in my song:—

The last time I came o'er the moor,
And left Maria's dwelling.

For "Toddlin Hame," take the following old English song, which I daresay is but little known:—

THE PRIMROSE.

Dost ask me why I send thee here,
This firstling of the infant year—
This lovely native of the vale,
That hangs so pensive and so pale?

Look on its bending stalk so weak,
That, each way yielding, doth not break,
And see how aptly it reveals
The doubts and fears a lover feels.

Look on its leaves of yellow hue,
Bepearl'd thus with morning dew,
And these will whisper in thine ears,
"The sweets of love are wash'd with tears."

N.B. I have altered it a little.

For "Mairland Willie," you have, in Ramsay's *Tea-table*, an excellent song, beginning, "Ah, why those tears in Nelly's eyes?" As for the "Collier's dochter," take the following old Bacehanal:

DELUDED SWAIN, THE PLEASURE.

Deluded swain, the pleasure
The fickle fair can give thee,
Is but a fairy treasure,—
Thy hopes will soon deceive thee.

The billows on the ocean,
The breezes idly roaming,
The clouds' uncertain motion,—
They are but types of woman.

O! art thou not ashamed,
To doat upon a feature?
If man thou wouldst be named,
Despise the silly creature.

Go, find an honest fellow;
Good claret set before thee;
Hold on till thou art mellow,
And then to bed in glory.

The faulty line in Logan-Water I mend thus:

How can your flinty hearts enjoy,
The widow's tears, the orphan's cry?

The song otherwise will pass. As to "McGregoira Rua-Ruth," you will see a song of mine to it, with a set of the air superior to yours, in the *Museum*, Vol. ii. p. 181. The song begins:—

Raving winds around her blowing.

Your Irish airs are pretty, but they are downright Irish. If they were like the "Banks of Banna," for instance, though really Irish, yet in the Scottish taste, you might adopt them. Since you are so fond of Irish music, what say you to twenty-five of them in an additional number? We could easily find this quantity of charming airs; I will take care that you shall not want songs; and I assure you that you would find it the most saleable of the whole. If you do not approve of "Roy's Wife," for the music's sake, we shall not insert it. "Deil tak' the war," is a charming song: so is "Saw ye my Peggy?" "There's nae luck about the house," well deserves a place. I cannot say that "O'er the hills and far awa," strikes me as equal to your selection. "This is no my ain house," is a great favourite air of mine; and if you will send me a set of it, I will task my muse to her highest effort. What is your opinion of "I hae laid a herrin' in saut?" I like it much. Your Jacobite airs are pretty: and there are many others of the same kind, pretty: but you have not room for them. You cannot, I think, insert "Fie, let us a' to the bridal," to any other words than its own.

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What pleases me as simple and *naïve*, disgusts you as ludicrous and low. For this reason, "Fie, gie me my coggie, Sirs," "Fie, let us a' to the bridal," with several others of that cast, are to me highly pleasing; while "Saw ye my father, or saw ye my mother?" delights me with its descriptive simple pathos. Thus my song, "Ken ye what Meg o' the mill has gotten?" pleases myself so much, that I cannot try my hand at another song to the air; so I shall not attempt it. I know you will laugh at all this: but, "ilka man wears his belt his ain gait."

BURNS TO THOMSON.

October, 1793.

Your last letter, my dear Thomson, was indeed laden with heavy news. Alas, poor Erskine.¹ The recollection that he was a coadjutor in your publication, has, till now, seared me from writing to you, or turning my thoughts on composing for you.

I am pleased that you are reconciled to the air of the "Quaker's wife;" though, by the bye, an old Highland gentleman, and a deep antiquarian, tells me it is a Gaelic air, and known by the name of "Leiger'm choss," which name, you may, if you think fit, prefix as the name of the tune. It bears that name in the west country, where there is still half a stanza of the song preserved, which I take to have been the chorus. The Gaelic phrase they have corrupted into "Liggeram Coss:"

Leiger'm choss, my bonnie wee lass,
Leiger'm choss, my dearie;
A' the lee-lang winter-night,
Leiger'm choss, my dearie.

The following verses I hope will please you, as an English song to the air:—

LOVELY NANCY.

Thine am I, my faithful fair,²
Thine, my lovely Nancy;
Every pulse along my veins,
Every roving fancy, &c.

[See p. 163, vol. III.]

¹ "The honourable A. Erskine, brother to Lord Kelly, whose melancholy death Mr. Thomson had communicated in an excellent letter, which he has suppressed."—*CURIE*. (See p. 128.)

² In August, 1795, Burns requested Thomson to alter this line to

Thine am I, my *Chloris* fair.

Your objection to the English song I proposed for "John Anderson, my jo," is certainly just. The following is by an old acquaintance of mine, and I think has merit. You will see that each fifth line is made to suit the peculiar note you mention. The song was never in print, which I think is so much in your favour. The more original good poetry your Collection contains, it certainly has so much the more merit.

SONG.

BY GAVIN TURNBULL.³

O condescend, dear charming maid,
My wretched state to view:
A tender swain to love betray'd,
And sad despair, by you.

While here all melancholy,
My passion I deplore,
Yet, urg'd by stern resistless fate,
I love thee more and more.

I heard of Love, and with disdain,
The witchin's power denied;
I laugh'd at every lover's pain,
And mock'd them when they sigh'd.

But how my state is alter'd!
Those happy days are o'er;
For all thy unrelenting hate,
I love thee more and more.

The following address of Turnbull's to the Nightingale, will suit as an English song to the air, "There was a lass and she was fair." By the bye, Turnbull has a great many songs in MS. which I could command, if you like his manner. Possibly, as he is an old friend of mine, I may be prejudiced in his favour: but I like some of his pieces very much.

THE NIGHTINGALE.

Thou sweetest minstrel of the grove,
That ever tried the plaintive strain,
Awake thy tender tale of love,
And soothe a poor forsaken swain.

For tho' the muses deign to aid,
And teach him smoothly to complain;
Yet Della, charming, cruel maid,
Is deaf to her forsaken swain.

³ Turnbull was a native of Kilmarnock, and born in humble circumstances. Little is known of his life, except that he took to the stage, and was member of a company that performed in the theatre of Dumfries while Burns resided there. A volume of poems by him was published at Glasgow in 1788, among the contents being a piece of some length called "The Bard," and inscribed to "Mr. R. B.," that is, Robert Burns.

I shall just transcribe another of Turnbull's, which would go charmingly to "Lewie Gordon."

LAURA.

Let me wander where I will,
By shady wood, or winding rill;
Where the sweetest May-born flowers
Paint the meadows, deck the bowers;
Where the linnet's early song
Echoes sweet the woods among;
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.

The rest of your letter I shall answer at some other opportunity.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

7th Nov. 1793.

MY GOOD SIR,

After so long a silence, it gave me peculiar pleasure to recognize your well-known hand, for I had begun to be apprehensive that all was not well with you. I am happy to find, however, that your silence did not proceed from that cause, and that you have got among the ballads once more.

I have to thank you for your English song to "Leiger'm closs," which I think extremely good, although the colouring is warm. Your friend Mr. Turnbull's songs have doubtless considerable merit; and as you have the command of his manuscripts, I hope you may find out some that will answer, as English songs, to the airs yet unprovided.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

December, 1793.

Tell me how you like the following verses to the tune of "My Jo Janet?"¹

MY SPOUSE, NANCY.

Husband, husband, cease your strife,
Nor longer idly rave, sir;
Tho' I am your wedded wife,
Yet I am not your slave, sir. &c.
[See p. 164, vol. iii.]

¹ *Jo Janet* is a humorous old Scottish song, in which a prudent and parsimonious husband answers the requests of his wife in a style which few husbands venture to adopt. We give two verses:—

Sweet sir, for your courtesie,
When you come by the Bess, then,

THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 17th April, 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,

Owing to the distress of our friend Cunningham for the loss of his child, at the time of his receiving your admirable but melancholy letter, I had not an opportunity, till lately, of perusing it.² How sorry I am to find Burns saying, "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?" while he is delighting others from one end of the island to the other. Like the hypochondriac who went to consult a physician upon his case—"Go," says the doctor, "and see the famous Carlini, who keeps all Paris in good humour." "Alas! sir," replied the patient, "I am that unhappy Carlini!"

Your plan for our meeting together pleases me greatly, and I trust that by some means or other it will soon take place; but your Bacchanalian challenge almost frightens me, for I am a miserably weak drinker!³

Allan is much gratified by your good opinion of his talents. He has just begun a sketch from your "Cotter's Saturday Night," and, if it pleases himself in the design, he will probably etch or engrave it. In subjects of the pastoral and humorous kind, he is, perhaps, unrivalled by any artist living. He fails a little in giving beauty and grace to his females, and his colouring is sombre, otherwise his paintings and drawings would be in greater request.

I like the music of the "Sutor's dochter," and will consider whether it shall be added to the last volume: your verses to it are pretty; but your humorous English song, to suit "Je Janet," is inimitable. What think you of the air, "Within a mile of Edinburgh?" It has always struck me as a modern English imita-

For the love ye bear to me,
Buy me a keekin' glass, then, looking
 Keek into the steeve we'll,
 Janet, Janet,
There ye'll see your bonnie sel',
 My Jo Janet.
Kind sir, for your courtesie,
When ye gae to the Cross, then.
For the love ye bear to me,
Buy me a pacin' horse, then.
 Pace upon your spinnin'-wheel,
 Janet, Janet,
 Pace upon your spinnin'-wheel,
 My Jo Janet.'

² A letter to Cunningham, dated 25th February, 1794, included in the General Correspondence.

³ See letter from Burns to Cunningham dated 3d March, 1794.

tion, but it is said to be Oswald's, and is so much liked, that I believe I must include it.¹ The verses are little better than namby pamby. Do you consider it worth a stanza or two?

BURNS TO THOMSON.

June, 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,

I return you the plates, with which I am highly pleased, your criticism on the grouping of the young lad being introduced to the mother only excepted. There I entirely agree with you. I would humbly propose that instead of the younker knitting, the artist would (in preference to your "trump"), put a stock and horn into his hands as if he were screwing and adjusting it. I would have returned them sooner, but I waited the opinion of a friend of mine, who is positively the ablest judge on the subject I have ever met with, and though an unknown, is yet a superior artist with the burin, and he is quite charmed with Allan's manner. I got him a peep of the "Gentle Shepherd;" and he pronounces Allan a most original artist of great excellence.

For my part, I look on Mr. Allan's choosing my favourite poem for his subject, to be one of the highest compliments I have ever received.

I am quite vexed at Pleyel's being cooped up in France, as it will put an entire stop to our work. Now, and for six or seven months, I shall be quite in song, as you shall see by and by. I know you value a composition, because it is made by one of the great ones, as little as I do. However, I got an air, pretty enough, composed by Lady Elizabeth Heron, of Heron, which she calls "The banks of Cree." Cree is a beautiful romantic stream, and as her Ladyship is a particular friend of mine, I have written the following song to it:—

HERE IS THE GLEN

Here is the glen, and here the bower,
All underneath the birchen shade;
The village bell has toll'd the hour,—
O what can stay my lovely maid? &c.

[See p. 169, vol. iii.]

The air, I fear, is not worth your while; else

¹ The air was composed by James Hook, a clever musician, and father of Theodore Hook, the novelist.

I would send it you. I am hurried; so farewell until next post. My seal is all well, except that my holly must be a *bush*, not a *tree*, as in the present shield. I also enclose it, and will send the pebble by the first opportunity.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

[July, 1794.]

Is there no news yet of Pleyel? Or is your work to be at a dead stop, until these glorious Crusaders, the allies, set our modern Orpheus at liberty from the savage thralldom of democratic discords? Alas the day! And woe is me! That auspicious period, pregnant with the happiness of millions—that golden age, spotless with monarchical innocence and despotic purity—that Millennium, of which the earliest dawn will enlighten even Republican turbulence, and show the swinish multitude that they are but beasts, must be led by the nose, and goaded in the backside—those days of sweet chords and concord seem by no means near.

Oh that mine eyes were fountains of waters for thy rueful sake, poor Prussia! that as thy ire has deluged the plains of Flanders, so might my grief inundate the regions of Gallovidian. Ye children of success, ye sons of prosperity, ye who never shed the tear of sorrow, or felt a wish unsatisfied, spare your reproaches on the left-handed shifts and snuffling of unhappy Brandenburg! Once was his rectitude straight as the shafts of the Archers of Edina, and stubborn as the granite of Gallovidian Hills—the Batavian witnessed his bowels of compassion, and Sarmatia rejoiced in his truth. But, alas! The needy man who has known better times can only console himself with a song, thus:—

When Princes and Prelates, and hot-headed zealots,

A' Europe had set in a lowe, a lowe, &c.

[See page 136, vol. iii.]

So much for nonsense! I have sent you by my much valued friend, Mr. Syme, of this place, the pebble for my seal. You will please remember that my holly is a bush, not a tree.

² Respecting the seal, see the poet's letter to Cunningham of 3d March, 1794. Cunningham had got a sketch of the design prepared and sent it to his friend through Thomson, which sketch is commented on as above.

I have three or four songs on the way for you; but I have not yet put the last hand to them. Pray are you going to insert "Ban-nockburn," or "Wilt thou be my dearie," in your collection? If you are not, let me know, as in that case I will give them to *Johnson's Museum*. I told you that our friend Clarke is quite an enthusiast in the idea that the air "Nancy's to the greenwood gane," is capable of sentiment and pathos in a high degree. In this, if I remember right, you did not agree with him. I intend setting my verses which I wrote and sent you for "The last time I came o'er the moor," to this air. I have made an alteration in the beginning of the song, which you will find on the new page.

Farewell thou stream that winding flows
Around Eliza's dwelling!
O merr'y! spare the cruel throes
Within my bosom swelling.¹ &c.

[See p. 194, vol. iii.]

I have presented a copy of your songs to the daughter of a much-valued and much-honoured friend of mine, Mr. Graham of Fintry. I wrote on the blank side of the title-page the following address to the young lady:—

Here, where the Scottish muse immortal lives,
In sacred strains and tuneful members join'd,
Accept the gift; tho' humble he who gives,
Rich is the tribute of the grateful mind. &c.

[See p. 183, vol. iii.]

I have also promised the young lady a copy of your Sonatas: you will have the goodness to send a copy directed to Miss Graham of Fintry.

Another friend of mine goes to town in a week or so, when you shall again have another packet of nonsense from yours, &c.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 10th August 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,

I owe you an apology for having so long delayed to acknowledge the favour of your last. I fear it will be as you say, I shall have no more songs from Pleyel till France and we are friends; but nevertheless, I am very desirous to be prepared with the poetry; and as the season approaches in which your Muse of Coila

¹ See a subsequent letter, p. 162.

visits you, I trust I shall, as formerly, be frequently gratified with the result of your amorous and tender interviews!

BURNS TO THOMSON.

[30th August, 1794.]

The last evening, as I was straying out and thinking of "O'er the Hills and far away," I spun the following stanzas for it; but whether my spinning will deserve to be laid up in store, like the precious thread of the silk-worm, or brushed to the devil, like the vile manufacture of the spider, I leave, my dear Sir, to your usual candid criticism. I was pleased with several lines in it at first, but I own that now it appears rather a flimsy business.

This is just a hasty sketch, until I see whether it be worth a critique. We have many sailor songs, but as far as I at present recollect, they are mostly the effusions of the jovial sailor, not the wailings of his love-lorn mistress. I must here make one sweet exception—"Sweet Annie frae the sea-beach came." Now for the very song.

ON THE SEAS AND FAR AWAY.

How can my poor heart be glad,
When absent from my sailor lad?
How can I the thought forego—
He's on the seas to meet the foe? &c.

[See p. 104, vol. iii.]

I give you leave to abuse this song, but do it in the spirit of Christian meekness.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 16th Sept. 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,

You have anticipated my opinion of "On the seas and far away." I do not think it one of your very happy productions, though it certainly contains stanzas that are worthy of all reception.

The second is the least to my liking, particularly, "Bullets, spare my only joy." Confound the bullets! It might, perhaps, be objected to the third verse, "At the starless midnight hour," that it has too much grandeur of imagery, and that greater simplicity of

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thought would have better suited the character of a sailor's sweet-heart. The tune, it must be remembered, is of the brisk, cheerful kind. Upon the whole, therefore, in my humble opinion, the song would be better adapted to the tune, if it consisted only of the first and last verses, with the choruses.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

Sept. 1794.

Little do the Trustees for our Manufactures, when they frank my letters to you—little do they consider what kind of manufacture they are encouraging. The manufacture of nonsense was certainly not in idea when the Act of Parliament was framed, and yet, under my hands and your cover, it thrives amazingly. Well, there are more pernicious manufactures, that is certain!

I shall withdraw my "On the seas and far away," altogether; it is unequal and unworthy of the work. Making a poem is like begetting a son: you cannot know whether you have a wise man or a fool, until you produce him to the world to try him.

For that reason I send you the offspring of my brain, abortions and all; and, as such, pray look over them and forgive them, and burn them. I am flattered at your adopting "Ca' the yowes to the knowes," as it was owing to me that ever it saw the light. About seven years ago I was well acquainted with a worthy little fellow of a clergyman, a Mr. Clunie,¹ who sung it charmingly; and, at my request, Mr. Clarke took it down from his singing. When I gave it to Johnson, I added some stanzas to the song, and mended others, but still it will not do for *you*. In a solitary stroll which I took to-day, I tried my hand on a few pastoral lines, following up the idea of the chorus, which I would preserve. Here it is, with all its crudities and imperfections on its head.

¹ Mr. Clunie was minister of the parish of Borthwick, Edinburghshire. He was so enthusiastically fond of singing Scottish songs, that he used to hang his watch round the candle on Sunday evenings, waiting anxiously till the arrival of twelve o'clock permitted him to break out in one of his favourite ditties. Mr. Clunie latterly became deranged in his intellect, and died in a madhouse.

CA' THE YOWES.

Ca' the yowes to the knowes,
Ca' them whare the heather grows,
Ca' them whare the burnie rowes—
My bonnie dearie! &c.

(See p. 183, vol. iii.)

I shall give you my opinion of your other newly adopted songs my first scribbling fit. Adieu!

BURNS TO THOMSON.

Sept. 1794.

Do you know a blackguard Irish song called "Oonagh's Water-Fall?" Our friend Cunningham sings it delightfully. The air is charming, and I have often regretted the want of decent verses to it. It is too much, at least for *my* humble rustic Muse, to expect that every effort of hers must have merit; still I think it is better to have mediocre verses to a favourite air, than none at all. On this principle I have all along proceeded in the *Scots Musical Museum*, and as that publication is at its last volume, I intend the following song, to the air above-mentioned, for that work.

If it does not suit you as an editor, you may be pleased to have verses to it that you can sing before ladies.

SHE SAYS SHE LOVES ME BEST OF A'.

Sae flaxen were her ringlets,
Her eyebrows of a darker hue,
Bewitchingly o'er-arching
Twa laughing een o' bonnie blue. &c.
(See p. 186, vol. iii.)

Not to compare small things with great, my taste in music is like the mighty Frederick of Prussia's taste in painting: we are told that he frequently admired what the connoisseurs decried, and always without any hypocrisy confessed his admiration. I am sensible that my taste in music must be inelegant and vulgar, because people of undisputed and cultivated taste can find no merit in my favourite tunes. Still, because I am cheaply pleased, is that any reason why I should deny myself that pleasure? Many of our strathspeys, ancient and modern, give me most exquisite enjoyment, where you and other judges would probably be showing disgust. For instance, I am just now making verses for "Rothemurehe's Rant," an air which puts me in raptures; and in fact, unless I be

pleased with the tune, I never can make verses to it. Here I have Clarke on my side, who is a judge that I will pit against any of you. "Rothemurche," he says, is an air "both original and beautiful;" and on his recommendation I have taken the first part of the tune for a chorus, and the fourth or last part for the song. I am but two stanzas deep in the work, and possibly you may think, and justly, that the poetry is as little worth your attention as the music.¹

I have begun anew, "Let me in this ae night." Do you think that we ought to retain the old chorus? I think we must retain both the old chorus and the first stanza of the old song. I do not altogether like the third line of the first stanza, but cannot alter it to please myself. I am just three stanzas deep in it. Would you have the *denouement* to be successful or otherwise? Should she "let him in" or not?

LET ME IN THIS AE NIGHT.²

O lassie art thou sleepin' yet,
Or art thou wauken I wad wit?
For love has bound me hand and fit,
And I would fain be in, jo. &c.

[See p. 161, vol. iii.]

Did you not once propose "The sow's tail to Geordie," as an air for your work? I am quite delighted with it; but I acknowledge that is no mark of its real excellence. I once set about verses for it, which I meant to be in the alternate way of a lover and his mistress chanting together. I have not the pleasure of knowing Mrs. Thomson's Christian name, and yours I am afraid is rather burlesque for sentiment, else I had meant to have made you the hero and heroine of the little piece.

I have just written four stanzas at random, which I intend to have woven somewhere into, probably at the conclusion of, the song.³

¹ In the original MS. two stanzas of a song, beginning "Lassie wi' the lint-white-locks," are here inserted. It will be found at full length at p. 194, vol. iii.

² A considerably altered version of this song with the "Lassie's" answer, was sent to Thomson in February, 1795, and will be found at p. 205, vol. iii.

³ Here are copied the random stanzas beginning, "The bee that thro' the sunny hour;" but as they form with slight alteration the concluding portion of the duet "O Philly, happy be the day," sent to Thomson on the 19th November, we do not print them here. In the stanzas referred to the lovers' names are Jeanie and Geordie, which become Philly and Willie in the completed song.

So much for an idle farago of a gossiping letter. . . .

Do you know a droll Scots song more famous for its humour than delicacy, called "The Grey Goose and the Gled?" Mr. Clarke took down the notes (such as they are) at my request, which I shall give, with some decenter verses, to Johnson. Mr. Clarke says that the tune is positively an old chant of the Romish Church, which corroborates the old tradition that at the Reformation the Reformers burlesqued much of the old Church music by setting them to bawdy verses. As a further proof, the common name for this song is "Cumnock Psalms." As there can be no harm in transcribing a stanza of a psalm, I shall give you two or three; possibly the song is new to you:—

As I looked o'er yon eastle wa'
I spied a grey goose and a gled, &c.⁴

So much for the Psalmody of Cumnock!

How do you like the following epigram, which I wrote the other day on a lovely young girl's recovery from a fever? Doctor Maxwell—the identical Maxwell whom Burke mentioned in the House of Commons—was the physician who seemingly saved her from the grave; and to him I address the following.

TO DR. MAXWELL.⁵

ON MISS JESSIE STAIG'S RECOVERY.⁶

Maxwell, if merit here you crave,
That merit I deny:
You save fair Jessie from the grave!
An angel could not die.

God grant you patience with this stupid epistle! Amen!

THOMSON TO BURNS.

[Oct. 1794.]

I perceive the sprightly muse is now attendant upon her favourite poet, whose "wood notes wild" are become as enchanting as ever. "She says she lo'es me best of a'," is one of the most pleasant table songs I have seen, and

⁴ This gross production may be found in the collection elsewhere spoken of, called *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*. The words set by Burns to the monotonous air are those beginning, "As I stood by yon roofless tower."

⁵ Dr. Maxwell, two years afterwards, was the poet's physician on his own death-bed.

⁶ See p. 187, vol. iii.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 14th October, 1794.

The last eight days have been devoted to the re-examination of the Scottish collections. I have read, and sung, and fiddled, and considered till I am half blind, and wholly stupid. The few airs I have added, are inclosed.

Peter Pindar has at length sent me all the songs I expected from him, which are in general elegant and beautiful.¹ Have you heard of a London collection of Scottish airs and songs, just published by Mr. Ritson, an Englishman? I shall send you a copy. His introductory essay on the subject is curious, and evinces great reading and research, but does not decide the question as to the origin of our melodies; though he shows clearly that Mr. Tytler, in his ingenious dissertation, has adduced no sort of proof of the hypothesis he wished to establish; and that his classification of the airs according to the aeras when they were composed, is mere fancy and conjecture. On John Pinkerton, Esq. he has no mercy; but consigns him to damnation! He snarls at my publication, on the score of Pindar being engaged to write songs for it; uncanonically and unjustly leaving it to be inferred, that the songs of Scottish writers had been sent a-pack- ing to make room for Peter's! Of you he speaks with some respect, but gives you a passing hit or two, for daring to dress up a little some old foolish songs for the *Museum*.² His sets of the Scottish airs are taken, he says, from the oldest collections and best authorities: many of them, however, have such a strange aspect, and are so unlike the sets which are

¹ We are nowhere told whether Peter Pindar (Dr. Wolcot, the celebrated satirist of George the Third's reign) received any pecuniary compensation for his contributions to Mr. Thomson's collection. If he did so the fact should have been urged, among others, in remonstrating with Burns against his resolution of not accepting payment for his services.

² The publication here referred to is Joseph Ritson's *Scottish Songs*, London, 1794, 2 vols. Of Burns Ritson remarks: "Robert Burns, a natural poet of the first eminence, does not, perhaps, appear to his usual advantage in song: *non omnia possunt*." "Mr. Burns, as good a poet as Ramsay, is, it must be regretted, an equally licentious and unfaithful publisher of the performances of others. Many of the original, old, ancient, genuine songs inserted in Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum* derive not a little of their merit from passing through the hands of this very ingenious critic."

henceforth shall be mine when the song is going round. I'll give Cunningham a copy; he can more powerfully proclaim its merit. I am far from undervaluing your taste for the strathspey music; on the contrary, I think it highly animating and agreeable, and that some of the strathspeys, when graced with such verses as yours, will make very pleasing songs; in the same way that rough Christians are tempered and softened by lovely woman, without whom, you know, they had been brutes.

I am clear for having the "Sow's tail," particularly as your proposed verses to it are so extremely promising. Geordie, as you observe, is a name only fit for burlesque composition. Mrs. Thomson's name (Katharine) is not at all poetical. Retain Jeanie, therefore, and make the other Jamie, or any other that sounds agreeably.

Your "Ca' the ewes" is a precious little morean. Indeed I am perfectly astonished and charmed with the endless variety of your fancy. Here let me ask you, whether you never seriously turned your thoughts upon dramatic writing? That is a field worthy of your genius, in which it might shine forth in all its splendour. One or two successful pieces upon the London stage would make your fortune. The rage at present is for musical dramas: few or none of those which have appeared since the "Duenna," possess much poetical merit; there is little in the conduct of the fable, or in the dialogue, to interest the audience. They are chiefly vehicles for music and pageantry. I think you might produce a comic opera in three acts, which would live by the poetry, at the same time that it would be proper to take every assistance from her tuneful sister. Part of the songs of course would be to our favourite Scottish airs; the rest might be left to the London composer—Storace for Drury-lane, or Shield for Covent-garden: both of them very able and popular musicians. I believe that interest and manœuvring are often necessary to have a drama brought on: so it may be with the nanby-pamby tribe of flowery scribblers; but were you to address Mr. Sheridan himself by letter, and send him a dramatic piece, I am persuaded he would, for the honour of genius, give it a fair and candid trial. Excuse me for obtruding these hints upon your consideration.

sung by every person of taste, old or young, in town or country, that we can scarcely recognise the features of our favourites. By going to the oldest collections of our music, it does not follow that we find the melodies in their original state. These melodies had been preserved, we know not how long, by oral communication, before being collected and printed; and as different persons sing the same air very differently, according to their accurate or confused recollection of it, so even supposing the first collectors to have possessed the industry, the taste, and discernment to choose the best they could hear, (which is far from certain,) still it must evidently be a chance, whether the collections exhibit any of the melodies in the state they were first composed. In selecting the melodies for my own collection, I have been as much guided by the living as by the dead. Where these differed, I preferred the sets that appeared to me the most simple and beautiful, and the most generally approved: and without meaning any compliment to my own capability of choosing, or speaking of the pains I have taken, I flatter myself that my sets will be found equally freed from vulgar errors on the one hand, and affected graces on the other.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

19th October, 1794.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

By this morning's post I have your list, and, in general, I highly approve of it. I shall, at more leisure, give you a critique on the whole. In the meantime let me offer a new improvement, or rather a restoring of old simplicity in one of your newly adopted songs:—

"When she cam ben she bobbit (a crotchet stop)

When she cam ben she bobbit (do)

And when she cam ben she kiss'd Cockpen,

And syne denied that she did it." (a crotchet stop)

This is the old rhythm, and by far the most original and beautiful. Let the harmony of the bass at the stops be full, and thin and dropping through the rest of the air, and you will give the tune a noble and striking effect. Perhaps I am betraying my ignorance; but Mr. Clarke is decidedly of my opinion. He goes to your town by to-day's fly, and I wish you would call on him and take his opinion in

general: you know his taste is a standard. He will return here again in a week or two: so, please do not miss asking for him. One thing I hope he will do, which will give me high satisfaction—persuade you to adopt my favourite, "Craigieburn Wood," in your selection: it is as great a favourite of his as of mine. The lady on whom it was made is one of the finest women in Scotland; and in fact (*entre nous*) is in a manner to me what Sterne's Eliza was to him—a mistress, or friend, or what you will, in the guileless simplicity of Platonic love. (Now don't put any of your squinting constructions on this, or have any elusiveness about it among our acquaintances.) I assure you that to my lovely friend you are indebted for many of your best songs of mine. Do you think that the sober, gin-horse routine of existence, could inspire a man with life, and love, and joy—could fire him with enthusiasm, or melt him with pathos, equal to the genius of your book? No! no!—Whenever I want to be more than ordinary in song—to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs—do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation? *Tout au contraire!* I have a glorious recipe; the very one that for his own use was invented by the divinity of healing and poetry, when erst he piped to the flocks of Admetus. I put myself in a regimen of admiring a fine woman; and in proportion to the adorability of her charms, in proportion you are delighted with my verses. The lightning of her eye is the godhead of Parnassus, and the witchery of her smile the divinity of Helicon!

To descend to the business with which I began: if you like my idea of, "When she cam ben she bobbit," the following stanzas of mine, altered a little from what they were formerly when set to another air, may perhaps do instead of worse stanzas:—

SAW YE MY PHILLY.

O saw ye my dear, my Philly?

O saw ye my dear, my Philly?

She's down i' the grove, she's wi' a new love,

She whina come hame to her Willy. &c.

[See p. 120, vol. iii.]

Now for a few miscellaneous remarks. "The Posie" (in the *Museum*) is my composition; the air was taken down from Mrs. Burns' voice. It is well known in the West country, but the old words are trash. By the bye, take

a look at the tune again, and tell me if you do not think it is the original from which "Roslin Castle" is composed. The second part, in particular, for the first two or three bars, is exactly the old air. "Strathallan's Lament" is mine; the music is by our right trusty and deservedly well-beloved Allan Masterton. "The young Highland Rover" (Morag) is also mine, but is not worthy of the fine air. "Donocht-Head" is not mine; I would give ten pounds it were. It appeared first in the *Edinburgh Herald*; and came to the editor of that paper with the Newcastle post-mark on it.¹ "Whistle o'er the lave o't" is mine: the music said to be by a John Bruce, a celebrated violin player in Dumfries, about the beginning of this century. This I know: Bruce, who was an honest man, though a red-wind Highlandman, constantly claimed it; and by all the old musical people here, is believed to be the author of it.

"O how can I be blythe and glad" is mine; but as it is already appropriated to an air by itself, both in the *Museum* and from thence to Ritson (I have got that book), I think it would be as well to leave it out. However, do as you please.

"M'Pherson's Farewell" is mine, excepting the chorus and one stanza.

"Andrew and his enty gun." The song to which this is set in the *Museum* is mine, and was composed on Miss Euphemia Murray, of Lintrose, commonly and deservedly called the Flower of Strathmore.

"The Quaker's wife." Do not give the tune that name, but the old Highland one "Leiger 'm chose." The only fragment remaining of the old words is the chorus, still a favourite lullaby of my old mother from whom I learned it:—

¹ We give the first two stanzas of this poem, so highly praised by Burns.

Keen blows the wind o'er Donocht-Head,
The snaw drives snelly thro' the dale,
The Gaberlunzie tirls my sneek,
And shivering tells his waeft' tale.
"Cauld is the night, O let me in,
And dinna let your minstrel fa',
And dinna let his windin'-sheet
Be naething but a wreath o' snaw.

"Full ninety winters ha'e I seen,
And pip'd where gow-ocks whirling flew,
And mony a day I've danc'd, I ween,
To lilt which from my drone I blew."
My Eppie wak'd, and soon she cry'd,
"Get up, guldman, and let him in;
For weel ye ken the winter night
Was short when he began his din."

Leiger 'm chose, my bonnie wee lass,
And Leiger 'm chose, my dearie;
A' the lee-lang winter night
Leiger 'm chose, my dearie.

The current name for the reel to this day at country weddings is *Leggeram Cosh*, a Lowland corruption of the original Gaelic. I have altered the first stanza which I would have to stand thus:—

Thine am I, my faithful fair,
Well thou mayst discover;
Every pulse along my veins
Tells the ardent lover.²

"Saw ye my father." I am decidedly of opinion that you should set the tune to the old song, and let mine follow for English verses; but as you please.

"In simmer when the hay was mawn," and "O for ane and twenty, Tam" are both mine. The set of the last in the *Museum* does not please me; but if you will get any of our ancienter Scots fiddlers to play you in Strathpey time, "The Moudiewart"—that is the name of the air—I think it will delight you.

"How long and dreary is the night:" I met with some such words in a collection of songs somewhere, which I altered and enlarged; and to please you, and to suit your favourite air "Cauld Kail," I have taken a stride or two across my room, and have arranged it anew, as you will find on the other page:—

HOW LANG AND DREARY IS THE NIGHT.³

How lang and dreary is the night,
When I am frae my dearie!
I restless lie frae e'en to morn,
Tho' I were ne'er sae weary. &c.
[See p. 191, vol. iii.]

Tell me how you like this. I differ from your idea of the expression of the tune. There is, to me, a great deal of tenderness in it. You cannot, in my opinion, dispense with a bass to your addenda airs. A lady of my acquaintance, a noted performer, plays "Nae luck about the house," and sings it at the same time so charmingly, that I shall never bear to see any of my songs sent into the world, as naked as Mr. What-d'ye-call-um⁴ has done in his London collection.

These English songs gravel me to death. I

² A slight alteration of the song in vol. iii. p. 163.

³ The earlier version of this song will be found at page 245, vol. ii.

⁴ Mr. Ritson.

have not that command of the language that I have of my native tongue. In fact, I think my ideas are more barren in English than in Scottish. I have been at "Duncan Gray," to dress it in English, but all I can do is deplorably stupid. For instance:—

LET NOT WOMAN E'ER COMPLAIN.

Let not woman e'er complain
Of inconstancy in love;
Let not woman e'er complain,
Fickle man is apt to rove. &c.

[See p. 190, vol. III.]

If you insert both Peter's song and mine, to the tune of "The Bonnie Brucket Lassie," it will cost you engraving the first verse of both songs, as the rhythm of the two is considerably different. As "Fair Eliza" is already published, I am totally indifferent whether you give it a place or not; but to my taste, the rhythm of my song to that air would have a much more original effect.

"Love never more shall give me pain" has long been appropriated to a popular air of the same title, for which reason, in my opinion, it would be improper to set it to "My Lodging is on the cold ground." There is a song of mine in the *Museum* by a *ci-devant* goddess of mine,¹ which I think not unworthy of the air, and suits the rhythm equally with "Love never more," &c. It begins:—

Talk not of Love, it gives me pain.

Since the above I have been out in the country taking a dinner with a friend, where I met the lady whom I mentioned in the second page of this odds-and-ends of a letter.² As usual I got into song, and returning home I composed the following:—

THE LOVER'S MORNING SALUTE TO HIS MISTRESS.

Sleep'st thou, or wak'st thou, fairest creature?
Rosy morn now lifts his eye. &c.

[See p. 191, vol. III.]

I allow the first four lines of each stanza to be repeated; but if you inspect the air, in that part, you will find that it also, without a quaver of difference, is the same passages repeated; which will exactly put it on the footing of other slow Scotch airs, as they, you know, are twice sung over. If you honour my

¹ Mrs. McLehose (Clarinda). ² Jean Lorimer.

verses by setting the air to them, I will vamp up the old song, and make it English enough to be understood. I have sent you my song noted down to the air, in the way I think it should go; I believe you will find my set of the air to be one of the best. I inclose you a musical curiosity, an East Indian air, which you would swear was a Scots one. I know the authenticity of it, as the gentleman who brought it over is a particular acquaintance of mine. Do preserve me the copy I send you, as it is the only one I have. Clarke has set a bass to it, and I intend putting it into the *Musical Museum*. Here follow the verses I intend for it:

THE WINTER OF LIFE.

But lately seen in gladsome green,
The woods rejoic'd the day,
Thou' gentle showers the laughing flowers,
In double pride were gay. &c.

[See p. 192, vol. III.]

I would be obliged to you if you would procure me a sight of Ritson's collection of English songs, which you mention in your letter. I can return them three times a week by the Fly. I will thank you for another information, and that as speedily as you please: whether this miserable drawing hotchpotch epistle has not completely tired you of the correspondence of yours,

R. B.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 27th Oct. 1791.

I am sensible, my dear friend, that a genuine poet can no more exist without his mistress than his meat. I wish I knew the adorable she, whose bright eyes and witching smiles have so often enraptured the Scottish bard! that I might drink her sweet health when the toast is going round. "Craigieburn Wood" must certainly be adopted into my family, since she is the object of the song; but, in the name of decency, I must beg a new chorus verse from you. "O to be lying beyond thee, dearie," is perhaps a consummation to be wished, but will not do for singing in the company of ladies. The songs in your last will do you lasting credit, and suit the respective airs charmingly. I am perfectly of your opinion with respect to the additional airs.

The idea as they all be Clarke.

I find nothing in the collection with his receive torical Your air I am sure sketches lauder to elect too, which glee. I and to his prints.

P. S. concern personal surely 'town."

Many present to me. &c., for in the time from arrange consists scraps of to give an end, necessary pages in cimen. so large than your tory was I am with v. Kail."

¹ It does anecdotal he seen

The idea of sending them into the world naked as they were born was ungenerous. They must all be clothed and made decent by our friend Clarke.

I find I am anticipated by the friendly Cunningham in sending you Ritson's Scottish collection. Permit me, therefore, to present you with his English collection, which you will receive by the coach. I do not find his Historical Essay on Scottish song interesting. Your anecdotes and miscellaneous remarks will, I am sure, be much more so. Allan has just sketched a charming design from "Maggie Lauder." She is dancing with such spirit as to electrify the piper, who seems almost dancing too, while he is playing with the most exquisite glee. I am much inclined to get a small copy, and to have it engraved in the style of Ritson's prints.

P.S. — Pray, what do your anecdotes say concerning "Maggie Lauder?" was she a real personage, and of what rank? You would surely "spier for her, if you ca'd at Anstruther town."

BURNS TO THOMSON.

Nov. 1794.

Many thanks to you, my dear Sir, for your present; it is a book of the utmost importance to me. I have yesterday begun my anecdotes, &c., for your work. I intend drawing it up in the form of a letter to you, which will save me from the tedious dull business of systematic arrangement. Indeed, as all I have to say consists of unconnected remarks, anecdotes, scraps of old songs, &c., it would be impossible to give the work a beginning, a middle, and an end, which the critics insist to be absolutely necessary in a work.¹ As soon as I have a few pages in order, I will send you them as a specimen. I only fear that the matter will grow so large among my hands as to be more expensive than you can allot for it. Now for my desultory way of writing you.

I am happy that I have at last pleased you with verses to your right-hand tune "Ca'd R. Kail." I see a little unlikeness in the line

¹ It does not appear whether Burns completed these anecdotes, &c., nor what became of the portion that he seems to have written.

you object to, but cannot alter it for a better. It is one thing to know one's error, and another and much more difficult affair to amend that error. In my last I told you my objections to the song you had selected for "My lodging is on the cold ground." On my visit the other day to my fair Chloris (that is the poetical name of the lovely goddess of my inspiration), she suggested an idea, which I, on my return from the visit, wrought into the following song. It is exactly in the measure of "My dearie, an thou die," which you say is the precise rhythm of the air:—

CHLORIS.

My Chloris, mark how green the groves,
The primrose banks how fair;
The balmy gales awake the flowers,
And wave thy tawny hair. &c.

[See p. 193, vol. iii.]

How do you like the simplicity and tenderness of this pastoral? I think it pretty well.

I like you for entering so candidly and so kindly into the story of "*ma chère Amie*." I assure you, I was never more in earnest in my life, than in the account of that affair which I sent you in my last.—Conjugal love is a passion which I deeply feel, and highly venerate; but, somehow, it does not make such a figure in poesy as that other species of the passion,

Where Love is liberty and Nature law.

Musically speaking, the first is an instrument of which the gamut is scanty and confined, but the tones inexpressibly sweet; while the last has powers equal to all the intellectual modulations of the human soul. Still, I am a very poet in my enthusiasm of the passion. The welfare and happiness of the beloved object is the first and inviolate sentiment that pervades my soul; and whatever pleasures I might wish for, or whatever might be the raptures they would give me, yet, if they interfere with that first principle, it is having these pleasures at a dishonest price: and justice forbids, and generosity disdains the purchase! As to the herd of the sex who are good for little or nothing else, I have made no such agreement with myself;² but where the parties are capable of, and the passion is, the true Divinity of Love—the man who can act otherwise is a villain!

² This is certainly candid—and it may be thought somewhat callous too.



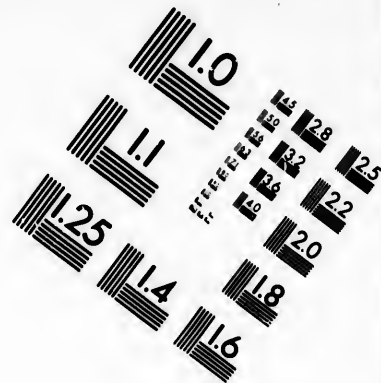
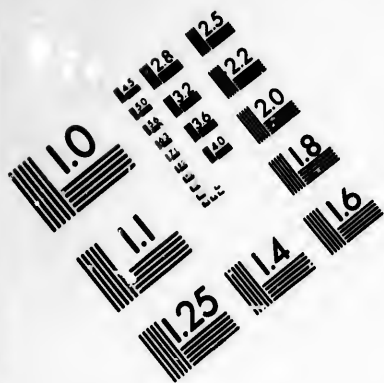
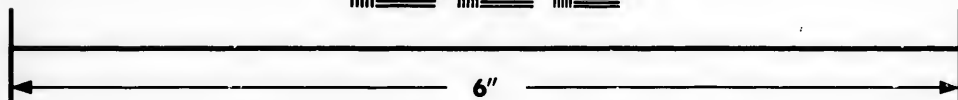
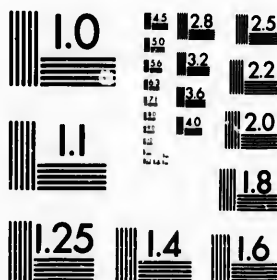


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It was impossible, you know, to take up the subject of your songs in the last sheet; that would have been a falling off indeed!

Despairing of my own powers to give you variety enough in English songs, I have been turning over old collections, to pick out songs, of which the measure is something similar to what I want; and, with a little alteration so as to suit the rhythm of the air exactly, to give you them for your work. Where the songs have hitherto been but little noticed, nor have ever been set to music, I think the shift a fair one. A song which, under the same first verse, you will find in Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany*, I have cut down for an English dress to your "Dainty Davie" as follows:—

CHLOE.

It was the charming month of May,
When all the flow'rs were fresh and gay,
One morning, by the break of day,
The youthful, charming Chloe, &c.

[See p. 250, vol. iii.]

You may think meanly of this, but take a look at the bombast original, and you will be surprised that I have made so much of it.¹ I have finished my song to "Rothemurche's Rant;" and you have Clloe to consult as to the set of the air for singing.

LASSIE WI' THE LINT-WHITE LOCKS.

Lassie wi' the lint-white locks,
Bonnie lassie, artless lassie,
Wilt thou wi' me tent the flocks?
Wilt thou be my dearie, O?

[See p. 194, vol. iii.]

This piece has at least the merit of being a regular pastoral: the vernal morn, the summer noon, the autumnal evening, and the winter night, are regularly rounded. If you like it, well: if not, I will insert it in the *Museum*.

I am out of temper that you should set so sweet, so tender an air, as, "Deil tak the wars," to the foolish old verses. You talk of the silliness of "Saw ye my father?" by heavens! the odds is gold to brass! Besides, the old song, though now pretty well modernized into the Scottish language, is originally, and in the early editions, a bungling low imitation of the Scottish manner, by that genius Tom D'Urfey: so has no pretensions to be a

¹ The reader will have the opportunity of comparing some of the verses of the "bombast original" by referring to p. 251, vol. iii.

Scottish production. There is a pretty English song by Sheridan, in the "Duenna," to this air, which is out of slight superior to D'Urfey's. It begins,

When sable night each drooping plant restoring.

The air, if I understand the expression of it properly, is the very native language of simplicity, tenderness, and love. I have again gone over my song to the tune as follows.²

Sleep'st thou, or wak'st thou, fairest creature?
Rosy morn now lifts his eye. &c.

I could easily throw this into an English mould; but to my taste, in the simple and tender of the Pastoral song, a sprinkling of the old Scottish has an inimitable effect. You know I never encroach on your privileges as an editor. You may reject my song altogether, and keep by the old one; or you may give mine as a second Scots one; or, lastly, you may set the air to my verses, still giving the old song as a second one, and as being well known; in which last case, I would find you, in English verses of my own, a song the exact rhythm of my Scottish one. If you keep by the old words, Sheridan's song will do for an English one. I once more conjure you to have no manner of false delicacy in accepting or refusing my compositions, either in this or any other of your songs.

Now for my English song to "Nancy's to the Greenwood," &c.

FAREWELL THOU STREAM.³

Farewell, thou stream that winding flows
Around Eliza's dwelling!
O men! spare the cruel throes
Within my bosom swelling. &c.

[See p. 194, vol. iii.]

"Young Jockey was the blythest lad." My English song, "Here is the glen, and here the bower," cannot go to this air. However, the measure is so common that you may have your choice of five hundred English songs. Do you know the air, "Lumps o' Pudding?" It is a

² See the song in its first and best dress given at page 191, vol. iii., with the title of "The Lover's Morning Salute to his Mistress."

³ The reader will observe that this is an altered, but not obviously improved, version of the song commencing "The last time I came o'er the Moor" sent to Thomson in April, 1793. The most significant change is the substitution of "Eliza" for "Maria," the name of his once kind hostess of Woodley Park, with whom he was now, alas, at deadly feud!

favourite of mine, and I think would be worth a place among your additional songs, as soon as several in your list. It is in a measure in which you will find songs enow to choose on; but if you were to adopt it, I would take it in my own hand.

There is an air, "The Caledonian Hunt's delight," to which I wrote a song that you will find in *Johnson*—"Ye banks an' braes o' bonnie Doon;" this air, I think, might find a place among your hundred, as Lear says of his knights. To make room for it you may take out (to my taste) "Young Jockey was the blythest lad," or "There's nae luck about the house," or "The Collier's Bonnie Lassie," or "The tither Morn," or "The Sow's Tail," and put it into your additional list. Not but that these songs have great merit; but still they have not the pathos of the "Banks o' Doon." Do you know the history of the air? It is curious enough. A good many years ago, Mr. James Miller, writer in your good town, a gentleman whom possibly you know, was in company with our friend Clarke; and talking of Scottish music, Miller expressed an ardent ambition to be able to compose a Scots air. Mr. Clarke, partly by way of joke, told him to keep to the black keys of the harpsichord, and preserve some kind of rhythm; and he would infallibly compose a Scots air. Certain it is, that, in a few days, Mr. Miller produced the rudiments of an air, which Mr. Clarke, with some touches and corrections, fashioned into the tune in question. Ritson, you know, has the same story of the black keys; but this account which I have just given you, Mr. Clarke informed me of several years ago. Now, to show you how difficult it is to trace the origin of our airs, I have heard it repeatedly asserted that it was an Irish air; nay, I met with an Irish gentleman who affirmed he had heard it in Ireland among the old women; while, on the other hand, a countess informed me, that the first person who introduced the air into this country was a baronet's lady of her acquaintance, who took down the notes from an itinerant piper in the Isle of Man. How difficult, then, to ascertain the truth respecting our poesy and music! I, myself, have lately seen a couple of ballads sung through the streets of Dumfries, with my name at the head of them as the author, though it was the first time I had ever seen them.

I thank you for admitting "Craigieburn Wood;" and I shall take care to furnish you with a new chorus. In fact, the chorus was not my work, but a part of some old verses to the air. If I can catch myself in a more than ordinarily propitious moment, I shall write a new "Craigieburn Wood" altogether. My heart is much in the theme.

I am ashamed, my dear fellow, to make the request; 'tis dunning your generosity; but in a moment, when I had forgotten whether I was rich or poor, I promised Chloris a copy of your songs. It wrings my honest pride to write you this: but an ungracious request is doubly so by a tedious apology. To make you some amends, as soon as I have extracted the necessary information out of them, I will return you Ritson's volumes.

The lady is not a little proud that she is to make so distinguished a figure in your collection, and I am not a little proud that I have it in my power to please her so much. On second thoughts, I send you Clarke's singing set of *Rothemurehe*, which please return me in your first letter: I know it will not suit you.

I have no more post-paper, and it is too late to go to the shop: so you must e'en take an envelope of Exercise paper. Lucky it is for your patience that my paper is done, for when I am in a scribbling humour, I know not when to give over. Adieu!

THOMSON TO BURNS.

15th November, 1794.

MY GOOD SIR,

Since receiving your last, I have had another interview with Mr. Clarke, and a long consultation. He thinks the "Caledonian Hunt" is more Bacchanalian than amorous in its nature, and recommends it to you to match the air accordingly. Pray, did it ever occur to you how peculiarly well the Scottish airs are adapted for verses in the form of a dialogue? The first part of the air is generally low, and suited for a man's voice; and the second part in many instances cannot be sung, at concert pitch, but by a female voice. A song thus performed makes an agreeable variety, but few of ours are written in this form: I wish you

would think of it in some of those that remain. The only one of the kind you have sent me is admirable, and will be a universal favourite.

Your verses for "Rothemurche" are so sweetly pastoral, and your serenade to Chloris, for "Deil tak the wars," so passionately tender, that I have sung myself into raptures with them. Your song for "My lodging is on the cold ground," is likewise a diamond of the first water: I am quite dazzled and delighted by it. Some of your Chlorises, I suppose, have flaxen hair, from your partiality for this colour; else we differ about it; for I should scarcely conceive a woman to be a beauty, on reading that she had lint-white locks!

"Farewell thou stream that winding flows," I think excellent, but it is much too serious to come after "Nancy:" at least it would seem an incongruity to provide the same air with merry Scottish and melancholy English verses! The more that the two sets of verses resemble each other, in their general character, the better. Those you have manufactured for "Dainty Davie" will answer charmingly. I am happy to find you have begun your anecdotes: I care not how long they be, for it is impossible that any thing from your pen can be tedious. Let me beseech you not to use ceremony in telling me when you wish to present any of your friends with the songs: the next carrier will bring you three copies, and you are as welcome to twenty as to a pinch of snuff.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

[19th November, 1794.]

You see, my dear Sir, what a punctual correspondent I am; though indeed you may thank yourself for the *tedium* of my letters, as you have so flattered me on my horsemanship with my favourite hobby, and have praised the grace of his ambling so much, that I am scarcely ever off his back. For instance, this morning, though a keen blowing frost, in my walk before breakfast, I finished my duet, which you were pleased to praise so much. Whether I have uniformly succeeded, I will not say; but here it is to you, though it is not an hour old.

O PHILLY, HAPPY BE THAT DAY.

HE.

O Philly, happy be that day
When roving through the gather'd hay,
My youthfu' heart was stown away,
And by thy charms, my Philly.

SHE.

O Willy, aye I bless the grove
Where first I ow'd my maiden love,
Whilst thou didst pledge the Powers above
To be my ain dear Willy. &c.

[See p. 195, vol. III.]

Tell me honestly how you like it; and point out whatever you think faulty.

I am much pleased with your idea of singing our songs in alternate stanzas, and regret that you did not hint it to me sooner. In those that remain I shall have it in my eye. I remember your objections to the name Philly, but it is the common abbreviation of Phillis, Sally, the only other name that suits, has to my ear a vulgarity about it, which unfits it for anything except burlesque. The legion of Scottish poetasters of the day, whom your brother editor, Mr. Ritson, ranks with me, as my coevals, have always mistaken vulgarity for simplicity: whereas, simplicity is as much *éloignée* from vulgarity, on the one hand, as from affected point and puerile conceit on the other.

I agree with you as to the air, "Craigielburn Wood," that a chorus would in some degree spoil the effect; and shall certainly have none in my projected song to it. It is not, however, a case in point with "Rothemurche;" there, as in "Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch," a chorus goes to my taste well enough. As to the chorus going first, that is the case with "Roy's Wife," as well as "Rothemurche." In fact, in the first part of both tunes, the rhythm is so peculiar and irregular, and on that irregularity depends so much of their beauty, that we must e'en take them with all their wildness, and humour the verse accordingly. Leaving out the starting note, in both tunes, has, I think, an effect that no regularity could counterbalance the want of.

Try,	{ O Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch.
and	{ O Lassie wi' the lint-white locks.
compare with,	{ Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch.
	{ Lassie wi' the lint-white locks.

Does not the tameness of the prefixed syllable strike you? In the last case, with the true

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furor of genius, you strike at once into the wild originality of the air; whereas, in the first insipid method, it is like the grating serew of the pins before the fiddle is brought into tune. This is my taste; if I am wrong, I beg pardon of the *cognoscenti*.

I am also of your mind as to the "Caledonian Hunt," but to fit it with verses to suit these dotted crotchets will be a task indeed. I differ from you as to the expression of the air. It is so charming, that it would make any subject in a song go down; but pathos is certainly its native tongue. Scots Bacchanalians we certainly want, though the few we have are excellent. For instance, "Tollin hame," is, for wit and humour, an unparalleled composition; and "Andrew and his cutty Gun," is the work of a master. By the way, are you not quite vexed to think that those men of genius, for such they certainly were, who composed our fine Scottish lyrics, should be unknown? It has given me many a heart-ache. Apropos to bacchanalian songs in Scottish, I composed one yesterday, for an air I liked much—"Lumps o' Pudding."

CONTENTED WI' LITTLE.

Contented wi' little, and cantie wi' mair,
Where'er I forgather wi' Sorrow and Care,
I gie them a skelp, as they're creepin' along,
Wi' a cog o' guid swats, and an auld Scottish sang. &c.
(See p. 197, vol. iii.)

If you do not relish this air, I will send it to Johnson.

The two songs you saw in Clarke's are neither of them worth your attention. The words of "Auld Lang Syne" are good, but the music is an old air, the rudiments of the modern tune of that name. The other tune you may hear as a common Scots country dance.

20th Nov.—Since yesterday's penmanship I have framed a couple of English stanzas, by way of an English song to "Roy's Wife." You will allow me that in this instance my English corresponds in sentiment with the Scottish:—

CANST THOU LEAVE ME THUS, MY KATIE?

Canst thou leave me thus, my Katie?
Canst thou leave me thus, my Katie?
Well thou knowst my aching heart—
And canst thou leave me thus for pity? &c.
(See p. 198, vol. iii.)

Well! I think this, to be done in two or
VOL. V.

three turns across my room, and with two or three pinches of Irish blackguard, is not so far amiss. You see I am determined to have my quantum of applause from somebody.

Now for "When she cam ben she bobbit."

O saw ye my dear, my Mary?
O saw ye my dear, my Mary?
She's down i' the grove, she's wi' a new Love,
She wlna come hame to her Harry. &c.¹

I think these names will answer better than the former, and the rhythm of the song is as you desired.

I dislike your proposed alterations in two instances. "Logie o' Buchan" and "There's my thumb, I'll ne'er hegule thee" are certainly fittest for your additional songs; and in their place, as two of the hundred, I would put the most beautiful airs—"Whistle and I'll come t'ye, my lad," at all rates, as one. It is surely capable of feeling and sentiment, and the song is one of my best. For the other, keep your favourite "Muirland Willie," and with it close your hundred. As for the first being Irish, all you can say is, that it has a tang of the Irish manner; but to infer from that, that it must of course be an Irish production, is unfair. In the neighbourhood and intercourse of the Scots and Irish—and both musical nations too—it is highly probable that composers of one nation would sometimes imitate and emulate the manner of the other. I never met with an Irishman who claimed this air, a pretty strong proof that it is Scottish. Just the same is the case with "Gramachree:" if it be really Irish, it is decidedly in the Scottish taste. The other one in your collection "Oran Gaoil," which you think is Irish, they claim as theirs by the name of "Cann du delish;" but look into your publications of Scottish songs, and you will find it as a Gaelic song, with the words in that language, a wretched translation of which original words is set to the tune in the *Museum* [No. 273]. Your worthy Gaelic priest gave me that translation, and at his table I heard both the original and the translation sung by a large party of Highland gentlemen, all of whom had no other idea of the air than that it was a native of their own country.

I am obliged to you for your goodness in your three copies, but will certainly return you

¹ See a previous letter, 19th October.

two of them. Why should I take money out of your pocket?

Tell my friend Allan (for I am sure that we only want the trifling circumstance of being known to one another, to be the best friends on earth,) that I much suspect he has, in his plates, mistaken the figure of the stock and horn. I have, at last, gotten one; but it is a very rude instrument. It is composed of three parts; the stock, which is the hinder thigh-bone of a sheep, such as you see in a mutton ham; the horn, which is a common Highland cow's horn, cut off at the small end, until the aperture be large enough to admit the stock to be pushed up through the horn, until it be held by the thicker end of the thigh-bone; and lastly, an oaten reed exactly cut and notched like that which you see every shepherd boy have, when the corn-stems are green and full grown. The reed is not made fast in the bone, but is held by the lips, and plays loose in the smaller end of the stock; while the stock, with the horn hanging on its larger end, is held by the hands in playing. The stock has six or seven ventages on the upper side, and one back ventage, like the common flute. This of mine was made by a man from the braes of Athole, and is exactly what the shepherds were wont to use in that country.

However, either it is not quite properly bored in the holes, or else we have not the art of blowing it rightly; for we can make little of it. If Mr. Allan chooses, I will send him a sight of mine; as I look on myself to be a kind of brother brush with him. "Pride in poets is nae sin;" and I will say it, that I look on Mr. Allan and Mr. Burns to be the only genuine and real painters of Scottish costume in the world.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

28th Nov. 1794.

I acknowledge, my dear Sir, you are not only the most punctual, but the most delectable correspondent I ever met with. To attempt flattering you never entered my head; the truth is, I look back with surprise at my impudence, in so frequently nibbling at lines and couplets of your incomparable lyrics, for which, perhaps, if you had served me right, you would have

sent me to the devil. On the contrary, however, you have all along condescended to invite my criticism with so much courtesy, that it ceases to be wonderful, if I have sometimes given myself the airs of a reviewer. Your last budget demands unqualified praise: all the songs are charming, but the duet is a *chef d'œuvre*. "Lumps o' pudding" shall certainly make one of my family dishes; you have cooked it so capitally, that it will please all palates. Do give us a few more of this cast when you find yourself in good spirits; these convivial songs are more wanted than those of the amorous kind, of which we have great choice. Besides, one does not often meet with a singer capable of giving the proper effect to the latter, while the former are easily sung, and acceptable to every body. I participate in your regret that the authors of some of our best songs are unknown: it is provoking to every admirer of genius.

I mean to have a picture painted from your beautiful ballad "The Soldier's Return," to be engraved for one of my frontispieces. The most interesting point of time appears to me, when she first recognises her ain dear Willie, "She gaz'd, she reddened like a rose." The three lines immediately following are, no doubt, more impressive on the reader's feelings; but were the painter to fix on these, then you'll observe the animation and anxiety of her countenance is gone, and he could only represent her fainting in the soldier's arms. But I submit the matter to you, and beg your opinion.

Allan desires me to thank you for your accurate description of the stock and horn, and for the very gratifying compliment you pay him in considering him worthy of standing in a niche by the side of Burns in the Scottish Pantheon. He has seen the rude instrument you describe, so does not want you to send it; but wishes to know whether you believe it to have ever been generally used as a musical pipe by the Scottish shepherds, and when, and in what part of the country chiefly. I doubt much if it were capable of any thing but ronting and roaring. A friend of mine says he remembers to have heard one in his younger days, made of wood instead of your bone, and that the sound was abominable.

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BURNS TO THOMSON.

December, 1794.

It is, I assure you, the pride of my heart, to do any thing to forward, or add to the value of your book; and as I agree with you that the Jacobite song in the *Museum*, to "There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame," would not so well consort with Peter Pindar's excellent love song to that air, I have just framed for you the following:—

MY NANNIE'S AWA'.

Now in her green mantle blythe Nature arrays,
And listens the lambskins that bleat o'er the braes,
While birds warble welcomes in their green shaw;
But to me it's delightless—my Nannie's awa'! &c.
[See p. 193, vol. iii.]

How does this please you? I have thought that a song in Ramsay's collection, beginning, "Come fill me a bumper, my jolly brave boys," might do as an English song for "Todlin' hame." It might do thus:—

Come fill me a bumper, my jolly brave boys,
Let's have no more of female impertinence and noise;
I've tried the emurements and witchcraft of love,
And found them but nonsense and whimsies, by
Jove!

Chorus—Truee with your love! no more of your
love!
The bottle henceforth is my mistress, by
Jove!¹

As to the point of time for the expression, in your proposed print from my "Sodger's Return," it must certainly be at—"She gaz'd." The interesting dubiety and suspense taking possession of her countenance, and the gushing fondness, with a mixture of roguish playfulness in his, strike me as things of which a master will make a great deal. In great haste, but in great truth, yours.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

1st Jan. 1795.

I fear for my songs, however a few may please; yet originality is a coy feature in composition, and, in a multiplicity of efforts in the same style, disappears altogether. For these three thousand years, we poetie folks have been describing the Spring, for instance; and as the Spring continues the same, there must soon be

¹ The chorus is a tag by Burns to fit the song to the air.

a sameness in the imagery, &c. of these said rhyming folks. To wander a little from my first design, which was to give you a new song, just hot from the mint, give me leave to squeeze in a clever anecdote of my *Spring* originality:—

Some years ago when I was young, and by no means the saint I am now, I was looking over in company with a *belle-lettre* friend, a magazine "Ode to Spring," when my friend fell foul of the recurrence of the same thoughts, and offered me a bet that it was impossible to produce an ode to Spring on an original plan. I accepted it, and pledged myself to bring in the verdant fields, the budding flowers, the crystal streams, the melody of the groves, and a love-story into the bargain, and yet be original. Here follows the piece, and wrote to music too!²

A great critic (Aikin) on songs, says that love and wine are the exclusive themes for song-writing. The following is on neither subject, and consequently is no song; but will be allowed, I think, to be two or three pretty good prose thoughts inverted into rhyme:—

FOR A' THAT, AND A' THAT.

Is there for honest Poverty
That tings his head, and a' that;
The coward-slave, we pass him by,
We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, and a' that. &c.

[See p. 200, vol. iii.]

Jan. 15th.—The foregoing has lain by me this fortnight, for want of a spare moment. The Supervisor of Excise having been ill, I have been acting for him, and I assure you I have hardly five minutes to myself to thank you for your elegant present of Pindar. The typography is admirable, and worthy of the truly original bard.

I do not give you the foregoing song for your book, but merely by way of *o' vive la bagatelle*; for the piece is not really poetry. How will the following do for "Craigieburn Wood?"

CRAIGIEBURN WOOD.

Sweet fa's the eve on Craigieburn,
And blythe awakes the morrow,
But a' the pride o' spring's return
Can yield me naught but sorrow. &c.
[See p. 202, vol. iii.]

Farewell! God bless you.

² Here the poet transcribed an "Ode to Spring" in three double stanzas, quite unfit for publication.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 30th Jan. 1795.

MY DEAR SIR,

I thank you heartily for "Nannie's awa'," as well as for "Craigieburn," which I think a very comely pair. Your observation on the difficulty of original writing in a number of efforts in the same style, strikes me very forcibly; and it has again and again excited my wonder to find you continually surmounting this difficulty, in the many delightful songs you have sent me. Your *rive la bagatelle* song, "For a' that," shall undoubtedly be included in my list.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

[6th February, 1795.]

I am afraid, my dear sir, that printing your songs in the manner of Ritson's, would counteract the sale of your greater work; but secluded as I am from the world, its humours and caprices, I cannot pretend to judge in the matter. If you are ultimately frustrated of Pleyel's assistance, what think you of applying to Clarke? This you will say, would be breaking faith with your subscribers; but, bating that circumstance, I am confident that Clarke is equal, in Scottish song, to take up the pen even after Pleyel.

I shall, at a future period, write you my sentiments as to sending my bagatelles to a newspaper.¹

Here is another trial at your favourite air:—

O, LASSIE, ART THOU SLEEPING YET.

O lassie, are ye sleepin' yet,
Or are ye wakin', I wad wit?
For love has bound me hand an' fit,
And I would fain be in, jo. &c.

[See p. 205, vol. iii.]

I do not know whether it will do.

¹ A letter of Thomson's containing remarks on the subjects of this and the preceding paragraph must have gone amissing.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

ECCLEFECHAN, 7th Feb. 1795.

MY DEAR THOMSON,

You cannot have any idea of the predicament in which I write to you. In the course of my duty as Supervisor, (in which capacity I have acted of late,) I came yesternight to this unfortunate, wicked, little village.² I have gone forward, but snows of ten feet deep have impeded my progress; I have tried to "gae back the gait I cam again," but the same obstacle has shut me up within insuperable bars. To add to my misfortune, since dinner, a scraper has been torturing cutgut, in sounds that would have insulted the dying agonies of a sow under the hands of a butcher, and I thinks himself, on that very account, exceeding good company. In fact, I have been in a dilemma, either to get drunk, to forget these miseries; or to hang myself, to get rid of them; like a prudent man, (a character congenial to my every thought, word, and deed,) I, of two evils, have chosen the least, and am—very drunk at your service!³

I wrote to you yesterday from Dumfries. I had not time then to tell you all I wanted to say; and, Heaven knows, at present I have not capacity.

Do you know an air—I am sure you must know it—"We'll gang nae mair to yon town?" I think, in slowish time, it would make an excellent song. I am highly delighted with it; and if you should think it worthy of your attention, I have a fair dame in my eye to whom I would consecrate it; try it with this doggrel, until I give you a better. You will find a good set of it in Bowie's collection.

Chorus—O wat ye wha's in yon town,
Ye see the e'enlin' sun upon?
The dearest mald's in yon town,
That e'enlin' sun is shuin' on. &c.

O sweet to me yon spreading tree,
Where Jeanie wanders aft her lane;

² "The bard must have been tipsy indeed," says Currie, who was a native of the neighbourhood, "to abuse sweet Ecclefechan at this rate." Before the year had run out "this unfortunate little village" became the birthplace of Thomas Carlyle, another of Scotia's greatest sons, whose name is now closely associated with that of the poet.

³ Thomson here adds the remark:—

"The handwriting shows it, and I can swear to the truth."

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¹ The
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³ For
207, vol.

⁴ It w
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The hawthorn flower that shades her bower,
O when shall I behold again? ¹ &c.

As I am just going to bed, I wish you a good night.

P.S. As I am likely to be storm-stead here to-morrow, if I am in the humour you shall have a long letter from me.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

25th February, 1795.

I have to thank you, my dear Sir, for two epistles, one containing "Let me in this ae night;" and the other from Eccefechan, proving, that, drunk or sober, your "mind is never muddy."² You have displayed great address in the above song. Her answer is excellent, and at the same time takes away the indelicacy that otherwise would have attached to his entreaties. I like the song as it now stands very much.

I had hopes you would be arrested some days at Eccefechan, and be obliged to beguile the tedious forenoons by song-making. It will give me pleasure to receive the verses you intend for "O wat ye wha's in yon town?"

BURNS TO THOMSON.

[April, 1795.]

O WAT YE WHA'S IN YON TOWN?

O wat ye wha's in yon town,
Ye see the e'enin' sun upon?
The fairest dame's in yon town,
That e'enin' sun is shining on. &c.³

Your objection to the last two stanzas of my song "Let me in this ae night," does not strike me as just.⁴ You will take notice that my

¹ The song will be found at p. 207, vol. iii., but Burns seems to have latterly cancelled the above verse.

² Quoted from the last song in the "Gentle Shepherd."

³ For the rest of this song, with its history, see p. 207, vol. iii. See also Burns's last letters.

⁴ It would appear from the above that Thomson had returned to his criticism of the song, and in a less favourable mood than in the immediately preceding epistle; but the letter containing this criticism has not been found.

heroine is replying quite at her ease, and when she talks of "faithless man," she gives not the least reason to believe that she speaks from her own experience, but merely from observation, of what she has seen around her. But of all boring matters in this boring world, criticising my own works is the greatest bore.

ADDRESS TO THE WOOD-LARK.

O stay, sweet warbling wood-lark, stay,
Nor quit for me the trembling spray,
A hapless lover courts thy lay,
Thy soothing fond complaining. &c.
[See p. 219, vol. iii.]

Let me know, your very first leisure, how you like this song.

ON CHLORIS BEING ILL.

Long, long the night, heavy comes the morrow,
While my soul's delight is on her bed of sorrow. &c.
[See p. 219, vol. iii.]

How do you like the foregoing? As to my "Address to the Woodlark," "Johnnie Cope" is an air would do it very well; still whether it be the association of ideas, I cannot say, but there is a squalidity, an absence of elegance in the sentiment and expression of that air that does not altogether suit the spirit and delicacy I have endeavoured to transfuse into the song.

As to English verses for "Craigieburn," you have them in Ritson's English selection, vol. 1st, song 22nd, by Sir Walter Raleigh, beginning,

Wrong not, sweet mistress of my heart.

"The Lammy" is an air that I do not much like. "Laddie, lie near me," I am busy with, and in general, have them all in my eye.

The Irish air, "Humours of Glen," is a great favourite of mine, and as, except the silly verses in the "Poor Soldier," there are not any decent words for it, I have written for it as follows:—

CALEDONIA.

Their groves o' sweet myrtle let foreign lands reckon,
Where bright-beaming summers exalt the perfume;
Far dearer to me yon lone glen o' green breckan,
Wi' the burn stealing under the lang yellow
broom. &c.

[See p. 219, vol. iii.]

Yours,

R. B.

Stop! turn over.

TWAS NA HER BONNIE BLUE EE.

'Twas na her bonnie blue ee was my ruin;
 Fair tho' she be, that was ne'er my undoing;
 'Twas the dear smile when naeboddy did mind us,
 'Twas the bewitching, sweet stown glance o' kindness, &c.

[See p. 220, vol. III.]

Let me hear from you.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

[EDINBURGH, May, 1795.]

You must not think, my good Sir, that I have any intention to enhance the value of my gift, when I say, in justice to the ingenious and worthy artist, that the design and execution of the Cotter's Saturday Night is, in my opinion, one of the happiest productions of Allan's pencil. I shall be grievously disappointed if you are not quite pleased with it.

The figure intended for your portrait, I think strikingly like you, as far as I can remember your phiz.¹ This should make the piece interesting to your family every way. Tell me whether Mrs. Burns finds you out among the figures.

I cannot express the feeling of admiration with which I have read your pathetic "Address to the Wood-lark," your elegant "Panegyric on Caledonia," and your affecting verses on "Chloris's illness." Every repeated perusal of these gives new delight. The other song to "Laddie, lie near me," though not equal to these, is very pleasing.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

[May 9th, 1795.]

SONG

ALTERED FROM AN OLD ENGLISH ONE.

How cruel are the parents
 Who riches only prize,
 And to the wealthy booby
 Poor woman sacrifice. &c.

[See p. 255, vol. III.]

¹ The only remembrance Thomson could have had of Burns's "phiz" must have been derived from Beugo's engraving from Nasmyth's picture, for the two correspondents never met face to face.

MARK YONDER POMP.

Mark yonder pomp of costly fashion
 Round the wealthy, titled bride;
 But when compared with real passion,
 Poor is all that princely pride. &c.

[See p. 217, vol. III.]

Well! this is not amiss. You see how I answer your orders: your tailor could not be more punctual. I am just now in a high fit for poetizing, provided that the strait-jacket of criticism don't cure me. If you can in a post or two administer a little of the intoxicating potion of your applause, it will raise your humble servant's frenzy to any height you want. I am at this moment "holding high converse" with the Muses, and have not a word to throw away on such a prosaic dog as you are.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

[May, 1795.]

Ten thousand thanks for your elegant present;² though I am ashamed of the value of it being bestowed on a man who has not by any means merited such an instance of kindness. I have shown it to two or three judges of the first abilities here, and they all agree with me in classing it as a first rate production. My phiz is *sae ken-speckle*,³ that the very joiner's apprentice whom Mrs. Burns employed to break up the parcel (I was out of town that day) knew it at once. You may depend on my care that no person shall have it in their power to take the least sketch from it. My most grateful compliments to Allan, who has honoured my rustic muse so much with his masterly pencil. One strange coincidence is, that the little one who is making the felonious attempt on the cut's tail, is the most striking likeness of an ill-deedie, d—n'd, wee, rumbegairie⁴ urchin of mine, whom, from that propensity to witty wickedness, and manifold mischief, which, even at two days auld, I fore-

² A drawing by David Allan intended to illustrate the "Cotter's Saturday Night." It shows "the father at the table" with the "big ha' bible" in his hand, and the rest of the household seated near him. Beside the fire a little merry urchin on the floor is in the act of cutting the point of the cat's tail with a pair of scissors. Burns himself is represented as one of the company, and placed at the cotter's left hand.

³ So well-marked, so noticeable.

⁴ Restless, never quiet.

now would form the striking features of his disposition, I named little Nicol, after a certain friend of mine, who is one of the masters of a grammar-school in a city which shall be nameless. Several people think that Allan's likeness of me is more striking than Nasmyth's, for which I sent him half-a-dozen times. However, there is an artist of very considerable merit just now in this town, who has hit the most remarkable likeness of what I am at this moment, that I think ever was taken of anybody. It is a small miniature, and as it will be in your town getting itself be-crystallized, &c., I have some thoughts of suggesting to you to prepare a vignette taken from it, to my song, "Contented wi' little, and cantie wi' mair," in order that the portrait of my face and the picture of my mind may go down the stream of Time together.

Now to business. I enclose you a song of merit, to a well-known air, which is to be one of yours. It was written by a lady, and has never yet seen the press. If you like it better than the ordinary "Woo'd and married," or if you choose to insert this also, you are welcome; only return me the copy. The "Lothian Lassie" I also enclose. The song is well known but was never in notes before. The first part is the old tune. It is a great favourite of mine, and here I have the honour of being of the same opinion with STANDARD CLARKE. I think it would make a fine andante ballad.

Give the enclosed epigram to my much-valued friend Mr. Cunningham, and tell him that on Wednesday I go to visit a friend of his, to whom his friendly partiality in speaking of the Bard, in a manner introduced me—I mean a well-known military and literary character, Colonel Dirom. As to what you hint of my coming to Edinburgh, I know of no such arrangement.¹

You do not tell me how you liked my two last songs. Are they condemned?

¹ This probably refers to a plan projected by Burns's friend and patron Mr. Graham of Fintry, who, according to Josiah Walker, proposed to have the poet appointed "to a respectable office at Leith, with an easy duty, and with emoluments rising to nearly £200 per annum. . . . But all the friendly designs of his patron were frustrated by the imprudence of the poet, and by that ill-luck which, in his case, made every act of imprudence create more than its adequate measure of punishment"—an allusion to the injudicious utterance by Burns of political heresy.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

13th May, 1795.

It gives me great pleasure to find that you are all so well satisfied with Mr. Allan's production. The chance resemblance of your little fellow, whose promising disposition appeared so very early, and suggested whom he should be named after, is curious enough. I am acquainted with that person, who is a prodigy of learning and genius, and a pleasant fellow, though no saint.

You really make me blush when you tell me you have not merited the drawing from me. I do not think I can ever repay you, or sufficiently esteem and respect you, for the liberal and kind manner in which you have entered into the spirit of my undertaking, which could not have been perfected without you. So I beg you would not make a fool of me again by speaking of obligation.

I like your two last songs very much, and am happy to find you are in such a high fit of poetizing. Long may it last! Clarke has made a fine pathetic air to Mallet's superlative ballad of "William and Margaret," and is to give it to me, to be enrolled among the elect.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

[June, 1795.]

FORLORN, MY LOVE, NO COMFORT NEAR.

Forlorn, my love, no comfort near,
Far, far from thee, I wander here;
Far, far from thee, the fate severe
At which I must reple, love, &c.

[See p. 220, vol. III.]

How do you like the foregoing? I have written it within this hour: so much for the *speed* of my Pegasus, but what say you to his bottom?

BURNS TO THOMSON.

[July 3d, 1795.]

LAST MAY A BRAW WOOPER.

Last May a braw wooer cam down the lang glen,
And sair wi' his love he did deave me;
I said there was naething I hated like men,
The deuce gae wi'm, to bellove me, believe me,
The deuce gae wi'm, to believe me! &c.

[See p. 221, vol. III.]

FRAGMENT.

CHLORIS.

Why, why tell thy lover,
Bliss he never must enjoy?
Why, why undeceive him,
And give all his hopes the lie?
O why, while fancy, raptur'd, slumbers,
Chloris, Chloris, all the theme,
Why, why, wouldst thou, cruel,
Wake thy lover from his dream?

Such is the damned peculiarity of the rhythm of this air, that I find it impossible to make another stanza to suit it.

"This is no my ain house" puzzles me a good deal; in fact I think to change the old rhythm of the first, or chorus part of the tune, will have a good effect. I would have it something like the gallop of the following:—

Chorus.—O this is nae my ain body,
Fair tho' the body be;
O weel ken I my ain body
Kind love is in her ee.

I see a form, I see a face. &c.

[See p. 223, vol. III.]

I am at present quite occupied with the charming sensations of the tooth-ach, so have not a word to spare. I know your letters come post-free to you, so I trouble you with the enclosed, which, as it is a business letter, please cause to be delivered at first convenience.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

MY DEAR SIR,

3d July, 1795.

Your English verses to "Let me in this ae night," are tender and beautiful; and your ballad to the "Lothian Lassie," is a masterpiece for its humour and naïveté. The fragment for the "Caledonian hunt" is quite suited to the original measure of the air, and, as it plagues you so, the fragment must content it. I would rather, as I said before, have had Bacchanalian words, had it so pleased the poet; but nevertheless, for what we have received, Lord, make us thankful!

BURNS TO THOMSON.

August 2d, 1795.

Your objection is just as to the verse of my song, "Forlorn, my love." I hope the following alteration will please you:—

Cold, alter'd friends, with cruel art,
Poisoning fell Misfortune's dart;
Let me not break thy faithful heart,
And say that fate is mine, love.

Did I mention to you that I wish to alter the first line of the English song "Leiger 'm choss," alias "The Quaker's Wife" from "Thine am I, my faithful Fair," to "Thine am I, my Chloris fair?" If you neglect this alteration, I call on all the NINE, conjunctly and severally, to anathematise you.

In "Whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad," the iteration of that line is tiresome to my ear. Here goes the old first four lines of every stanza, and then follows what I think is an improvement:

O whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad,
O whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad,
Tho' father and mother, and a' should gae mad,
O whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad.

Alter to

O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad;
O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad;
Tho' father and mother, and a' should gae mad,
Thy Jeanie will venture w' ye, my lad.

In fact, a fair dame, at whose shrine I, the Priest of the Nine, offer up the incense of Parnassus; a dame whom the Graces have attired in witchcraft, and whom the Loves have armed with lightning; a fair one, herself the heroine of the song, insists on the amendment; and dispute her commands if you dare!

"Gatesluck," the word you object to in my last ballad, is positively the name of a particular place, a kind of passage up among the Lowther Hills, on the confines of this county. "Dalgarnock" is also the name of a romantic spot, near the Nith, where are still a ruined church and a burial place. However let the line run, "He up the lang loan," &c.

"This is nae my ain body" alter into "This is no my ain lassie."

This is no my ain lassie,
Fair tho' the lassie be;
Weel ken I my ain lassie,
Kind love is in her ee. &c.

[See p. 223, vol. III.]

Do you know that you have roused the torpidity of Clarke at last? He has requested me to write three or four songs for him, which he is to set to music himself. The inclosed sheet contains two songs for him: the sheet please to present to my very much valued friend¹ whose name is at the bottom of the sheet. I will write him a long letter one of these days.

I inclose the sheet open, both for your inspection, and that you may copy the song, "O bonnie was yon rosy brier." I do not know whether I am right; but that song pleases me, and as it is extremely probable that Clarke's newly roused celestial spark will be soon smothered in the fogs of indulgence, if you like the song, it may go as Scottish verses to the air of "I wish my love was in a mire;" and poor Erskine's English lines may follow.

I inclose you a "For a' that, and a' that," which was never in print: it is a much superior song to mine.² I have been told that it was composed by a lady.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

NOW SPRING HAS CLAD THE GROVE IN GREEN.

Now spring has clad the grove in green,
And strew'd the lea wi' flowers;
The furrow'd, waving corn is seen
Rejoice in fostering showers. &c.

[See p. 224, vol. III.]

O BONNIE WAS YON ROSY BRIER.

O bonnie was yon rosy brier,
That blooms sae far frae haunt o' man;
And bonnie she, ah, and how dear!
It shaded frae the e'enin' sun. &c.

[See p. 225, vol. III.]

Written on the blank leaf of a copy of the last edition of my poems, presented to the lady, whom, in so many fictitious reveries of passion, but with the most ardent sentiments of real friendship, I have so often sung under the name of Chloris:—

TO CHLORIS.

'Tis friendship's pledge, my young, fair friend,
Nor thou the gift refuse,
Nor with unwilling ear attend
The moralizing muse. &c.

[See p. 226, vol. III.]

Une bagatelle de l'amitié.—COILA.

¹ Alexander Cunningham.

² We have no farther account of this piece, except in postscript to Thomson's next letter.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 3d August, 1796.

MY DEAR SIR,

This will be delivered to you by a Dr. Brantton, who has read your works, and pants for the honour of your acquaintance. I do not know the gentleman; but his friend, who applied to me for this introduction, being an excellent young man, I have no doubt he is worthy of all acceptance.

My eyes have just been gladdened, and my mind feasted, with your last packet—full of pleasant things indeed. What an imagination is yours! It is superfluous to tell you that I am delighted with all the three songs, as well as with your elegant and tender verses to Chloris.

I am sorry you should be induced to alter, "O whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad," to the prosaic line, "Thy Jeanie will venture wi' ye, my lad." I must be permitted to say, that I do not think the latter either reads or sings so well as the former. I wish, therefore, you would in my name petition the charming Jeanie, whoever she be, to let the line remain unaltered.

I should be happy to see Mr. Clarke produce a few airs to be joined to your verses. Every body regrets his writing so very little, as every body acknowledges his ability to write well. Pray was the resolution formed coolly before dinner, or was it a midnight vow made over a bowl of punch with the bard?

I shall not fail to give Mr. Cunningham what you have sent him.

P.S.—The lady's "For a' that and a' that," is sensible enough, but no more to be compared to yours than I to Hercules.

THOMSON TO BURNS.

5th Feb. 1796.

O Robbie Burns, are ye sleeping yet?
Or are ye wauken, I would wit?

The pause you have made, my dear Sir, is awful!³ Am I never to hear from you again?

³ From 3d August, 1796, to the present date, Burns seems to have written few letters to anybody, sorrow and sickness being a sufficient excuse. See General Correspondence, especially letter to Mrs. Dunlop, dated 31st January, 1796.

I know, and I lament how much you have been afflicted of late, but I trust that returning health and spirits will now enable you to resume the pen, and delight us with your musings. I have still about a dozen Scotch and Irish airs that I wish "married to immortal verse." We have several true born Irishmen on the Scottish list; but they are now naturalized, and reckoned our own good subjects. Indeed we have none better. I believe I before told you that I have been much urged by some friends to publish a collection of all our favourite airs and songs in octavo, embellished with a number of etchings by our ingenious friend Allan; what is your opinion of this?

BURNS TO THOMSON.

Feb. 1796.

Many thanks, my dear Sir, for your handsome, elegant present to Mrs. Burns,¹ and for my remaining volume of P. Pindar—Peter is a delightful fellow, and a first favourite of mine. Now to business. How are you paid by your subscribers here? I gave you in the names of Robert Riddell of Glenriddell, and his brother Walter Riddell of Woodley Park. Glenriddell subscribed only for the Songs; Walter Riddell for both the Songs and Sonatas. Glenriddell's widow, to whom he left all his fortune, lives now in your town, and Walter is also at present in it; call on them for their cash. I mention these matters because probably you have a delicacy on my account, as if I had presented them with their copies—a kindness neither of them deserves at my hands. They are bona fide subscribers, and as such treat them. I also supplied another subscriber, Mr. Sharpe of Hoddam, with the second set of Sonatas (my own copy); so charge him accordingly. Mr. Gordon of Kenmure, who subscribed for the Songs only, unknown to me at the time, in a money transaction where I was concerned, paid the 10s. 6d. to my account. So there I am your debtor.

I am much pleased with your idea of publishing a collection of our songs in octavo with etchings. I am extremely willing to lend every assistance in my power. The Irish airs I

¹ A Paisley shawl.

shall cheerfully undertake the task of finding verses for.

I have already, you know, equipt three with words, and the other day I strung up a kind of rhapsody to another Hibernian melody, which I admire much.

HEY FOR A LASS WI' A TOCHER.

Awa wi' your witchcraft o' beauty's alarms,
The slender bit beauty you grasp in your arms;
O, gie me th' lass that has acres o' charms,
O, gie me the lass wi' the weel-stockit farms.
Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher. &c.

[See p. 231, vol. iii.]

If this will do, you have now four of my Irish engagement—"Humours of Glen," "Captain O'Kear," "Oonagh's Waterfall," and "Balinamona." In my by-past songs I dislike one thing—the name Chloris. I meant it as the fictitious name of a certain lady; but, on second thoughts, it is a high incongruity to have a Greek appellation to a Scottish pastoral ballad.²—Of this, and something else, in my next: I have more amendments to propose. What you mention of "flaxen locks" is just; they cannot enter into an elegant description of beauty. Of this also again—God bless you!

THOMSON TO BURNS.

[February, 1796.]

Your "Hey for a lass wi' a tocher" is a most excellent song, and with you the subject is something new indeed. It is the first time I have seen you debasing the god of soft desire into an amateur of acres and guineas.

I am happy to find you approve of my proposed octavo edition. Allan has designed and etched about twenty plates, and I am to have my choice of them for that work. Independently of the Hogarthian humour with which they abound, they exhibit the character and costume of the Scottish peasantry with inimitable felicity. In this respect, he himself says, they will far exceed the aquatinta plates he did for the Gentle Shepherd, because in the etching he sees clearly what he is doing, but not so with the aquatinta, which he could not manage to his mind.

² "Our poet never explained what name he would have substituted for Chloris."—GEO. THOMSON. But evidently he was now out of conceit with her.

The Dutch boors of Ostade are scarcely more characteristic and natural than the Scottish figures in those etchings.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

[April, 1796.]

Alas, my dear Thomson, I fear it will be some time ere I tune my lyre again! "By Babel streams I have sat and wept," almost ever since I wrote you last; I have only known existence by the pressure of the heavy hand of sickness, and have counted time by the repercussions of pain! Rheumatism, cold, and fever, have formed to me a terrible Trinity in Unity which makes me close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope. I look on the vernal day, and say, with poor Fergusson—

Say wherefore has an all-indulgent Heaven
Light to the comfortless and wretched given?

This will be delivered to you by a Mrs. Hyslop, landlady of the Globe Tavern here, which for these many years has been my howff, and where our friend Clarke and I have had many a merry squeeze. I mention this because she will be a very proper hand to bring that seal you talk of. I am highly delighted with Mr. Allan's etchings. "Woo'd and married an' a'," is admirable. The grouping is beyond all praise. The expression of the figures, conformable to the story in the ballad, is absolutely faultless perfection. I next admire "Turninspike." What I like least is, "Jenny said to Jocky." Besides the female being in her appearance quite a virago, if you take her stooping into the account, she is at least two inches taller than her lover. I will thank you much for a number or two of that magazine you mention. Poor Cleghorn! I sincerely sympathize with him! Happy I am to think that he yet has a well-grounded hope of health and enjoyment in this world. As for me—but that is a damning subject! Farewell!

THOMSON TO BURNS.

4th May, 1796.

I need not tell you, my good Sir, what concern the receipt of your last gave me, and how

much I sympathize in your sufferings. But do not, I beseech you, give yourself up to dependency, nor speak the language of despair. The vigour of your constitution, I trust, will soon set you on your feet again; and then it is to be hoped you will see the wisdom and the necessity of taking due care of a life so valuable to your family, to your friends, and to the world.

Trusting that your next will bring agreeable accounts of your convalescence, and returning good spirits, I remain, with sincere regard, yours.

P.S. Mrs. Hyslop, I doubt not, delivered the gold seal to you in good condition.¹

BURNS TO THOMSON.

[May, 1796.]

MY DEAR SIR,

Inclosed is a certificate,² which (though a little different from Mr. M'Knight's model) I suppose will amply answer the purpose, and I beg you will prosecute the miscreants without mercy. When your publication is finished, I intend publishing a collection, on a cheap plan, of all the songs I have written for you, the *Museum*, &c.,—at least of all the songs of which I wish to be called the author. I do not propose this so much in the way of emolument, as to do justice to my Muse, lest I should be blamed for trash I never saw, or be defrauded

¹ Burns wrote to his Edinburgh friend Cunningham in March, 1794 (see General Correspondence), about the cutting of a pebbie seal for him, which was to bear a coat of arms invented by himself. Thomson had also something to do with that seal (see Letter of June, 1794), but it can hardly be the same as the one spoken of here and in the foregoing letter: this seems to have been a present from Thomson himself. See also next letter.

² The original certificate, transferring for a time the copyright of the songs to Thomson, has not been preserved. A copy of it was appended to the preface of the second half-volume of Thomson's Collection, published in August, 1798, and runs as follows:—

"I do hereby certify and declare, that ALL the songs of my writing, published and to be published by Mr. George Thomson of Edinburgh, are so published by my authority. And, moreover, That I never empowered any other person whatever to publish any of the songs written by me for his Work. And I authorize him to prosecute, in his own name, any person or persons who shall publish any of those Songs without his consent. In testimony whereof, &c.—ROBERT BURNS."

by other claimants of what is justly my own. The post is going, I will write you again to-morrow. Many, many thanks for the beautiful seal.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

[May, 1796.]

MY DEAR SIR,

I once mentioned to you an air which I have long admired—"Here's a health to them that's awa, hinny," but I forget if you took any notice of it. I have just been trying to suit it with verses; and I beg leave to recommend the air to your attention once more. I have only begun it.

JESSY.

Here's a health to aye I lo'e dear,

Here's a health to aye I lo'e dear;

Thou art sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet,
And soft as their parting tear—*Jessy! &c.*

[See p. 233, vol. iii.]

This will be delivered by a Mr. Lewars,¹ a young fellow of uncommon merit; indeed by far the cleverest fellow I have met with in this part of the world. His only fault is D-m-cratie heresy. As he will be a day or two in town, you will have leisure, if you choose, to write me by him: and if you have a spare half hour to spend with him, I shall place your kindness to my account.

I have no copies of the songs I have sent you, and I have taken a fancy to review them all, and possibly may mend some of them; so when you have complete leisure, I will thank you for either the originals or copies.² I had rather be the author of five well-written songs, than of ten otherwise. My verses to "Cauld Kail," I will suppress; and also those to "Laddie, lie near me." They are neither worthy of my name nor of your book. I have great hopes that the genial influence of the approaching summer will set me to rights, but as yet I cannot boast of returning health. I have now reason to believe that my complaint is a flying gout: a d—nable business!

Do let me know how Cleghorn is, and remember me to him.

¹ Mr. Lewars was brother to Jessy, the subject of the above song.

² "It is needless to say, that this revision Burns did not live to perform."—CURRIE.

This should have been delivered to you a month ago, but my friend's trunk miscarried, and was not recovered till he came home again.³ I am still very poorly, but should like much to hear from you.

BURNS TO THOMSON.

Brow,⁴ 4th July, 1796.

MY DEAR SIR,

I received your songs; but my health is so precarious, nay dangerously situated, that, as a last effort, I am here at sea-bathing quarters. Besides my inveterate rheumatism, my appetite is quite gone, and I am so emaciated as to be scarce able to support myself on my own legs. Alas! is this a time for me to woo the Muses? However, I am still anxiously willing to serve your work, and if possible, shall try. I would not like to see another employed, unless you could lay your hand upon a poet whose productions would be equal with the rest. You will see my remarks and alterations on the margin of each song. My address is still Dumfries. Farewell, and God bless you.

³ This letter, which Currie unaccountably cuts into two, was eventually posted on the 16th June.

⁴ Brow is a decayed village in Ruthwell parish, Dumfries-shire, on the coast of the Solway Firth, at the influx of Lochar Water, nine miles south-east of Dumfries. In his last illness, Burns went there to try the effects of sea-bathing. He was at Brow from the 4th July to the 18th. His health at first was slightly improved by bathing; the pains in his limbs were relieved; but this was immediately followed by a relapse, and he went back to Dumfries. A night or two before he left Brow he drank tea with Mrs. Craig, widow of the minister of Ruthwell. His altered appearance excited much silent sympathy; and the evening being beautiful, and the sun shining brightly through the casement, Miss Craig was afraid that the light might be too much for him, and rose with the view of letting down the window blinds. Burns immediately guessed what she meant; and, regarding the young lady with a look of great benignity, said, "Thank you, my dear, for your kind attention; but oh, let him shine! he will not shine long for me!" Mrs. Riddell, of Woodley Park, also had an interview with the poet, while he was residing at Brow, and penned a very interesting account of the meeting. (See Lockhart's Life, p. 128.) The poet returned on the 18th to Dumfries, and on the 21st breathed his last. Brow was formerly resorted to for a mineral well which springs in considerable force close beside the Lochar, which is a mere brook. In the accompanying print this well is marked in the foreground, and the cottage which Burns occupied is the central one of three, which form nearly the whole village.

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July, 1796.

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BURNS TO THOMSON.

BROW ON THE SOLWAY FIRTH.
12th July, 1796.

After all my boasted independence, curst necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds. A cruel scoundrel of a haberdasher, to whom I owe an account, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process, and will infallibly put me into jail. Do, for God's sake, send me that sum, and that by return of post. Forgive me this earnestness, but the horrors of a jail have made me half-distracted. I do not ask all this gratuitously; for, upon returning health, I hereby promise and engage to furnish you with five pounds worth of the neatest song-genius you have seen. I tried my hand on "Rothemurchie" this morning. The measure is so difficult, nat it is impossible to infuse much genius into the lines; they are on the other side. Forgive, forgive, me!

FAIREST MAID ON DEVON BANKS.

Fairest maid on Devon banks,
Crystal Devon, winding Devon,
Wilt thou lay that frown aside,
And smile as thou were wont to do?
[See p. 238, vol. ii.]

THOMSON TO BURNS.

14th July, 1796.

MY DEAR SIR,

Ever since I received your melancholy letter, by Mrs. Hyslop, I have been ruminating in what manner I could endeavour to alleviate your sufferings. Again and again I thought of a pecuniary offer, but the recollection of one of your letters on this subject, and the fear of offending your independent spirit, checked my resolution. I thank you heartily therefore for the frankness of your letter of the 12th, and with great pleasure inclose a draft for the very sum I proposed sending. Would I were Chancellor of the Exchequer but for one day, for your sake!

Pray, my good Sir, is it not possible for you to muster a volume of poetry?¹ If too much

¹ Mr. Thomson here hits on the true and most effectual mode of relieving the poet's difficulties; and it is surprising that the suggestion should not have before this occurred to the poet himself, or should have been rejected by him if it did. During Burns's life-

trouble to you in the present state of your health, some literary friend might be found here, who would select and arrange from your manuscripts, and take upon him the task of Editor. In the mean time, it could be advertised to be published by subscription. Do not shun this mode of obtaining the value of your labour: remember Pope published the *Iliad* by subscription. Think of this, my dear Burns, and do not reckon me intrusive with my advice. You are too well convinced of the respect and friendship I bear you to impute any thing I say to an unworthy motive. Yours faithfully.

The verses to "Rothemurchie" will answer finely. I am happy to see you can still tune your lyre.

LETTER FROM MR. GEORGE THOMSON,
TO MESSRS. BLACKIE & SON.

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXTRACT OF A LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE PUBLISHERS OF THIS WORK BY MR. GEORGE THOMSON, ON THE SUBJECT OF BURNS. IT IS DATED "BRIGHTON, 15TH MAY, 1843," AND WAS WRITTEN IN REFERENCE TO THE WELL-KNOWN EDITION OF BURNS'S WRITINGS THAT SOON AFTER APPEARED.

... Much has it vexed me that Mr. [Allan] Cunningham in his immensity of Notes has given circulation to so many on *dits*, surmises, and innuendoes about the irregularities and dissipation of the poet; hearsay tales, resting upon very doubtful authority; some of them perhaps true, and others exaggerated or unfounded. I am far from thinking that he was not guilty of many follies, remembering his own memorable and candid confession of these, which methinks might have served to prevent

time only *three* editions of his poems were published, —namely, the Kilmarnock edition (1786) of six hundred copies, the Edinburgh edition (1787) of three thousand copies, and another Edinburgh edition (1793) in two small volumes, but we do not know of how many copies. Surely this supply did not fill the market; but, supposing it did, or supposing that Creech claimed the copyright of what appeared in the first Edinburgh edition,—what was to prevent the publication of an entirely *new* volume of poems? The "Jolly Beggars," and many other pieces, including numberless inimitable lyrics, were all lying in the poet's desk, or had only been partially given to the public: —and why the thought of issuing a collected edition of them did not occur to the author himself, or any of his friends but Thomson at the last hour, is matter of astonishment.

biographers from prying into holes and corners in search of gossiping details to prove the truth of what *he had himself admitted!* Mark his contrition and humility,—

The poor inhabitant below
Was quick to learn, and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow;
 And softer flame;
But thoughtless follies laid him low,
 And stain'd his name.

But if we are forced to go into evidence, I would say that I think the detailed allegations of the Herons and Cunninghams are neutralized by the statements of the Grays, Findlaters, and Lockharts. Gilbert Burns told me that his brother's frailties and errors had been considerable, *although by no means so great as they were called.* In this Mr. Lockhart, after due inquiry and consideration, decidedly concurs with him.—Mr. Lockhart in his biography says,—“that Burns ever sunk into a toper—that he ever was addicted to solitary drinking—that his bottle ever interfered with his discharge of his duties as an exciseman—or that, in spite of some transitory follies, he ever ceased to be a most affectionate husband—all these charges have been insinuated, *and they are all false.* His intemperance was, as Heron says, in fits: his aberrations of all kinds were occasional, not systematic: they were all to himself the sources of exquisite misery in the retrospect; they were the aberrations of a man whose moral sense was never deadened—of one who encountered more temptation from without and from within, than the immense majority of mankind, far from having to contend against, are even able to imagine.”

Here I take my stand in vindication of Burns, and I contend that Mr. James Gray, and Collector Findlater, his superior in office, both resident in Dumfries, who saw him daily and knew him thoroughly, and Mr. Lockhart, who was at pains to investigate the charges against him, are fully as well entitled to belief in his behalf as Mr. Heron, Mr. Cunningham, and the gossips of Dumfries are, in their assertions, insinuations, and assumptions to his prejudice.

It is well known that the Poet was often literally dragged into society on account of his wit and humour and the charms of his conver-

sation, and that strangers from distant parts frequently journeyed to Dumfries on purpose to see the greatest Poet of the age. Could he be insensible to the homage of those visitors; and can we wonder at his accepting their flattering invitations to dinner, or that his flashes of wit should have prolonged the hours of social enjoyment beyond prudential limits on such occasions? Poor Burns! how cruel was his fate, doomed through life to wither at the foot of fortune's ladder, with a genius that could have carried him triumphantly to its summit, if the hand of power had been stretched out to help him to ascend. One of our witty philosophers has expressed an opinion, I am told, for I have not yet seen it, that as the public has been highly gratified by the Poet's works, it is of little consequence how the Poet fared! If this be what he has said, I venture to differ from him, and to think that if the case were his *own* he would quite agree with me, and would scout such preposterous doctrine. Had Burns been promoted to the office of Collector in the Excise, or placed in any situation that would have afforded him a moderate competence, and left him leisure to cultivate the Muse, instead of being left to pine in poverty and to waste his life in the drudgery of a common gauger, the public in all probability would have been gratified by many more invaluable productions from his pen. That a man of such original genius, of such transcendent talents, and of such independence of mind as he possessed, did not find a patron in the influential class of society, to rescue him from the situation of a drudge, is a matter ever to be lamented. *Considering his misfortunes*, it might have been expected, when the grave closed over him, that he would have been treated with far greater sympathy by biographers and reviewers, who surely have scrutinized his conduct by too severe a test.

Such are my sentiments with respect to our great Poet, which I have been induced to lay before you, finding that you are now preparing a new edition of his works for the press: for none of his own family, I believe, regard his reputation more than your faithful humble servant,

G. THOMSON.

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REMARKS ON SCOTTISH SONGS AND BALLADS.

In an interleaved copy of Johnson's *Musical Museum*, which Burns presented to Captain Riddell, numerous interesting annotations exist in his own handwriting. These valuable volumes were left by Mrs. Riddell to her niece, Miss Eliza Bayley, of Manchester, by whose kindness Cromek was enabled to present the public with transcripts of the notes. These he published first in his *Reliques*, 1808, and afterwards in a work in two volumes, published in 1810, entitled *Select Scottish Songs, Ancient and Modern, with Critical Observations and Biographical Notices by Robert Burns*. With the assistance of Allan Cunningham a certain number of fresh notes and songs not in Johnson's *Museum* appeared in this publication, and hence some of Cunningham's notes have occasionally passed as Burns's "remarks." Many of Burns's own annotations are trivial and of no interest in connection with his life or works, and some of them contain erroneous statements; others again are of considerable value as showing something of the tastes and critical methods of the poet. The following are the more interesting of these notes: those, however, which were attached to his own compositions have been transferred to the songs to which they respectively belong. Most of the songs referred to will be found in White-law's *Book of Scottish Song*, published by Blackie & Son.

BESS THE GAWKIE.

(Johnson's *Museum*, No. 4.)

This song shows that the Scottish Muses did not all leave us when we lost Ramsay and Oswald, as I have good reason to believe that the verses and music are both posterior to the days of these two gentlemen. It is a beautiful song, and in the genuine Scottish taste.

We have few pastoral compositions, I mean the pastoral of nature, that are equal to this.¹

(Blythe young Bess to Jean did say,
Will ye gang to yon sunny brae,
Where flocks do feed and herds do stray,
And sport awhile w' Jamie?
Ah, na, lass, I'll no gang there,
Nor about Jamie tak nae care,
Nor about Jamie tak nae care,
For he's ta'en up w' Maggie!

For hark, and I will tell yon, lass,
Did I not see your Jamie pass,
W' meikle gladness in his face,
Out o'er the muir to Maggie?
I wat he gae her mony a kiss,
And Maggie took them ne'er amiss;
'Tween lika smack, pleas'd her w' this,
That Bess was but a gawkie. &c.]

THE BANKS OF THE TWEED.

(Johnson's *Museum*, No. 6.)

This song is one of the many attempts that English composers have made to imitate the Scottish manner, and which I shall, in these *Strictures*, beg leave to distinguish by the appellation of Anglo-Scottish productions. The music is pretty good, but the verses are just above contempt.

[To the soft murmuring stream I will sing of my love,
How delighted am I when abroad I can rove,
To indulge a fond passion for Jockey my dear,
When he's absent I sigh, but how blythe when he's near.

'Tis these rural amusements delight my sad heart,
Come away to my arms, love, and never depart,
To his pipe I could sing, for he's bonnie and gay:
Did he know how I lov'd him, no longer he'd stay.]

¹ The song was first published in Herd's Collection, 1769. Its author was the Rev. James Muirhead, minister of Urr in Galloway, 1740-1808, who comes in for a share of the poet's satire in the fourth of the "Heron Ballads." It is the only poetical piece that he is known to have written, and is said to have been founded on an incident belonging to his own early days.

THE BEDS OF SWEET ROSES.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 7.)

This song, as far as I know, for the first time appears here in print.—When I was a boy, it was a very popular song in Ayrshire. I remember to have heard those fanatics, the Buchananites, sing some of their nonsensical rhymes, which they dignify with the name of hymns, to this air.

[As I was a walking one morning in May,
The little birds were singing delightful and gay;
The little birds were singing delightful and gay;
Where I and my true love did often sport and play,
Down among the beds of sweet roses,
Where I and my true love did often sport and play,
Down among the beds of sweet roses.]

SAW YE JOHNNIE COMIN'.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 9.)

This song, for genuine humour in the verses and lively originality in the air, is unparalleled. I take it to be very old.

SAW YE MY PEGGY.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 11.)

This charming song is much older, and indeed superior to Ramsay's verses, "The Toast," as he calls them. There is another set of the words, much older still, and which I take to be the original one, but though it has a very great deal of merit, it is not quite ladies' reading.

The original words, for they can scarcely be called verses, seem to be as follows; a song familiar from the cradle to every Scottish ear.

Saw ye my Maggie,
Saw ye my Maggie,
Saw ye my Maggie,
Linkin' o'er the lea?

High killed was she,
High killed was she,
High killed was she,
Her coat aboon her knee.

What mark has your Maggie,
What mark has your Maggie,
What mark has your Maggie,
That ane may ken her be?

Though it by no means follows, that the silliest verses to an air must, for this reason,

be the original song; yet I take this ballad, of which I have quoted part, to be the old verses. The two songs in Ramsay, one of them evidently his own, are never to be met with in the fire-side circle of our peasantry; while that which I take to be the old song, is in every shepherd's mouth. Ramsay, I suppose, had thought the old verses unworthy of a place in his collection.

THE FLOWERS OF EDINBURGH.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 13.)

This song is one of the many effusions of Scots Jacobitism. The title, "Flowers of Edinburgh," has no manner of connection with the present verses; so I suspect there has been an older set of words, of which the title is all that remains.

By the bye, it is singular enough that the Scottish Muses were all Jacobites.—I have paid more attention to every description of Scots songs than perhaps any body living has done, and I do not recollect one single stanza, or even the title of the most trifling Scots air, which has the least panegyric reference to the families of Nassau or Brunswick, while there are hundreds satirizing them. This may be thought no panegyric on the Scots Poets, but I mean it as such. For myself, I would always take it as a compliment to have it said that my heart ran before my head,—and surely the gallant though unfortunate house of Stuart, the kings of our fathers for so many heroic ages, is a theme much more interesting than

[The song begins thus:

My love was once a bonnie lad;
He was the flower of a' his kin;
The absence of his bonnie face
Has rent my tender heart in twain.

It is doubtful if the lines had any Jacobitical allusion.]

FYE GAE RUB HER O'ER WI' STRAE.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 16.)

It is self-evident, that the first four lines of this song are part of a song more ancient than Ramsay's beautiful verses which are annexed to them. As music is the language of nature,

and poetry, particularly songs, are always less or more localized (if I may be allowed the verb) by some of the modifications of time and place, this is the reason why so many of our Scots airs have outlived their original, and perhaps many subsequent sets of verses; except a single name or phrase, or sometimes one or two lines, simply to distinguish the tunes by.

To this day, among people who know nothing of Ramsay's verses, the following is the song, and all the song that ever I heard:

Gin ye meet a bonnie lassie,
Gie her a kiss and let her gae;
But gin ye meet a dirty hizzie,
Fye, gae rub her o'er wi' strae.
Fye, gae rub her, rub her, rub her,
Fye, gae rub her o'er wi' strae;
An' gin ye meet a dirty hizzie,
Fye, gae rub her o'er wi' strae.

THE LAST TIME I CAME O'ER THE MUIR.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 18.)

Ramsay found the first line of this song, which had been preserved as the title of the charming air, and then composed the rest of the verses to suit that line. This has always a finer effect than composing English words, or words with an idea foreign to the spirit of the old title. Where old titles of songs convey an idea at all, it will generally be found to be quite in the spirit of the air.¹

[The last time I came o'er the muir,
I left my love behind me;
Ye pow'r's! what pain do I endure,
When soft ideas mind me:
Soon as the ruddy morn display'd
The beaming day ensuing,
I met betimes my lovely maid
In fit retreats for wooing.]

THE LASS OF PATIE'S MILL.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 20.)

In Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland*, this song is localized (a verb I must use for want of another to express my idea) somewhere in the north of Scotland, and likewise is claimed by Ayrshire.—The following anecdote I had from the present Sir William Cunningham of

¹ See a song by Burns himself to this air in vol. iii. p. 149.

Robertland, who had it from the last John, Earl of Loudoun. The then Earl of Loudoun, and father to Earl John before mentioned, had Ramsay at Loudoun, and one day walking together by the banks of Irvine water, near New-Mills, at a place called Patie's Mill, they were struck with the appearance of a beautiful country girl. His Lordship observed, that she would be a fine theme for a song.—Allan lagged behind in returning to Loudoun Castle, and at dinner, produced this identical song.

[The lass of Patie's Mill,
So bonnie, blythe, and gay,
In spite of all my skill,
She stole my heart away.
When tedding of the hay,
Bare-headed on the green,
Love 'midst her locks did play,
And wanton'd in her een.]

THE HIGHLAND LADDIE.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 21.)

As this was a favourite theme with our later Scottish muses, there are several airs and songs of that name. That which I take to be the oldest, is to be found in the *Musical Museum*, beginning, "I hae been at Crookie-den." One reason for my thinking so is, that Oswald has it in his Collection by the name of "The auld Highland Laddie." It is also known by the name of "Jinglin Johnnie," which is a well-known song of four or five stanzas, and seems to be an earlier song than Jacobite times. As a proof of this, it is little known to the peasantry by the name of "Highland Laddie;" while every body knows "Jinglin Johnnie." The song begins,

Jinglin John, the meikle man,
He met wi' a lass was blythe and bonnie.

Another "Highland Laddie" is also in the *Museum*, vol. v., which I take to be Ramsay's original, as he has borrowed the chorus—"O my bonnie Highland lad," &c. It consists of three stanzas besides the chorus; and has humour in its composition. It is an excellent, but somewhat licentious song. It begins,

As I cam o'er the Cairney Mount,
And down amang the blooming heather.

This air, and the common "Highland Laddie," seem only to be different sets.

Another "Highland Laddie," also in the *Museum*, vol. v., is the tune of several Jacobite fragments.¹ One of these old songs to it only exists, as far as I know, in these four lines—

Where hae ye been a' day,
Boudie laddie, Highland laddie?
Down the back o' Bell's brue,
Courtin' Maggie, courtin' Maggie.

Another of this name is Dr. Arne's beautiful air, called the new "Highland Laddie."

THE TURNIMSPIKE.

(*Johnson's Museum*, No. 23.)

There is a stanza in this excellent song for local humour, omitted in this set—where I have placed the asterisms.

They tak the horse then by the head,
And there they make him stand, man;
Me tell them, me hae seen the day
They no had sic command, unu.

A tradition is mentioned in *The Bee*, that the second Bishop Chisholm, of Dunblane, used to say, that if he was going to be hanged, nothing would soothe his mind so much by the way as to hear "Clout the Caldron" [the tune of the above-mentioned song] played.

I have met with another tradition, that the old song to this tune,

Hae ye ony pots or pans,
Or ony broken chandlers?

was composed on one of the Kenmure family in the cavalier times; and alluded to an amour he had, while under hiding, in the disguise of an itinerant tinker. The air is also known by the name of "The Blacksmith and his apron," which, from the rhythm, seems to have been a line of some old song to the tune.

JOHNNIE'S GREY BREEKS.

(*Johnson's Museum*, No. 26.)

To sing such a beautiful air to such execrable verses (as "The Gentle Swain") is downright prostitution of common sense! The Scots verses indeed are tolerable.

Though this has certainly every evidence of being a Scottish air, yet there is a well-known

¹ Burns here refers to a volume which was not published till after his death; but at the time these notes were penned, proof sheets of the music-plates were in his hands.

tune and song in the north of Ireland, called "The Weaver and his Shuttle, O," which, though sung much quicker, is every note the very same tune.

THE BLAITHRIE O'T.

(*Johnson's Museum*, No. 33.)

The following is a set of this song, which was the earliest song I remember to have got by heart. When a child, an old woman sung it to me, and I picked it up, every word, at first hearing:—

O Willie, weel I mind I lent you my hand,
To sing you a song which you did me command;
But my memory's so bad, I had almost forgot,
That you call'd it the gear and the blathrie o't.²

I'll not sing about confusion, delusion, or pride,
I'll sing about a laddie was for a virtuous bride;
For virtue is an ornament that time will never rot,
And preferable to gear and the blathrie o't.

Tho' my lassie hae nae scarlets or silks to put on,
We envy not the greatest that sits upon the throne,
I wad rather hae my lassie, though she cam' in her
smock,
Than a princess w' the gear and the blathrie o't.

Tho' we hae nae horses or menzle at command,
We will toll on our foot, and we'll work w' our hand;
And when wearied without rest, we'll find it sweet
in any spot,
And we'll value not the gear and the blathrie o't.

If we hae ony babies, we'll count them as lent;
Hae we less, hae we mair, we will aye be content;
For they say they hae mair pleasure that wins but a
groat,
Than the miser w' his gear and the blathrie o't.

I'll not meddle w' th' affairs o' the kirk or the queen,
They're nae matters for a sang, let them sink let
them swim;
On your kirk I'll ne'er encroach, but I'll hold it still
remote,
Sae tak this for the gear and the blathrie o't.

MAY EVE, OR KATE OF ABERDEEN.

(*Johnson's Museum*, No. 35.)

"Kate of Aberdeen" is, I believe, the work of poor Cunningham the player; of whom the following anecdote, though told before, deserves a recital. A fat dignitary of the church coming past Cunningham one Sunday, as the poor poet was busy plying a fishing-rod in some stream near Durham, his native county, his

² That is "the money and the cajolery or persuasive effect of it."

reverence reprimanded Cunningham very severely for such an occupation on such a day. The poor poet, with that inoffensive gentleness of manners which was his peculiar characteristic, replied, that he hoped God and his reverence would forgive his seeming profanity of that sacred day, "*as he had no dinner to eat but what lay at the bottom of that pool!*" This, Mr. Woods the player, who knew Cunningham well, and esteemed him much, assured me was true.

[The silver moon's enamour'd beam
Steals softly through the night,
To wanton with the whirling stream,
And kiss reflected light.
To beds of state go bawby sleep,
(Tis where you've seldom been.)
May's vigil while the shepherds keep,
With Kate of Aberdeen. &c.]

TWEED SIDE.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 36.)

In Ramsay's "Tea-table Miscellany," he tells us that about thirty of the songs in that publication were the works of some young gentlemen of his acquaintance; which songs are marked with the letters D., C., &c.—(Old Mr. Tytler, of Woodhouselee, the worthy and able defender of the beauteous Queen of Scots, told me that the songs marked C. in the "Tea-table," were the composition of a Mr. Crawford, of the house of Auchinames, who was afterwards unfortunately drowned coming from France.—As Tytler was most intimately acquainted with Allan Ramsay, I think the anecdote may be depended on. Of consequence, the beautiful song of "Tweed Side" is Mr. Crawford's, and indeed does great honour to his poetical talents. He was a Robert Crawford: the Mary he celebrates, was a Mary Stewart, of the Castle-Milk family, afterwards married to a Mr. John Ritchie.

I have seen a song, calling itself the original Tweed Side, and said to have been composed by Lord Yester. It consisted of two stanza, of which I still recollect the first—

When Maggy and I was acquaint,
I carried my noddle in' ble;
Nae lintwhite on a' the green plain,
Nor gowdspink sae happy as me;
But I saw her sae fair, and I lo'ed;
I woo'd, but I came nae grant speed;
So now I moun wander abroad,
And lay my banes far frae the Tweed.

MARY'S DREAM.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 37.)

The Mary here alluded to is generally supposed to be Miss Mary Maeghile, daughter to the Laird of Airds, in Galloway. The poet was a Mr. Lowe, who likewise wrote another beautiful song, called Pompey's Ghost.—I have seen a poetical epistle from him in North Amerlen, where he now is, or lately was, to a lady in Scotland.—By the strain of the verses, it appears that they allude to some love disappointment.

[The moon had climb'd the highest hill,
Which rises o'er the source of Dee,
And from the eastern summit shed
Her silver light on tow'r and tree:
When Mary laid her down to sleep,
Her thoughts on Sandy far at sea;
When soft and low a voice was heard,
Saying, Mary, weep no more for me!]

THERE'S NAE LUCK ABOUT THE HOUSE.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 44.)

This is one of the most beautiful songs in the Scots, or any other language.—The lines,

And will I see his face again,
And will I hear him speak!

as well as the two preceding ones, are unequalled almost by any thing I ever heard or read: and the lines,

The present moment is our ain,
The next we never saw,

are worthy of the first poet. It is long posterior to Ramsay's days. About the year 1771 or 1772 it came first on the streets as a ballad; and I suppose the composition of the song was not much anterior to that period.

[This well-known song is generally believed to have been written by a schoolmistress named Jean Adams, of Crawforddyke, Greenock, who died in 1765. The two lines preceding the first two above quoted are,

His very foot has maul'd in't
As he comes up the stair.

The second two quoted are from a verse interpolated by Dr. Beattie.]

reland, called
O," which,
very note the

O'T.

32.)

ng, which was
b have got by
omman sung it
word, at first

hand,
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n, or pride,
mous bride;
will never rot,
thrie o't.

ks to put on,
oon the throne,
she cam' in her

blathrie o't.

command,
ork w' our hand;
't find it sweet

blathrie o't.

m as lent;
e be content;
that wins but a

blathrie o't.

ark or the queen,
t them shuk let

I'll hold it still

blathrie o't.

ABERDEEN.

35.)

ieve, the work
; of whom the
efore, deserves
e church com-
ay, as the poor
g-rod in some
ve county, his
ery or persuasive

MY AIN KIND DEARIE, O.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 49.)

The old words of this song are omitted here, though much more beautiful than those inserted; which were mostly composed by poor Fergusson, in one of his merry humours. The old words began thus:—

I'll rowe thee o'er the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie, O,
I'll rowe thee o'er the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie, O;
Altho' the night were ne'er sae wat,
And I were ne'er sae weary, O,
I'll rowe thee o'er the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie, O.

THE BLYTHSOME BRIDAL.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 58.)

I find the "Blythsome Bridal" in James Watson's collection of Scotch poems, printed at Edinburgh in 1706. This collection, the publisher says, is the first of its nature which has been published in our own native Scots dialect—it is now extremely scarce.

Tradition, in the western parts of Scotland, tells us that the old song, "An the Kirk wad let me be" (of which there are still two stanzas extant), once saved a covenanting clergyman out of a scrape. It was a little prior to the Revolution—a period when being a Scots Covenanter was being a felon—that one of the clergy who was at that time hunted by the merciless soldiery, fell in, by accident, with a party of the military. The soldiers were not exactly acquainted with the person of the reverend gentleman of whom they were in search; but from some suspicious circumstances they fancied that they had got one of that cloth and opprobrious persuasion among them, in the person of this stranger. *Mass John*, to extricate himself, assumed a freedom of manners very unlike the gloomy strictness of his sect; and among other convivial exhibitions, sung (and some traditions say composed on the spur of the occasion) "Kirk wad let me be" with such effect, that the soldiers swore he was a d—d honest fellow, and that it was impossible he could belong to those hellish conventicles; and so gave him his liberty.

The first stanza of this song, a little altered, is a favourite kind of dramatic interlude acted

at country weddings in the south-west parts of the kingdom. A young fellow is dressed up like an old beggar; a peruke, commonly made of earded tow, represents the hoary locks; an old bonnet; a ragged plaid, or surtout, bound with a straw rope for a girdle; a pair of old shoes, with straw ropes twisted round the ankles, as is done by shepherds in snowy weather; his face they disguise as like wretched old age as they can: in this plight he is brought into the wedding-house, frequently to the astonishment of strangers who are not in the secret, and begins to sing—

I am a silly old man,
My name is Auld Glenae. &c.

He is asked to drink, and by and by to dance, which, after some uncouth excuses, he is prevailed on to do, the fiddler playing the tune (which here is commonly called "Auld Glenae"); in short, he is all the time so plied with liquor that he is understood to get intoxicated, and with all the ridiculous gesticulations of an old drunken beggar, he dances and staggers until he falls on the floor; yet still in all his riot, nay, in his rolling and tumbling on the floor, with one or other drunken motion of his body, he beats time to the music, till at last, he is supposed to be carried out *dead drunk*.

THE BONNIE BRUCKET LASSIE.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 63.)

The idea of this song is to me very original: the two first lines are all of it that is old. The rest of the song, as well as those songs in the *Museum* marked T., are the works of an obscure, tippling, but extraordinary body of the name of Tytler, commonly known by the name of Balloon Tytler, from his having projected a balloon; a mortal, who, though he drudges about Edinburgh as a common printer, with leaky shoes, a sky-lighted hat, and knee-buckles as unlike as George-by-the-grace-of-God, and Solomon-the-son-of-David; yet that same unknown drunken mortal is author and compiler of three-fourths of Elliot's pompous Encyclopædia Britannica, which he composed at half a guinea a-week!

(The bonnie brucket lassie,
She's blue beneath the een;

¹ *Brucket* seems to mean having the face soiled with weeping.

She was the fairest lassie
That danced on the green;
A lad he lo'ed her dearly,
She did his love return;
But he his vows has broken
And left her for to mourn.]

MARY SCOTT, THE FLOWER OF YARROW.

(*Johnson's Museum*, No. 73.)

Mr. Robertson, in his statistical account of the parish of Selkirk, says, that Mary Scott, the Flower of Yarrow, was descended from the Dryhope, and married into the Harden family. Her daughter was married to a predecessor of the present Sir Francis Elliot of Stobbs, and of the late Lord Heathfield.

There is a circumstance in their contract of marriage that merits attention, as it strongly marks the predatory spirit of the times. The father-in-law agrees to keep his daughter for some time after the marriage; for which the son-in-law binds himself to give him the profits of the first Michaelmas moon!

THE BUSH ABOON TRAQUAIR.

(*Johnson's Museum*, No. 80.)

This is another beautiful song of Mr. Crawford's composition. In the neighbourhood of Traquair, tradition still shows the old "Bush;" which, when I saw it in the year 1787, was composed of eight or nine ragged birches. The Earl of Traquair has planted a clump of trees near by, which he calls, "The new Bush."

[Hear me, ye nymphs, and every swain,
I'll tell how Peggy grieves me;
Tho' thus I languish and complain,
Alas! she ne'er believes me.
My vows and sighs, like silent air,
Unheeded never move her;
The bonnie bush aboon Traquair,
Was where I first did love her.]

GO TO THE EWE-BUGHTS, MARION.

(*Johnson's Museum*, No. 83.)

I am not sure if this old and charming air be of the South, as is commonly said, or of the North of Scotland. There is a song apparently as ancient as "Ewe-bughts, Marion," which sings to the same tune, and is evidently of the North. It begins thus:—

The Lord o' Gordon had three dochters,
Mary, Margaret, and Jean,
They wadna stay at bonnie Castle Gordon,
But awa to Aberdeen.

[The above is the first verse of a well-known ballad—not properly a song as Burns designates it.]

[Will ye go to the ewe-bughts Marion,
And wear in the sheep wi' me?
The sun shines sweet, my Marion,
But nae half sae sweet as thee.]

LEWIS GORDON.

(*Johnson's Museum*, No. 86.)

This air is a proof how one of our Scots tunes comes to be composed out of another. I have one of the earliest copies of the song, and it has prefixed,

Tune of Tarry woo.

Of which tune a different set has insensibly varied into a different air.—To a Scots critic, the pathos of the line,

Tho' his back be at the wa',

must be very striking. It needs not a Jacobite prejudice to be affected with this song.

The supposed author of "Lewis Gordon" was a Mr. Geddes, priest at Shenval, in the Ainzie.

[Dr. Alexander Geddes, a learned and liberal-minded Roman Catholic priest at Auchinhalrig, Enzie, Banffshire. See in regard to him note on p. 125, vol. iv.]

[O send Lewie Gordon hame,
And the lad I daurna name;
Though his back be at the wa',
Here's to him that's far awa!]

THE WAUKIN' O' THE FAULD.

(*Johnson's Museum*, No. 87.)

There are two stanzas still sung to this tune which I take to be the original song, whence Ramsay composed his beautiful song of that name in the Gentle Shepherd. It begins—

O will ye speak at our town,
As ye come frae the fauld.

I regret that, as in many of our old songs, the delicacy of the old fragment is not equal to its wit and humour.

I'LL NEVER LEAVE THEE.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 91.)

This is another of Crawford's songs, but I do not think in his happiest manner.—What an absurdity, to join such names as Adonis and Mary together!

[One day I heard Mary say,
How shall I leave thee?
Stay, dearest Adonis, stay;
Why wilt thou grieve me?
Alas! my fond heart will break,
If thou should leave me:
I'll live and die for thy sake,
Yet never leave thee.]

PREFACE BY BURNS TO JOHNSON'S
MUSEUM, VOL. II.

In the first volume of this work, two or three airs, not of Scots composition, have been inadvertently inserted; which, whatever excellence they may have, was improper, as the collection is meant to be solely the music of our own country. The songs contained in this volume, both music and poetry, are all of them the work of Scotsmen. Wherever the old words could be recovered, they have been preferred; both as 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 which were." Of our more modern songs, the editor has inserted the authors' names as far as he can ascertain them; and as that was neglected in the first volume, it is annexed here. If he has made any mistakes in this affair, which he possibly may, he will be very grateful at being set right.

Ignorance and prejudice may perhaps affect to sneer at the simplicity of the poetry or music of some of these poems; but their having been, for ages, the favourites of Nature's judges—the common people—was to the editor a sufficient test of their merit.

EDIN. March 1, 1788.

TRANENT-MUIR.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 102.)

Composed by a Mr. Skirving, a very worthy respectable farmer near Haddington. I have

heard the anecdote often, that Lieut. Smith, whom he mentions in the ninth stanza, came to Haddington after the publication of the song, and sent a challenge to Skirving to meet him at Haddington, and answer for the unworthy manner in which he had noticed him in his song. "Gang awa' back," said the honest farmer, "and tell Mr. Smith that I ha'e nae leisure to come to Haddington; but tell him to come here, and I'll tak' a look o' him, and if I think I'm fit to fecht him, I'll fecht him; and if no, I'll do as he did—I'll rin awa'."

[The battle is better known by the name of Prestonpans. The following is the stanza in which Lieut. Smith is mentioned:—

And Major Bowle, that worthy soul,
Was brought down to the ground, man,
His horse being shot, it was his lot
For to get mony a wound, man.
Lieutenant Smith, of Irish birth,
Frae whom he call'd for aid, man,
Being full of dread, lap o'er his head,
And wadna be gainsaid, man.

The whole production of fifteen stanzas is little better than doggerel.]

DUMBARTON DRUMS.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 161.)

This is the last of the West Highland airs; and from it, over the whole tract of country to the confines of Tweed-side, there is hardly a tune or song that one can say has taken its origin from any place or transaction in that part of Scotland.—The oldest Ayrshire reel is Stewarton Lasses, which was made by the father of the present Sir Walter Montgomery Cunningham, alias Lord Lysle; since which period there has indeed been local music in that country in great plenty.—Johnnie Faa is the only old song which I could ever trace as belonging to the extensive county of Ayr.

[Burns seems to think that the tune of "Dumbarton's Drums" had local connection with the garrison of Dumbarton. But it relates to *Dumbarton's regiment*, a British regiment, so called from having been first commanded by the Earl of Dumbarton, a nobleman who distinguished himself during the reigns of Charles II. and James II., and who died an exile in France, in 1692.

Dumbarton's drums beat bonnie, O,
When they mind me o' my dear Johnnie, O;
How happy am I when my soger is by,
While he kisses and blesses his Annie, O.
'Tis a soger alone can delight me, O,
For his graceful looks do invite me, O;
While guarded in his arms, I'll fear no wars' alarms,
Neither danger nor death shall affright me, O.]

JOHNNY FAA, OR THE GYPSIE LADDIE.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 181.)

The people in Ayrshire begin this song—

The gypsies cam to my Lord Cassilis' yett.—

They have a great many more stanzas in this song than I ever yet saw in any printed copy—The castle is still remaining at Maybole, where his Lordship shut up his wayward spouse, and kept her for life in confinement.

[The ballad of Johnny Faa, narrating how the gypsies, by "casting the glamour ower her," wiled away the lady of Lord Cassilis, was inserted in the *Museum* from Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany*. See note to p. 53, vol. ii.]

I HAD A HORSE AND I HAD NAE MAIR.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 185.)

This story is founded on fact. A John Hunter, ancestor to a very respectable farming family, who live in a place in the parish, I think, of Galston, called Barr-mill, was the luckless hero that "had a horse and had nae mair."—For some little youthful follies he found it necessary to make a retreat to the West Highlands, where "he fee'd himself to a Highland Laird;" for that is the expression of all the oral editions of the song I ever heard.—The present Mr. Hunter, who told me the anecdote, is the great grandchild of our hero.

PREFACE BY BURNS TO JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, VOL. III.

Now that the editor gives this third volume of the *Scots Musical Museum* to the public, he hopes it will not be found unworthy of the volumes already published. As this is not

one of those many publications which are hourly ushered into the world merely to catch the eye of Fashion in her frenzy of a day, the Editor has little to hope or fear from the herd of readers.

Consciousness of the well-known merit of our Scottish Music, and the national fondness of a Scotchman for the productions of his own country, are at once the Editor's motive and apology for this undertaking; and where any of the pieces in the collection may perhaps be found wanting at the Critical Bar of the *first*, he appeals to the honest prejudices of the *last*.

EDINBURGH, February 2d, 1790.

WHEN I UPON THY BOSOM LEAN.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 205.)

This song was the work of a very worthy facetious old fellow, John Lapraik, late of Dalfram, near Muirkirk; which little property he was obliged to sell in consequence of some connection as security for some persons concerned in that villainous bubble, the Ayr bank. He has often told me, that he composed this song one day when his wife had been fretting o'er their misfortunes.

[See note vol. i. p. 249, where this song is given in connection with Burns's Epistle to Lapraik.]

LEADER HAUGHS AND YARROW.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 211.)

There is, in several collections, the old song of "Leader Haughs and Yarrow." It seems to have been the work of one of our itinerant minstrels, as he calls himself, at the conclusion of his song, *Minstrel Burn*.

[For some particulars regarding Minstrel Burn and the long song here referred to, see Lockhart's Life, p. 71.]

TAK YOUR AULD CLOAK ABOUT YE.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 250.)

A part of this old song, according to the English set of it, is quoted in Shakspeare [*Othello*, act ii. scene 3].

DONALD AND FLORA.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 252.)

This is one of those few Gaelic tunes, preserved from time immemorial in the Hebrides; they seem to be the ground-work of many of our finest Scots pastoral tunes. The words of this song were written to commemorate the unfortunate expedition of General Burgoyne in America, in 1777.

THE BOB O' DUMBLANE.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 270.)

Ramsay, as usual, has modernized this song. The original, which I learned on the spot, from my old hostess in the principal Inn there, is:—

Lassie, lend me your braw hemp heckle,
And I'll lend you my thrippin'-kame;
My heckle is broken, it canna be gotten,
And we'll gae dance the bob o' Dumblane.
Twa gaed to the wood, to the wood, to the wood,
Twa gaed to the wood—three came hame;
An it be na weel bobbit, weel bobbit, weel bobbit,
An it be na weel bobbit, we'll bob it again.

I insert this song to introduce the following anecdote, which I have heard well authenticated. In the evening of the day of the battle of Dumblane (Sheriff-muir), when the action was over, a Scots officer in Argyle's army, observed to His Grace, that he was afraid the rebels would give out to the world that they had gotten the victory. "Weel, weel," answered his grace, alluding to the foregoing ballad, "if they think it be na weel bobbit, we'll bob it again."

TULLOCHGORUM.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 239.)

This first of songs is the master-piece of my old friend Skinner. He was passing the day at the town of Cullen, I think it was in a friend's house, whose name was Montgomery. Mrs. Montgomery observing, *en passant*, that the beautiful reel of Tullochgorum wanted words, she begged them of Mr. Skinner, who gratified her wishes, and the wishes of every lover of Scottish song, in this most excellent ballad.

These particulars I had from the author's son, Bishop Skinner, at Aberdeen.

PREFACE TO VOLUME IV. OF THE MUSEUM.

When the Editor published the third volume of this work, he had reason to conclude that one volume more would finish the publication. Still however, he has a considerable number of Scots Airs and Songs more than his plan allowed him to include in this fourth volume. These, though in all probability they will not amount to what he has hitherto published as one volume, he shall yet give to the world: that the Scots Musical Museum may be a collection of every Scots Song extant. To those who object that his publication contains pieces of inferior, or little value, the Editor answers, by referring to his plan. All our songs cannot have equal merit. Besides, as the world have not yet agreed on any unerring balance, any undisputed standard, in matters of taste, what to one person yields no manner of pleasure, may to another be a high enjoyment.

EDINR. August 13, 1792.

GALLOWAY TAM.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 335.)

I have seen an interlude acted at a wedding to this tune, called "The Wooing of the Maiden."—These entertainments are now much worn out in this part of Scotland.—Two are still retained in Nithsdale, viz. "Silly pair anld Glenae," and this one, "The Wooing of the Maiden."

[O Galloway Tam cam' here to woo;
I'd rather we'd gl'en him the brawnit cow,
For our lass Bess may curse an' ban
The wanton wit o' Galloway Tam.
O Galloway Tam cam' here to shear;
I'd rather we'd gl'en him the gude grey mare,
He kiss'd the gudewife, and dang the gudeman,
And that's the tricks o' Galloway Tam.]

LORD RONALD, MY SON.

(Johnson's Museum, No. 327.)

This air, a very favourite one in Ayrshire, is evidently the original of "Lochaber."—In this manner most of our finest more modern airs have had their origin. Some early minstrel, or musical shepherd, composed the simple

artless original air; which, being picked up by the more learned musicians, took the improved form it bears.

[A complete copy of this ballad will be found in the *Border Minstrelsy* and other collections.]

We have sufficient evidence that Burns was an ardent admirer of the ancient Minstrelsy of Scotland; and it appears to have been his design to recover all that was worthy of preservation. When his attention was more immediately drawn to this subject by Mr. William Tytler of Woodhouselee, he copied some fragments of old ballads, which he inclosed to his friend in this letter:

"Sir,

"Inclosed I have sent you a sample of the old pieces that are still to be found among our peasantry in the West.—I once had a great many of these fragments, and some of these more entire; but as I had no idea then that any body cared for them, I have forgotten them. I invariably hold it sacrilege to add any thing of my own to help out with the shattered wrecks

of these venerable old compositions; but they have many various readings. If you have not seen these before, I know they will flatter your true old-style Caledonian feelings; at any rate, I am truly happy to have an opportunity of assuring you how sincerely I am, revered Sir, your gratefully indebted humble servant,

"ROBERT BURNS.

"LAWN MARKET, Aug. 1787."

Burns's later practice did not at all square with the sentiments expressed in this letter, as he subsequently amended and altered in various ways many of these antique fragments for insertion in Johnson's *Musical Museum*, as the following extract from one of his letters will testify:—"The songs marked Z in the *Museum*, I have given to the world as old verses to their respective tunes; but, in fact, of a good many of them little more than the chorus is ancient, though there is no reason for telling every body this piece of intelligence."

The fragments sent to Mr. Tytler consisted of Western versions of the ballads "The Dowie Dens of Yarrow," "Rob Roy," and "Young Hyndhorn."

THE COMMON-PLACE BOOKS OF BURNS.

COMMON-PLACE BOOK, 1783-1785.

This early manuscript of Burns consists of a stitched book of twenty-two folio leaves, and latterly became the property of the late Mr. John Adam, town-chamberlain of Greenock. It had evidently passed through the hands of Currie, who, however, preferred to use the abridgment of it inscribed by Burns in the volume of Letters which he wrote out for Mr. Robert Riddell of Glenriddell. Cromek in his *Reliques* (1808) professed to print the manuscript entire, but he interpolated several pieces from other manuscripts of Burns, which never formed a part of this Common-place Book, and otherwise presented it in a mangled and incomplete form. It was first printed in its entirety in a privately printed edition, Edinburgh, 1872. There are a good many verbal differences between the poems as they appear in the Common-place Book and in his published works, but they are all unimportant.

OBSERVATIONS, HINTS, SONGS, SCRAPS OF POETRY, &c., by ROBERT BURNES; a man who had little art in making money, and still less in keeping it; but was, however, a man of some sense, a great deal of honesty, and unbounded good-will to every creature, rational and irrational.—As he was but little indebted to scholastic education, and bred at a plough-tail, his performances must be strongly tinged with his unpolished, rustic way of life; but as I believe they are really his own, it may be some entertainment to a curious observer of human nature to see how a ploughman thinks, and feels, under the pressure of love, ambition, anxiety, grief, with the like cares and passions, which, however diversified by the modes and manners of life, operate pretty much alike, I believe, on all the species.

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

"Pleasing, when youth is long expired, to trace
The forms our pencil, or our pen, designed!
Such was our youthful air, and shape, and face,
Such the soft image of our youthful mind."—IBID.

April, 1783.

Notwithstanding all that has been said against love, respecting the folly and weakness it leads a young inexperienced mind into; still I think it in a great measure deserves the highest encomiums that have been passed upon it. If any thing on earth deserves the name of rapture or transport, it is the feelings of green eighteen in the company of the mistress of his heart, when she repays him with an equal return of affection.

August.

There is certainly some connection between love and poetry; and, therefore, I have always thought it a fine touch of nature, that passage in a modern love-composition:—

As towards her cot he jogg'd along,
Her name was frequent in his song.¹

For my own part, I never had the least thought or inclination of turning poet till I got once heartily in love, and then rhyme and song were, in a manner, the spontaneous language of my heart. The following composition was the first of my performances, and done at an early period of life, when my heart glowed with honest warm simplicity; unacquainted

1 When Colin turned his team to rest,
And sought the lass he loved the best,
As towards her cot he jogg'd along,
Her name was frequent in his song.

—*The Lark*, 1765, vol. i. p. 69.

and uncorrupted with the ways of a wicked world. The performance is, indeed, very puerile and silly; but I am always pleased with it, as it recalls to my mind those happy days when my heart was yet honest, and my tongue was sincere. The subject of it was a young girl who really deserved all the praises I have bestowed on her. I not only had this opinion of her then—but I actually think so still, now that the spell is long since broken, and the enchantment at an end.

SONG.

Tune—"I am a man unmarried."

O once I lov'd a bonnie lass,
Ay, and I love her still,
And whilst that honour warms my breast
I'll love my handsome Nell.

Fal la! de ral, &c

[Vol. I. p. 139.]

CRITICISM ON THE FOREGOING SONG.

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

The first distic of the first stanza is quite too much in the flimsy strain of our ordinary street ballads; and, on the other hand, the second distic is too much in the other extreme. The expression is a little awkward, and the sentiment too serious. Stanza the second I am well pleased with; and I think it conveys a fine idea of that amiable part of the sex—the agreeables; or what in our Scotch dialect we call a sweet sony lass. The third stanza has a little of the flimsy turn in it: and the third line has rather too serious a cast. The fourth stanza is a very indifferent one; the first line is, indeed, all in the strain of the second stanza, but the rest is mostly an expetive. The thoughts in the fifth stanza come finely up to my favourite idea—a sweet sony lass: the last line, however, halts a little. The same sentiments are kept up with equal spirit and tenderness in the sixth stanza: but the second and fourth lines ending with short syllables hurt the whole. The seventh stanza has several minute faults: but I remember I composed it in a wild enthusiasm of passion, and to this hour I never recollect it but my heart melts, my blood sallies, at the remembrance.

SEPTEMBER.

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

Of all the numerous ills that hurt our peace, &c.
[Vol. I. p. 219.]

MARCH, 1784.

A penitential thought, in the hour of Remorse:
Intended for a tragedy.

All devil as I am, a damned wretch, &c.
[See vol. I. p. 192.]

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

RNS.

who do not want
an opinion of their
ording their oh-
ame importance
ear in print."

red, to trace
n, designed!
ape, and face,
ful mind."—181D.

April, 1783.

een said against
akness it leads
to; still I think
the highest end
upon it. If
e name of rap-
elings of green
mistress of his
with an equal

August.

ection between
e, I have always
re, that passage

'd along,
his song.¹

had the least
ning poet till I
hen rhyme and
ontaneous lan-
ing composition
es, and done at
my heart glowed
; unacquainted

to rest,
the best,
long,
song,
k, 1765, vol. I. p. 89.

MARCH, 1784.

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

MARCH, 1784.

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

O thou Great Being! what thou art.

[See p. 201, vol. I.

APRIL.

As I am what the men of the world, if they knew of such a man, would call a whimsical mortal; I have various sources of pleasure and enjoyment, which are, in a manner, peculiar to myself; or some here and there such other out-of-the-way person. Such is the peculiar pleasure I take in the season of winter, more than the rest of the year. This, I believe, may be partly owing to my misfortunes giving my mind a melancholy cast; but there is something even in the

Mighty tempest, and the hoary waste,
Abrupt and deep, stretch’d o’er the buried earth,

which raises the mind to a serious sublimity, favourable to everything great and noble. There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I do not know if I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood, or high planta-

tion, in a cloudy winter-day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees, and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion; my mind is rapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him, who, in the pompous language of Scripture, “walks on the wings of the wind.” In one of these seasons, just after a train of misfortunes, I composed the following:—

SONG.

Tune—“M’Pherson’s Farewell.”

The wintry west extends his blast.

[See p. 201, vol. I.

APRIL.

The following song is a wild rhapsody, miserably deficient in versification; but as the sentiments are the genuine feelings of my heart, for that reason I have a particular pleasure in conning it over.

SONG.

Tune—“The weaver and his shuttle O.”

My father was a farmer.

[See p. 206, vol. I.

APRIL.

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

SONG.

Tune—“As I came in by London O.”

Behind yon hill where Lugar flows.

[See p. 216, vol. I.

APRIL.

EPITAPH ON WM. HOOD, SENR.,

IN TARBOLTON.

[See p. 221, vol. I.

ON JAS. GRIEVE, LAIRD OF BOGHEAD,
TARBOLTON.

Here lies Boghead among the dead,
In hopes to get salvation;
But if such as he in Heav'n may be,
Then welcome! hail! damnation.
[Omitted at its proper place.]

APRIL.

EPITAPH

ON MY OWN FRIEND, AND MY FATHER'S FRIEND,
WM. MUIR IN TARBOLTON MILN.

[See p. 220, vol. i.]

APRIL.

EPITAPH ON MY EVER HONOURED FATHER.

[See p. 220, vol. i.]

APRIL.

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

The *grave* I shall cast into the usual division of those who are goaded on by the love of money; and those whose darling wish is to make a figure in the world. The *merry* are the men of pleasure of all denominations; the jovial lads, who have too much fire and spirit to have any settled rule of action; but, without much deliberation, follow the strong impulses of nature: the thoughtless, the careless, the indolent—in particular *he* who, with a happy sweetness of natural temper and a cheer-

ful vacancy of thought, steals through life—generally, indeed in poverty and obscurity—but poverty and obscurity are only evils to him who can sit gravely down and make a repining comparison between his own situation and that of others; and lastly, to grace the quorum, such are, generally, those whose heads are capable of all the towerings of genius, and whose hearts are warmed with all the delicacy of feeling.

AUGUST.

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

There's nought but care on ev'ry han',
In ev'ry hour that passes, O,
[See "Green grow the Rashies," p. 218, vol. i.]

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

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

AUGUST.

A Prayer, when fainting fits, and other alarming symptoms of a pleurisy or some other dangerous disorder, which indeed still threatens me, first put nature on the alarm:—

O thou unknown, Almighty cause
Of all my hope and fear!

[Vol. I. p. 202.]

AUGUST.

Misgivings in the hour of Despondency and prospect of Death

Why am I loth to leave this earthly scene,
Have I so found it full of pleasing charms?

[Vol. I. p. 203.]

SEPTEMBER.

SONG.

Tune—"Invercald's reel—Strathspey."

Thyby I hae seen the day
Ye wadna been sae shy.

[Vol. I. p. 190.]

SEPTEMBER.

SONG.

Tune—"Black Joke."

My girl she's alry, she's buxom and gay;
Her breath is as sweet as the blossoms in May;
A touch of her lips it ravishes quite:
She's always good-natur'd, good-humour'd and free;
She dances, she glances, she smiles upon me;
I never am happy when out of her sight.

Her slender neck, her handsome waist,
Her hair well curl'd, her stays well lac'd,
Her taper white leg—

JOHN BARLEYCORN—A SONG, TO ITS OWN TUNE.

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

JUNE, 1785.

There was three kings into the East.

[Vol. I. p. 200.]

JUNE.

The death and dyin' words o' poor Mailie—
my ain pet ewe—an unco mournfu' tale.

As Mailie and her lambs thegither
Were ae day nibblin' on the tether.

[Vol. I. p. 210.]

JUNE.

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

APRIL 1st, 1785.

While breers and woodbines buding green
And patricks scratchin' loud at e'en.

[Vol. I. p. 210.]

On receiving an answer to the above I wrote the following:

APRIL 21st, 1785.

When new ca't ky rowt at the stake
And pownies reek at plough or brake.

[Vol. I. p. 253.]

AUGUST.

A SONG.

Tune—"Peggy Bawn."

When ehill November's surly blast
Made fields and forests bare.

[Vol. I. p. 230.]

AUGUST.

However I am pleased with the works of our Scotch poets, particularly the excellent Ramsay, and the still more excellent Fergusson; yet I am hurt to see other places of Scotland, their towns, rivers, woods, haughs, &c., immortalized in such celebrated performances, while my dear native country, the ancient baileries of Carriek, Kyle, and Cunningham, famous both in ancient and modern times for a gallant and warlike race of inhabitants; a country where civil, and particularly religious liberty have ever found their first support, and their last asylum; a country, the birth-place of many famous philosophers, soldiers, and statesmen, and the scene of many important events recorded in Scottish history, particularly a great many of the actions of the glorious WALLACE, the SAVIOUR of his country; yet, we have never had a Scotch poet of any eminence, to make the fertile banks of Irvine, the romantic woodlands and sequestered scenes on

JUNE.

poor Mailie—
nfu' tale.

egither
tetter.

[Vol. I. p. 210.]

JUNE.

ik, near Muir-
Bard.

APRIL 1st, 1785.

llug green
e'en.

[Vol. I. p. 219.]

above I wrote

PRIL 21st, 1785.

the stake
gh or brake.

[Vol. I. p. 233.]

AUGUST.

k."

arly blast

re.

[Vol. I. p. 230.]

AUGUST.

the works of our
excellent Ram-
ses of Scotland,
ugh, &c., im-
performances,
y, the ancient
Cunningham,
modern times for
inhabitants; a
larly religious
st support, and
the birth-place
soldiers, and
any important
ry, particularly
of the glorious
country; yet,
et of any emi-
s of Irvine, the
tered scenes on

Aire, and the heathy mountainous source and
winding sweep of DOON,¹ emulate Tay, Forth,
Etrick, Tweed, &c. This is a complaint I would
gladly remedy, but, alas! I am far unequal to
the task, both in native genius and education.

Obscure I am, and obscure I must be, though
no young poet, nor young soldier's heart ever
beat more fondly for fame than mine—

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

AUGUST.

A FRAGMENT.

Tune—"I had a horse and I had nae mair."

When first I came to Stewart Kyle.

[Vol. I. p. 228.]

HAR'STE.—A FRAGMENT.

Tune—Foregoin' g.

Now breezy win's and slaughtering guns.

[Vol. I. p. 215.]

SEPTEMBER.

There is a certain irregularity in the old
Scotch songs, a redundancy of syllables with
respect to the exactness of accent and measure
that the English poetry requires, but which
glides in, most melodiously, with the respec-
tive tunes to which they are set. For instance,
the fine old song of "The Mill, Mill, O," to
give it a plain, prosaic reading, it halts pro-
digiously out of measure: on the other hand,
the song set to the same tune in Bremner's
collection of Scotch songs, which begins "To
Fanny fair could I impart," &c. it is most ex-
act measure; and yet, let them both be sung
before a real critic,—one above the biases of
prejudice, but a thorough judge of nature,—
how flat and spiritless will the last appear, how
trite and lamely methodical, compared with the
wild-warbling cadence, the heart-moving mel-
ody of the first!—This particularly is the case
with all those airs which end with a hyper-
metrical syllable. There is a degree of wild
irregularity in many of the compositions and

¹ Little did the poet imagine, when he penned this
modest memorandum, how soon he was to render the
Doon, his native stream, immortal in song, and how
soon it was to become, on his account, for ever classi-
cal.

fragments which are daily sung to them by my
compeers, the common people—a certain happy
arrangement of old Scotch syllables, and
yet, very frequently, nothing, not even like
rhyme, or sameness of jingle, at the ends of
the lines. This has made me sometimes ima-
gine that, perhaps, it might be possible for a
Scotch poet, with a nice judicious ear, to set
compositions to many of our most favourite airs,
particularly that class of them mentioned above,
independent of rhyme altogether.

There is a noble sublimity, a heart-melting
tenderness, in some of these ancient fragments,
which show them to be the work of a masterly
hand; and it has often given me many a heart-
ache to reflect that such glorious old bards—
bards who very probably owed all their talents
to native genius, yet have described the ex-
ploits of heroes, the pangs of disappointment,
and the meltings of love, with such fine strokes
of nature—and, O how mortifying to a bard's
vanity! their very names are "buried 'mongst
the wreck of time which were."

O ye illustrious names unknown! who could
feel so strongly and describe so well: the last,
the meanest of the muses' train—one who,
though far inferior to your flights, yet eyes
your path, and with trembling wing would
sometimes soar after you—a poor rustic bard
unknown, pays this sympathetic pang to your
memory! Some of you tell us, with all the
charms of verse, that you have been unfor-
tunate in the world—unfortunate in love: he,
too, has felt all the unfitness of a poetic heart
for the struggle of a busy, bad World, he has
felt the loss of his little fortune, the loss of
friends, and, worse than all, the loss of the
woman he adored. Like you, all his consol-
ation was his muse: she taught him in rustic
measures to complain—Happy could he have
done it with your strength of imagination and
flow of verse! May the turf rest lightly on
your bones! and may you now enjoy that solace
and rest which this world rarely gives to the
heart tuned to all the feelings of poesy and
love!

SEPTEMBER.

The following fragment is done something
in imitation of the manner of a noble old Scotch
piece called "M'Millan's Peggy," and sings to
the tune of Galla Water.—My "Montgomerie's
Peggy" was my deity for six or eight months.

She had been bred (though, as the world says, without any just pretence for it), in a style of life rather elegant—but as Vauburgh says in one of his comedies, “My damn’d star found me out” there too; for though I began the affair merely in a *gaieté de cœur*, or to tell the truth, which will scarcely be believed, a vanity of showing my parts in courtship, particularly my abilities at a *billet-doux*, which I always piqued myself upon, made me lay siege to her; and when, as I always do in my foolish gularities, I had battered myself into a very warm affection for her, she told me, one day, in a flag of truce, that her fortress had been for some time before the rightful property of another; but, with the greatest friendship and politeness, she offered me every alliance except actual possession. I found out afterwards that what she told me of a pre-engagement was really true; but it cost some heart-aches to get rid of the affair.

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

Altho’ my bed were in yon mair.
[See p. 104, vol. I.]

SEPTEMBER.

Another fragment in imitation of an old Scotch song, well known among the countryingle sides—I cannot tell the name, neither of the song nor the tune, but they are in fine unison with one another.—By the way, these old Scottish airs are so nobly sentimental, that when one would compose to them, to “south the tune,” as our Scotch phrase is, over and over, is the readiest way to catch the inspiration, and raise the bard into that glorious enthusiasm so strongly characteristic of our old Scotch poetry. I shall here set down one verse of the piece mentioned above, both to mark the song and tune I mean, and likewise as a debt I owe to the author, as the repeating of that verse has lighted up my flame a thousand times.

Alluding to the misfortunes he feelingly laments before this verse

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

Though fleckle fortune has deceived me,
She promis’d fair and perform’d but ill;
Of mistress, friends, and wealth bereav’d me,
Yet I bear a heart shall support me still.

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

The above was an extempore, under the pressure of a heavy train of misfortunes, which, indeed, threatened to undo me altogether. It was just at the close of that dreadful period already mentioned,¹ and though the weather has brightened up a little with me, yet there has always been since “a tempest brewing round me in the grim sky” of futurity, which I pretty plainly see will some time or other, perhaps ere long, overwhelm me, and drive me into some doleful dell, to pine in solitary, squalid wretchedness. However, as I hope my poor country muse, who, all rustic, awkward, and unpolished as she is, has more charms for me than any other of the pleasures of life beside—as I hope she will not then desert me, I may even then learn to be, if not happy, at least easy, and *south a sang* to soothe my misery.

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

O raging fortune’s withering blast. &c.
[See p. 205, vol. I.]

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

[See notes at Poems.]

OCTOBER, 1785.

If ever any young man, in the vestibule of the world, chance to throw his eye over these pages, let him pay a warm attention to the following observations, as I assure him they are the fruit of a poor devil’s dear-bought experience.—I have literally, like that great poet and great gallant, and, by consequence, that great fool, Solomon, “turned my eyes to behold madness and folly.” Nay, I have, with all the ardour of lively, fanciful, and whimsical

¹ See the passage under March, 1784.

imagination, accompanied with a warm, feeling, poetic heart, shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship.

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

[Here the MS. closes abruptly.]

The following passage along with the song, "Tho' cruel Fate should bid us part," the fragment, "One night as I did wander," "There was a lad was born in Kyle," and the "Elegy on the Death of Robert Ruisseau," were inserted by Cromek in his version of the Common-place Book given above, and have since frequently appeared as part of that document. They belong, however, to the following year, viz. 1786:—

EGOTISMS FROM MY OWN SENSATIONS.

MAV,—

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

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

SECOND COMMON-PLACE BOOK.

Currie in printing a portion of Burns's Second Common-place Book, partly written at Edinburgh, says:—"The most curious particulars in the book are the delineations of characters he met with. These are not numerous; but they are chiefly of persons of distinction in the republic of letters, and nothing but the delicacy and respect due to living characters prevents us from committing them to the press." Lockhart, writing in 1828, observes of it: "This most curious document,

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it is to be observed, has not yet been printed entire. Another generation will no doubt see the whole of the confession." With the exception, however, of a very inconsiderable portion printed in Alexander Smith's edition of Burns ("Golden Treasury" edition, 1865) the remainder of this Edinburgh MS. was not made public till 1879, when it appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine*. The part that then first saw the light is not extensive, but it contains the characters drawn by the poet of Mr. Greenfield, Mr. Stewart, and Mr. Creech, which are well worth having. The MS. was for long thought to be lost; in fact, Allan Cunningham gives a very circumstantial account of its being stolen by a Leith carpenter in 1787, and carried to Gibraltar. "He was written to repeatedly to restore the book, a clasped quarto, but in vain. He had even the audacity to acknowledge the theft, but he refused to part with the journal." Dr. Currie undoubtedly had possession of the book in preparing his first edition of 1800 for the press, and it probably remained in his possession till his death, as there is evidence of his using it in his fourth edition, 1803; but after that it seems to have passed unrecognized through several hands until it came into the possession of Mr. Macmillan, the publisher. It was used by Alexander Smith in preparing his 1865 edition of Burns, but he evidently did not recognize what he had in hand, and supposed it to have been a volume of early scraps, presented by the poet to Mrs. Dunlop. At length the possessor of the MS. recognized its character, and its contents appeared embedded in a series of magazine articles by Professor Jack of Glasgow, March—June, 1879. Currie, according to his manner, had taken various small liberties with the text.

EDINBURGH, April, ninth, 1787.

As I have seen a good deal of human life in Edinburgh, a great many characters which are new to one bred up in the shades of life as I have been, I am determined to take down my remarks on the spot. Gray observes in a letter of his to Mr. Palgrave, that "half a word fixed upon, or near the spot, is worth a cart-load of recollection." I don't know how it is with the world in general, but, with me, making remarks is by no means a solitary pleasure. I

want some one to laugh with me, some one to be grave with me, some one to please me and help my discrimination with his or her own remark; and at times, no doubt, to admire my acuteness and penetration.—The world are so busied with selfish pursuits, ambition, vanity, interest, or pleasure, that very few think it worth their while to make any observation on what passes around them; except where that observation is a sucker, or branch of the darling plant they are rearing in their fancy. Nor am I sure, notwithstanding all the sentimental flights of novel-writers, and the sage philosophy of moralists, if we are capable of so intimate and cordial a coalition of friendship, as that one of us may pour out his bosom, his every thought and floating fancy, his very inmost soul, with unreserved confidence to another, without hazard of losing part of that respect man demands from man; or, from the unavoidable imperfections attending human nature, of one day repenting his confidence.

For these reasons, I am determined to make these pages my confidant. I will sketch every character that any way strikes me, to the best of my observation, with unshrinking justice. I will insert¹ anecdotes and take down remarks, in the old law phrase, without feud or favour: where I hit on any thing clever, my own applause will in some measure feast my vanity; and, begging Patroclus' and Achates's pardon, I think a lock and key a security at least equal to the bosom of any friend whatever.

My own private story likewise, my amours, my rambles, the smiles and frowns of fortune on my bardship, my poems and fragments that must never see the light, shall be occasionally inserted:—in short, never did four shillings purchase so much friendship, since confidence went first to market, or honesty was set to sale.

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

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

¹The MS. has "take down insert."

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

A FRAGMENT.

Tune—"Daintie Davie."

There was a birkie horn in Kyle.

[See note to "Rantlin' Rovin' Robin," p. 42, vol. II.

There are few of the sore evils under the sun give me more uneasiness and chagrin than the comparison how a man of genius, nay avowed worth, is everywhere received, with the reception which a mere ordinary character, decorated with the trappings and futile distinctions of Fortune, meets.—Imagine a man of abilities, his breast glowing with honest pride, conscious that men are born equal, still giving that "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 any at table perhaps, 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 forgot to the Son of Genius and poverty?

The noble Glencairn has wounded me to the soul here, because I dearly esteem, respect and love him.—He showed so much attention, engrossing attention, one day to the only blockhead, as there was none but his lordship, the 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 ease.—I never

respect him with humble veneration; but when he kindly interests himself in my welfare, or, still more, when he descends from his pinnacle and meets me on equal ground, my heart overflows with what is called, liking. When he neglects me for the mere carcase of greatness, or when his eye measures the difference of our points of elevation, I say to myself with scarcely any emotion, what do I care for him or his pomp either?

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

Mr. Greenfield¹ is of a superior order.—The bleedings of humanity, the generous resolve, a manly disregard of the paltry subjects of vanity, virgin modesty, the truest taste, and a very sound judgment, characterize him. His being the first speaker I ever heard is perhaps half owing to industry. He certainly possesses no small share of poetic abilities; he is a steady, most disinterested friend, without the least affectation of seeming so; and as a companion, his good sense, his joyous hilarity, his sweetness of manners and modesty, are most engagingly charming.

The most perfect character I ever saw is Mr. Stewart.² An exalted judge of the human heart, and of composition. One of the very first public speakers; and equally capable of generosity as humanity. His principal discriminating feature is—from a mixture of benevolence, strength of mind and manly dignity, he not only at heart values, but in his deportment and address bears himself to all the actors, high and low, in the drama of life, simply as they merit in playing their parts. Wealth, honours, all that is extraneous of the

man, have no more influence with him than they will have at the Last Day. His wit, in the hour of social hilarity, proceeds almost to goodnatured waggishness; and in telling a story he particularly excels.

The next I shall mention, my worthy bookseller, Mr. Creech—is a strange, multiform character. His ruling passions of the left hand kind are, extreme vanity, and something of the more harmless modifications of selfishness. The one, mixed, as it often is, with great goodness of heart, makes him rush into all public matters, and take every instance of unprotected merit by the hand, provided it is in his power to hand it into public notice; the other quality makes him, amid all the embarrass in which his vanity entangles him, now and then to cast half a squint at his own interest. His parts as a man, his deportment as a gentleman, and his abilities as a scholar are much above mediocrity. Of all the Edinburgh literati and wits he writes most like a gentleman. He does not awe you with the profoundness of the philosopher, or strike your eye with the soarings of genius; but he pleases you with the handsome turn of his expression, and the polite ease of his paragraph. His social demeanour and powers, particularly at his own table, are the most engaging I have ever met with. On the whole he is, as I said before, a multiform, but an exceedingly respectable, worthy character.

The following poem is the work of some hapless, unknown son of the muses, who deserved a better fate. There is a great deal of "The Voice of Cena" in his solitary, mournful notes; and had the sentiments been clothed in Shenstone's language they would have been no discredit even to that elegant poet.

ELEGY.³

Strait is the spot and green the sod,
From whence my sorrows flow:
And soundly rests the ever dead
Inhabitant below.—

³ Alexander Smith, who first published the poem in the "Globe" edition, was of opinion that it was not written by Burns, and in this we quite agree with him. Professor Jack, on the other hand, thinks it is the work of Burns, and would connect the Stella of the poet with Highland Mary, and Jean Armour with "the Vanessa of the dim background." This is mere fancy, and really, on the whole the matter is of little

¹ The Rev. W. Greenfield, Dr. Blair's colleague in the High Church.

² Prof. Dugald Stewart.

Pardon my transport, gentle Shade,
While o'er this turf I bow!
Thy earthly house is circumscrib'd
And solitary now!

Not one poor stone to tell thy name,
Or Make thy virtues known;
But what avails to me, to thee,
The sculpture of a stone?

I'll sit me down upon this turf,
And wipe away this tear:
The chill blast passes swiftly by,
And flits around thy bier.—

Dark is the dwelling of the dead,
And sad their house of rest:
Low lies the head by Death's cold arm
In awful fold embrac'd.

I saw the grim Avenger stand
Incessant by thy side;
Unseen by thee, his deadly breath
Thy lingering frame destroy'd.—

Pale grew the roses on thy cheek,
And wither'd was thy bloom,
Till the slow poison brought thy youth
Untimely to the tomb.—

Thus wasted are the ranks of men,
Youth, Health, and Beauty fall;
The ruthless ruin spreads around,
And overwhelms us all.

Behold where round thy narrow house
The graves unnumbered lie!
The multitudes that sleep below
Existed but to die.—

Some, with the tottering steps of Age,
Trode down the darksome way:
And some, in youth's lamented prime,
Like thee, were torn away.—

Yet these, however hard their fate,
Their native earth receives;
Amid their weeping friends they di'd,
And fill their fathers' graves.

From thy loved friends where first thy breath
Was taught by Heaven to flow:
Far, far remov'd, the ruthless stroke
Surpris'd and laid thee low.—

At the last limits of our Isle,
Wash'd by the western wave,
Touch'd by thy fate, a thoughtful bard
Sits lonely on thy grave.—

Pensive he eyes, before him spread,
The deep outstretch'd and vast;
His mourning notes are borne away
Along the rapid blast.—

importance, as the poem is itself of no intrinsic value. Still, as Alex. Smith says, the *Elegy*, so far as is known, exists nowhere else: and if Burns did not actually compose it, he at least thought it worthy of being copied with his own hand into a book devoted almost exclusively to his own compositions. Even if it were certain that Burns was not the author, still, the knowledge that he admired it, and that through his agency it alone exists, is considered sufficient excuse for its admission here.

And while, amid the silent Dead,
Thy hapless fate he mourns;
His own long sorrows freshly bleed,
And all his grief returns.

Like thee cut off in early youth
And flower of beauty's pride,
His friend, his first and only joy,
His much lov'd Stella di'd.

Him too, the stern impulse of Fate
Resistless bears along;
And the same rapid tide shall whelm
The Poet and the Song.—

The tear of pity which he shed,
He asks not to receive;
Let but his poor remains be laid
Obscurely in the grave.—

His grief-worn heart, with truest joy,
Shall meet the welcome shock;
His niry harp shall lie unstrung
And silent on the rock.

O my dear maid, my Stella, when
Shall this sick period close;
And lead thy solitary Bard,
To his lov'd repose?

ELLISLAND, 14th June, 1788.
Sunday.

This is now the third day I have been in this country. Lord, what is man! what a bustling little bundle of passions, appetites, ideas and fancies! and what a capricious kind of existence he has here! If legendary stories be true, there is indeed an Elsewhere, where, as Thomson says, "Virtue sole survives."

"Tell us ye Dead;
Will none of you in pity disclose the secret
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be?
a little time
Will make us learn'd as you are and as close."—

I am such a coward in life, so tired of the service, that I would almost at any time with Milton's Adam,

"gladly lay me in my mother's lap,
And be at peace."—

but a wife and children—in poetics, "The fair partner of my soul, and the little dear pledges of our mutual love," these bind me to struggle with the stream: till some chopping squall overset the silly vessel, or in the listless return of years, its own craziness drive it a wreck. Farewell now to those giddy follies, those varnished vices, which, though half sanctified by the bewitching levity of Wit and Humour,

¹This seems to have been a favourite passage of the poet: it is twice quoted in letters to Mrs. Dunlop.

are at best but thriftless idling with the precious current of existence; nay, often poisoning the whole, that, like the plains of Jericho, "The water is naught, and the ground barren;" and nothing short of a supernaturally gifted Elisha can ever after heal the evils.

Wedlock, the circumstance that buckles me hardest to Care, if Virtue and Religion were to be anything with me but mere names, was what in a few seasons I must have resolved on: in the present case it was unavoidably necessary. —Humanity, Generosity, honest Vanity of character, justice to my own happiness for after life, so far as it could depend—which it surely will a great deal—on internal peace; all these joined their warmest suffrages, their most powerful solicitations with a rooted attachment, to urge the step I have taken. Nor have I any reason on her part to rue it. I can fancy *how*, but have never seen *where* I could have made it better.¹ Come then, let me return to my favourite motto, that glorious passage in Young:—

"On Reason build Resolve,
That column of true majesty in man."

JUNE 16th, 1788.

Copy of a letter to Lord Buchan in answer to a bombast epistle he sent me when I went first to Edinburgh.

[See Letter 7th Feb. 1787, vol. iv. p. 51.]

To the Earl of Eglinton on receiving ten guineas as his lordship's subscription money.

[See Letter 11th January, 1787, vol. iv. p. 45.]

Written in Carse Hermitage.

[See vol. iii. p. 13.]

To Robt. Graham of Fintry, Esq.: with a request for an Excise Division.—Ellisland, Sept. 8th, 1788.

When Nature her great masterpiece design'd.

[See vol. ii. p. 255.]

Alteration of the lines wrote in Carse Hermitage. Dec. 23d, 1788.

¹ Compare similar sentiments in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop, 18th July, 1788. This section of the Common-place Book was published by Currie.

The everlasting surliness of a lion, Saracen's head, &c., or the unchanging blandness of the Landlord's Welcoming a Traveller, on some sign-posts, would be no bad similes of the constant affected fierceness of a bully, or the eternal simper of a Frenchman or a Fiddler.

He looked

Just as your sign-posts lions do,
As fierce, and quite as harmless too.

Patient Stupidity.

So, heavy, passive to the tempest's shocks,
Strong on the sign-post stands the stupid ox.²

His face with smile eternal drest
Just like the Landlord to his guest,
High as they hang with creaking din
To index out the country Inn.

A head, pure, shinless quite of brain or soul,
The very image of a Barber's Poll;
Just shows a human face and wears a wig,
And looks, when well-friseur'd, too amazing big.

[A hiatus of four pages occurs here, pp. 23, 24, 25, and 26 of the MS. being wanting. In all probability they contained "The Poet's progress" and the "Ode to the Memory of Mrs. Oswald of Auchencruive," the last four lines of which appear on p. 27.]

CASTLE GORDON.

INTENDED TO BE SUNG TO "MORAG."

Streams that glide in orient plains,
Never bound by Winter's chains.

[See vol. ii. p. 225.]

SCOTS BALLAD.

Tune—"Mary weep no more for me."

My heart is wae, and unco wae,
To think upon the raging sea.

[See vol. ii. p. 237.]

SONG.

Tune—"Captain O'Kean."

The small birds rejoice in the green leaves' returning.

[See vol. ii. p. 249.]

EXTEMPORE.

TO MR. DAVID HAMILTON.

To you, Sir, this summons I've sent,
Pray whip till the pownie is fraething.

[See vol. ii. p. 158.]

² These two lines are made use of in "The Poet's Progress" and the second Epistle to Graham of Fintry.

TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

ON HER LEAVING EARL'S COURT, 1784. BY MRS.
DR. HUNTER, LONDON.¹

Why from these shades, sweet bird of eve,
Art thou to other regions wildly fled?
Thy pensive song would oft my cares relieve,
Thy melancholy softness oft would shed
Peace on my weary soul, return again,
Return, and sadly sweet, in soothing notes complain.—

At the still hour I'll come alone,
And listen to thy lovelorn trembling lay,
Or by the moon's beam on some mossy stone
I'll sit, and watch thy wing from spray to spray;
Then when the swelling cadence slow shall rise,
I'll join the plaintive strain in lowly murmuring sighs.—

Ah, simple bird, where art thou flown?
What distant woodland now receives thy nest?
What distant echo answers to thy moan?
What distant thorn supports thy panting breast?
Who e'er shall feel thy melting woes like me,
Or pay thee for thy song with such true sympathy?

A SONNET AFTER THE MANNER OF
PETRARCH.

BY THE SAME.

Come tender thoughts, with twilight's pensive gloom,
Soften remembrance, mitigate despair,
And cast a gleam of comfort o'er the tomb.—

Methinks again the days and years return
When joy was young, and careless fancy smiled,
When hope with promises the heart beguiled,
When love illumed the world, and happiness was born.—

Where are ye fled, dear moments of delight!
And thou, O best beloved! alas, no more
The future can the faded past restore,
Wrapped in the shades of Time's eternal night.—
For me remains alone, through ling'ring years,
The melancholy Muse, companion of my tears.

¹ Wife of John Hunter, Earl's Court, Brompton, the celebrated surgeon, and sister of Sir Everard Home, of Greenlaw. She was the author of "My mother bids me bind my hair," "The Mermaid's Song," and others, rendered famous by the music of Haydn, whose intimate friend she was. This poem and the following were sent to Burns by Dr. Gregory as models for the correction of his style!

TO MR. GRAHAM, OF FINTRY,
ON BEING APPOINTED TO MY EXCISE DIVISION.
I call no goddess to inspire my strains.

[See vol. iii. p. 49.]

SONG.

Tune—"Ewe buchts, Marion."

Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
And leave old Scotia's shore?

[See vol. ii. p. 145.]

ON SEEING A FELLOW WOUND A HARE
WITH A SHOT, APRIL, 1780.

Inhuman man! curse on thy barbarous art.
[Original version and also version amended in deference to Dr. Gregory.—See vol. iii. p. 32.]

ELEGY ON CAPTAIN MATTHEW HENDERSON.

A GENTLEMAN WHO HELD THE PATENT FOR HIS
HONOURS IMMEDIATELY FROM ALMIGHTY GOD!

O Death, thou tyrant fell and Moody!

[See vol. iii. p. 74.]

TO THE HONOURABLE THE BAILIES OF THE
CANONGATE, EDINBURGH.

Gentlemen, I am sorry to be told that the
remains of Robert Fergusson, &c.

[See vol. iv. p. 50.]

EPITAPH.

Here lies Robert Fergusson, Poet. He was
born 5th Sept. 1751, and died 16th October,
1774.

No pageant bearings here nor pompous lay,

No story'd urn nor animated bust,

This simple stone directs old Scotia's way

To pour her sorrows o'er her Poet's dust.²

[See vol. ii. p. 201.]

² This stanza differs slightly, as will be seen, from the version of our text.

FINTRY,
KICISE DIVISION.
my strains.
ee vol. iiii. p. 49.

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y Mary,
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ee vol. ii. p. 145.

UND A HARE
L, 1789.
parb'rous art.
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i. p. 32.]

W HENDERSON.
PATENT FOR HIS
ALMIGHTY GOD!
nd bloody!
ee vol. iiii. p. 74.

AILIES OF THE
CRGH.
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&c.
ee vol. iv. p. 50.

Poet. He was
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APPENDIX.

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APPENDIX.

MANUAL OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF,

IN FORM OF A DIALOGUE BETWEEN FATHER AND SON.

COMPILED BY WILLIAM BURNES, THE POET'S FATHER, AND TRANSCRIBED BY
JOHN MURDOCH, HIS TEACHER.

Son. Dear Father, you have often told me, while you were initiating me into the Christian Religion, that you stood bound for me, to give me a Christian education, and recommended a religious life to me. I would therefore, if you please, ask you a few questions that may tend to confirm my faith, and clear its evidences to me.

Father. My Dear Child, with gladness I will resolve to you (so far as I am able), any question you shall ask, only with this caution, that you will believe my answers, if they are founded in the Word of God.

Question. How shall I evidence to myself that there is a God?

Answer. By the works of creation: for nothing can make itself: and this fabric of Nature demonstrates its Creator to be possessed of all possible perfection, and for that cause we owe all that we have to Him.

Q. If God be possessed of all possible perfection, ought not we then to love Him as well as fear Him?

A. Yes; we ought to serve Him out of love, for His perfections give us delightful prospects of His favour and friendship, for if we serve Him out of love, we will endeavour to be like Him, and God will love His own image, and if God love us, He will rejoice over us and do us good.

Q. Then one would think this were sufficient to determine all men to love God; but how shall we account for so much wickedness in the world?

A. God's revealed Word teaches us that our first parents brake His Covenant, and deprived us of the influences of His Grace that were to be expected in that state, and intro-

duced Sin into the world; and the Devil, that great enemy of God and man, laying hold on this instrument, his kingdom has made great progress in the world.

Q. But has God left His own rational offspring thus, to the tyranny of His and their enemy?

A. No: for God hath addressed His rational creatures, by telling them in His Revealed Word, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the Serpent, or Devil, or in time destroy his kingdom; and in the meantime, every one oppressed with the tyranny of the Devil, should, through the promised seed, by faith in Him, and humble supplication, and a strenuous use of their own faculties, receive such measures of Grace, in and through this method of God's conveyance, as should make them able to overcome.

Q. But by what shall I know that this is a revelation of God, and not a cunningly devised fable?

A. A revelation of God must have these four marks. 1. It must be worthy of God to reveal; 2. It must answer all the necessities of human nature; 3. It must be sufficiently attested by miracles; and, 4. It is known by prophecies and their fulfilment. That it is worthy of God is plain, by its addressing itself to the reason of men, and plainly laying before them the dangers to which they are liable, with motives and arguments to persuade them to their duty, and promising such rewards as are fitted to promote the happiness of a rational soul. Secondly, it provides for the guilt of human nature, making an atonement by a Mediator; and for its weakness by promising the assistance of God's Spirit; and for its

happiness, by promising a composure of mind, by the regulation of its faculties, and reducing the appetites and passions of the body unto the subjection of reason enlightened by the Word of God, and by a resurrection of the body, and a glorification of both soul and body in heaven, and that to last through all eternity. Thirdly, as a miracle is a contradiction of known laws of Nature, demonstrating that the worker has the power of Nature in his hands, and consequently must be God, or sent by His commission and authority from Him, to do such and such things. That this is the case in our Scriptures is evident both by the prophets, under the Old, and our Saviour under the New Testament. Whenever it served for the glory of God, or for the confirmation of their commissions, all Nature was obedient to them; the elements were at their command, also the sun and moon, yea Life and Death. Fourthly, that prophecies were fulfilled at a distance of many hundreds of years is evident by comparing the following texts of Scripture:—Gen. xlix. 10, 11; Matt. xxi. 5; Isaiah vii. 14; Matt. i. 22, 23; Luke i. 34; Isaiah xl. 1; Matt. iii. 3; Mark i. 3; Luke iii. 4; John i. 23; Isaiah xlii. 1, 2, 3, 4. A description of the character of Messiah in the Old Testament Scriptures is fulfilled in all the Evangelists. In Isaiah l. 5, His sufferings are prophesied, and exactly fulfilled in the New Testament, Matt. xxvi. 67, and xxvii. 26; and many others, as that Abraham's seed should be strangers in a strange land, four hundred years, and being brought to Canaan, and its accomplishment in the days of Joseph, Moses, and Joshua.

Q. Seeing the Scriptures are proven to be a revelation of God to His creatures, am not I indispensably bound to believe and obey them?

A. Yes.

Q. Am I equally bound to obey all the laws delivered to Moses upon Mount Sinai?

A. No: the laws delivered to Moses are of three kinds: first, the Moral Law, which is of eternal and indispensable obligation on all ages and nations; Secondly, the law of Sacrifices and ordinances were only Ordinances in which were couched types and shadows of things to come, and when that dispensation was at an end, this law ended with them, for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness; Thirdly,

laws that respected the Jewish Commonwealth can neither be binding on us, who are not of that Commonwealth, nor on the Jews, because their Commonwealth is at an end.

Q. If the Moral Law be of indispensable obligation, I become bound to perfect and perpetual obedience, of which I am incapable, and on that account cannot hope to be justified and accepted with God.

A. The Moral Law as a rule of life, must be of indispensable obligation, but it is the glory of the Christian religion, that if we be upright in our endeavours to follow it and sincere in our repentance, upon our failing or shortening, we shall be accepted according to what we have, and shall increase in our strength, by the assistance of the Spirit of God co-operating with our honest endeavours.

Q. Seeing the assistance of the Spirit of God is absolutely necessary for salvation, hath not God clearly revealed by what means we may obtain this great blessing?

A. Yes: the Scriptures tell us that the Spirit of God is the purchase of Christ's mediatorial office; and through faith in Him, and our humble prayers to God through Christ, we shall receive such measures thereof as shall answer our wants.

Q. What do you understand by Faith?

A. Faith is a firm persuasion of the Divine mission of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that He is made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, and complete redemption; or as He is represented to us under the notion of a root, and we the branches, deriving all from Him; or as the head, and we the members of His body; intimating to us that this is the way or channel through which God conveys His blessings to us, and we are not to expect them but in God's own way. It is therefore a matter of consequence to us, and therefore we ought with diligence to search the Scriptures, and the extent of His Commission, or what they declare Him to be, and to receive Him accordingly, and to acquiesce in God's plan of our salvation.

Q. By what shall I know that Jesus Christ is really the person that was prophesied of in the Old Testament; or that He was that seed of the woman that was to destroy the kingdom of Sin?

A. Besides the Scriptures fore-cited, which

fully prove Him to be that blessed person, Christ did many miracles; He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, made the lame to walk, raised the dead, and fed thousands with a few loaves, &c. He foretold His own death and resurrection, and the wonderful progress of His religion, in spite of all the power of the Roman Empire—and that, by means of His disciples, a few illiterate fishermen.

Q. You speak of repentance as absolutely necessary to salvation—I would like to know what you mean by repentance?

A. I not only mean a sorrowing for sin, but a labouring to see the malignant nature of it; as setting nature at variance with herself, by placing the animal part before the rational, and thereby putting ourselves on a level with the brute beasts, the consequence of which will be an intestine war in the human frame, until the rational part be entirely weakened, which is Spiritual Death, and which in the nature of the thing renders us unfit for the society of God's spiritual kingdom, and to see the beauty of holiness. On the contrary, setting the rational part above the animal, though it promote a war in the human frame, every conflict and victory affords us grateful reflection, and tends to compose the mind more and more, not to the utter destruction of the animal part, but to the real and true enjoyment of both, by placing Nature in the order that its Creator designed it, which, in the natural consequences of the thing, promotes Spiritual Life, and renders us more and more fit for Christ's spiritual kingdom; and not only so, but gives to animal life pleasure and joy that we never could have had without it.

Q. I should be glad to hear you at large upon religion giving pleasure to animal life; for it is represented as taking up our cross and following Christ.

A. Our Lord honestly told His disciples of their danger, and what they were to expect by being His followers, that the world would hate them, and for this reason, because they were not of the world, even as He also was not of the world; but He gives them sufficient comfort, showing that He had overcome the world; as if He had said, "You must arm yourself with a resolution to fight, for if you be resolved to be My disciples, you expose the world, by setting their folly in its true light,

and therefore every one who is not brought over by your example, will hate and oppose you as it hath Me; but as it hath had no advantage against Me, and I have overcome it, if you continue the conflict, you, by My strength, shall overcome likewise;" so that this declaration of our Lord cannot damp the pleasures of life when rightly considered, but rather enlarges them. The same revelation tells us, that a religious life hath the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come; and not only by the well regulated mind described in my last answer, as tending to give pleasure and quiet, but by a firm trust in the providence of God, and by the help of an honest calling industriously pursued, we shall receive such a portion of the comfortable things of this life as shall be fittest for promoting our eternal interest, and that under the direction of infinite wisdom and goodness; and that we shall overcome all our difficulties by being under the protection of infinite power. These considerations cannot fail to give a relish to all the pleasures of life. Besides the very nature of the thing giving pleasure to a mind so regular as I have already described, it must exalt the mind above those irregular passions that jar and are contrary one to another, and distract the mind by contrary pursuits, which is described by the Apostle with more strength in his Epistle to the Romans (chap. i., from 26 to the end) than any words I am capable of framing; especially if we take our Lord's explanation of the parable of the tares in the field as an improvement of these doctrines, as it is in Matt. xiii., from the 37 to 44 verse; and Rev. xx., from verse 11 to the end. If these Scriptures, seriously considered, can suffer any man to be easy, judge ye, and they will remain truth, whether believed or not. Whereas, on a mind regular, and having the animal part under subjection to the rational, in the very nature of the thing gives uniformity of pursuits. The desires, rectified by the Word of God, must give clearness of judgment, soundness of mind, regular affections, whence will flow peace of conscience, good hope, through grace, that all our interests are under the care of our Heavenly Father. This gives a relish to animal life itself, this joy that no man intermeddeth with, and which is peculiar to a Christian or holy life; and its

comforts and blessings the whole Scripture is a comment upon, especially our Lord's sermon upon the Mount, Matt. v. 1-13, and its progress in the parable of the sower in the thirteenth of Matthew.

From two extant letters of William Burnes, we should judge that the foregoing was not entirely his own composition, and that Murdoch's part in it must have been considerably greater than that of mere transcriber. One of the letters consists of only a few lines, the other (in the poet's monument at Edinburgh) runs as follows:—

TO MR. JAMES BURNES, MONTROSE.

DEAR NEPHEW,

I received your affectionate letter by the bearer, who came 5 miles with it to my house. I received [it] with the same warmth you wrote it, and I am extremely glad you express yourself with so warm regard for your parents and friends. I wish much Joy in your wife and child. I should have been glad had you

sent me their names, with the name of your brother-in-law.

I have a family of four sons and three douthers:¹ two of my sons and two of my douthers are men and women and all with me in the farm way: I have the happiness to hope they are virtuously inclined. My youngest douthers is ten years of age: my eldest son is named Robert; the second Gilbert; the third William; the fourth John; my eldest douthers is named Agnes; the second Anna Bela; the third Isabal.

My Brother lives at Stewarton by Kilmarnock; he hath two sons and one douthers, named John, William and Fanny; their circumstances are very indifferent.

I shall be happy to hear from you when it is convenient, when I shall writt to you from time to time. Please give my respects to your Brother and Sister in the kindest manner, and to your Wife, which will greatly oblige your affectionate Uncle,

WILLIAM BURNES.

LOCHLIE, 14 April, 1781.

A PAINTER'S TRIBUTE TO BURNS.

DESCRIPTIVE NOTICE OF THE POET'S DREAM AT LINCLUDEN.

The Vignette entitled "The Poet's Dream at Lincluden" is thus described by the artist who designed it:—

" . . . Perhaps you will say the picture should describe itself; but the subject is a *dream*, and the best dreams on record have after all required interpretations, and these were sometimes supplied by the dreamers themselves; under which high examples I take shelter, while I attempt to describe and interpret the Poet's Dream at Lincluden.

"The architecture which forms the background of the subject is the ruined and beautiful door-way and western window of the chapel at Lincluden Abbey, near Dumfries, which I need not remind a devotee of Burns was one of his most favourite haunts. Here, by the roofless tower, 'the stern and stalwart ghaist' of liberty appeared to the poet, and here, as he has recorded in his version of 'Ca' the Yowes,' the

fairies love to wander by the clear moonlight. I have supposed that the bard has visited this beautiful seclusion late on a summer night; that he has lain down on one of the verdant knolls before the ruin, and, falling asleep, supposes his head pillowed on the lap of Coila, the favourite muse of his youthful manhood, to whom, and to Doon's fair banks, though he now lived where 'Nith ran proudly to the Sea,' he was often transported both in sleeping and waking vision. In this situation he is found by the king and queen of the fairies, who, with their train of elves, spunkies, brownies, kelpies, mermaids, &c., come to hold a night of high revelry in their favourite domain. They immediately recognize the child of song, who had celebrated their race, and resolve to gratify

¹ Apparently an attempt to spell the word in accordance with a pronunciation common in the part of Scotland where the writer was born.

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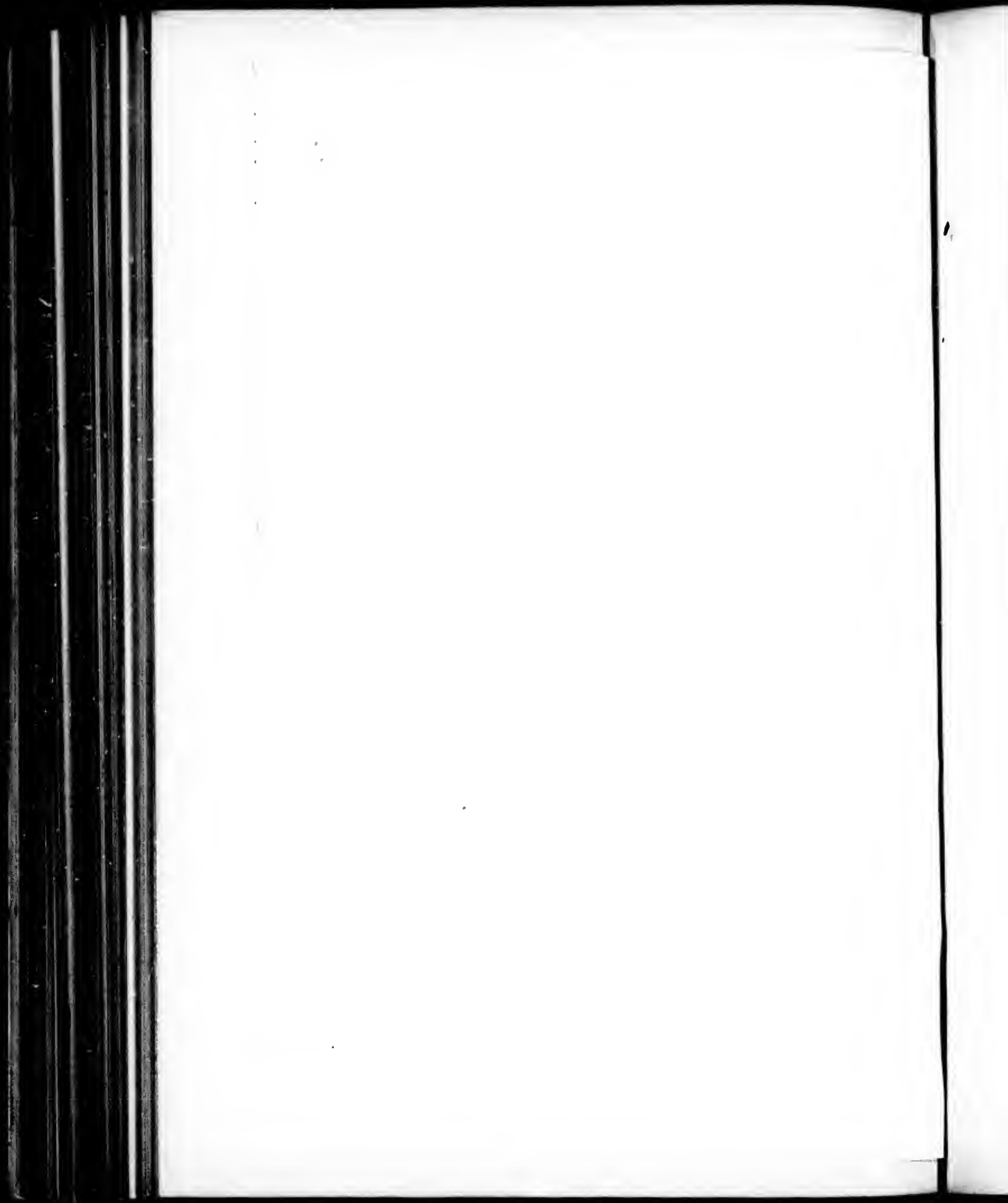
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AM BURNES.

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THE POET'S MONUMENT AT KINLOUGHEN ABBEY
A PAINTING BY J. H. P. H. H. H.

LONDON: A. S. & CO. 1840.

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him with a vision of some subjects worthy of his muse. As on another 'midsummer night,' a difference of opinion arises between the royal pair, in regard to the nature of the vision to be presented. The voice of the king is still for war, and he wishes to inspire the poet to sing of high and noble deeds. The queen gives her voice for gentler and humbler themes; and the poet accordingly profits by the dispute, for, instead of one class of subjects, his soul is gladdened with a varied series of spectral tableaux, which go to fit him for excelling in all the walks of his art.

"The figures in armour behind the advanced banner 'auld Scotland's Bluidy Lion,' conjured up by the fairy king, are Wallace, Bruce, Douglas, and Randolph—characters, it may be presumed, in the intended drama, founded on a portion in the history of the great restorer of Scottish liberty, which Burns long nourished the idea of writing, and which Sir Walter Scott regretted, and his countrymen may ever regret, he did not live to write. The tattered and mutilated warrior beside them is the son of Mars of the 'Jolly Beggars,' keeping watch over the kettle of the kirk and state, illustrating the patriotic resolves which animated even the lowest of the people at the time of the threatened French invasion; so felicitously brought out by Burns in the song of his old hero, who, beggar as he was, declared himself ready to turn out, and 'rattle on his stumps to the sound of the drum.' The figures on the other side of the picture are several rustic beauties—a ruling elder, a clergyman, Tam o'Shanter and Souter Johnnie, the toil-worn cotter, over whose head Death shakes his sand-glass, while the spectre is repelled by Horn-book, who with ready art holds in his face a phial, containing probably that universal specific the sal-alkali of midge-tail clippings. The old gentleman aloft, employed in the exercise of our serenely silent art, is Captain

Grose, who was engaged in making drawings of Lineluden when he met the poet at Friars' Carse, to which rencontre we are indebted for the tale of Tam o'Shanter. The 'uneo sleight of caulk and keel' displayed by the military artist, has arrested with surprise and dread a crew of witches, warlocks, and worricows, in their descent to join in the revelry below. The harper in the centre is the ghaist of liberty, proper to this locality; and I presume it is needless to be too minute in naming the more infernal minstrel with the bagpipes, who shows his unhallowed and 'reested pliz' from behind the doorway; or the somewhat too slightly draped lady who forms the apex of the pyramidal group in the unearthly galliard in the interior of the chapel. The fairies who are rifling the pockets of the sleeping bard, find one solitary coin there, indicating his poverty; the toad in the foreground personates one of those critics or biographers, whose blackened pages, throwing their shadows before, sometimes while the poet lived clouded his serenity. In the present instance, a friendly fairy shields him from the venom of the reptile, and annoys it in turn by the application of a sprig of Scotch thistle; the moral of which is, that the countrymen of the bard will not permit even his frailties to be further drawn from their dread abode without administering the merited castigation. We are assured that through poverty, neglect, and detraction, the vision of his future fame never forsook him; and accordingly his monument is seen in the bright, though far, distance. The whole phantasma is lighted up from the fire of a fairy distillery, which may be at once taken as allusive to the professional occupation of the exciseman, and as showing the nature of that spell of power which has conjured up the vision, namely, the very potent, but very natural, necromancy of the punch-bowl."

POEMS WRITTEN IN MEMORY OF BURNS.

ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT BURNS.

BY WILLIAM ROSCOE, ESQ.

Rear high thy bleak majestic hills,
Thy shelter'd valleys proudly spread,
And, SCOTIA, pour thy thousand rills,
And wave thy heaths with blossoms red;
But, ah! what poet now shall tread
Thy airy heights, thy woodland reign,
Since he the sweetest bard is dead
That ever breath'd the soothing strain?

As green thy towering pines may grow,
As clear thy streams may speed along,
As bright thy summer suns may glow,
As gaily charm thy feathery throng;
But now, unheeded is the song,
And dull and lifeless all around,
For his wild harp lies all unstrung,
And cold the hand that waked its sound.

What tho' thy vigorous offspring rise,
In arts, in arms, thy sons excel;
Tho' beauty in thy daughters' eyes,
And health in every feature dwell;
Yet who shall now their praises tell,
In strains impassion'd, fond and free,
Since he no more the song shall swell
To love, and liberty, and thee.

With step-dame eye and frown severe
His hapless youth why didst thou view?
For all thy joys to him were dear,
And all his vows to thee were due:
Nor greater bliss his bosom knew,
In opening youth's delightful prime,
Than when thy favouring ear he drew
To listen to his chanted rhyme.

Thy lonely wastes and frowning skies
To him were all with rapturo fraught;
He heard with joy the tempest rise
That wak'd him to sublimer thought;
And oft thy winding dells he sought,
Where wild flow'rs pour'd their rathe perfume,
And with sincere devotion brought
To thee the summer's earliest bloom.

But ah! no fond maternal smile
His unprotected youth enjoyed;
His limbs inur'd to early toil,
His days with early hardships tried;
And more to mark the gloomy void,
And bid him feel his misery,
Before his infant eyes would glide
Day-dreams of immortality.

Yet, not by cold neglect depress'd,
With sinewy arm he turn'd the soil,
Sunk with the evening sun to rest,
And met at morn his earliest smile,
Wak'd by his rustic pipe, meanwhile
The powers of fancy came along,
And sooth'd his lengthen'd hours of toil
With native wit and sprightly song.

—Ah! days of bliss, too swiftly fled,
When vigorous health from labour springs,
And bland contentment smooths the bed,
And sleep his ready opiate brings;
And hovering round on airy wings
Float the light forms of young desire,
That of unutterable things
The soft and shadowy hope inspire.

Now spells of mightier power prepare,
Bid brighter phantoms round him dance;
Let Flattery spread her viewless snare,
And Fame attract his vagrant glance;
Let sprightly Pleasure too advance,
Unveil'd her eyes, unclasp'd her zone,
Till lost in love's delirious trance
He scorn the joys his youth has known.

Let Friendship pour her brightest blaze,
Expanding all the bloom of soul;
And Mirth concentrate all her rays,
And point them from the sparkling bowl;
And let the careless moments roll
In social pleasures unconfined,
And Confidence that spurns control
Unlock the inmost springs of mind:

And lead his steps those bowers among,
Where elegance with splendour vies,
Or Science bids her favour'd throng,
To more refin'd sensations rise:
Beyond the peasant's humbler joys,
And freed from each laborious strife,
There let him learn the bliss to prize
That waits the sons of polish'd life.

Then whilst his throbbing veins beat high
With every impulse of delight,
Dash from his lips the cup of joy,
And shroud the scene in shades of night;
And let Despair, with wizard light,
Disclose the yawning gulf below,
And pour incessant on his sight
Her spectr'd ills and shapes of woe:

And show beneath a cheerless shed,
With sorrowing heart and streaming eyes,
In silent grief where droops her head,
The partner of his early joys;

And let his infants' tender cries
His fond parental succour claim,
And bid him hear in agonies
A husband's and a father's name.

'Tis done, the powerful charm succeeds;
His high reluctant spirit bends;
In bitterness of soul he bleeds,
Nor longer with his fate contends.
An idiot laugh the welkin rends
As genius thus degraded lies;
Till pitying Heaven the veil extends
That shrouds the Poet's ardent eyes.

—Rear high thy bleak majestic hills,
Thy shelter'd valleys proudly spread,
And, SCOTIA, pour thy thousand rills,
And wave thy heaths with blossoms red;
But never more shall poet tread
Thy airy heights, thy woodland reign,
Since he the sweetest bard is dead
That ever breath'd the soothing strain.

STANZAS TO THE MEMORY OF BURNS.

BY THOMAS CAMPBELL.

Soul of the poet! wheresoe'er,
Reclaim'd from earth, thy genius plume
Her wings of immortality,
Suspend thy harp in happier sphere,
And with thine influence illumo
The gladness of our jubilee.

And fly, like fiends from secret spell,
Discord and strife, at Burns's name,
Exorcised by his memory;
For he was chief of bards that swell
The heart with songs of social flame,
And high delicious revelry.

And love's own strain to him was given,
To warble all its ecstasies,
With Pythian words, unsought, unwill'd,—
Love, the surviving gift of Heaven,—
The choicest sweet of paradise
In life's also bitter cup distill'd.

Who, that has melted o'er his lay
To Mary's soul in heaven above,
But pictured sees, in fancy strong,
The landscape and the live-long day
That smiled upon their mutual love?
Who that has felt forgets the song?

Nor skill'd one flame alone to fan,
His country's high-souled peasantry:
What patriot pride he taught! How much
To weigh the inborn worth of man!
And rustic life and poverty
Grow beautiful beneath his touch.

Him, in his clay-built cot, the muse
Entranced, and show'd him all the forms
Of fairy light and wizard gloom,
That only gifted poet views,—
The genii of the floods and storms,
And martial shades from glory's tomb.

On Bannock-field what thoughts arouse
The swain whom Burns's song inspires!
Beat not his Caledonian veins,
As o'er the heroic turf he ploughs,
With all the spirit of his sires,
And all their scorn of death and chains.

And see the Scottish exile tann'd
By many a far and foreign clime,
Bond o'er his home-born verse and weep
In memory of his native land,
With love that scorns the lapse of time
And ties that stretch beyond the deep.

Encamp'd by India's rivers wild
The soldier, resting on his arms,
In Burns's carol sweet recalls
The scenes that bless'd him when a child,
And glows and gladdens at the charms,
Of Scotia's woods and waterfalls.

O deem not, 'mid thy worldly strife,
An idle art the poet brings:
Let high philosophy control,
And sages calm the stream of life,
'Tis he refines its fountain-springs,
The nobler passions of the soul.

It is the muse that consecrates
The native honours of the brave,
Unfurling, at the trumpet's breath,
Rose, Thistle, Harp. 'Tis she clates
To sweep the field or ride the wave,
A sun-burst in the storm of death.

And thou, young hero,¹ when thy pall
Is cross'd with mournful sword and plume,
When public grief begins to fade,
And only tears of kindred fall,—
Who but the bard shall dress thy tomb,
And greet with fame thy gallant shade?

Such was the soldier: Burns, forgive
That sorrows of mine own intrude
In strains to thy great memory due;
In verse like thine, O could he live,
The friend I mourn'd, the brave, the good
Edward, that died at Waterloo.

Farewell, high chief of Scottish song!
That could'st alternately impart
Wisdom and rapture in thy page,

¹ Major Edward Hodge, of the 7th Hussars, who fell at the head of his squadron in the attack on the Polish lancers.

And brand each vice with satire strong;
Whose lines are mottoes of the heart,
Whose truths electrify the sage.

Farewell, and ne'er may envy dare
To wring one baleful poison drop
From the crush'd laurels of thy bust;
But, while the lark sings sweet in air,
Still may the grateful pilgrim stop
To bless the spot that holds thy dust.

ADDRESS TO THE SONS OF BURNS ON VISITING HIS GRAVE.

BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

Mid crowded obelisks and urns
I sought the untimely grave of Burns:
Sons of the bard my heart still mourns
With sorrow true;
And more would grieve, but that it turns
Trembling to you!

Through twilight shades of good and ill
Ye now are panting up life's hill,
And more than common strength and skill
Must ye display,
If ye would give the better will
Its lawful sway.

Hath nature strung your nerves to bear
Intemperance with less harm, beware!
But if the poet's wit ye share,
Like him can speed
The social hour—for tenfold eare
There will be need.

Even honest men delight will take
To spare your failings for his sake,
Will flatter you,—and fool and rake
Your steps pursue;
And of your father's name will make
A snare for you.

Far from their noisy haunts retire,
And add your voices to the quire
That sanctify the cottage fire
With service meet;
There seek the genius of your sire,
His spirit greet.

Or where mid "lonely heights and hows"
He paid to nature tuneful vows;
Or wiped his honourable brows,
Bedewed with toil,
While reapers strove, or busy ploughs
Upturned the soil.

His judgment with benignant ray
Shall guide, his fancy cheer, your way;
But ne'er to a seductive lay
Let faith be given;
Nor deem that "light which leads astray
Is light from heaven."

Let no mean hope your souls enslave;
Be independent, generous, brave;
Your father such example gave,
And such revere;
But be admonished by his grave,
And think and fear!

ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF BURNS'S BIRTH-DAY.

BY JAMES MONTGOMERY.

What bird in beauty, flight, or song,
Can with the bard compare,
Who sang as sweet and soar'd as strong,
As ever child of air?

His plume, his note, his form could BURNS,
For whim or pleasure, change;
He was not one, but all by turns,
With transmigration strange:—

The blackbird, oracle of spring,
When flow'd his moral lay;
The swallow, wheeling on the wing,
Capriciously at play:—

The humming-bird, from bloom to bloom
Inhaling heavenly balm;
The raven in the tempest's gloom;
The halcyon in the calm:—

In "auld Kirk-Alloway," the owl,
At witching time of night;
By "bonnie Doon," the earliest fowl
That carolled to the light.

He was the wren amidst the grove,
When in his homely vein;
At Bannock-burn, the bird of Jove,
With thunder in his train:—

The woodlark, in his mournful hours;
The goldfinch, in his mirth;
The thrush, a spendthrift of his powers,
Enrapturing heaven and earth:—

The swan, in majesty and grace,
Contemplative and still;
But roused,—no falcon in the chase
Could, like his satire, kill:—

The linnet in simplicity;
In tenderness, the dove;
—But, more than all beside, was he
The nightingale, in love.

Oh! had he never stoop'd to shame,
Nor lent a charm to vice,
How had devotion loved to name
That bird of Paradise!

Peace to the dead!—In Scotia's choir
Of minstrels, great and small,
He sprang from his spontaneous fire,
The Phoenix of them all!

ODE.

WRITTEN FOR, AND PERFORMED AT THE CELEBRATION OF ROBERT BURNS'S BIRTH-DAY, FAISLEY, 29TH JAN. 1807.

BY ROBERT TANNAHILL.¹

RECITATIVE.

While Gallia's chief, with cruel conquests vain,
Bids clanging trumpets rend the skies,
The widow's, orphan's, and the father's sighs,
Breathe, hissing thro' the guilty strain;
Mild Pity hears the barrowing tones,
Mix'd with shrieks and dying groans;
While warm Humanity, afar,
Weeps o'er the ravages of war,
And shudd'ring hears Ambition's servile train,
Rejoicing o'er their thousands slain.
But when the song to worth is given,
The grateful anthem wings its way to heaven;
Rings thro' the mansions of the bright abodes,
And melts to ecstasy the list'ning gods;
Apollo, on fire,
Strikes with rapture the lyre,
And the Muses the summons obey,
Joy wings the glad sound,
To the worlds around,
Till all nature re-echoes the lay.—
Then raise the song, ye vocal few,
Give the praise to merit due.

SONG.

T. o' dark scowling Winter, in dismal array,
Re-marshals his storms on the bleak hoary bill,
With joy we assemble to hail the great day
That gave birth to the Bard who ennobles our
Isle.
Then loud to his merits the song let us raise,
Let each true Caledonian exult in his praise;
For the glory of Genius, its dearest reward,
Is the laurel entwin'd by his country's regard.
Let the Muse bring fresh honours his name to
adorn,
Let the voice of glad melody pride in the theme,
For the genius of Scotia, in ages unborn,
Will light up her torch at the blaze of his fame.
When the dark mist of ages lies turbid between,
Still his star of renown thro' the gloom shall be
seen,
And his rich blooming laurels, so dear to the
Bard,
Will be cherish'd for aye by his country's regard.

RECITATIVE.

Yes, Burns, "thou dear departed shade!"
When rolling centuries have fled,

¹ Tannahill wrote also an Ode for the anniversary of 1805, besides a song in praise of the poet for another similar occasion; but we can only make room for the present piece.

Thy name shall still survive the wreck of Time,
Shall rouse the genius of thy native clime;
Bards yet unborn, and patriots shall come,
And catch fresh ardour at thy hallow'd tomb—
There's not a cairn-built cottage on our hills,
Nor rural hamlet on our fertile plains,
But echoes to the magic of his strains,
While every heart with highest transport thrills.
Our country's melodies shall perish never,
For, Burns, thy songs shall live for ever.
Then, once again, ye vocal few,
Give the song to merit due.

SONG.

Hail, ye glorious sons of song,
Who wrote to humanize the soul!
To you our highest strains belong,
Your names shall crown our friendly bowl.
But chiefly, Burns, above the rest,
We dedicate this night to thee;
Engraved in every Scotchman's breast,
Thy name, thy worth shall ever be!

Fathers of our country's weal,
Sternly virtuous, bold and free!
Ye taught your sons to fight, yet feel
The dictates of humanity.
But chiefly, Burns, above the rest,
We dedicate this night to thee;
Engraved in every Scotchman's breast,
Thy name, thy worth shall ever be!

Haughty Gallia threatens our coast,
We hear their vaults with disregard,
Secure in valour, still we boast
"The Patriot, and the Patriot Bard."
But chiefly, Burns, above the rest,
We dedicate this night to thee;
Engraved in every Scotchman's breast,
Thy name, thy worth shall ever be!

Yes, Caledonians! to our country true,
Which Danes nor Romans never could subdue,
Firmly resolved our native rights to guard,
Let's toast "The Patriot, and the Patriot Bard."

IRREGULAR ANNIVERSARY ODE,
SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF BURNS.

BY THE REV. HAMILTON PAUL.²

SCENE—The Cottage in which he was born.

Here let me kneel and kiss the precious earth,
For ever hallow'd by the Poet's birth.
Where'er I look, around on grove or green,
From this blest spot his magic gilds the scene:
Here stands the Kirk, in which his wizard power,
Conjur'd hobgoblins at the midnight hour;

² One of the earliest biographers of Burns, author of the *Life* in an edition of the *Poems and Songs* published at Ayr in 1819.

And Doon in sweet meanders winds along,
'Mid banks that bloom for ever in his song;
Thro' fairy scenes, there wanders wood-crown'd
AYR,

Scenes of his love, his musings, and his care.

While rivers roll their torrents to the main,
While dewy dawns refresh the thirsty plain,
So long, sweet Bard, thy heav'nly strains shall
flow,

Inspiring joy, or mitigating woe.

While youthful bards delight to strike the lyre,
And pay their court with rapturous desire,
To objects half infernal, half divino,
Man's bane and bliss—to women, wit, and wine:
So long thine amorous ditties shall be sung,
And breathe enchantment from the virgin's
tongue;

So long each tale of thine, each story droll,
Shall add new lustre to the sparkling bowl.

You've heard the choristers of spring,

Their dulcet throats attune,
And far and wide responsive ring,
The Braes o' bonnie DOON:

And on the bushy banks of Ayr,
You've heard the warbling throng,
But none so witching, none so rare,
None half-entitled to compare
With our sweet ROBIN's song.

The mellow numbers, as they flow,
Pour balm into the wounds of woe,
Or bid the youthful fancy rove,
To scenes of joy or haunts of love.
Thus beams the friendly polar star,
On midnight mariner from far,
Whose wakeful and inquiring eye,
Unceasing rambles o'er the sky,
In quest of an unerring guide,
To pilot him across the tide,
And moor him safe from ocean's harms,
Within his well beloved's arms.

Ye trees, that crown the wat'ry glade,
Ye birds, that chant the boughs among,
Ye seem to wear a deeper shade,
Ye seem to pour a sadder song.

What tho' around the Poet's grave,
The thistle spring, the long grass wave,
The lowly bramble creep!

What though the church-yard's heaps among
In slow procession move along
The friends of genius and of song,
To wonder and to weep!

Yet still around the Poet's tomb,
The laurel evergreen shall bloom,
Shall beautify his honour'd bust,
And shade his consecrated dust.
Ye sacred groves, ye silver streams
That glitter to the sunny beams,
Your lov'd retreats we choose:

To sing of him who bids you show
A brighter verdure, as you blow,
A sweeter murmur, as you flow,
In his enchanting muse.

Ye woods that grace his Coila's plain,
Ye bloom and fade, and bloom again,
But in his deathless verse pourtray'd,
Ye blossom never more to fade.

Still Spring, with hyacinthine bell,
Shall grace the green groves of Rozelle,
And Summer, with bewitching smile,
Bloom round the borders of Bellisle.
And that lov'd stream, bless'd by his song,
In soft meanders glide,
The braes of Alloway among
Or woodlands of Doonside.

Still honest men, and maidens fair,
Shall tread the bonnie banks of Ayr,
And th' annual tributary lay,
With willing hearts to him we'll pay,
Whose ardent soul and polish'd mind
Restor'd the purity of song
(Degraded and debas'd so long)
And love's soft dialect refin'd:
Who bade the youthful Scottish swain
Breathe from his soul a purer strain,
Expressive of love's joy or woe,
Than ever yet was heard to flow
From shepherd on Arcadian plain;
Who taught the ruddy rural lass,
When May-morn goss the dewy grass,
As bending o'er her milking pail,
To pour her soft notes on the gale—
Notes that a Vestal well might hear,
And notes that would have charm'd the ear,
And claim'd the sympathetic tear
Of Petrarch in Vaucluse's vale!

Happy could I ascend on equal wing,
And soaring high with equal vigour sing,
Then Doon should roll more rapidly his floods,
Ayr more majestic wander thro' his woods.
Beloved streams, where'er my footsteps roam,
Your grateful murmurs seem to call me home:
By fancy led, I linger in your shades,
And gaze enamour'd on your lovely maids—
Review your palaces and wizard towers,
And tread again your honeysuckle bowers—

O, that the lov'd Bard, ere his spirit was flown,
Ere he bade a short life of misfortune adieu,
Wide over my shoulders his mantle had thrown.
I'd have breath'd a strain worthy of him and
of you!

But, alas! cold for ever's the soul-kindling fire,
Mute the tongue that could captivate, ravish,
inspire,
While the hands of the feeble awaken the lyre,
And the Muses sigh out, "our adorers are few!"

Yet many a one, whose kindred soul,
 Glows with congenial fire,
 As years on years successive roll,
 Will, gathering round the mantling bowl,
 In ecstacy admire
 That matchless magnitude of mind,
 That feeling heart, that taste refin'd,
 That self-taught art sublime,
 Which bid the Cottage tenant rise,
 Th' ennobled favourite of the skies,
 Whose heaven-sent laurel crown defies
 The withering touch of time!

Where Caledonia's name is known,
 From Iceland to the burning Zone,
 Who that the witchery has tri'd,
 Of Coila's Lark, and Scotia's pride,
 As he depicts the rural scene,
 Tho' exil'd from his native home,
 Does not with ceaseless transport roam,
 'Mong groves of everlasting green?
 And where the Ganges' ocean stream
 Rolls, and reflects the morning beam,
 Or Niagara's waters play,
 And dance beneath the setting day,
 Reclin'd amid the bow'ry shade
 At gloaming grey or sultry noon,
 Who has not clasp'd his darling maid,
 By hermit Ayre or bonnie Doon?
 But chief, beneath his native shades,
 The ardent youths and love-sick maids,
 The feast of harmony prolong,
 And pour the very soul of song,
 Where nymphs and swains enamour'd stray,
 Along the fertile banks of Tay;
 Or shepherds tune the Doric reed,
 And charm the holms of classic Tweed;
 Or roam Edina's virgin train,
 Where Forth menud'ring seeks the main;
 Or Glotta's maids, with graceful pride,
 Adorn the verdant vale of Clyde;
 There they attune their mellow throats
 And warble forth their cheerful notes.

But nothing can surpass the tune,
 That echoes from the braes of Doon:
 Nought with the music can compare,
 That floats along the banks of Ayre.

Ye rivers that have roll'd your tide
 Since time began to run,
 Whose waters will perennial glide,
 Coeval with the sun,
 When we shall yield, as yield we must,
 To fate, and mingle with the dust,
 On you shall future beauties bloom,
 And fresh flowers yearly shed perfume.
 And other Bards, profuse of praise,
 Delight your echoes with their lays,
 And other friends to merit fled
 Here pay due honours to the dead,

And as they fan the gon'rous flame
 immortalize the Poet's name!—

ON BURNS'S ANNIVERSARY.

BY HUGH AINSLIE.

We meet not here to honour one
 To gear or grandeur born,
 Nor one whose bloodiness of soul
 Hath crowns and kingdoms torn.

No, tho' he'd honours higher far
 Than lordly things have known,
 His titles spring not from a prince,
 His honour from a throne.

Nor needs the bard of Coila arts
 His honour to prolong;
 No flattery to gild his fame;
 No record but his song.

O! while old Scotia hath sons
 Can feel his social mirth,
 So long shall worth and honesty
 Have brothers upon earth.

So long as lovers, with his song,
 Can spurn as shining dust,
 So long hath faithful woman's breast
 A bosom she may trust.

And while his independent strain
 Can make one spirit glow,
 So long shall freedom have a friend,
 And tyranny a foe!

Here's to the social, honest man,
 And Scotland's boast and pride!
 And here's to freedom's worshippers
 Of every tongue and tribe.

And here's to them, this night, that meet
 Out o'er the social bowl,
 To raise to Coila's darling son
 A monument of soul.

What heart hath ever match'd his flame?
 What spirit match'd his fire?
 Peace to the prince of Scottish song,
 Lord of the bosom's lyre!

VERSES TO THE MEMORY OF BURNS.

BY FITZGREEN HALLECK, OF NEW YORK.

ON VIEWING THE REMAINS OF A ROSE BROUGHT
FROM ALLOWAY KIRK, IN AUTUMN, 1822.

Wild rose of Alloway! my thanks—
 Thou mind'st me of that autumn noon,
 When first we met upon "the banks
 And braes of bonny Doon."

Like thine, beneath the thorn tree's bough,
My sunny hour was glad and brief;
We've cross'd the winter sea, and thou
Art wither'd, flower and leaf.

And wilt not thy death doom be mine,
The doom of all things wrought of clay,
And wither'd my life's leaf like thine,
Will rose of Alloway?

Not so HIS memory, for whose sake
My bosom bore thee far and long;
His—who an humbler flower could make
Immortal as his song.

The memory of BURNS—a name
That calls, when brimn'd her festal cup,
A nation's glory, and her shame,
In silent sadness up.

A nation's glory—be the rest
Forgot—she's canonized his mind,
And it is joy to speak the best
We may of human kind.

I've stood beside the cottage bed
Where the bard-peasant first drew breath—
A straw-thatched roof above his head,
A straw-wrought couch beneath.

And I have stood beside the pile,
His monument, that tells to heaven
The homage of earth's proudest isle,
To that bard-peasant given!

Bid thy thoughts hover o'er that spot,
Boy-minstrel, in thy dreaming hour,
And know, however low his lot,
A poet's pride and power—

The pride that lifted BURNS from earth,
The power that gave a child of song
Ascendancy o'er rank and birth—
The rich, the brave, the strong.

And if despondency weigh down
Thy spirit's fluttering pinions, then,
Despair—thy name is written on
The roll of common men.

There have been loftier themes than his,
And longer scrolls, and louder lyres,
And lays lit up with poesy's
Purer and holier fires.

Yet read the names that know not death,
Few nobler ones than BURNS are there,
And few have won a greener wreath
Than that which binds his hair.

His is that language of the heart,
In which the answering heart would speak,
Thought, word, that bids the warm tear start,
Or the smile light up the cheek:

And his, that music, to whose tone
The common pulse of man keeps time,
In cot or castle's mirth or moan,
In cold or sunny clime.

And who hath heard his song, nor knelt
Before its spell with willing knee,
And listened, and believed, and felt
The poet's mastery

O'er the mind's sea, in calm and storm,
O'er the heart's sunshine, and its showers,
O'er passion's moments, bright and warm,
O'er reason's dark cold hours;

On fields where brave men "died or do,"
In halls where rings the banquet's mirth,
Where mourners weep—where lovers woo,
From throne to cottage hearth?

What sweet tears dim the eyes unshed,
What wild vows falter on the tongue,
When "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled"
Or "Auld lang syne" is sung!

Pure hopes, that lift the soul above,
Come with the Cotter's hymn of praise,
And dreams of youth, and truth, and love,
With "Logan's" banks and braes.

And when he breathes his master lay
Of Alloway's witch-haunted wall,
All passions in our frame of clay
Come thronging at his call;

Imagination's world of air,
And our own world, its gloom and glee,
Wit, pathos, poetry, are there,
And death's sublimity.

And BURNS—though brief the race he ran,
Though rough and dark the path he trod,
Lived—died—in form and soul a man,
The image of his God.

Through care, and pain, and want, and woe,
With wounds that only death could heal,
Tortures the poor alone can know,
The proud alone can feel;

He kept his honesty and truth,
His independent tongue and pen,
And moved, in manhood and in youth,
Pride of his fellow men.

Strong sense, deep feeling, passions strong,
A hate of tyrant and of knave,
A love of right, a scorn of wrong,
Of coward, and of slave;

A kind, true heart, a spirit high,
That could not fear, and would not bow,
Were written in his manly eye,
And on his manly brow.

Praise to the bard!—his words are driven,
Like flower-seeds by the fair winds sown,
Where'er beneath the sky of heaven
The birds of fame are flown.

Praise to the man!—a nation stood
Beside his coffin with wet eyes,
Her brave, her beautiful, her good,
As when a loved one dies.

And still, as on his funeral day,
Men stand his cold earth-couch around,
With the mute homage that we pay
To consecrated ground.

And consecrated ground it is,
The last, the hallowed home of one
Who lives upon all memories,
Though with the buried gone.

Such graves as his are pilgrim-shrines,
Shrines to no code or creed confined,—
The Delphian vales, the Palestines,
The Meccas of the mind.

Sages with Wisdom's garland wreathed,
Crowned kings, and mitred priests of power,
And warriors with their bright swords sheathed,
The mightiest of the hour;

And lowlier names, whose humble home
Is lit by fortune's dimmer star,
Are there—o'er wave and mountain come—
From countries near and far;

Pilgrims, whose wandering feet have press'd
The Sinitzer's snows, the Arab's sand,
Or trod the piled leaves of the west,
My own green-forest land.

All ask the cottage of his birth,
Gaze on the scenes he loved and sung,
And gather feelings not of earth
His fields and streams among.

They linger by the Doon's low trees,
And pastoral Nith, and wooded Ayr,
And round thy sepulchres, Dumfries!
The poet's tomb is there.

But what to them the sculptor's art,
His funeral columns, wreaths, and urns?
Wear they not, graven on the heart,
The name of ROBERT BURNS!

FOR THE ANNIVERSARY OF BURNS.

BY DAVID VEDDER.

Ushered by storms and tempests drear,
Again the auspicious day returns;
A day to Caledonia dear,—
The birth-day of immortal Burns.—

No more the beauteous matron mourns,
No more her tresses sweep the earth,
Her poet's mighty name adorns
The happy land that gave him birth!

O! for a portion of that fire,
That pathos, strength, and energy,
With which the poet swept his lyre
While struggling with pale poverty;—
Then should my muse adventurous try
The dignified, the daring theme,—
A theme immeasurably high,—
Even Scotland's mighty Minstrel's fame.

But that can ne'er forgotten be;—
He bade her Doric numbers chime,
And struck her harp, whose silver chords
Shall vibrate till the end of time.
The pealing, rapturous notes sublime,
That rung from his immortal lyre,
Shall ever ring, through every clime,
Till blazes Nature's funeral pyre!

His lyrics glad the Scottish swains,
Where Ganges rolls with sullen roar;
His nervous, soul-ennobling strains
Resound on Hudson's icy shore:
Beyond the Andean mountains hear,
Where sacred freedom's banners blaze,
Our countrymen his loss deplore,
And yearly crown his bust with bays.

His satire was the lightning's flash
Which purified our meral air,
His war songs were the thunder's crash
Which stirred the lion in his lair:—
He painted Scotland's daughters fair,
All beauty, tenderness, and light,
Like verdant wreaths of flowerets rare,
With summer dews bespangled bright.

Then let thy heath-empurpled plains
With Tuscan vales for ever vie,
And, Scotland, may thy dulcet strains
Still rival Tuscan melody:—
Let thy maternal tears be dry,
For though his radiant course be run,
The astonished world with plaudits high
Proclaims him thine illustrious son.

ON THE DEATH OF BURNS.

BY MRS. GRANT, OF LAGGAN.

What adverse fate awaits the tuneful train?
Has Otway died and Spenser liv'd in vain?
In vain has Collins, Fancy's pensive child,
Pour'd his lone plaints by Avon's windings wild?
And Savage, on Misfortune's bosom bred,
Bar'd to the howling storm his houseless head?
Who gentle Shenstone's fate can hear unmoved,
By virtue, elegance, and genius lov'd?

Yet, pensive wand'ring o'er his native plain,
His plaints confess'd he lov'd the Muse in vain.
Chill penury invades his favourite bower,
Blasts every scene, and withers every flower,
His warning Muse to Prudence turn'd her strain,
But Prudence sings to thoughtless bards in vain;
Still restless fancy drives them headlong on
With dreams of wealth, and friends, and laurels won—

On ruin's brink they sleep, and wake undone!

And see where Caledonia's genius mourns,
And plants the holly round the grave of Burns!
But late "its polished leaves and berries red
"Play'd graceful round the rural Poet's head;"
And while with manly force and native fire
He wak'd the genuine Caledonian lyre,
Twined's severing flood exulting heard her tell,
Not Roman wreaths the holly could excel;
Not Tiber's stream, along Campania's plain,
More pleas'd, convey'd the gay Horatian strain,
Than bonny Doon, or fairy-haunted Ayr,
That wont his rustic melody to share,
Resound along their banks the pleasing theme,
Sweet as their murmurs, copious as their stream:
And Ramsay once the Horace of the North,
Who charm'd with varied strains the listening
Forth,

Bequeath'd to him the shrewd peculiar art
To satire nameless graces to impart,
To wield her weapons with such sportive ease,
That, while they wound, they dazzle and they
please:

But when he sung to the attentive plain
The humble virtues of the patriarch swain,
His evening worship, and his social meal,
And all a parent's pious heart can feel;
To genuine worth we bow submissive down,
And wish the Cotter's lowly shed our own:
With fond regard our native land we view,
Its cluster'd hamlets, and its mountains blue,
Our "virtuous populace," a nobler boast
Than all the wealth of either India's coast.
Yet while our hearts with admiration burn,
Too soon we learn that "man was made to
mourn."

The independent wish, the taste refin'd,
Bright energies of the superior mind,
And feeling's generous pangs, and fancy's glow,
And all that liberal nature could bestow,
To him profusely given, yet given in vain;
Misfortune aids and points the stings of pain.

How blest, when wand'ring by his native Ayr,
He woo'd "the willing Muse," unknown to care!
But when fond admiration spread his name,
A candidate for fortune and for fame,
In evil hour he left the tranquil shade
Where youth and love with hope and fancy
play'd;

Yet rainbow colours gild the novel scene,
Deceitful fortune sweetly smil'd like Jean;

Now courted oft by the licentious gay,
With them thro' devious paths behold him stray;
The opening rose conceals the latent thorn,
Convivial hours prolong'd awake the morn,
Even reason's sacred pow'r is drown'd in wine,
And genius lays her wreath on folly's shrine;
Too sure, alas! the world's unfeeling train
Corrupt the simple manners of the swain;
The blushing muse indignant scorns his lays,
And fortune frowns, and honest fame decays,
Till low on earth he lays his sorrowing head,
And sinks untimely 'midst the vulgar dead!

Yet while for him, belov'd, admir'd in vain,
Thus fond regret pours forth her plaintive strain,
While fancy, feeling, taste, her griefs rehearse,
And deck with artless tears his mournful hearse,
See cunning, dulness, ignorance, and pride,
Exulting o'er his grave in triumph ride,
And boast, "tho' genius, humour, wit agree,"
Cold selfish prudence far excels the three;
Nor think, while grovelling on the earth they go,
How few can mount so high to fall so low.
Thus Vandals, Goths, and Huns, exulting come,
To insult the ruins of majestic Rome.
But ye who honour genius—sacred beam!
From holy light a bright ethereal gleam,
Ye whom his happier verse has taught to glow,
Now to his ashes pay the debt you owe,
Draw pity's veil o'er his concluding scene,
And let the stream of bounty flow for Jean!
The mourning matron and her infant train,
Will own you did not love the muse in vain,
While sympathy with liberal hand appears,
To aid the orphan's wants, and dry the widow's
tears!

ADDRESS TO THE SHADE OF BURNS.

WRITTEN FOR THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF THE
IRVINE BURNS CLUB, 1820.

BY CHARLES GRAY, CAPTAIN, ROYAL MARINES.

Hail, BURNS! my native Bard, sublime;
Great master of our Doric rhyme!
Thy name shall last to latest time,
And unborn ages
Shall listen to the magic chime
Of thy enchanting pages!

Scarcely had kind Nature given thee birth,
When, from his caverns in the North,
Wild Winter sent his tempests forth,
The winds propelling—
To level with its native earth,
Thy clay-built, lowly dwelling.

Too well such storm did indicate
The gloom that hung upon thy fate.—

Arrived at manhood's wished estate,
When ills were rife,
Thy heart would dance with joy elate
At elemental strife!

Lone-seated by the roaring flood,
Or walking by the sheltered wood,
Rapt in devotion's solemn mood,
Thy ardent mind
Left, whilst with generous thoughts it glowed,
This sordid world behind!

Thou found man's sentence was to moil,
In turning o'er the stubborn soil;
But ne'er was learning's midnight oil
By thee consumed;
Yet humour, fancy, cheered thy toil,
Whilst nature round thee bloomed.

Though nurtured in the lowly shed—
A peasant born—with rustics bred—
Bright Genius round thy head display'd
Her beams intense—
Where Coila found thee—loveliest maid!
"Ben i' the sneaky spence!"

Mute is the voice of Coila now,
Who once with laurels decked thy brow;—
Still let us ne'er forget that thou
Taught learned men;
The hand that held the pond'rous plough
Could wield the Poet's pen!

Upon thine eagle-course I gaze,
And weep o'er all thy devious ways;
Thou peer and peasant prized thy lays
What did it serve!—
Grim Av'rice said, "Give lasting bays,
"But let the Poet starve!"

The heartless mandate was obeyed;—
Although the holly crowned thy head,
Yet wealth and power withheld their aid,
And hugg'd their gain;
While thy loved babes might cry for bread,
And cry, alas! in vain!

But now thy column seeks the skies,
And draws the inquiring stranger's eyes;—
Art's mimic boast for thee may rise
Magnificent;—
Yet thou hast reared, midst bitter sighs,
A prouder monument!

Thy songs, "untaught by rules of art,"
Came gushing from thy manly heart,
And claim for thee a high desert;—
In them we find
What genius only can impart—
A mood for every mind!

The milkmaid at calm evening's close—
The ploughman starting from repose—

The lover weeping o'er his woes—
The worst of pains!
The soldier as to fight he goes—
All chaunt thy varied strains!

Sweet minstrel, "of the lowly strain,"
"We never shall see thy like again!"
May no rude hand thy laurels stain;
But o'er thy bier
Let poets breathe the soothing strain
Through each revolving year!

Yes! future bards shall pour the lay,
To hail with joy thy natal day;
And round thy head the verdant bay
Shall firm remain,
Till Nature's handiworks decay,
And "chaos come again!"

THE BARD OF SONG.

WRITTEN FOR BURNS'S ANNIVERSARY, 1834.

BY ROBERT OILFILLAN.

The bard of song rose in the west,
And gladdened Coila's land,
The badge of fame was on his brow,
Her sceptre in his hand.

The minstrel Muse beheld her son,
While glory round him shone,
Walk forth to kindle with his glance
Whate'er he looked upon!

She saw the green earth where he strayed
Acquire a greener hue,
And sunny skies high o'er his head
Assume a brighter blue.

She saw him strike his rustic harp,
In cadence wild and strong;
His song was of bold freedom's land—
Of Scotland was his song!

He soared not 'mong aerial clouds,
Beyond the mortal ken;
His song was of the moorland wild,
The happy homes of men.

Or of our battle chiefs, who rose
To his enraptured view—
He knelt before the BRUCE's crown,
And sword that WALLACE drew!

Their deeds inspired his martial strains,
He marked the patriot band
Who stood, 'mid dark and stormy days,
The guardians of our land.

"All hail! my son," the Muse she cried,
"Thy star shall ne'er decline;
A deathless name, and lasting fame,
Shall evermore be thine!"

Fain had she said, "and length of days,"

But thus she boding sung—

"Away, away, nor longer stay,
Thy parting knell hath rung!"

The Minstrel sighed, and from his harp

A few sad tones there fell;

They told of honours—all too late,
And of his last farewell!

They told of fame, when he no more

Would need a cold world's fame—

Of proud memorials to his name,
When he was but a name!—

Of pride, contumely, and scorn—

The proud man's passing by—

The Minstrel left to die on earth,

Yet lauded to the sky!

'Tis past!—and yet there lives a voice

That thrills the chords among:

'Tis—Scotland's song shall be of BURNS,

Who gave to Scotland song!

THE GRAVE OF BURNS.

BY ROBERT NICOLL.

By a kirkyard-yett I stood, while many enter'd in,

Men bow'd wi' toil an' age—wi' haffets auld an' thin;

An' ithers in their prime, wi' a bearin' proud an' hie;

An' maidens, pure an' bonnie as the daisies o' the lea;

An' matrons wrinkled auld, wi' lyart heads an' grey;

An' balms, like things o'er fair for death to wede away.

I stood beside the yett, while onward still they went,—

The laird frae out his ha', and the shepherd frae the bent:

It seem'd a typo o' men, an' o' the grave's domain;

But these were livin' a' an' could straight come forth again.

An' of the beiral auld, wi' meikle courtesie,

I speer'd what it might mean? an' he bade me look an' see.

On the trodden path that led to the house of worshipping,

Or before its open doors, there stood nae livin' thing;

But awa' among the tombs, ilk comer quickly pass'd,

An' upon ae lowly grave ilk seekin' eo was cast.

There were sabbin' bosoms there, and proud yet soften'd eyes,

An' a whisper breathed around, "There the loved and honour'd lies."

There was ne'er a murmur there—the deep-drawn breath was hush'd—

And o'er the maiden's cheek the tears o' feelin' gush'd;

An' the bonnie infant face was lifted as in prayer;

An' manhood's cheek was flush'd wi' the thoughts that movin' were:

I stood beside the grave, and I gazed upon the stone,

And the name of "Robert Burns" was engraven thereupon.

STANZAS FOR THE BURNS FESTIVAL, 1844.¹

BY DAVID MACBETH MOIR (DELTA).

Stir the beal-fire, wave the banner,

Bid the thundering cannon sound,

Rend the skies with acclamation,

Stun the woods and waters round,

Till the echoes of our gathering

Turn the world's admiring gaze

To this act of duteous homage

Scotland to her poet pays.

Fill the banks and braes with music,

Be it loud and low by turns—

That we owe the deathless glory,

This the hapless fate of Burns.

¹ Some account of this festival will be found farther on in this volume; from it several of the allusions in the poem will be better understood.

Born within the lowly cottage

To a destiny obscure,

Doom'd through youth's exulting spring-time
But to labour and endure—

Yet Despair he elbow'd from him;
Nature breath'd with holy joy,
In the hues of morn and evening,
On the eyelids of the boy;
And his country's Genius bound him
Laurels for his sunburnt brow,
When inspired and proud she found him,
Like Elisha, at the plough.

On, exulting in his magic,
Swept the gifted peasant on—
Though his feet were on the greensward,
Light from Heaven around him shone;
At his conjuration, demons
Issued from their darkness drear;
Hovering round on silver pinions,
Angels stoop'd his songs to hear;
Bow'd the Passions to his bidding,
Terror gaunt, and Pity calm;
Like the organ pour'd his thunder,
Like the lute his fairy psalm.

Lo! when clover-swathes lay round him,
Or his feet the furrow press'd,
He could mourn the sower's daisy,
Or the mouse's ruin'd nest;
Woven of gloom and glory, visions
Haunting throng'd his twilight hour;
Birds enthral'd him with sweet music,
Tempests with their tones of power;
Eagle-wing'd, his mounting spirit
Custom's rusty fetters spurn'd;
Tasso-like, for Jean he melted,
Wallace-like, for Scotland burn'd!

Scotland!—dear to him was Scotland,
In her sons and in her daughters,
In her Highlands, Lowlands, Islands,
Regal woods and rushing waters;
In the glory of her story,
When the tartans fired the field,—
Scotland! oft betray'd—belonger'd—
Scotland! never known to yield!
Dear to him her Doric language,
Thrill'd his heart-strings at her name;
And he left her more than rubies,
In the riches of his fame.

Sons of England—sons of Erin!
Ye who, journeying from afar,
Throng with us the shire of Coila,
Led by Burns's guiding star—
Proud we greet you—ye will join us,
As on this triumphant day,
To the champions of his genius
Grateful thanks we duly pay—
Currie—Chambers—Lockhart—Wilson—
Carlyle—who his bones to save
From the wolfish fiend, Detraction,
Couch'd like lions round his grave.

Daughter of the poet's mother!
Here we hail thee with delight;
Shower'd be every earthly blessing
On thy locks of silver-white!—
Sons of Burns, a hearty welcome,
Welcome home from India's strand,
To a heart-loved land far dearer
Since your glorious Father's land.—
Words are worthless—look around you—
Labour'd tomes far less could say
To the sons of such a father,
Than the sight of such a day!

Judge not ye, whose thoughts are fingers,
Of the hands that witch the lyre—
Greenland has its mountain icebergs,
Ætna has its heart of fire;
Calculation has its plummet;
Self-control its iron rules;
Genius has its sparkling fountains;
Dulness has its stagnant pools;
Like a halcyon on the waters,
Burns's chart disdain'd a plan—
In his soaring he was Heavenly,
In his sinkings he was man.

As the sun from out the orient
Pours a wider, warmer light
Till he floods both earth and ocean,
Blazing from the zenith's height;
So the glory of our poet,
In its deathless power serene,
Shines, as rolling time advances,
Warmer felt, and wider seen:
First Doon's banks and braes contain'd it,
Then his country form'd its span;
Now the wide world is its empire,
And its throne the heart of man.

Home returning, each will carry
Proud remembrance of this day,
When exulted Scotland's bosom
Homage to her bard to pay;—
When our jubilee to brighten,
Eglinton with Wilson ried,
Wealth's regards and Rank's distinctions
For the season set aside;
And the peasant, peer, and poet,
Each put forth an equal claim,
For the twining of his laurel
In the wreath of Burns's fame!

BURNS.

BY EBENEZER ELLIOT.

That heaven's belov'd die early,
Prophetic Pity mourns;
But old as truth, although in youth,
Died giant-hearted Burns.

O that I were the daisy
That sank beneath his plough,
Or "neighbour meet, that skylark sweet!"
Say, are they nothing now?

That mouse, "our fellow mortal,"
Lives deep in Nature's heart;
Like earth and sky, it cannot die
Till earth and sky depart.

Thy Burns, child-honour'd Scotland!
Is many minds in one;
With thought on thought, the name is fraught,
Of glory's peasant son.

Thy Chaucer is thy Milton,
And might have been thy Tell,
As Hampden fought, thy Sydney wrote,
And would have fought as well.

Be proud, man-child'd Scotland!
Of earth's unpolish'd gem;
And "Bonny Deon," and "heaven aboon,"
For Burns hath hallowed them.

Be proud, though sin dishonour'd
And grief baptized thy child;
As rivers run, in shade and sun,
He ran his courses wild.

Grieve not though savage forests
Look'd grimly on the wave
Where dim-eyed flowers and shaded bowers
Seem'd living in the grave.

Grieve not, though by the torrent
Its headlong course was riven,
When o'er it came, in clouds and flame,
Niagara from heaven!

For sometimes gently flowing,
And sometimes chafed to foam,
O'er slack and deep, by wood and steep,
He sought his heavenly home.

STANZAS TO THE MEMORY OF BURNS.¹

BY ELIZA COOK.

Oh, Robin, Robin, child of song!
The nobly poor—the bravely strong,
Warm hearts have met to crown thy lyre,
And mourn the fate that quenched its fire.
Like many another, rare and great,
Thou wert not treasured till too late;
Thy "magic mantle's" glowing sheen
Burst through thy shroud-cloth ere 'twas seen.

Oh, Robin, Robin! bards divine
Fair wreaths for thee have loved to twine;
But none that deck thy memory-stone
Eclipse the laurels of thine own.

¹ Inserted by permission of the writer's publishers, Messrs. Frederick Warne & Co., London.

The craven hand would seek to fling
A shadow o'er thy richest string;
But never shall such eoward slave
Shut out one ray from Robin's grave.

Oh, Robin, Robin! princes now
Will speak of him who "held the plough;"
And many a pilgrim hails the spot
Made sacred by the "ploughman's cot,"
The lips that laugh—the hearts that grieve,
Chant forth thy strains from morn till eve;
For nature ever fondly turns
To hear her own sweet truth from Burns.

Though nought beside of hallowed worth
Marked Scotia's men and Scotia's earth,
Since Burns has sung, she needs no more
To spread her fame the wide world o'er.
Oh, Robin, Robin! proudly dear,
Thy spirit still is with us here;
And glory's halo round thy head
Shines as we laud the mighty dead.

CENTENARY ODE.²

BY ISA CRAIG.

We hail this morn,
A century's noblest birth;
A poet peasant-born,
Who more of Fame's immortal dower
Unto his country brings,
Than all her kings!

As lamps high set
Upon some earthly eminence, —
And to the gazer brighter thence
Than the sphere-lights they flout, —
E-windle in distance and die out,
While no star waneth yet;
So through the past far-reaching night,
Only the star-souls keep their light.

A gentle boy, —
With moods of sadness and of mirth.
Quick tears and sudden joy, —
Grew up beside the peasant's hearth.
His father's toil he shares;
But half his mother's cares,
From his dark searching eyes,
Too swift to sympathize,
Hid in her heart she bears.

At early morn,
His father calls him to the field;
Through the stiff soil that clogs his feet,
Chill rain and harvest heat,

² Inserted by permission from volume of poems published by Messrs. Wm. Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh. This poem gained the first prize at the Centenary celebration of 1859, over more than 600 competitors.

He plods all day; returns at eve, outworn,
To the rude fare a peasant's lot doth yield;—
To what else was he born?

The God-mado king
Of every living thing
(For his great heart in love could hold them all):
The dumb eyes meeting his by hearth and stall,—
Gifted to understand!—
Knew it and sought his hand;
And the most timorous creature had not fled,
Could she his heart have read,
Which fain all feeble things had bless'd and
shelter'd.

To Nature's feast—
Who knew her noblest guest
And entertained him best—
Kingly he came. Her chambers of the East
She drap'd with crimson and with gold,
And pour'd her pure joy-wines
For him the poet-soul'd.
For him her anthem roll'd,
From the storm-wind among the winter pines,
Down to the slenderest note
Of a love warble, from the linnet's throat.

But when begins
The array for battle, and the trumpet blows,
A king must leave the feast, and lead the fight.
And with its mortal foes,—
Grim gathering hosts of sorrow and of sins,—
Each human soul must close.
And Fame her trumpet blew
Before him; wrapp'd him in her purple state;
And made him mark for all the shafts of fate
That henceforth round him flew.

Though he may yield
Hard-press'd, and wounded fall
Forsaken on the field;
His regal vestments soil'd;
His crown of half its jewels spoil'd;
He is a king for all.
Had he but stood aloof!
Had he array'd himself in armour proof
Against temptation's darts!
So yearn the good;—so those the world calls wise.
Triumphant moralize.

Of martyr-woe
A sacred shadow on his memory rests;

Tears have not ceased to flow;
Indignant grief yet stirs impetuous breasts,
To think,—above that noble soul brought low,
That wise and soaring spirit fool'd, enslav'd,—
Thus, thus he had been sav'd!

It might not be!
That heart of harmony
Had been too rudely rent;
Its silver chords, which any hand could wound,
By no hand could be tun'd,
Save by the maker of the instrument,
Its every string who knew,
And from profaning touch his heavenly gift
withdrew.

Regretful love
His country fain would prove,
By grateful honours lavish'd on his grave;
Would fain redeem her blame
That he so little at her hands can claim,
Who unrewarded gave
To her his life-bought gift of song and fame.

The land he trod
Hath now become a place of pilgrimage;
Where dearer are the daisies of the sod
That could his song engage.
The hoary hawthorn, wreath'd
Above the bank on which his limbs he flung
While some sweet plaint he breath'd;
The streams he wander'd near;
Tho maidens whom he lov'd; the songs he sung;
All, all are dear.

The arch blue eyes,—
Arch but for love's disguise,—
Of Scotland's daughters, soften at his strain;
Her hardy sons, sent forth across the main
To drive the ploughshare through earth's virgin
soils
Lighten with it their toils;
And sister lands have learned to love the tongue
In which such songs are sung.

For doth not song
To the whole world belong!
Is it not given wherever tears can fall,
Wherever hearts can melt, or blushes glow,
Or mirth and sadness mingle as they flow,
A heritage to all?

CENTENARY POEM,

BY THE HON. MRS. NORTON (LADY STIRLING-MAXWELL).

A Hundred Years! Does that recurring chime
Sound strange to those who "take no note of time?"
While to the young such slow-returning day
Seems but a seal Time sets upon Decay.

Yea, it *hath* sealed Decay! From ruined walls,
 More hoar, more moss-grown, many a fragment falls;
 Churchyards, where once the passionate mourners wept,
 Keep but faint trace of where their loved ones slept;
 On war-fields, cursed by many a dying groan,
 The partridge builds her nest, the corn is sown;
 And for fierce clarions of a hostile throng,
 Lo! children's laughter, and the reaper's song.
 Huge forest oaks are gone whose age was told
 By palsied grandsires linked with "days of old;"
 The windlestraw waves bare where once they stood,
 And slender saplings screen a thinner wood.
 CHANGE is around us! Change, whose busy spade
 Lends the old sexton, Timo, his younger aid;
 And, with a brisk ambition, buries all
 Which Death can silence, or Decay enthral.
 What do they bury? Men. They hide away
 Dead hearts, that moulder in the kindred clay;
 But something yet survives from sire to son—
 Death cannot bury *what those men have done*.
 The holy Creed which vanished lips have taught—
 The Freedom which the Patriot's blood hath bought—
 The keen invention of some vigorous mind
 Which gleaned from Science gifts for all mankind—
 The plans philanthropy at length matured
 To lessen griefs by weaker souls endured—
 These are not Death's! nor Death's the POET's SONG!
 Vainly the centuries shall roll along,
 Vainly the generations disappear—
 That Life had sap that springs from year to year!
 Who strikes one chord of Nature's music true
 Fills the void world with echoes over now:
 Men listened who are gone, but still the sound
 Gathers the newer generations round;
 And the one thought of one man's brief, bright morn
 Fathers the thoughts of men as yet unborn;
 Leaves them a younger life when his departs—
 Heirs of his claim on human hearts.

A Hundred Years! When twice that time has sped,
 Fresh be the music of the vanished dead!
 Could we count up—instead of years—the souls
 Which, through such years, poetic power controls,
 By vaguest millions could they reckoned be,
 Or by thy sands, thou world-encroaching sea?
 Count but one Poet—count the myriad throngs
 That echo Burns's words, and Burns's songs;
 How many hearts have read with honest pride,
 That "man's a man" with wealth and rank denied?
 How many, woo'd, through him, their "Bonnie Jean?"
 How many, mourned their "Mary" in his strain?
 How many, lingered o'er the Arcadian light
 That made the "Cotter's Saturday" seem bright?
 How many, felt with martial ardour fill'd,
 Hearing his "Scots wha hae" by music thrill'd?
 How many tears have dropped like ocean brine,
 When clasping hands have hallowed "Auld Lang Syne?"

We know not! but the thoughts that poets have
 (Heaven's part in them) can fill no earthly grave;
 Thought is man's soul, and lives beyond his time,
 Immortal—even when clothed in simplest rhyme;
 Like beacon fires that shone in days of yore,
 Onward they shoot, and gather more and more,
 Still waking, as they pass from mind to mind,
 An answering light to lights long left behind.
 Nor let us murmur that such fire must be
 Made of the dead boughs of an earthly tree.
 For flickering flames alone to earth are given,
 The lights that moveless shine are set in heaven.
 Poet and man (not angel), "earth to earth!"
 Dead are thy days of sorrow and of mirth;
 Dead, the quick passionate heart whose pulse beat full,
 Indifferent measure from the cold and dull.
 And dead are all thy faults! The reckless jest,
 Born of a baffled hope and sad unrest—
 Love's wild delights that fevered every vein—
 Wit's careless words from an excited brain—
 Thirst for the laurel-wreath disdain might grudge—
 And warm temptations, which the untempted judge,
 Who "know not what's resisted"—these are gone:
 Bury their memory 'neath his funeral stone;
 Let the long summers seal them in repose;
 Let the drear winters blot them with their snows;
 And own him one of those great master minds,
 Set in all stations—made of various kinds—
 But howsoever made, raised from our ken
 Above the level of more common men.
 We are blind judges. He shall judge who lends
 The various talents for mysterious ends.
 What though perverted sight can quick desery
 The mote that blurs a brother's kindling eye,
 Enough for us to hope—enough to know
 The gift of genius is God's gift below.
 In what to us seem wavering sparks, may lurk
 Fire that yet glows to do the Maker's work:
 And minor discords in the Poet's song
 May teach a lesson, though we learn it wrong.

All cannot tread alike who onward elimb
 Through the wild passes of the untracked Time,
 Nor all keep patient heart and patient speech,
 While mountain tops still top the heights they reach.
 Paths set with flowers some tempted feet delay—
 Brakes, rough with thorns, the weaker wanderer stay—
 And wistful pauses of discouraged rest
 Come to the wisest, bravest, strongest, best,
 Who see, with mournful eyes of fond regret,
 The "meliora latent," latent yet.
 Enough for us, whatever flaw man sees,
 The retrograde is not for feet like these;
 The aggregato of thought in sentient man
 Hath burst the gloom, and struggled to the van;
 And though a varying strength may arm the host,
 Their heavenly standard never can be lost.

"Onwards!" is written there in gleams of light
 The watchword of a still unfinished fight,
 Whose wrestling strength shall yet prevail, and be
 Crowned in heaven's breaking dawn with victory!

A Hundred Years! When this day comes again,
 Scarce one of all now living will remain.
 Some infant, born even while I write this rhyme,
 Perchance shall linger out that stretch of time,
 And all the elder of each meeting throng
 Be dead like him—the Master of sweet song!
 Within the circuit of those hundred years
 Eyes that are weeping shall be sealed from tears;
 Hearts that beat now, shall rest—no records tell
 The strong temptations under which they fell;
 And women's prayers of yearning wild appeal,
 To bid the men who "loved" them try to feel
 Shall grate no more; but garnered up in heaven,
 Find gentler answer than on earth was given.
 But master still of Time, dead BURNS shall be—
 His words still watchwords for the brave and free—
 His songs still love songs to the young and fond—
 His fame still linking with the time beyond.
 Much hath been lost within the vanished years,
 But not HIS power o'er human smiles and tears;
 And when the Hundredth Year again returns,
 More shall be lost—but not the name of BURNS.

ROBERT BURNS, A CENTENARY ODE.

BY JAMES MACFARLAN.

In lonely hut and lordly hall a mighty voice is heard,
 And 'neath its wild bewitching spell the honest brows are bared;
 From Scotland's hills and twilight glens to far Columbian woods;
 It stirs the city's streets of toil, and wakes its solitudes;
 It speaks no triumph reaped with swords, it brings no conquering cry
 Of buried honours battle-crowned and veiled with victory;
 But hearts leap loving to its note, and kindling bosoms glow
 To hail the Poet born to fame a hundred years ago.

O! like a glorious bird of God, he leapt up from the earth,
 A lark in song's exalted heaven, a robin by the hearth;
 O! like a peerless flower he sprang from Nature's nearest sod,
 Yet shedding joy on every path by human footsteps trod.
 How shall we tell his wondrous power, how shall we say or sing
 What magic to a million hearts his deathless strains can bring!
 How men on murkiest battlefields have felt the potent charm
 Till sinking valour leapt to life, and strung the nerveless arm;
 How hearts in dreariest loneliness have toiled through barren brine—
 The only glimpse of sunshine then, *his* pictures o' langsyne;
 How far amid the western wilds, by one enchanting tune,
 The wide Missouri fades away in dreams of "Bonnie Doon:"
 More hearts and hands renew the pledge—sweet pledge of other years,
 That sacred "auld acquaintance," by the light of parting tears.

O! blessed be the brawny arm that tore presumption down,
 That snatched the robe from worthless pride, and gave to toil a crown,
 That smote the rock of poverty with song's enchanting rod,
 Till joy into a million hearts in streams of beauty flow'd.
 And while that arm could stretch to heaven and wield the lightning's dart,
 It brought the glorious sunshine down to cheer the humblest heart;
 For free as Spring, his gladsome muse dane'd o'er the daisied plain,
 Or rang in organ-gusts of praise through grandeur's mightiest fane.
 Then blest for ever be the soul that link'd us man to man—
 A brotherhood of beating hearts—God's own immortal plan;
 Whilo Labour, smiling at his forge, or stalking at his plough,
 Looks up with prouder soul to find God's finger on his brow;
 Feels man is man though russet-robed and smacking of the soil,
 And all are brothers whether born to titles or to toil.

Then pledge his mem'ry far and near, although the hand be dust
 That oft has swept the golden lyre which ages cannot rust;
 The sun of Time ne'er sets upon the empire of his fame,
 And still unwearied is the wing that bears abroad his name;
 There may be grander bards than he, there may be loftier songs,
 But none have touch'd with nobler nerve the poor man's rights and wrongs;
 Then, while unto the hazy past the eye of fancy turns,
 Raise high the fame and bless the name of glorious ROBERT BURNS.

LINES WRITTEN FOR THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY BANQUET OF A
 NEWLY-FORMED BURNS CLUB IN MANCHESTER.¹

BY JANET HAMILTON.

High Bard of Scotia, brightest son of song,
 Who boldly swept his master hand along
 The golden strings of Caledonia's lyre,
 And pour'd in magic strains and words of fire
 The witching songs of love, its hopes and fears,
 Of love in death, embalmed with burning tears,
 Of blooming nature in her flow'ry prime;
 Of pathos deep, and sentiment sublime,
 Of humour quaint, and wit's keen lightning glance;
 The midnight orgies of the witches' dance;
 The song of Saturday's sweet evening rest,
 Dear to the cottar, eve of Sabbath blest.
 No sweeter music poet's hand hath rung
 From Scotia's lyre—no son of genius sung
 In loftier strains—no patriot's battle-cry
 Like his can nerve the arm when foes are nigh.
 But time forbids that we should longer dwell
 On themes that thrill the heart, the bosom swell—
 The name, the tuneful fame of Robert Burns,
 Still to the "Auld Clay Biggin'" memory turns,
 Where Scotia's genius, robed in tartan screen,
 In vision'd beauty, by the bard was seen,

¹ Inserted by permission of Messrs. James Maclehose & Sons, Glasgow, from volume of the author's poems published by them.

Binding upon his brow the holy wreath
 That crown'd him King of Song in life and death.
 We hail with joy and pride his natal day,
 Our votive offerings on his shrine we lay,
 And pay with honours meet and high regard
 The homage due to Scotia's deathless bard.
 Deem'd not his sire, nor mother faint and worn,
 That to their arms that wild and wintry morn
 A child of genius, heir of song and fame,
 Was given! The halo circling round his name
 Still broader, brighter grows; within its light
 In bonds of brotherhood we meet to-night,
 And hail with glowing hearts, with song and mirth,
 The day's return that saw the poet's birth,
 Not now as "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,"
 Long laid to rest on freedom's gory bed—
 Nor as of yore in battle's fierce turmoil:
 We meet as brothers on fair England's soil,
 And here with clasping hands and hearts unite,
 While mingling round the festive board to-night,
 To hail the infant year, for then returns
 The day we bless—the natal day of Burns.

ROBERT BURNS.

BY LONGFELLOW.

I see amid the fields of Ayr
 A ploughman, who, in foul or fair,
 Sings at his task
 So clear, we know not if it is
 The laverock's song we hear, or his,
 Nor care to ask.

For him the ploughing of those fields
 A more ethereal harvest yields
 Than sheaves of grain;
 Songs flush with purple bloom the rye,
 The plover's call, the curlew's cry
 Sing in his brain.

Touched by his hand, the way-side weed
 Becomes a flower; the lowliest reed
 Beside the stream
 Is clothed with beauty; gorse and grass
 And heather, where his footsteps pass,
 The brighter seem.

He sings of love, whose flame illumines
 The darkness of lone cottage rooms;
 He feels the force,
 The treacherous under-tow and stress
 Of wayward passions, and no less
 The keen remorse.

At moments, wrestling with his fate,
 His voice is harsh, but not with hate;
 The brushwood hung

Above the tavern-door lets fall
 Its bitter leaf, its drop of gall,
 Upon his tongue.

But still the burden of his song
 Is love of right, disdain of wrong;
 Its master-chords
 Are Manhood, Freedom, Brotherhood;
 Its discords but an interlude
 Between the words.

And then to die so young, and leave
 Unfinished what he might achieve!
 Yet better sure
 Is this than wandering up and down,
 An old man, in a country town,
 Infirm and poor.

For now he haunts his native land
 As an immortal youth: his hand
 Guides every plough;
 He sits beside each ingle-nook;
 His voice is in each rushing brook,
 Each rustling bough.

His presence haunts this room to-night,
 A form of mingled mist and light,
 From that far coast.
 Welcome beneath this roof of mine!
 Welcome!—this vacant chair is thine,
 Dear guest and ghost!

BURNS.

ON RECEIVING A SPRIG OF HEATHER IN BLOSSOM.

BY JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

No more these simple flowers belong
To Scottish maid and lover;
Sown in the common soil of song,
They bloom the wide world over.

In smiles and tears, in sun and showers,
The minstrel and the heather,
The deathless singer and the flowers
He sang of live together.

Wild heather-bells and Robert Burns!
The moorland flower and peasant!
How, at their mention, memory turns
Her pages old and pleasant!

The grey sky wears again its gold
And purple of adorning,
And manhood's noonday shadows hold
The dews of boyhood's morning.

The dews that washed the dust and soil
From off the wings of pleasure,
The sky, that flocked the ground of toil
With golden threads of leisure.

I call to mind the summer day,
The early harvest mowing,
The sky with sun and clouds at play,
And flowers with breezes blowing.

I hear the blackbird in the corn,
The locust in the baying;
And like the fabled hunter's horn,
Old tunes my heart is playing.

How oft that day, with fond delay,
I sought the maple's shadow,
And sang with Burns the hours away,
Forgetful of the meadow!

Bees hummed, birds twittered, overhead
I heard the squirrels leaping,
The good dog listened while I read,
And wagged his tail in keeping.

I watched him while in sportive mood,
I read "The Twa Dogs'" story,
And half believed he understood
The poet's allegory.

Sweet day, sweet songs!—The golden hours
Grew brighter for that singing,
From brook and bird and meadow flowers
A dearer welcome bringing.

New light on home-seen Nature beamed,
New glory over Woman;
And daily life and duty seemed
No longer poor and common.

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I woke to find the simple truth
Of fact and feeling better
Than all the dreams that held my youth
A still repining debtor;

That Nature gives her handmaid Art,
The themes of sweet discoursing;
The tender idyls of the heart
In every tongue rehearsing.

Why dreams of land of gold and pearl,
Of loving knight and lady,
When farmer boy and barefoot girl
Were wandering thero already?

I saw through all familiar things
The romance underlying;
The joys and griefs that plume the wings
Of Fancy skyward flying.

I saw the same blytho day return,
The same sweet fall of even,
That rose on wooded Craigeburn,
And sank on crystal Devon.

I matched with Scotland's heathery hills
The sweet-brier and the clover;
With Ayr and Doon, my native rills,
Their wood-hymns chanting over.

O'er rank and pomp, as he had seen,
I saw the Man uprising;
No longer common or unclean,
The child of God's baptizing!

With clearer eyes I saw the worth
Of life among the lowly;
The Bible at his Cotter's hearth
Had made his own more holy.

And if at times an evil strain,
To lawless love appealing,
Broke in upon the sweet refrain
Of pure and healthful feeling,

It died upon the eye and ear,
No inward answer gaining;
No heart had I to see or hear
The discord and the staining.

Let those who never erred forget
His worth, in vain bewailings;
Sweet Soul of Song!—I owe my debt
Uncancelled by his failings!

Lament who will the ribald line
Which tells his lapse from duty,
How kissed the maddening lips of wine
Or wanton ones of beauty;

But think, while falls that shade between
The erring one and heaven,
That he who loved like Magdalen,
Like her may be forgiven.

Not his the song whose thunderous chime
Eternal echoes render,—
The mournful Tuscan's haunted rhyme,
And Milton's starry splendour!

But who his human heart has laid
To Nature's bosom nearer?
Who sweetened toil like him, or paid
To love a tribute dearer?

Through all his careful art, how strong
The human feeling gushes!
The very moonlight of his song
Is warm with smiles and blushes!

Give lettered pomp to teeth of Time,
So "Bonnie Doon" but tarry;
Blot out the Epic's stately rhyme,
But spare his Highland Mary!

ROBERT BURNS.

ON THE INAUGURATION OF THE BURNS MONUMENT, KILMARNOCK, 1870

BY ALEXANDER ANDERSON.¹

Ho, stand bare-brow'd with me to-day, no common name we sing,
And let the music in your hearts like thunder-marches ring;
We sing a name to which the heart of Scotland ever turns,
The master singer of us all, the ploughman Robert Burns.

How shall we greet him as he stands a beacon in the years?
With smiles of joy and love, or bursts of laughter and sweet tears?
Greet him with all—a fitting meed for him who came and wove
Around this lowly life of ours the spells of song and love.

What toil was his! but, know ye not, that ever in their pride
The unseen Heaven-sent messengers were walking by his side;
He felt their leaping fire, and heard far whispers shake and roll,
While visions, like the march of kings, went sweeping through his soul.

"Thou shalt not sing of men," they cried, "girt up in sordid life,
Nor statesmen strutting on the stage their hour of party strife,
Nor the wild battle-field where death stalks red, and where the slain
Lie thicker than in harvest fields the sheaves of shining grain.

"Sing thou the thoughts that come to thee, to lighten up thy brow,
When, with a glory all around, thou standest by the plough;
Sing the sweet loves of youth and maid, the streams that glide along,
And let the music of the lark leap light within thy song.

"Sing thou of Scotland till she feels the rich blood fill her veins,
And rush along like sudden storms at all thy glorious strains;
A thousand years will come and pass, but loyal to thy claim,
Forever in her heart shall glow the Pharos of thy fame."

He came, and on his lips lay fire that touch'd his fervid song,
And seathed like lightning all that rose to skulk behind a wrong;
He sung, and on the lowly cot beside the happy stream
A halo fell upon the thatch, with heaven in its gleam.

And love grew sweeter at his touch, for full in him there lay
A mighty wealth of melting tones, and all their soft, sweet sway;
He shaped their rapture and delight, for unto him was given
The power to wed to burning words the sweetest gift of Heaven.

¹ Mr. Anderson, author of *Ballads and Sonnets*, *Songs of the Rail*, and other volumes of poetry, first became known to the public by poems to which the signature "Surfaceman" was attached. He has not

only been kind enough to allow the above piece to appear here, but has also carefully gone over it, and made many improvements in view of its present purpose.

O, blessings on this swarthy seer, who gave us such a boon,
And still kept in his royal breast his royal soul in tune!
Men look'd with kindlier looks on men, and in far distant lands
His very name made brighter eyes and firmer clasp of hands.

The ploughman strode behind the plough, and felt within his heart
A glory like a crown descend upon his peaceful art;
The hardy cotter, bare of arm, who wrestled with the soil,
Rose up his rugged height, and blessed the kingly guild of toil.

And sun-brow'd maidens in the field, among the swaying corn,
Their pulses beating with the soft delight of love new born,
Felt his warm music thrill their hearts, and glow to finger tips,
As if the spirit of him who sang was throbbing on their lips.

What gift was this of his to hold his country's cherished lyre,
And strike, with master hand, the chords of passion's purest fire!
Say, who can guess what light was shed upon his upturn'd brow,
When in the glory of his youth he walk'd behind the plough!

What visions girt with glorious things, what whispers of far fame,
That down the ladder of his dreams like radiant angels came!
What potent spells that held him bound, or swift, and keen, and strong,
Lifted to mighty heights of thought this peasant-king of song!

Hush! think not of that time when Fame her rainbow colours spread,
And the cool rustling laurel wreath was bound about his head;
When in the city 'mid the glare of fashion's luring light,
He moved—the moment's whim of those that wished to see the sight.

Oh, heavens! and was this all they sought? to please a passing pride,
Nor cared to know for one short hour this grand soul by their side;
But shook him off with dainty touch of well-gloved hand, and now—
Oh! would to God that all his life had been behind the plough!

And dare we hint that after this a bitter canker grew,
That all his aspirations sunk, and took a paler hue;
That dark and darker grew the gloom, till in the heedless town
The struggling giant in his youth heart-wearied laid him down.

What were his sad earth-thoughts in that last hour—ah, who can tell?
When by the pillar of his song our laurel'd Cæsar fell?
We ask but questions of the Sphinx; we only know that death
Unclasp'd his singing robes in tears, but left untouched the wreath.

Thou carper; well we know at times he sung in wilder mirth,
Until the mantle of his song was trailing on the earth;
But not for thee to lift thy voice, but leave the right to Heaven
To judge how far this soul has dimm'd the splendours it had given.

For us who look with other eyes, he stands in other light,
A great one with his hands upheld through shadows to the right,
Who, though his heart had shrunk beneath the doom that withers all,
Still wove a golden thread of song to stretch from cot to hall.

And now, as when the mighty gods had fanes in ancient days,
And up to carven roof-work swept great storms of throbbing praise
So we to all, as in our heart, this day with tender hand
Uprear the marble shape of him, the Measurer of our land.

And sweeter sounds are ours than those which from that Memnon came,
When the red archer in the east smote it with shafts of flame;
We hear those melodies that made a glory crown our youth.
And wove around the firmer man their spells of love and truth.

And still we walk within their light—a light that cannot die;
It shines down from a purer sun and from a brighter sky;
It crowns this heaven-born deputy of Song's supremest chords,
And leaps like altar-fire along his deep and burning words.

Lo! pause and for a moment take the seer's keen reach of ken,
And see the dim years struggling up with crowds of toiling men;
They, too, will come, as we this hour, with passionate worship wrung,
And place upon those white, mute lips, the grand, great songs he sung.

Ho! then, stand bare of brow to-day, no common name we sing,
And let the music in your hearts like thunder-marches ring;
We sing a name to which the heart of Scotland ever turns,
The master singer of us all, *our* ploughman—Robert Burns.

BURNS FESTIVAL ON THE BANKS OF THE DOON, 1844.

An interesting and imposing demonstration in honour of Burns was held on the banks of the Doon, on 6th August, 1844, being got up for the double purpose of honouring the memory of the poet and giving a fitting welcome to his sons on their return from India—after upwards of thirty years' service. The idea originated in consequence of a visit paid by Colonel William Nicol Burns, soon after his return from India, to his aunt, Mrs. Begg, the youngest sister of the poet, who then, with her two daughters, inhabited a neat cottage within a stone's-throw of the poet's birthplace. It was suggested that the appearance of the son among the scenes consecrated to the memory of his father ought not to be passed over as an ordinary occurrence, but that some attempt should be made to welcome him in a worthier manner than by the common greetings of admiring or loving friends. An influential committee being constituted it was resolved to issue invitations which should include not only the three surviving sons of Burns, but also many distinguished persons who might desire an opportunity to render homage to the memory of the bard. The arrangements of the committee included the erection of a large pavilion in a field immediately behind the monument

on the banks of the Doon to accommodate the principal visitors; while at the other extremity of the inclosure were several less dignified erections for the use of less privileged guests. The town of Ayr was gallily decorated with flags, triumphal arches, &c., and the various clubs, societies, and trades marched out to take their part in the proceedings on the banks of the Doon. A great banquet was served in the pavilion, covers being laid for 1600 guests. The Earl of Eglinton presided, and among those present were Robert Burns, the poet's eldest son; Colonel William Nicol Burns, his second son; Major James Glencairn Burns, his youngest son; Miss Begg, niece of the poet; Professor Wilson; Sheriff Glassford Bell; Mr. and Mrs. Thomson, of Dumfries, the latter being the "Jessie Lewars" sung by the poet; Sir John McNeill; Lord-president Boyle; Sir David Hunter Blair; Sir Archibald Alison, the historian; Colonel Mure of Caldwell; Professor Aytoun; Dr. Moir, the "Delta" of "Blackwood;" Robert Chambers, and other celebrities. The chairman in proposing "The memory of Burns," delivered an eloquent and sympathetic address, in which he said: "The descendant of those who dwell in the 'Castle of Montgomery' feels himself only too highly honoured in being permitted

to propose the memory of him who then wandered there unknown on the banks of the Fall. How little could the pious old man who dwelt in yonder cottage—with his 'lyart haffets' o'er-spreading his venerable brow—when he read the 'big ha' Bible' how little could he have guessed that the infant prattling on his knee was to be the pride of his nation—the chief among the poetic band—was to be one of the brightest planets that glows around the mighty sun of the Bard of Avon—second to none in the fervent expression of deep feeling, in the genuine perception of the beauties of nature; and equal to any who revels in the fairy land of poesy. Well may we rejoice that Burns is our own!—that no other spot can claim to be the birth-place of our Homer except the spot on which we stand. Oh! that he could have foreseen the futurity of fame created for him this day, when the poet and the historian, the peer and the peasant, vie with each other in paying the tribute of their admiration to the humble but mighty genius of him whom we hail as the first of Scottish poets. Such a foresight might have alleviated the dreary hours of his sojourn at Moss-giel—might have lightened the dark days of his pilgrimage on earth. Well does he deserve our homage who has portrayed the 'Cotter's Saturday Night'—not in strains of inconsiderate mirth, but in solemnity and truth—who breathed the patriotic words that tell of the glories of our Wallace, immortalizing alike the poet and the hero; he who could draw inspiration from the humble daisy, breathed forth the heroic words of 'The Song of Death,' strains the incarnation of poetry and love, and yet of the bitterest shafts of satire and ridicule!—obeying but the hand of nature, despising all the rules of art, yet triumphing over the very rules he had set at naught. At his name every Scottish heart beats high. He has become a household word alike in the palace and the cottage. Of whom should we be proud—to whom should we pay homage, if not to our own immortal Burns?"

The great feature of the banquet was the speech of Professor Wilson in introducing the toast—"Welcome to the sons of Burns." His speech excited the utmost enthusiasm throughout the assembly, its effect being enhanced by the fervid style of his delivery, augmented by the highly picturesque appearance of the

speaker, and his exceedingly musical voice. In the course of his speech he said:—"Were this festival to commemorate the genius of Burns, and it were asked what need is there of such commemoration, since his fame is co-extensive with the literature of our land, and inherent in every soul, I would answer that though admiration of the poet be indeed unbounded as the world, yet we, as compatriots to whom it is more especially dear, rejoice to see that universal sentiment concentrated in the voice of a great assembly of his own people—that we rejoice to meet in thousands to honour him who has delighted each single one of us all at his own hearth. But this commemoration expresses, too, if not a profounder, yet a more tender sentiment; for it is to welcome his sons to the land which their father illustrated—to indulge our national pride in a great name, while, at the same time, we gratify in full breasts the most pious of affections. It was customary, you know, in former times, to crown great poets. No such ovation honoured our bard; yet he too tasted of human applause—he enjoyed its delights, and he knew the trials that attend it. Which, think you, would he have preferred? Such a celebration as this in his lifetime, or fifty years after his death? I cannot doubt that he would have preferred the posthumous, because the finer incense. I would not even in the presence of his sons pass altogether over the father's faults. But surely they are not to be elaborately dwelt upon in this place, and upon an occasion like the present. It is consolatory to see how the faults of those whom the people honour, grow fainter and more faint in the national memory, while their virtues grow brighter and still more bright; and if in this, injustice has been done them—and who shall dare to deny that earnest injustice was once done to Burns?—the succeeding generations become more and more charitable to the dead, and desire to repair the wrong by some profounder homage. Truly said, 'the good which men do lives after them.' All that is ethereal in their being alone seems to survive; and, therefore, all our cherished memories of our best men, and Burns was among our best, ought to be invested with all consistent excellencies; for far better do their virtues instruct us by the love which they inspire, than ever could their vices admonish us. Burns,

who, while sorely oppressed in his own generous breast by the worst of anxieties—the anxiety of providing the means of subsistence to those of his own household and his own hearth—was, notwithstanding, no less faithful to that sacred gift with which by heaven he had been endowed. Obedient to the holy inspiration, he ever sought it purely in the paths of poverty—to love which is indeed from heaven. From his inexhaustible fancy, warmed by the sunshine of his heart, even in the thickest gloom, he strewed along the weary ways of the world flowers so beautiful, that even to eyes that weep—that are familiar with tears—they looked as if they were flowers dropped from heaven. Among mighty benefactors to mankind, who will deny that Robert Burns is entitled to a high place? He who reconciled poverty to its lot, who lightened the burden of care, made toil charmed with its very task-work, and almost reconciled grief to the grave; who, by one immortal song has sanctified for ever the poor man's cot, and by a picture which genius alone, inspired by piety, could have conceived, a picture so tender and yet so true of that happy night, that it seems to pass, by some sweet transition, from the working world into that hallowed day of God's appointment, and made to breathe a heavenly calm—a holy serenity. Now, I hold that such sentiments as these which I have expressed, if they be true, afford a justification at once of the character of Burns—his moral and intellectual character—that places him, beyond the possibility of detraction, amongst the highest order of human beings who have benefited their race by the expression of noble sentiments and glorious thoughts. The people of Scotland loved their great poet. They loved him because he loved his own order, nor ever desired, for a single hour, to quit it. They loved him because he loved the very humblest condition of humanity so much, that by his connection he saw more truly, and became more distinctly acquainted with what was truly good, and imbued with a spirit of love in the soul of a man. They loved him for that which he had sometimes been, most absurdly, ques-

tioned for—his independence. They loved him for bringing sunshine into dark places; not for representing the poor hard-working man as an object of pity—but for showing that there was something more than is dreamed of in the world's philosophy among the tillers of the soil, and the humblest children of the land."

Robert Burns, Junr., the eldest son of the poet, replied to the toast. In the course of his speech, he said: "I am sure the sons of Burns feel all that they ought on an occasion so gratifying, on which so nobly generous a welcome has been given them to the banks of the Doon. Wherever they have gone they have found a reception prepared for them by the genius and fame of their father, and, under the providence of God, they owe to the admirers of his genius all that they have, and what competencies they now enjoy. We have no claim to attention individually—we are all aware that genius, and more particularly poetic genius, is not hereditary—and in this case the mantle of Elijah has not descended upon Elisha. The sons of Burns have grateful hearts, and will remember, as long as they live, the honour which has this day been conferred upon them by the noble and the illustrious of our own land, and many generous and kind spirits from other lands—some from the far West, a country composed of the great and the free, and altogether a kindred people. We beg to return our most heartfelt thanks to this numerous and highly respectable company for the honour which has been done us this day." Among the other toasts were "The poets of England," by Sir John McNeill, who paid a beautiful compliment to Wordsworth; the "Poets of Ireland," by Sheriff Glassford Bell; the "Memories of Scott, Campbell, and Byron," by Sir Archibald Alison; the "Memories of James Hogg and Allan Cunningham," by Professor Aytoun; the "Peasantry of Scotland," by Colonel Mure; the "Land of Burns," by Sir James Campbell; &c. &c.

The general crowd that had assembled to take part in the festivities was believed to have numbered about 50,000 people.

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS, 1859.

Whoever first conceived the thought of celebrating the anniversary of Burns's birth, could have formed little idea of the floods of eloquence and enthusiasm which the institution he then contemplated would year after year give vent to. Since 25th January, 1801, when Burns's biographer, the Rev. Hamilton Paul, Wm. Crawford of Doonside, John Ballantine of Ayr, and Robert Altken, both personal friends of Burns, and a few others instituted the Ayr Burns Club, and held their first meeting in the cottage at Alloway, till the present time, the number of Burns clubs and similar associations has increased to such an extent that there is scarcely a Scotch community in the world but has its club and annual celebration on 25th January. Though as a general rule these meetings are convivial, and though sometimes the enthusiasm may be due as much to the punch-bowl as to Burns's poetry, yet at many of them the most distinguished men of the day have taken part—and done honour to the "lad" that "was born in Kyle," from pure love and admiration of the man and his work. For instance, the Edinburgh celebration in 1819 drew out an array of eminent men such as is seldom seen in any one gathering—among the speakers being Scott, Jeffrey, Cockburn, Hogg, Wilson, Robert Ainslie, Geo. Thomson, &c. All previous celebrations, however, were eclipsed by the national commemoration of the hundredth birthday of the poet, on 25th January, 1859, which was a thing of the kind unparalleled. The nearest resemblance to it previously was, perhaps, the great Stratford Jubilee of 1769, in which Garrick interested himself so much, as the nearest approaches to it since have been the celebration of the ter-centenary of Shakspeare's birthday on 23rd April, 1864, and the hundredth anniversary of Sir Walter Scott's birthday which was celebrated in August, 1871. But despite the fact that the two former of these demonstrations were in honour of the mighty-minded Bard of Avon, and the other in honour of the great Wizard of the North, the other fact remains that none of them were—to put it shortly—a "success"

equal to that on which the nation united to do homage to the memory of the peasant Bard of Ayrshire. That, indeed, was not merely national—it extended to every portion of the habitable globe where the English language is spoken—the festival being held not in Scotland alone, but in England, in Ireland, in America, in India, Africa, and Australia. It may confidently be asserted that no other poet of any time or country ever evoked such a profound, heartfelt, and wide-spread expression of love and sympathy. Scotland itself had, of course, by far the greatest number of celebrations. A "Chronicle" published during the year by James Ballantine, the poet, records 676 celebrations in Scotland, 76 in England, 10 in Ireland, 48 in the Colonies, 61 in America, and 1 in Copenhagen, but the actual number held would at least be twice as many. In Edinburgh the day was kept as a general holiday. In the evening there were four great public or open demonstrations, in the Music Hall, the Corn Exchange, Queen Street Hall, and Dunedin Hall. The most important gathering was at the banquet held in the Music Hall, presided over, in the regretted absence of Lord Brougham, by Lord Ardmillan, the distinguished Scottish judge. The chairman—who used a mallet made from the wood of the "wincock bunker in the east," mentioned in "Tam o' Shanter," and now preserved in the Edinburgh monument—was accompanied to the platform by the Lord Provost (Melville), the Lord Justice-Clerk (Inglist), Lord Ivory, Lord Neaves, Rev. Dr. Robert Lee, Mr. Adam Black, M.P., Sir Wm. Gibson Craig, Professor Blackie, Mr. D. O. Hill, Mr. James Ballantine, Professor Campbell Swinton, and others. Sheriff Gordon and Mr. Robert Chambers acted as croupiers. A letter was sent by Lord Brougham to the chairman, which dilated on the Scottish system of education and the merits of the Scottish language, with digressions on the dialects of ancient Greece and of Italy, but with little or no reference to Burns or to the particular occasion. The chairman, in proposing the prin-

epical toast of the evening, delivered an eloquent address, from which we extract the following:—

"Though I am deeply conscious that I shall most inadequately present to you the great toast of this evening—especially as I am a most unworthy substitute for the illustrious man whom we had hoped to see in the chair—I shall, without prelude, address myself to the subject which has evoked these simultaneous gatherings in every part of the world. One hundred years ago, a Scottish peasant was born, who in his life was first flattered and tempted, then scorned and neglected, by the great, and whose world-wide fame now craves a demonstration altogether without precedent. There is a pretty impromptu by James Montgomery—

He pass'd through life's tempestuous night,
A brilliant trembling Northern Light;
Through after years he shines from far
A fix'd unsetting Polar Star.

To that star, clear and bright, after the lapse of a century—a glorious light and yet a beacon light—all eyes are now turned. No poet of any age or country has obtained the same position in popular admiration and affection as Burns. Truly it is said by Wilson—a noble and appropriate eulogist of such a man—'Burns was by far the greatest poet who ever sprung from the bosom of the people, and lived and died in humble condition.' As the embodiment of popular genius, the champion of popular independence, and the type of popular elevation, his memory—not the memory of his faults and his follies, but the memory of his matchless genius and his noble spirit—is cherished close to the heart of every Scottish man. In my own county of Ayr, to my connection with which I owe the honour of my present position, this feeling is greatly intensified. His memory there is inscribed on every feature of natural scenery, and associated with every phase of domestic life. Everything there around us is impressed by his genius and vocal with his name. We seem to hear it in the song of every bird and the murmur of every stream, in the sigh of the night-wind that rocks the raven's nest at Alloway Kirk, and the rippling of the moon-lit waves breaking on the coves of Culzean; our breezes whisper, and our rocks repeat, all nature echoes, and the heart of man owns it with responsive

throb. There in a lowly cottage, on 'the banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,' dwelt his worthy father—he who is so touchingly and beautifully described in 'The Cotter's Saturday Night,' as reading to his gathered household from 'the big ha' Bible,' and offering the family prayer, so impressive in its simple solemnity—

That He, who stills the raven's clamorous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But chiefly in their hearts with grace divine preside.

In that cottage Burns was born. Within a week of his birth the 'auld clay bigging' was partly blown over in the night, and beneath the midnight storm and howling wind and flashing light, the infant poet and his mother were carried to a neighbouring hovel for protection—meet ushering into life of the tempest-tossed soul of Burns—fit emblem of the startling combination of the wild and the tender, the terrible and the homely, which swayed his heart and inspired his muse. Since Ayrshire contains not merely the spot of his birth but the scene of his youth and his prime, of his sports and his toil, of his loves and his friendships—the scene of his nascent thoughts and springing fancies, where his young genius tried her early wing, and,

As he walked in glory and in pride,
Following his plough upon the mountain side,

his great heart swelled with its high aspirations—amid such scenes an Ayrshire man may be forgiven an intense and peculiar feeling on the subject. But Burns belongs not to Ayrshire alone, but to Scotland; and in a sense, not to Scotland alone, but to humanity. In every part of the habitable world where Scottish enterprise has penetrated, and the Scottish tongue is known, and Scottish hearts beat with manly feeling and patriotic emotion, his works are universally felt to be a great popular treasure—his fame a great popular heritage—his genius a great popular impulse, as it sheds gladness on the humble home, and cheers the social board, and inspires the dream of young ambition, and revives the courage of sinking hope. To the Scottish peasant Burns represents and illustrates all that he prizes most: his order ennobled; his humble lot dignified; his un-

uttered aspirations expressed in words that set his heart on fire; his country honoured by the genius of the cottage-born. But there have been other peasant-bards; and it is not alone to his humble birth, his rural toils, and his Scottish dialect, that the name of Burns owes its popular spell. The true power of the charm lies in three qualities, characteristic alike of the man and of his poetry—sensibility, simplicity, and reality. He was the poet not of fiction but of truth. His joys and tears, his passion and his pathos, his love and his pride, the reckless mirth of his jovial hours, and the remorseful sadness of his subsequent reflections—all are real—the product not of his fancy, but of his experience; and as he clothes in language of modest and nervous simplicity his natural and earnest thoughts, his words find an echo in the heart. Under all the forms of affectation, whether it be of thought, or fancy, or feeling, or style, the charm of poetry breaks and the power of genius withers; and of all true poetry the inspiration should be drawn, like that of Burns, fresh, clear, and gushing, from the fountains of natural thought and feeling. Burns was no mere song-writer. Had he never written a song, his poems would have made him immortal; had he written an epic or dramatic poem, the author of 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' and of 'Tam o' Shanter' could not have failed; and in any view he must rank, not merely as the greatest poet of humble station, but as one of the greatest poets whom the world has produced. In my humble opinion there is more genius in Burns's songs than in volumes of our modern poetry. Sometimes in sublimity, sometimes in pathos, sometimes in graphic description, sometimes in elevated sentiment, sometimes in exquisite humour, and always in tender and passionate emotion, Burns is without a rival. Let petty fault-finders and carping cavillers object as they may—the true test of the power of Burns's poetry is, that, like what is recorded of his society, criticism is disarmed by intense emotional impression. There are deep springs in the human heart, often covered and hidden by the rubbish and *debris* which the tide of life deposits as it rolls along; other poets pass over the surface and pierce not the interposed earthiness, but these hidden springs are stirred by the power of a spirit like Burns, and nature, evoked from her

deep and rarely-reached recesses, owns the touch of a master-spirit, and bursts forth responsive to the call of true genius. I should trespass too long on your time if I once began to quote in illustration of this peculiar character of Burns's poetry. What heart does not feel that 'The Cotter's Saturday Night,' 'The Vision,' 'The Lament,' and the address 'To Mary in Heaven,' with others too numerous to mention, are poems of the rarest and highest order? What can be finer, wild and startling as it is, than the "Address to the Deil," and the picture of the great enemy as

Whyles ranging like a roaring lion,
For prey a' holes and corners tryin';
Whyles on the strong-wing'd tempest flyin',
Tirlin' the kirk's;
Whyles in the human bosom pryin',
Unseen thou lurks!

'Tam o' Shanter,' to any one well acquainted with the Scottish dialect, is magnificent. It is scarcely possible to refrain from quoting; but I must forbear. Notwithstanding the supernatural ingredients so admirably wrought into the tale, it has all the air of a reality. Every Scotsman, especially every Ayrshireman, with a mind above the clouds of the valley, can close his vision on existing objects, and in his mind's eye can see Tam, and the Souther, and the landlady, and the parting cup, and the ride in the storm, the auld haunted kirk, the accumulated horrors on the table, the dance of witches to the unearthly music of the demon-piper on the bunker, the furious rush of the startled legion with Cutty-sark at their head, the crisis of Tam's fate at the keystone of the brig, and the gray mare skelping hame without her tail! In the midst of this wild description, where horror and humour prevail by turns, how beautifully is the vanity of earthly pleasure touched off:—

But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snow-fall in the river,
A moment white—then melts for ever.
Or like the borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
Evanishing amid the storm.

But wonderful as 'Tam o' Shanter' is, our admiration is increased by the extraordinary fact that the whole poem was written, not in Ayrshire, where he was in the midst of the

scenes, but at Ellisland, and between break-fast and sunset of one day. Among the many specimens of the broad and hearty humour of Burns, I may mention 'Meg o' the Mill,' 'Tam Glen,' 'Death and Dr. Hornbook,' where rare caustic humour alternates with a power almost sublime; and 'Hallowe'en,' where the rustic sports of that now almost forgotten festivity are charmingly described. The 'nk of the adventure of 'Feehtin' Jamie Fleck,'

Who whistled up Lord Lennox' march
To keep his courage cheerie;
Although his hair began to arch,
He was sue fley'd and eerie:
Till presently he hears a squeak,
An' then a grane and grumtle,
He by his shoulther g'ed a kek,
An' tumbled wi' a winkle
Out-owre that night.

He roar'd a horrid murder shout
In dreadfu' desperation!
And young and auld came rinnin' out,
To hear the sad narration;
He swore 'twas hiltchin' Jean McCraw
Or crouchin' Merran Humphie,
Till, stop!—she trotted through them a';
An' wha was it but Grumphie,
Asteer that night!

Or call to mind the scaring of Leezie on the brae—a sketch in which the graphic and humorous spirit is relieved by a bit of exquisitely beautiful description:—

A wanton widow Leezie was,
As canty as a kittlin';
But, och! that night, among the shaws,
She got a fearfu' settlin'!
She through the whins, and by the cairn,
And over the hill gaed screevin',
Where three lairds' lands meet at a burn,
To dip her left sark sleeve in,
Was bent that night.

Whyles ower a linn the burnie plays,
As through the glen it wimpl't,
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays;
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't;
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays
Wi' flickering, dancing dazzle;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
Below the spreading hazel,
Unseen that night.

Among the brackens, on the brae,
Between her and the moon,
The dell—or else an outler quey
Gat up an' gae a croon:
Puir Leezie's heart maist lap the hool,
Near lav rock-height she jumpit;
But miss'd a fit, and in the pool
Out-owre the lugs she plumpit,
Wi' a plunge that night.

Or what say you to his epigram on a certain lawyer?—

He clench'd his pamphlets in his fist,
He quoted and he blinted,
Till in a declamation-mist,
His argument he tint it:
He gaped for't, he gaped for't,
He fand it was awa', man,
But what his common-sense cam' short,
He eek'd it out wi' law, man.

I cannot pause to give specimens of the tender and passionate poetry of Burns. His songs abound in stanzas of surpassing beauty, chiefly inspired by his love to Bonnie Jean, his good and faithful wife—a love which was, I think, his deepest and tenderest feeling. His famous lines said to be addressed to Clarinda, and containing the stanza adopted by Byron as the motto of the 'Bride of Abydos,'

Had we never loved so kindly,
Had we never loved so blindly,
Never met, or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted,

were not, I believe, meant for Clarinda, but for Bonnie Jean, whose image was never long absent from his heart. He walks by the burn-side at night, and sings—

As in the bosom of the stream,
The moonbean dwells at dewy e'en,
So trembling, pure, is tender love
Within the breast of Bonnie Jean.

He plods his way across the hills from Ellisland to Mossiel, and love prompts the charming song to Jean, 'Of a' the airts the wind can blaw.' When Lapraik's verses are sent him, his heart chooses—

There was ae sang among the rest
Aboon them a' it pleased me best,
That some kind husband had address'd
To some sweet wife;
It thrill'd the heart-strings through the breast,
A' to the life.

He sees in fancy the Genius of Coila, and Jean recurs to his mind as alone rivalling the celestial visitant—

Down flow'd her robe—a tartan sheen,
Till half a leg was scrippily seen,
And such a leg—my Bonnie Jean
Alane could peer it;
Sae straight and taper, tight and clean,
None else came near it.

And then, with all his high aspirings, and all his love for social pleasures and even social excesses, where does he place the scene of his highest duties and his dearest joys?

To make a happy fireside ellipse,
For weans and wife,
That's the true pathos and sublime
Of human life.

Had this man not a heart, and a heart with some rare qualities—sensitive, passionate, and tender? I believe that, next to the blessing of a conscience divinely enlightened, and divinely cleared, the greatest happiness permitted to man in this life is the happiness of loving and being beloved. The heart is the true spring of happiness, as Burns himself well says—

It's no in titles nor in rank,
It's no in wealth like Lammock bank
To purchase pence and rest.
It's no in books, it's no in lair,
It's no in making muckle mair,
To make us truly blest.
If happiness have not her seat
And centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
We never can be blest.
Nae treasures, nae pleasures
Can make us happy lang:
The heart aye's the part aye
That makes us right or wrang.

Of the moral character of Burns I must say a word. Let me not be misunderstood. I am no hero-worshipper, no unqualified eulogist of Burns. I protest against the thought that for what is morally wrong an excuse can be found in the rarest talents; and deeply should I regret if any word fell from me tending to lower the standard of character, or loosen the obligations of religion and morality. There are few sadder subjects of contemplation than a noble generous spirit like that of Burns, manly, tender, and true, full of the love of nature, of country, and of liberty, yet floating rudderless and helpless on the tide of life, till dashed on the fatal rocks which have wrecked so many of his countrymen. His lot, indeed, was cast on evil times. The tone of morality in his day was not pure or high; the tone of religion was cold, and hard, and low. To the prevailing devotion of his day, generally cold, frequently ascetic, sometimes hypocritical, there was an antagonism in Burns's nature. Genuine, practical, and loving piety might have charmed and won him. If, instead of the stern or the cold preachers who repelled his feelings and stimulated his opposition, there had met Burns a pastor in whose large and genial heart dwells love and sympathy as well as faithfulness, who,

true to his own convictions, recognizes in others the rights of conscience, whose preaching and whose life present religion in her most attractive aspect, and whose imperishable memorial will be read in the statistics of diminished crime, in the testimony of reclaimed children, and in the records of converted souls, who can tell what impression might have been made on him? He was not so fortunate. To him was rarely presented the instructive illustration of the influence of true religion on human character. That influence comes in no harsh or ascetic spirit, it diverts no noble aim, it extinguishes no honourable ambition, it quenches no pure fire of genius, no flame of virtuous love, no generous sentiment or kindly feeling; but, entering with searching power into the heart, out of which are the issues of life, it expels from the 'dome of thought' and the fountain of feeling the dark spirits of evil, it raises man to his true dignity, and directs his faculties to their appropriate aims. We must deplore and condemn much in the character and in the writings of Burns; we must lament that the spirit in which he wrote the 'Cotter's Saturday Night' did not always prompt his pen or guide his life; but there was much to deplore in the character of the times in which he lived. Time has not passed in vain over the influence of Burns. As a mountain torrent, depositing its earthiness as it flows, comes after a long course to reflect the face of heaven on its bosom, time has cleared and mellowed the influence of Burns—like an old and rich wine, the coarse and impure particles have subsided, and we now rejoice only in the pure and generous qualities which remain. I do not seek to disguise or to palliate his faults—but who among us is without faults? Charity, which hopeth all things and thinketh no evil, ought to be our monitor. Let us 'gently scan our brother man'—let us judge ourselves severely, and others leniently—let us gather the good we can, though it be intermingled with evil—let us use aright the more favourable appliances which surround us—let us strive ourselves to cultivate a purer morality, and adorn by our lives a sounder religious profession; but let us admire in Burns whatever is worthy of admiration, and honour his genius as it deserves. Those who object to this demonstration must remember that the power of Burns over the

popular mind of Scotland is a great fact which cannot be ignored. Burns has lived, and has written, and has a hold upon the heart of Scotland. It is well to qualify our praises, and to inculcate the warning lessons of his life. But surely it is not the part of wisdom or of virtue so to repudiate such a man as to consign to the cause and the friends of mischief a name and fame so attractive and so potent. Let us rather deal with the power of Burns's name as science has dealt with the electric element. Science has not stood afar off, scared by each flash, mourning each shivered tower; science has caught and purified the power, and chained it to the ear of commerce and the chariot of beneficence, and applied it to the noble purpose of consolidating humanity—uniting all the world by the interchange of thought and feeling. On this day Burns is to us, not the memory of a departed, but the presence of a living power—the electric chain which knits the hearts of Scotsmen in every part of the world, stirring us not only to admiration of the poet's genius, but to the love of country, of liberty, and of home, and of all things beautiful and good. Therefore, I call on you to pledge me, not in solemn silence, but with our heartiest honours, to 'The Immortal Robert Burns.'

At the conclusion of the chairman's speech Mr. James Ballantine read a poetical address composed by himself for the occasion.

The genial Lord Neaves, in proposing "The Biographers of Burns, and Mr. Robert Chambers," said—"It has been said that a hero is nothing without a poet to celebrate his achievements; and it may be added that a poet is not wholly himself without a biographer to commemorate his character and conduct. Some poets there may have been so fortunate as to afford few materials for biography—who, blest with a decent competence, and exempt from violent passions, have retired to the secluded contemplation of nature, or have looked at the world through the loopholes of some cabin retreat where they might behold the perils of life without partaking of them—

With friendly stars their safety see,
Within some little winding creek,
And see the storm ashore.

But with those who are cast forth upon the billows and breakers of human existence, who, with feelings as quick and passions as power-

ful as their genius, are exposed to all the trials and temptations that flesh is heir to; above all, with those who, with manly souls and genial dispositions, have known the heights and hollows of worldly fortunes, the task of the biographer is necessary not only to make us know the poet, but to make us know his poems. With all its imperfections, there is no literary work more delightful than Johnson's *Lives*, and there has seldom been a life more deserving of commemoration than that of the great man in whose honour we are now met. I shall not attempt to enumerate all his biographers, for their name is Legion. I shall select four names out of the list as specially deserving notice. The services of Dr. James Currie, as the first great biographer of Burns, were nearly as valuable as they were meritorious and disinterested. I do not enter on the controversy whether Currie was too forward to do what another great man forbade—

To draw his frailties from their dread abode,
The bosom of his father and his God.

If he erred in this respect, it was not through want of charity or from bad intention; and any accusations there admitted have since been answered by anxious and ample vindications, which have enabled the cooler hands of our own days to hold the balance impartially. We now know the man as he was, with many errors that in him were unhappy, and in us would be unpardonable, but with virtues at the same time that far outweigh all his faults. But Currie was especially useful in helping men to form a true estimate of Burns's genius and works. Even in Scotland, Burns was then imperfectly appreciated. But in England he needed an interpreter to introduce him. Currie discharged that office successfully, and thereby at once did honour to the Scottish name, and rendered good service to English literature. Towards the end of the last century there seemed at one time a great risk that all manly and noble poetry would be extinct. By the influence of some silly women, and some sillier men, a school arose under the name of the Della Cruscan, of the most sickly and senseless sentimentality; while, on the other hand, a return to the old style of Pope and Dryden was hopeless. At this juncture there arose two men especially qualified to regenerate the

public taste, and give it a truer and firmer tone than it had long exhibited. Cowper published his 'Task' in 1785, and in 1786 there appeared in the obscure town of Kilmarnock a volume of 'Poems chiefly in the Scottish Dialect,' which needed only to be known in order to be admired. These two men were very different, and were suited to reach very different minds; but they agreed in this, that they were men of manly intellects and noble hearts, and it was impossible that where their poetry could penetrate there could be any room for affectation or imposture. The diffusion of a relish for Burns was in this way a safeguard against false taste, and a preparation for whatever of genuine nature or feeling we have since welcomed in the poetry of the present century. Nor would it, perhaps, be a bad thing if some of the poets of the present day would revert to those models, and imitate, without copying, the native force and straightforward simplicity—the intelligible feelings and the transparent diction—by which they are so eminently characterized. It should never be forgotten as to Currie, that while he devoted to his friendly task the time and strength which might have been occupied in his profession, he generously gave up to Burns's family the whole profit—a very considerable sum—which was thus realized. The next names I shall couple together—Lockhart and Wilson—have both done justice to our great bard; and the eulogy of Wilson is one of the noblest pieces of criticism in the language. These men, adorned with all the learning of classical studies, and accomplished in all the arts that confer literary skill, recognized fully, by an instinctive sympathy, the merits of him who had 'followed his plough upon the mountain side;' and they gave him their admiration, not as a sentiment of relative wonder due to a show or a prodigy, having reference to his origin and position, but as a tribute of just praise to an equal—to one who, in his own department, was absolutely and abstractly, both in sentiment and in expression, an unrivalled master of his art. I now come to the last of the list—one who, in closing the procession, has done his work so fully and so exhaustively, that he seems to have made it impossible than he can have a successor. Our friend and fellow-citizen, Mr. Robert Cham-

bers, has brought to bear on this task that power of industry and skill of research which in other departments, and particularly in the Antiquities and in the Domestic Annals of Scotland, have rendered such services to his country. In preparing his Life of Burns, every source of information has been visited, every track that promised any advantage has been followed up, every document has been collected that could throw a ray of light on the truth. We have thus, I think, a perfect history and representation of the man, while the occasion and motive of all his poems have been admirably illustrated. To Mr. Chambers we thus owe a full and final development of the truth (as to Burns), and we can there learn the lesson to avoid his errors, to admire his virtues, and to cherish, as we now seek to do, the memory of his genius. I ought to add that Chambers, like Currie, has literally made his work a labour of love, and generously surrendered the profits of his great exertions to promote the comfort of those of Burns's surviving relatives who needed assistance."

Mr. Robert Chambers, in returning thanks, said that he must attribute his having entered into the same field with such men as Currie, Wilson, and Lockhart, to Burns himself, and to the public, because there was no name in the past which he had been accustomed to regard with so much veneration and love as that of Robert Burns. In his (Mr. Chambers's) early days, Burns was in the position of Shakespeare in the days of Rowe and Pope; but since then men had learned to appreciate his works more thoroughly and to take greater interest in the incidents of his life. That was the reason that had led him to look more narrowly into the life of Burns, and to prepare his biography of the poet. If, in executing that book, he should have gratified the curiosity of the present or of any future generation, he should be amply rewarded for his laborious days and nights.

The chairman, in the absence of the Dean of Faculty (J. Moncrieff, M.P., LL.D., afterwards Lord Moncrieff), proposed the toast of "The Peasantry of Scotland." Not being able to find any one to undertake that toast, he would venture, he said, to do so himself. He therefore proposed the fountain from which the stream flowed in which they were all re-

joining. The influence of Burns's poetry on the people of Scotland subsisted at that moment; it affected them in their homes; it affected them in their public gatherings; it affected the heart and mind of the people of Scotland; and not of Scotland only, but of the whole world at that day. He thought that it could be nothing but a generous, noble, and virtuous sentiment which came so home to the hearts of men in every stage of their lives and in every part of the globe. Therefore, with very warm wishes for the prosperity, advancement, advantage, and elevation of the peasantry of Scotland, he proposed their health. No good could befall them they did not wish them; no good could happen to them they did not deserve; no good could be their lot which Burns would not have desired; no good could be theirs which, on this hundredth anniversary of Burns's birth, they did not earnestly and with their whole hearts wish for them. He proposed "The Peasantry of Scotland." He hoped they might retain the feeling and fervent affections of Burns, with firmer principle and more self-denial.

The chairman then introduced to the company Mr. William Glover, an old man, aged a hundred years and six months, who had been a contemporary of Burns, had heard his voice, and seen him face to face.

Mr. Glover, who appeared remarkably hale for his years, was received with much cheering; and recited a portion of "Tam o' Shanter," with a good deal of spirit and humour.

Among the other toasts were "The memory of Sir Walter Scott," by Professor Blackie; "Scottish Art and the Royal Scottish Academy," by Prof. Campbell Swinton; &c.

The "grand citizen banquet" in the Corn Exchange, Edinburgh, under the auspices of the Total Abstinence Society, was likewise a great success. The chairman was Mr. Duncan McLaren, long member of parliament for Edinburgh. Part of his address ran as follows:—

"It is not for me to depict the character of Burns in all its parts. I will only say that the poetry of Burns has sunk into the character and hearts of the people of Scotland. Every one knows more or less of it. Every one knows so much of it, that I have no doubt whatever that if, by some extraordinary event, the writings of Burns were to be all burnt, they

could be reproduced from the memories of the people of Scotland. The power of his writings is something extraordinary. They have, as it were, been woven into the thoughts and feelings of the people. His whole character seems to have been imbued with the most intense love of country—with the most ardent patriotism. I know many people blame us for coming here to celebrate the anniversary of Burns, because, as they justly say, he was not an immaculate character. No doubt, ladies and gentlemen, many things could be pointed out which are deserving of severe criticism; but when we consider the character of the man, we must consider it in reference to the times in which he lived. We must not measure a man like Burns by the gauge of the customs and sentiments of the present day alone. For example, if, in the days of Burns, some great meeting had been called to celebrate the heroes whom he idolized and almost worshipped—I mean Wallace and Bruce—had a meeting been called for this or any other purpose when Burns lived and was in the zenith of his fame, I ask you, would it have been possible to have called 2500 persons together in a hall like this, where they had nothing stronger to drink than tea and water? Those who read the contemporary history of that time know that, much as he is blamed for the bacchanalian sentiments to be found in many of his songs, and for the effect which those in many instances have produced, he must be measured by the men amongst whom he lived; and if you look at contemporary history and inquire into the customs that then prevailed, by reading the lives of men who lived in these times—take, for example, the glimpses which are given of life in Edinburgh at the beginning of the present century in that interesting work of Lord Cockburn's—you will find that men, far more elevated, in a worldly point of view, than Burns—men most distinguished at the bench and at the bar—indulged as much, I fear some of them even more, in those bacchanalian orgies for which Burns became, unfortunately, so distinguished. There is one part of his character which I should like to notice—the deep and heart-felt sympathy which he had for anything to elevate man; his ardent love of liberty; his sympathy with every just and good cause; his utter abhorrence of everything like obsc-

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quency, and falling down and worshipping the rich and the great in whatever society he was placed. When he came, for example, to this great city to have a second edition of his works published, he was taken into the highest circles; he was idolized; and no man could have been more noticed and petted (if I may say so) than was Burns. And yet, from all that we know of that period of his life, we have every reason to believe that he took his place amongst the highest of the land, standing erect and calling no man master. He tells us himself in a short sketch of the early period of his life which is preserved, that the first books which he ever read after he left the school, were the *Life of Hannibal*, and the *Life of Wallace* by Blind Harry; and he tells us the effect of the reading of the last of these works was extraordinary upon his mind. He says,—‘The story of Wallace poured Scottish prejudices into my veins, which will boil and run over until the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest.’ This was infinitely the case. This may be regarded as the key to his character. To his intense love of country as a Scotsman, his intense admiration of his patriot hero, and for all those who, like him, stood in defence of liberty, we are no doubt indebted for that beautiful song, ‘Scots, wha hae wi’ Wallace bled!’ In no circumstances of his life did he forget that self-respect to which he was entitled from his talents and genius. When he came to Edinburgh, he was taken by the hand and met with an amount of kindness which, I think, has been greatly underrated. Many people say he did not get justice from the more distinguished men who lived in his time. My impression is that he could hardly have expected to meet with greater attention, greater respect, or greater patronage (as it was then called) than he did when he came to Edinburgh.” After referring to what had been done for the success of Burns’s second edition of his works by the gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt, Mr. McLaren said—“In the dedication to that edition of his works, we do not find that fawning, flattering, cringing to the great, which we find in the dedications of many works of that period by many distinguished literary men. In that dedication he says, in words which should never be forgotten: ‘I was bred to the plough, and I am independent.’ That was Burns’s idea of

independence. Burns was one of the people. He knew that to every man health and strength were real independence, if he could only earn his bread; and that independence he would not have exchanged for the most distinguished position which the world could give. That is the kind of man with which the people at that time had to deal; and hence the ardent love of liberty which is to be found woven into the very heart of all his poetry, and which has done so much, in my opinion, to nourish, to cherish that ardent love of liberty, which exists to so great an extent amongst the people of Scotland. I believe that, next to the spirit that was infused into this country at the time of the Covenanters (to whom we can never be sufficiently grateful), I think that to Burns we are more indebted than to any other single individual, for cherishing, and preserving, and increasing that intense patriotism and love of country and love of liberty that characterize Scotsmen, not only in their own country, but in any other country in the world to which it may be their fortune to go.”

Mr. Thomas Knox, a well-known citizen of Edinburgh, said:—“It seems to me that we sometimes speak of Burns as our national bard without realizing how transcendently glorious the title is; for only think how big that great soul of his must have been which can fill up the vast space of a century—I might even say of the wide, wide world of civilization itself. For where is the habitable nook of creation that the enterprising and daring feet of our countrymen have ever trodden, that has not also been penetrated and gilded by the sun-like rays of his resplendent genius? Wherever Scotsmen go, he goes—dwell, and he dwells—ay, laugh, and he laughs; and it is because of this moral ubiquitousness of Burns that he is emphatically our national poet, and that we celebrate his centenary in a manner that has never been before, and may never be again. If I were asked to define in one simple and significant word the great supreme characteristic of Robert Burns, I would define it as universality—universal love. He loved all mankind, without reference to creed, country, or colour, as perhaps no man ever did. No man ever gave such overflowing fulness of expression to the idea of universal brotherhood as did Robert Burns.” Mr. Knox having cited

"A man's a man for a' that" as an illustration of the idea of universal brotherhood which so largely distinguished Burns, said, in conclusion—"And since Burns fell asleep, what mighty forces have been wakened up by Providence, and launched into the arena of the world's history, and are hurrying on the epoch for which he so fervently longed! The penny postage has opened its lips, and proclaimed the dawn of the prophecy—"It's coming yet for a' that;" the printing-engine, with untiring energies and enterprise, cries out by night and by day—"It's coming yet for a' that;" the railway train, bounding and careering along the valleys of England, along the valleys of Europe, ay, and along the valleys of every continent in the world, merrily whistles the strain, "It's coming yet for a' that." The fleets of steamships, scudding along the high-seas, beat paddle-time as they bear to every shore the millennial music, "It's coming yet for a' that;" and the electric telegraph, as if impatient of the progress of its great compeers in civilization, speeds lightning-footed, and careers from shore to shore, proclaiming the same heaven-born message—

It's coming yet for a' that,
When man to man, the world o'er,
Shall brithers be for a' that.

In the name of our national bard, Robert Burns—in the name of his and our own dear auld mother, Scotland—in the name of universal manhood—and in the name of our universal Father, God, Amen—so let it universally and quickly be."

The Rev. Alexander Wallace of Glasgow also delivered an eloquent address, in which he said—"This is, in some respects, one of the most remarkable nights in the history of Scotland. The country is stirred to its very depths, and not only so, but a sympathetic chord is struck which vibrates in the breast of every Scotsman on the face of the earth. What is it that has led to such a national demonstration on the part of a people not easily moved to such meetings as the present? The gatherings in every town and village to-night, from John O'Groat's to Maidenkirk, are not sectional or party gatherings, but national. They breathe the spirit of an entire people, for Robert Burns was the most intensely national poet that ever lived. The Supreme Giver of all good gave

Scotland a rich and rare gift—we may never see the like of it again—in that immortal genius which, when it rose to the high purpose for which it was given, men felt—as they feel still, and must ever do, so long as human hearts can feel the power of genius—that this gift was truly the 'touch of nature that makes the world kin.' We can never forget that Burns was born a poet, that he was a poet by nature, that the gift which was in him was not the result of art, but a gift of nature, as much as is the song of the linnet or the lark. He poured the rich melody of his genius over broad Scotland, because, like the birds, he could not but sing. There was in him, by nature, what could not fail to attract and delight, and make him a power amongst the people. In that humble homestead in which he was reared, conjugal love and all the gentle ministrations of the home affections brightened the stern face of poverty, strengthened every noble sentiment, and cheered the drudgery of ceaseless toil. No man knew better, or could better describe, the home influences of humble cottage life. He knew the straits, the privations, the joys and the sorrows, the independence and the worth, the manly virtues as well as the weaknesses, that were to be found in the cottage homes of Scotland; and nowhere does his marvellous genius appear to greater advantage—nowhere does it shine with greater brightness and purity than when he starts into life those scenes and feelings which appeal to the common heart of man. This is the secret of his power, especially with the mass of the people. They love him notwithstanding all his failings. You have but to witness the effect produced in any circle, or in any great promiscuous gathering of the people, by the singing of one of Burns's songs, in which manly independence, or the love of freedom, or patriotism, or conjugal affection, or the purity of virgin love, is set forth, to be convinced of the power and vitality of his genius, and of the hold which he has upon the hearts of men. The popularity of his best lyrics does not arise from the music to which they have been wed, as is the case with many songs, but from the inherent power of genius itself. Take away from his writings all that is objectionable, all that in his last hours he would have blotted out, and which he would have consigned,

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could bitter regret have done it, to the deepest shades of oblivion—take away all which the best of men and his firmest admirers regret should ever have been written, and after this is done there will still remain much, very much, that will endear his genius to the common heart of man, and which that heart, as long as it beats in unison with noble sentiment, will not willingly let die."

At the meeting in Queen Street Hall the chair was taken by Professor George Wilson (professor of technology in the university), who in the course of his speech said:—"We are met together this night, not to criticise Burns, not to judge Burns, not to apologize for Burns—no, not even to praise Burns. He is now in the land of the great departed, and when we consider that, we shall be slow to call him, whom the Merciful Judge has already judged, before our unauthorized tribunal to judge him anew. If you think that in that world of spirits they know what happens here, you will be slow to call before you him who has been already judged; and if, on the other hand, you believe that no message goes from this earth to that other spirit world except by those who themselves have also put off the mortal flesh, you will the more feel that, as he cannot hear our praises, as little should he be called before us to hear his faults. You will also agree with me that we should be sparing of judgment, and that we need not offer laudation; yet, let me say that it is not because we are afraid to submit him to criticism. All know the incident that happened when his grave was opened to lay his widow beside him. When his mouldering remains were exposed, they took up that wondrous example of Divine architecture—his skull—and, perhaps unseemly—I will not say irreverently—they tried whether their hats would fit it. And that very skull, which bare the flesh that once covered it, and the noble black locks that had curled around it, was too big for their hats. Ay, let us be warned by that; let us not try to cover Burns's head with our caps. Let us not seek to show that his organ of veneration was not so big as ours—that his organ of benevolence was not so large—but that his organ of self-approbation was larger than ours. Ah me! he was beyond most of us; and let us cheerfully concede that, and waive aught of judgment. And yet we might

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submit him to judgment, and not be afraid to praise him. We are not here to be partakers of other men's sins. It is not the faults of Burns that have brought us together; no, it is the superabounding excellence of his virtues that has compelled us to come here to-night. No man denies that he had his faults; he would rise himself from his grave and condemn him if he did. Nevertheless, let me remark that he was a shining star. In that noble poem which was read to-day in the Crystal Palace, Burns is called a 'star soul,' and the world will be acknowledged. I would have said he was a 'burning and a shining light,' did I not fear that I should be called irreverent in quoting Scripture about him. Yet he was a true star, and 'dwelt alone;' and, as a star, so as a sun. Now, you know that our sun has spots in it—great blanks of darkness, great areas out of which no light comes. There are some who judge Burns as an astronomer would the sun, if, when he was asked about it, he said there were only spots of darkness in it. You do not judge so. As the sun heats as well as illuminates, I ask you if Burns has not, from our earliest childhood forward to manhood, been alike the source of intellectual light and moral heat, though we do not refuse to acknowledge that there are spots of darkness in him. There is a seaminess in our commemorating his birthday, for I ask you if it is not the case that Burns lives amongst us to a far greater extent than many a man whose heart is still beating, and his blood still flowing in his veins? He is so, inasmuch as he was that great thing—a poet. And what does that mean? It means that he could create what others could not; it means a man who can see a greater light about all things than other men can see—a sweeter sound in all music than they can hear—a deeper loveliness in all that is lovable than they can feel—who can, in fact, day after day, feel and realize what other men do only at short seasons and at brief intervals. And then this Burns, who was a marvel of genius—who had the power to see what other men could not see, was no poet-laureate with a liberal pension—no titled lord occupying his leisure hours with verses—no idolized youth with his collar turned down—but a hard-worked ploughman, 'following his plough upon the mountain side,' who could

only steal an evening for something to lighten the hardships of his daily toll by thrashing so many more sheaves in the barn—one whose bread was scanty and coarse, whose sleep was short—who, in bearing on his shoulders the burden of a Scottish peasant's life, had enough, and yet who rose to be a higher light than the most idolized and most regal Scotsman of them all. Yet we are all poets in some degree. The child who thinks it can climb the rainbow, who believes that the moon can be cut into slices, or who looks into his pillow and sees wondrous things there, is a poet; every child who reads the Arabian Nights, who believes in Aladdin's lamp, or who goes to a pantomime, is a poet. And in later years we all become poets—love makes us poets. Every man lover is a poet; every gentle sweetheart is a poetess; every mother bending over her suckling child is a poetess; every son comforting his old mother is a poet. There is a poetry in all our lives, if we can feel it; and if we cannot, no Burns or any one can teach it. But we want some one to see it for us, and this Burns did; and how did he do it? He so sang that we not only enter intensely and sympathizingly into all his feelings, but he sang in the very way that we ourselves would have done had we had the power. Think of this—that he has sung our native land into greater glory in the earth because it is the birth-land of Burns. There is not anywhere over the civilized world where men are able to appreciate genius, or worth, or reality—who do not say that Scotland, in producing a ploughman like Burns, who did not pretend to speak more than the feelings of his own countrymen, but spoke it with the poet's power, must be a grand land. And he sang our Scottish tongue into a repute that it never had before, and secured for it a longevity that otherwise it never would have had, so that he would be a bold man who would predict the time that mother speech will die, when Englishmen learn it for nothing but to read the songs of Burns." The professor also touched on some of the sorrowful features of the life of Burns, in which respect he compared him with Scott, Southey, Moore, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Chatterton, and other poets. An obligation lay on all, he said, to receive the instruction and edification from the lives of our poets that they were fitted to give, as it

was only by suffering that they learned what they had taught in song.

The greatest of the gatherings in Glasgow to do honour to the National Bard took place in the City Hall, under the presidency of Sir Archibald Alison.

The chairman in proposing "The Immortal Memory of Robert Burns," said:—"In approaching this great subject, I know not whether to feel most impressed with the lowliness of the origin from which our great national poet sprung, or the colossal magnitude of the fame which he has since attained. On this day one hundred years—25th January 1759—a child was born in a cottage near the now classic Kirk of Alloway, in Ayrshire, intended apparently for a humble lot, and to be gathered at length to his fathers, unknown, unsung, in the simple churchyard where 'the rude forefathers of the hamlet slept.' But this child was destined to immortality—Nature had given him the patent of true nobility, the passport to eternal fame; and while all, or nearly all, contemporary reputations have already passed away, his alone is hourly on the increase, and now shines like the fixed stars with imperishable lustre. His fame has been like the swelling eddy, which rises round a pebble thrown by a child—the child of nature—into a stream; but that stream has descended to the ocean and become a mighty wave, which has rolled across the Atlantic, and broke on the American and Australian shores. Vast as is this assembly which I now address, it is but the representative of millions in the East and in the West, in the North and in the South, who are now found together in the expression of common feeling; and the pulse which now throbs so violently at the very name of Burns under this roof, is beating also at the same moment in the extremities of the earth, afar off in Australian and Transatlantic wilds. Mr. Pitt said at Lord Liverpool's table, shortly after Burns's death, that 'since the time of Shakespeare, poetry had never come so sweetly from the hand of Nature as in his rhyme;' and that was literally true, and true just because Nature had been his only teacher. Self-taught, untutored, he poured forth in unpremeditated lays 'the short and simple annals of the poor;' but in their short and simple annals he found means to descend to the inmost depths of the

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human heart, to ascend to the loftiest heights of human feeling. 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' is the most perfect picture that ever was drawn, not merely of individual life, but of the race of man, inferior to none in the world in virtue and firmness—the peasantry of the land. 'Auld Langsyne' has become the national air of Scotland—the expression of the love of home and of the scenes of infancy to the entire civilized world. 'Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,' is already the war-song of the bold and the patriotic in every country of the earth—and the passion of love in its purest form was never so finely expressed as in his immortal lines to Highland 'Mary in Heaven.' To us, and to Scotsmen in every part of the world, who can appreciate the fidelity of his pictures, the poems of Burns possess a peculiar and indescribable charm: they recall scenes of early youth, long unseen, but still unforgotten, and realize in waking hours the beautiful words of the poet in the Soldier's Dream:—

I flew to the pleasant fields traversed so oft
In life's morning march, when my bosom was young;
I heard my own mountain goats bleating aloft,
And knew the sweet strains which the corn reapers sung.

But the universal admiration with which the poems of Burns have been hailed, not merely in his own country, but over the whole civilized world, prove that, great as his graphic powers were, they were the least of his varied gifts. It was the depth of his feeling, his warm, expansive love for all mankind, the touching pathos which shone forth in his pieces, which everywhere went to the heart. His tenderness extended even to inanimate objects. The hare, the field-mouse, the mountain daisy, have been celebrated in his songs. Above all, he possessed in the highest degree that great quality without which, in the trial of Time, all others are but as tinkling brass—a due appreciation of the dignity of human nature, and a firm determination to assert it. To him we owe those noble lines now become as household words in every land of freedom—

The rank is but the guinea's stamp;
The man's the gowd for a' that.

To this quality also he owed many of the mis-

fortunes with which his life was embittered. Had he condescended to flatter the great—to conciliate the affluent—to fawn upon the multitude—he might have earned ease and comfort in life; but he disdained to do any of the three. Therefore he was neglected by his contemporaries—therefore we are now raising statues to his memory. Gentlemen, it is said that Burns was a Radical. I know he was; but I do not respect him the less on that account. I wish we had more Radicals like Burns. Most men of his ardent and poetic temperament are inclined to those opinions, and were so especially in his day. They see in others the generous feelings of which they are conscious in themselves. It is well they are so; they would miss their mission if they were not. Genius is the moving power of the moral world. Experience is the fly-wheel which regulates the movements of the mighty machine: without the first it would stand still; without the second it would be torn in pieces. It is by the counteracting influence of the two, as by the antagonistic action of fire and water in the material world, that the equilibrium of nature is preserved; and thus is secured at once the life, the progress, and the stability of nations. But if Burns was a Radical, he was not less a patriot. He was no advocate for domestic broils or foreign interference; for what said he to the Dumfries Volunteers, of whom he was a member?—

Be Britons still to Britons true,
Among ourselves united;
For never but by British hands
Mann British wrangs be righted.

A more serious charge brought against Burns is that his life was sometimes irregular, and some of his poems effusions which, however admired at the moment, his warmest friends must now lament. Gentlemen, in reference to this charge I will not repeat the common excuse, that his frailties were those to which men of ardent and poetic mind have in all ages been most subject. I disclaim any such apology. I recognize no exemption from moral responsibility in the sons of genius. I know rather that from him to whom much is given much also will be expected. But I say he was a son of Adam, and let him that is without sin among you throw the first stone. I would answer in the words of Bolingbroke, when re-



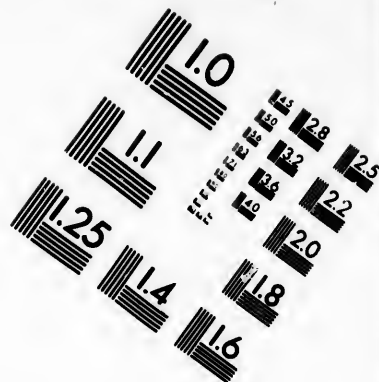
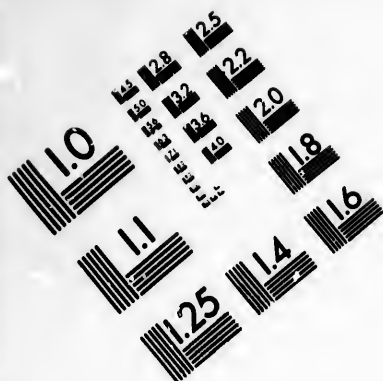
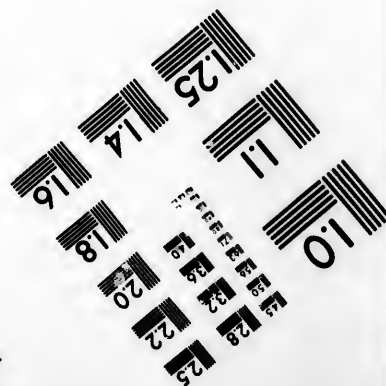
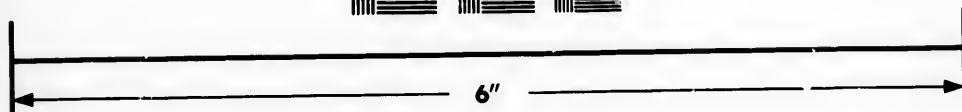
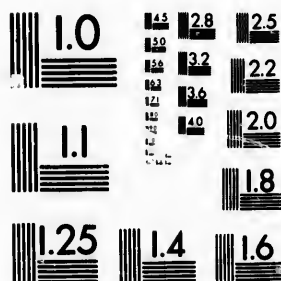
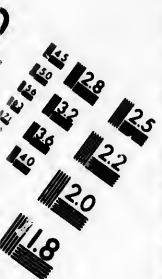


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mind of the faults of his great political antagonist, Marlborough—'Yes, I know he had faults; but he was so great a man that I have forgot what they were.' And I would recommend his detractors to imitate his example—to expiate passing faults by lasting benefits to the species, and, like him, to cause the spots on the sun to be forgotten in the lustre of his rays. But one great moral truth I extract from the fate of Burns, and that is that no lasting fame is to be acquired, even by the brightest genius, save that which is devoted to the purposes of Virtue; for the few poems of Burns which we now lament have long since passed into oblivion, and those on which his immortal fame is rested are as pure as the driven snow. And, as such, they will form an unseen bond which will for ever unite Britons and their children in every part of the world—a bond which will survive the maturity of colonies, the severance of empires; and 'Auld Langsyne' will hold together the widespread descendants of the British empire, when grown into independent states—

Tho' seas atween them since hae row'd.

Gentlemen, I have detained you too long; and I conclude in the words of the poet—

A last request permit me here
When yearly ye assemble a',
One round, I ask it with a tear,
To him the bard that's far awa'."

The poet's son Colonel James Glencairn Burns, who formed one of the company, said—"I humbly thank my God that He has spared me to live and see this glorious day, a day on which so many thousands in almost every part of the globe are paying homage to the genius of the Bard of Scotia. My mother told the late Mr. M'Diarmid of Dumfries that my father once said to her—'Jean, one hundred years hence they'll think mair o' me than they do now.' How truly this prophecy has been fulfilled the proceedings here and elsewhere amply testify. I feel most grateful to you for the opportunity you have afforded me of being present at this, one of the most influential of these gatherings, presided over, as it is, by the celebrated and talented author of the *History of Europe*—supported by such well-known and distinguished men as Judge Haliburton, Principal Barclay, Sir David Brewster, Mr.

Monckton Milnes, and Mr. Glassford Bell. In no place will the day be hailed and celebrated with more enthusiasm than in the far East, where I spent so many and such happy years. In proof of this I may quote a few lines written by my old friend, Colonel George Anderson Veitch, the author of many a Burns's birthday ode. In a poem of his, entitled 'The Exile in India,' he says—

The music of Scotia is sweet 'midst the scene,
But ah! could you hear it when seas roll between!
'Tis then, and then only, the soul can divine
The rapture that dwells in the songs o' langsyne.

As a leal and true Scot, and a warm admirer of the genius of the bard, I have joined in doing honour to his memory. As his son, permit me to return you my most sincere thanks for the same."

Mr. Henry Glassford Bell, himself well-known as a poet, gave the toast of "The Poets of England." "Every one," he said, "has felt that it is not always on those occasions when he is most anxious to say something worthy of being listened to, that he is best able to satisfy his own wishes. I confess that to-night I feel my mind almost overpowered when I reflect on the grandeur of the devotion—not national only, but world-wide—that is being paid to the memory of one man. I question whether such an amount of grateful and affectionate remembrance was ever before so concentrated and so extended. The question naturally occurs—Whence all this gratitude?—honourable alike to him who occasions and him who cherishes it; surely no unworthy sentiment, since it ascends to the Creator through the person of one of his created. Whence this gratitude? Simply because that Scottish peasant added more than most men to the stock of human happiness; and he did so by throwing wider open the gate of human knowledge. The most valuable of all knowledge is knowledge of ourselves, and it is *that* the poet teaches. Great as the benefactor of his species is who extends the confines of science, not less great is he whose finer eye looks with a clearer perception into all the subtle mechanism of the human heart. Robert Burns invented no steam-engine, but he knew the secret source of tears and smiles; he discovered no new planet, but he called up thoughts that twinkled in the soul like stars, for he touched, as with

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a fiery finger, every latent emotion until it
started into light; he made us no richer in
worldly wealth, but he taught us how divine
a thing human love may be; he taught us the
nobility of earnest patriotism and unflinching
manliness; he taught us how these, or any of
these, may make the darkest life resplendent
with a gleam of inward lustre. Hence comes
it that thousands of his fellow-men, who never
saw him in the flesh, have to-day met in every
quarter of the globe to do him honour; hence
comes it that

The might
Of the whole world's good wishes with him goes;
Blessings and prayers, in nobler retinue
Than scepter'd king or laurel'd conqueror knows,
Follow this wondrous potentate!

In Scotland all this feeling is intensified by
the consciousness that Burns was essentially,
and, from his cradle to his grave, our country-
man—a Caledonian. The country to which
other great men have belonged seems often to
have been an accident of birth. There appears
no reason why Shakspeare might not have been
born in Scotland, and Beattie or Campbell in
England. But Burns never! He was a con-
centration of the genius of Scotland. His
patriotism was Scottish—

Wha for Scotland's king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freeman stand, or freeman fa',
Let him on wi' me!

His delight in the beauties of external nature
was Scottish—

Their groves o' sweet myrtle let foreign lands reckon,
Where bright-beaming summers exalt the perfume;
Far dearer to me yon lone glen o' green breckan,
Wi' the burn stealing under the lang yellow broom.

His loves were Scottish, and his happiest mo-
ments with the objects of his love were in the
midst of Scottish scenery—

Ye banks and braes and streams around
The Castle o' Montgomery,
Green be your woods and fair your flowers,
Your waters never drunlike;
There simmer first unfold her robe,
An' there the longest tarry,
For there I took the last farewell
O' my sweet Highland Mary.

His noble independence was Scottish—

Is there for honest Poverty
Wha hangs his head, and a' that?
The coward-slave, we pass him by,
We daur be poor for a' that!

His earliest and his latest aspirations were
Scottish—

Even 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 useful plan or book could make,
Or sing a sang at least!

Shall Scotland not be proud of her peasant
poet—

Who murmur'd to the running brooks
A music sweeter than their own.

Show me a song-writer, from the days of Ana-
creon to the days of Beranger, who comes
within a thousand miles of him. All social
and friendly gatherings do good to the hearts
of care-worn men; but we have assembled here
to night with a nobler motive than to eat and
drink and be merry. We have assembled to
do justice to the better part of our own nature,
by declaring our veneration for a true bard
who died in poverty, but who has made us
heirs to the priceless riches of his own effulgent
mind. I leave the theme with reluctance; but
it has already been desecrated on with an elo-
quence that has charmed us all, with a copious
grace and beauty peculiar to the rich, genial,
and refined mind of an Alison. The toast I
have the honour to propose is 'The Poets of
England.' I do not know whether it is meant
to be limited to the living poets; if so, their
number, I fear, is small, taking the word poet
in its true and proper sense. But I think it
may be understood to comprehend all those
poets who shed, about five-and-twenty years
ago, so brilliant a light over the literary hori-
zon. Their bodily presence has been taken
from us, and it is a somewhat sad thought for
those who, like myself, have been privileged
to look upon their fine and thoughtful fore-
heads, and to hear their living voices, that
nothing mortal now remains of a Byron, a Cole-
ridge, a Wordsworth, a Southey, a Shelley, a Ro-
gers, a Hemans, and a Landon, but the mouldering
dust in their graves. Yet, though dead, they
still speak to us solemnly and sweetly; none
with more solemn sweetness than Wordsworth,
because none with a truer and purer human
love and understanding. The sacred key was
intrusted to the keeping of them all by which
the deeper heart of man is unlocked; and the
electric thrill emanating from them diffuses
itself through all lands—

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin!

Of living poets I must not pretend to speak; but, as Wordsworth in his beautiful sonnets on personal feelings says he will mention two female portraiture 'pre-eminently dear'—

The gentle lady wedded to the Moor,
And heavenly Una with her milk-white lamb—

so I shall venture to name two poets as standing conspicuously out among all our living minstrels, and sending abroad from their resounding lyres richer and nobler melodies than any of their compeers. You will not doubt that I mean Alfred Tennyson, and the high-minded lady, Mrs. Barrett Browning. Their styles are altogether different, each marked by its own originality; but in the works of both there is a repertory of dignified and graceful thoughts, of deep and glowing feelings, of suggestive and lofty imaginings, which have worthily won for them a place far up the sacred mount. Of them, and of all who labour at the same delightful task, we say with universal voice—

Blessings be with them, and eternal praise,
Who gave us nobler loves, and nobler cares;
The poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth, and pure delight, by heavenly lays!

Permit me to couple with my toast the health of an English poet now present, whose English heart is not the less sound that it has in it some Scottish affections, which inspired him with a poet's yearning to do honour with us to Scotia's bard. Mr. Monckton Milnes—so well known for his more recent exertions in the cause of legislative and social improvement, has written, among other effusions of great energy and beauty, *Memories of Many Scenes*. I hope that to-night will enable him to add to them a fresh memory which he may deem worthy of cherishing, and that he will at least believe that 'poor auld Scotland,' whilst it remembers departed, welcomes living genius."

Mr. Monckton Milnes (afterwards Lord Houghton) was received with cordial applause, and said—"Nurtured in the love and admiration of Burns, and accidentally connected with the fortunes of his family, I accepted the proposal to act as one of the arbiters of the merits of the poems composed in his honour, and for myself, the distinction of being your guest to-day. Many of you will have seen the poem

to which the prize has been adjudged, and have, I hope, not considered it unworthy of the occasion; but it becomes me here to say a word respecting the unsuccessful candidates for the crown, many of whom have produced works of deep feeling and noble expression, and all of whom appeared impressed with the real greatness of the character it was proposed to them to celebrate. In the phrase of one, they all recognized

The glorious and poetic peasant
Driving his laurel'd plough.

In the words of another, they appreciated the character of the people who read by turns

The Psalms of David and the Songs of Burns.

Two impressions indeed, which seem to me altogether erroneous, prevailed in many of the poems—the neglect of the poet by his contemporaries, and the connection between his poetic gifts and the sorrows and discomforts of his life. Now, I believe that the worth of a poet never received a more rapid acknowledgment from a nation than Scotland has given to Burns, from the first letter of Dr. Blacklock to the celebration of this hundredth anniversary. I am equally convinced that the poetry of Burns was the joy and sustenance of an existence not otherwise favoured by fortune. True, the lights of the poetic temperament cast their shadows, as they will always do; true, there was in him that earnest melancholy, which is ever the reverse of the true medal of genuine humour. But without his poetry Burns must have been as much an exile from his native land as Dante, whereas with it he is as identified with his country as Shakespeare. Those, indeed, who desire to combine the pleasures of the composition of verse with the duties of active life, will rejoice to remember that Burns made an excellent and diligent exciseman, as Wordsworth an accurate stamp-distributor; and instead of lamenting that such men were so employed, they will delight in every combination of rare talents and honest toil. Who shall say whether, if the outward circumstances of the life of Burns had been those of comfort and repose, his wonderful powers might not have been obscured and contracted? But be this as it may, I am sure that the passionate admiration which brings together the multitudes of this evening would not have been excited. The

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sorrows of the great have ever been the aliment
of the veneration of mankind; and the victims
of misfortune in high places have even attained
supernatural powers, without any very close
scrutiny into their character and conduct.
But the time comes when even the 'sad stories
of the deaths of kings' fail to move the popu-
lar imagination; and yet, even then, the heart
of a nation is stirred to its depths by the re-
collection of suffering genius, and something
of a sacred halo surrounds the poet who has
endured and striven like a man."

Mr. Blanchard Jerrold then, in a few words,
proposed, "The Poets of Scotland;" a toast
which he coupled with the name of Peter
Cunningham, the son of Allan Cunningham.

Mr. Peter Cunningham, in his reply, said—
"I have a slender claim to return thanks for
the poets of Scotland. My father was a Scot-
tish poet, and was, moreover, a Scottish peas-
ant. To him I owe everything, and my
brothers, who fought in the East, like the
sons of your chairman—to him they owe every-
thing. Our destiny has been cast very much
like the destiny of the sons of Burns. My
friend, Mr. James Glencairn Burns, derives
his name from a Cunningham; and my father
also was one of the best friends the poet had,
for he wrote his life, and wrote it well, and
vindicated his character. My dear friend Col-
onel Burns here, left his native Dumfries, and
became a scholar in Christ's Hospital like
myself. The two sons of Burns went to India
and came back with honour. Two sons of
Allan Cunningham went there too, and ac-
quitted themselves with honour to their
country. I have this claim also to return
thanks for the poets of Scotland, that I have
shaken hands with Sir Walter Scott, and for
twenty years I sat with Archibald Hastie,
and drank to the immortal memory of Scot-
land's poet out of Burns's own punch-bowl. I
have perhaps another claim to reply to this
toast. I have sat with Thomas Campbell, the
poet of Hope and Hohenlinden, and drank
whisky-toddy, very well brewed, from that
silver bowl given to the great poet by the stu-
dents of this university. I have also sat and
drank with the Ettrick Shepherd from a silver
bowl given to him by a true-hearted Scot, and
honoured and prized as it deserved to be.
There is a genealogy in song. Our friend,

Mr. Monckton Milnes, will recollect how
beautifully that idea is expressed by Dryden,
who says that Chaucer was the poetical father
of Spenser, and Spenser of Milton. There is
a hereditary descent in song as natural as
'Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob.'
I will even say that Allan Ramsay was the
father of Robert Burns, and Robert Burns the
father of the 'Ettrick Shepherd, and Allan Cun-
ningham of Edmonstone Aytoun and Charles
Mackay. In this belief, that poetry never
dies, I return thanks for the poets of Scotland."

Mr. Baillie Cochrane of Lamington (now
Lord Lamington), in proposing "The Poets
of Ireland," said—"It does not require any
assurance to persuade us of the extreme beauty
of the Irish melodies. The lyrical power has
happily not expired with Cormac and Carolan
—the names of Sheridan and of Moore, of
Sheridan's illustrious granddaughters, of Gold-
smith, of Lever, of Morgan, of the author of
the 'Angel's Whisper' and of 'Rory O' More,'
our honoured guest of this night, Samuel
Lover—all these testify that the cunning has
not departed from the land, and that the fire
of Irish talent still burns like the inextinguish-
able lamp of Kildare's shrine."

Mr Samuel Lover, in reply, said—"Before I
attempt to allude to the subject-matter of the
toast you have just heard, I must first give
expression to a feeling that has been struggling
at my heart all this night, increasing in warmth
and magnitude as the evening has progressed;
and that feeling has been one of more than a
fulness of joy—an overflow of joy—at the glo-
rious sight I have seen to-night of a nation's
pride in her poet. That I have been invited
to this banquet to-night, and for such a pur-
pose as to speak on the part of the poets of
Ireland, I look upon as the highest honour of
my life. It is an honour every man might be
proud of, and this medal I wear as steward of
this meeting I look upon as an order of poetic
merit which I shall treasure as long as I live.
Ireland is as proud of her poets as Scotland is,
and Great Britain ought to be well pleased,
and regard it as one of the happiest circum-
stances attendant upon the triumphal march
of our language, that it has become the vehicle
of thought and expression for such men as
Goldsmith, and Sheridan, and Moore. That the
poets of Ireland should be remembered

here does not surprise me, because there is much in common between the people of the two countries. They are both of Celtic origin, both gifted, as all the Celtic races are, with the gift of song, both clinging affectionately to national observances, both excelling in national glory, both rejoicing in a generous and hilarious hospitality, both sending round the shells of joy, often filled with mountain dew—that dew that distils so plentifully in the evening, but does not always so fast evaporate in the morning. Ladies and gentlemen, there is an old saying that states that an Irishman has leave to speak twice for another man's once. But the minutes are so precious that really I feel that, though an Irishman with that privilege, I must speak only once, and that as short as possible. It has been of late, in these utilitarian days, common to ridicule nationalities, to think lightly of those dear remembrances that every man of warm sympathies must wish to cherish, and it has been too much the fashion to look upon poets as merely the ornamental appendages of society rather than things to be honoured and remembered. But if any man of so cold a nature will not listen to a generous argument on the subject, if they will accept of nothing less than an argument of stone walls, let me refer them back to the history of Greece, and point to the ruins of the Parthenon, and let me ask what is the cause that the glory of Greece has passed away, and that the conquests of Alexander are but as dust, while Homer and Sophocles hold their sway as strongly as ever in the human mind? No, let us never give up our poetical memories. What should we be without these endearing remembrances? Where is the man that has not some sacred place in his heart for dear memories, and who would be solitary and desolate without them? The ship in mid ocean, without compass, quadrant, or rudder, would not be more utterly desolate without some tender recollections in his heart. No, let us never give up our heart memories, or forget our poets. I hope and believe the time is coming when those evil feelings will be dispersed, and when poets will be cherished as dear things; and if any are sceptical, I should like to show them this meeting, and I think that it, in the shape of an argument, would be what is called a clench.

The Hon. Judge Haliburton proposed the next toast—"The Scottish Clergy." In doing so, he said—"I have accepted the invitation to appear here to-night with peculiar pleasure. A hundred and fifty years have elapsed since my family left the borders of Scotland to seek their fortune in the wilds of America, and I am the first of that family that has made his appearance in his fatherland—and that you have been so good as to call me here to-night as your guest, overpowers me in a way that I cannot well express. I have been honoured by being requested to propose a toast, which, I am sure, every one who hears me will receive with a most cordial and affectionate response, since it is the clergy of Scotland. When it was first proposed to me to give this toast, I confess that I was considerably embarrassed. It did not appear to me particularly appropriate that so venerable, so pious, so zealous, and so learned a body as the Church of Scotland should be given by the humble author of *Sam Slick*. I thought perhaps that it might have been given more appropriately by one nearer home and better able to do justice to such a subject; but a moment's reflection taught me that nothing was required of me but to propose it, because it was a toast that spoke for itself, as the clergy had their bond of union with the country in the feelings, and sympathies, and hearts of the people. Nothing, therefore, remained for me to do but to propose it, for their eulogium is like that beautiful inscription, sublime from its simplicity, in the crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral—the inscription to the immortal architect who raised it—*Si monumentum queris circumspice*."

The genial Dr. Norman M'Leod, of the Barony Church, in replying to the toast, said—"The clergy could not have their merits tried by a more discriminating judge than the honourable gentleman. Yet I for one would not have objected had the duty which he has so eloquently performed been assigned to an illustrious friend of his, who, if less venerable, is, if possible, better known over the world than himself, and who is everywhere admired for his accurate knowledge of men and manners—his keen perception of character—his most excellent wit and genial humour; and who, if he could not, perhaps, spare the weaknesses of the clergy, would certainly not forget their

Mr. Norton proposed the "Clergy." In doing so, he accepted the invitation with peculiar pleasure. He has since the time of his emigration to America, and I think that has made his mind—and that you all know—me in a way that I have been honoured to propose a toast, which, I think, will receive a affectionate response, Scotland. When it comes to give this toast, I am considerably embarrassed. It is particularly appropriate to give this toast, so zealous, and so much of Scotland should be the author of *Sam Slick*. It might have been given by one nearer home to give such a subject; but you taught me that I must not propose it, but to propose it, I spoke for itself, as a toast of union with the land and sympathies, and I think, therefore, to propose it, for a beautiful inscription, in the crypt of the inscription to the raised it—*Si monumentum*." Mr. McLeod, of the toast, said— "I have tried to judge than the honour for one would not say which he has so assigned to an illustration of less venerable, is, over the world than where admired for men and manners. Character—his most humour; and who, are the weaknesses only not forget their

virtues—I mean his distinguished friend the Clockmaker. It is now more than ten years since I enjoyed the privilege, which the Judge, no doubt, cannot remember, but which I cannot forget, of receiving a shake of his hand in Halifax, and a welcome to Nova Scotia. I now in Glasgow reciprocate that welcome to old Scotia; and where could Old and New Scotia more appropriately meet than when commemorating Robert Burns? There are two things which to me make Burns sufficiently memorable. One is—his noble protest for the independence and dignity of humanity, as expressed, for example, in that heroic song, 'A man's a man for a' that.' Another is—his intense nationality—a noble sentiment, springing, like a plant deeply rooted for ages in the soil, and bearing fruit which nourishes the manliest virtues of a people. Few men have done for any country in this respect what Burns has done for Scotland. He has made our Doric for ever poetical. Everything in our land touched with the wand of his genius will for ever retain the new interest and beauty which he has imparted to it. And yet, sir, how can a clergyman, of all men, forget or fail to express his deep sorrow on such an occasion as the present for some things that Burns has written, and which deserve the uncompromising condemnation of those who love him best? I am not called upon to pass any judgment on him as a man, but only as a writer; and with reference to some of his poems, from my heart I say it—for his own sake, for the sake of my country, for the sake of righteousness more than all—would God they were never written, never printed, and never read! And I would rejoice to see, as the result of these festivals in honour of Burns, a centenary edition of his poems from which everything would be excluded which a Christian father could not read aloud in his family circle, or the Christian mother on his 'Saturday night' to his sons and daughters! One thing I feel assured of is—that, righteously to condemn whatever is inconsistent with purity and piety, while it cannot lessen one ray of his genius, is at once the best proof we can give of our regard for his memory, and the best sacrifice we can offer to his departed spirit. If that spirit is cognisant of what is done upon earth, most certainly such a judgment must be in accordance with its

most solemn convictions and most earnest wishes."

Mr. J. P. Trotter, advocate, proposed "Colonel Burns and other existing Relatives of the Poet." In doing so, he said—"I cannot help remarking that it is a matter of congratulation to this assembly that, at a time so far removed from that in which the poet lived, we are privileged to honour him in the presence of his son. I have often been privileged to visit our honoured guest and his no less honoured brother at their delightful residence in Cheltenham, and I have often thought how it would have gladdened the heart of his father if he had been permitted to see his sons, after lives passed honourably in the pursuit of an honourable profession, spending the evening of their lives in the enjoyment of each other's society, living under the same roof, engaged in the same pursuits, and devoted to each other with a love so strong as is only to be transcended by that still stronger love which they bear to the great name of their father. The other relatives bear about them the impress of worth and of talent with which the poet himself was so strongly stamped, which marks and verifies their distinguished lineage. To use a familiar Scottish phrase, they are all come of a good kind; and there is much meaning in that phrase."

Colonel Burns was again received with great applause. He said—"I have to thank my friend Trotter very heartily for the way in which he has introduced the toast, and you for the hearty manner in which you have responded to the toast of 'The Sons and Relatives of the Bard.' I may as well here enumerate them, as far as my knowledge extends. There are my brother William Nicol and myself; my two daughters, Mrs. Hutchison, with her two children, in Australia, and Annie Burns, now in Edinburgh; and my late brother Robert's daughter, Mrs. Everett, with her daughter, in Belfast. These are the direct descendants. My uncle Gilbert left a large family, of whom survives one daughter (Ann) and three sons (William, Thomas, and Gilbert). The three brothers have many olive branches. For the survivors of my late dear aunt, Mrs. Begg, I leave my cousin Robert to thank you himself."

Mr. Robert Burns Begg, nephew of the poet, also responded to the toast.

Mr. Samuel Lover in a humorous speech

proposed "The Lassies," in the course of which he read an additional verse to "Green grows the rashie, O," composed by Robert Burns, son of the great poet:

Frae man's ain side God made his wark
That a' the lave surpasses, O;
The man but lo'es his ain heart's bluid
Wha dearly lo'es the lassies, O!

A select party of forty gentlemen dined in the Royal Hotel under the presidency of Mr. James Hedderwick, of the *Citizen*, and author of the *Lays of Middle Life*, &c. There were also present, the distinguished painter, Mr. (afterwards Sir Daniel) Maclise, and Mr. Alexander Smith, author of the *Life Drama* and other poems.

The chairman, in proposing the toast of "the day," said—"Gentlemen, when I reflect that wherever any half-dozen Scotsmen are assembled, there this night must be a Burns's festival, I find myself haunted by a fear that, great as our national poet undoubtedly was, the language of eulogy may reach such a pitch as to defeat its end. Great reputations are at all times liable to be assailed by the intellects which they dwarf. Now, what if a reaction should ensue, in connection with this Burns centenary, the result of a too exuberant apotheosis? To be confidential with you, I had some notion of trying to throw a little shade into the picture. I began to muse upon the weaknesses and the aberrations of genius. Like Wordsworth—but in a more critical mood—

I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous boy,
The sleepless soul that perish'd in his pride;
Of him who walk'd in glory and in joy
Behind his plough upon the mountain side.

My purpose was, like the Poet of the Lakes, to be calm, unimpassioned, and a good deal more stern; but, I may as well confess to you at once, that it melted before the fire of Burns's genius. To say the truth, the time is past for attempting to lower the position of Burns among the immortals. At the outset I find myself confronted by a success I cannot gain-say, and for which I dare only try to account. The enthusiasm which now prevails is not a thing of yesterday. It began during his life. It turned the heads of the 'Tarbolton lasses' and the 'belles of Mauchline.' It shook the rafters of many a masonic lodge and jovial

howff in various parts of Ayrshire. On the wings of the Kilmarnock press it spread over all Scotland, penetrated the high places of learning in classic Edinburgh, 'throned on crags, and broke in tears and penitence over the poet's grave at Dumfries. I say penitence, not because I consider that the contemporaries of Burns were particularly to blame for his life of struggle, but because his countrymen, touched by his early death, thought bitterly on what he had suffered. It is not, I hold, the business of any age to seek out and elevate its men of genius. Such enterprise would be Quixotic, and liable to all the errors of caprice and fashion. Genius of the highest kind can never, indeed, be known until proved by its own immortality. But if, from inevitable causes, Burns found Scotland a poor enough land to live in, it at least proved for him a sufficiently glorious land to die in. Ten thousand people thronged to his funeral. Every scrap of his bury handwriting became a treasure. The public sorrow took visible shape in stone and marble. Not a favourite haunt of his but became immediately and for ever classic. . . . In the universality of this commemoration there is an eloquence which enfeebles all speech, and a glory which dims all display. Suffice it that we, as Scotsmen, feel a debt of gratitude to him who was the first to popularize the sentiment of 'daring to be poor,' the first to cause the truth to be widely and proudly recognized among his countrymen, that, apart from the accidents of fortune, 'a man's a man for a' that.'"

Various other meetings of somewhat lesser note, but none the less enthusiastic, were held in Glasgow.

In Ayr the festival was celebrated, as might have been expected from its proximity to the poet's birthplace, with remarkable enthusiasm. During the day there was a great procession of the freemasons to the Cottage and Monument. In the evening there were large gatherings at the Cottage, presided over by the Rev. P. Hately Waddell, who has since been an editor of the poet's works. A soiree was held in the Assembly Room, while the masonic body dined in the Corn Exchange Hall. In the theatre a large meeting was also held.

The principal banquet, however, was held in the County Buildings, where about two

Ayrshire. On the
 press it spread over
 the high places of
 Ayr, 'throned on
 and penitence over
 I say penitence,
 the contemporaries
 to blame for his life
 his countrymen,
 thought bitterly
 It is not, I hold,
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hundred and fifty gentlemen sat down to dinner—Sir James Fergusson of Kilkerran in the chair; Professor Aytoun, croupier.

The chairman, in giving the toast of the evening, said—"Wholly unequal as I am to do justice to this occasion, I have felt that to shrink from the proud and enviable office that had been offered to me would be to confess my inability to unite with my fellow-countrymen in their great unanimous rejoicing. I know that I speak in the presence of the living poet of Scotland—whose glorious lines cause every one's cheek to glow with pride and pleasure—of him who has drunk deep at the fountain whence Burns derived his inspiration—who has restored to us so many of those noble old Scottish lays from the perusal of which Burns imbibed the nurture of his genius. Also, I speak to many upon whose ears must linger the burning words of the panegyrics of Eglington, of Wilson, and of Aytoun, delivered on the Banks of Doon at the first great celebration in honour of the Poet's memory, and whose hearts must have been struck in their tenderest chord by the written praises of Jeffrey, of Carlyle, of Wordsworth, and of Montgomery. The meeting which I now address is not so large as that which assembled on the banks of the Doon. It is not even graced by so many men who have rendered themselves famous by their success in science, in poetry, or in art. But it is the great central meeting of a vast number of meetings, held in every town, and village, and hamlet throughout the country, and in different parts of the world. The demonstration of to-day makes me feel proud of being a Scotsman. It is as the poet of Scotland that I call upon you to do honour to Burns this day; and let not our children's children, to whom Burns's songs will be as dear as to us, have cause to wonder at the littleness of the minds of those who, while regarding the shell in which the pearl was hid, forgot the brightness of the jewel. It is our peculiar right and privilege in Ayrshire to show how much we value the poet. What Stratford was to Shakespeare—what Weimar was to Schiller and Goethe—so is Ayrshire to Burns. This is a spot dear to us, and but for the genius of Burns it would have been comparatively unknown; but now it has gained a world-wide fame. Burns holds the first place in popular favour

—in the estimation of all who have a heart and a soul to value and appreciate him—by the scholar and the critic—by the simple and unlettered—his memory lives and shall live with us; and to-day we lay a gift at his shrine—the offering of a nation's gratitude and love."

Professor Aytoun in course of his speech said—"It was on a cold night like this, when the wind howled as it does now, and the sleet was beating as it does now, when within a humble cottage, was heard the feeble cry of a babe just brought into a world wherein it was to find so much fame, and to suffer so much distress. It is with unmingled satisfaction that I have joined the demonstrations that are being made, not only in this his native district, but all over Scotland, beyond the Border, in America I know, and in Australia I believe, in honour of our greatest, of our self-reared, of our most popular poet. I have heard it said that in meeting together in this way we are perpetrating idolatry and man-worship, and we are attempting to pass over, or rather to varnish, frailty in the individual man. Sir, I am no idolater, no man-worshipper. I am not here to varnish over frailty, or to defend it; but I say to those men who have made the accusation, that if they would judge him in a more kindly spirit they would act more in accordance with the dictates of Christianity." The learned professor concluded an eloquent speech by proposing "The Memory of Sir Walter Scott."

The demonstrations at Dumfries in honour of the centenary were notably enthusiastic. There were at the time a few old people living in Dumfries who had a vivid recollection of the last days of Burns, who remembered his appearance, and could point out the spots where he was generally seen. In the course of the day there was a public procession; and in the evening there were two dinner parties—one, that of the local Burns Club, the other a great public dinner. The business of the town was entirely suspended, and the shops were shut all day. In many of the streets triumphal arches, adorned with evergreens, were erected. The town was thronged with strangers from all parts of the country. In the procession the provost, magistrates, and town council, the incorporated trades, freemasons, tradesmen, &c., took part. At night

there were illuminations, fireworks, and bonfires.

At the dinner held under the auspices of the Burns Club, the chair was occupied by Dr. W. A. F. Browne. The most noteworthy of those present were, Mr. Thomas Aird of the *Dumfries Herald* (the poet); and Colonel William Nicol Burns. The latter, in replying to the toast of "The Health of the Sons of Burns," returned his most grateful thanks. He referred to the progress of himself and his brother in the army in India. As had been the case in every district of Scotland, so in India, from the genius of Robert Burns, they had received an enthusiastic reception. From the same cause he himself and his brother had received an appointment in the staff of one of their generals. Having spent a long residence in India, they had now come to spend the evening of their life in this their native land. And wherever the sons of Burns had gone, whether into England, Scotland, or Ireland, they had always been received with the greatest enthusiasm. Even in America, the people had almost as enthusiastically responded to the names of the sons of Burns as in their own country. Colonel Burns also presented himself at the general or town's meeting held in the sheds of the Nithsdale Mills. He was received with most rapturous demonstrations, and his health, as well as that of his brother, was the occasion of extreme enthusiasm. In rising to respond he was so deeply moved that he could only utter a few words of thanks.

Similar celebrations were held in almost every town and village of Scotland; while Manchester, Liverpool, Southampton, Oxford, Bristol, Newcastle, Carlisle, &c., among English towns vied with each other in doing honour to Burns. In London the Caledonian Society celebrated the day, as the accredited representatives of the Scotch resident in England, by a dinner held in the London Tavern. Mr. W. Chambers of Edinburgh, who appeared as one of a deputation from the body of gentlemen by whom the centenary festival had been got up in Edinburgh, exhibited several very interesting relics of the poet. The chair was occupied by Mr. R. Marshall, the president of the Caledonian Society; and among the gentlemen present were Mr. Charles Knight, Professor Masson, Dr. W. B. Hodgson, David Roberts, R.A.,

Mr. Hepworth Dixon, &c. Mr. Hepburn, one of the vice-presidents, proposed "The Memory of Burns," which was drunk with every demonstration of respect. A variety of other toasts followed—such as "British Literature," coupled with the name of Professor Masson; "The Fine Arts;" "The Edinburgh Deputation," coupled with the name of Mr. W. Chambers, who replied, and described the nature of some of the relics of Burns which he had brought for the inspection of the company;—"Our Guests," replied to by Mr. Charles Knight; "The Land o' Cakes," &c.

A considerable number of gentlemen dined together at the Guildhall Hotel under the presidency of Mr. James Hannay (the novelist), who in the course of his speech proposing "The Memory of Burns," said:—"He did not rise without some hesitation and apprehension to bring before them the toast of the evening. He could not but feel the great difficulty of doing justice to the memory of that poet who, perhaps alone, of all the poets in the world, was honoured by such a celebration. He would speak of him not only as a poet, but as one of the greatest men that the race of which they were all proud had ever produced. He would not simply look upon him as a man of letters, but as a great Scotsman, and as part of the history of that great Scottish land which was the mother of them all. They would do Burns a great injustice if they set him up against great poets, and compared his casual writings and poems with the writings of literary celebrities. By doing that they would not only do an injustice to Burns, but also do an injustice to the country from which he came. He preferred to look at him as the product of the nation to which he belonged, and as part of it—a man whose writings and life became as much a part of Scottish nationality as the Castle of Edinburgh or the Palace of Holyrood. They were not merely met to celebrate the memory of a great man. They might have centenaries in honour of many great men amongst their countrymen. If they held a centenary for every Scotsman of importance in Europe they would never be sober. There was some reason why one particular man should be selected for honour all over the world. It was not merely in consequence of the force of his understanding and

Mr. Hepburn, one of the Memory Society, with every demonstration of other toasts followed by literature," coupled with Mr. Masson; "The Edinburgh Deputation," Mr. W. Chambers, the nature of some of the things he had brought with him;—"Our Countryman," Charles Knight;

of gentlemen dined at the hotel under the presidency (the novelist), the speech proposing the toast of the Memory Society said:—"He did not feel the great debt to the memory of Burns, of all the poets of his time, by such a celebration of him not only as a great man, but the greatest man that the world had ever known, simply look upon him as a great Scotsman, the story of that great mother of them, a great injustice to great poets, and great poems with their titles. By doing so an injustice to the country, to the country, preferred to look upon the nation to which it—a man whose name is much a part of the history of Edinburgh."

They were not the memory of a great nation in honour of their countrymen. Every Scotsman of the name would never be the reason why one paraded for honour all day merely in consequence of understanding and

intellect. No man would doubt that David Hume was a man as remarkable in natural gifts, and they might just as well expect another Hume as another Burns; but they did not attend there to drink old David's health. He was a much greater man than Burns in some respects, and yet they met to celebrate the memory of Burns, and not of David, because there was about Burns a humanity and manhood beyond all intellectual traits. It had been suggested by some writers on the subject of the centenary meeting that nothing should be said about Burns's life and character, but he (the chairman) contended that there was nothing in the whole course of Burns's biography of which they should be ashamed. Burns's heart was good; his head was good; his principles were good; he displayed fidelity to his friends, and both kindness and affection towards his equals. Very few men that ever had been known could be compared with him. Whose friendship did he betray? Whose wife did he seduce? Whose honour did he calumniate? Whose generosity did he neglect? The worst that could be said of him was that he was too indulgent of his animal capacity. He was not the man to say that these things were defensible; and if they thought him a very bad man, the mere fact that he had written clever poems would not justify them in honouring his memory. He felt convinced, however, that, taking into consideration the notions that prevailed in the days when Burns lived, and all the circumstances that surrounded him, an expression of kindness and affection was due to his memory on personal as well as on literary grounds.

The most popular and general commemoration in London—in fact by far the greatest

held on the south of the Tweed—took place at the Crystal Palace, Sydenham. Trains were run from a very early hour, and long before the time for the commencement of the ceremonies an immense multitude had assembled in the Central Transept. The proceedings began at twelve o'clock, when a colossal bust of the poet, by Mr. Calder Marshall the sculptor, was unveiled. Various relics of the poet were also exhibited, such as portraits, autographs, and other articles. In the lecture-room of the building "Tam o' Shanter" was recited at intervals to a succession of audiences, the principal "situations" being illustrated by dissolving views. This was one of the most popular incidents of the day. The Crystal Palace Company having offered a prize of fifty guineas for the best poem on the occasion, no fewer than six hundred and twenty-one poems were put in competition. The great event of the day was the announcement of the author of the prize poem and the recital of the verses. The adjudicators, Mr. R. Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton), Sir Theodore Martin, and Tom Taylor, assigned the prize to the ode written by Isa Craig (now Isa Craig Knox), the author of a small volume of poetry published some little time previously, but whose name was utterly new to most people. It will be found in the present volume among the "Poems written in memory of Burns." The poem was read by Mr. Phelps, the actor, and was received with the greatest applause. The visitors during the latter part of the day amused themselves with singing Scotch songs, dancing Scotch reels, and eating dinners, from which the Scotch delicacies of haggis, cock-a-leekie, Ayrshire puddings, &c., were not omitted.

MONUMENTS TO BURNS.

The first monument erected to the memory of Burns was a simple slab of freestone placed over the grave in the north corner of St. Michael's Churchyard, Dumfries, where the remains of Burns and two of his children were originally interred. This tombstone, which is now preserved in the neighbouring mausoleum,

was erected by his widow, and bears the following inscription:—"In memory of Robert Burns, who died the 21st July, 1796, in the 37th year [38th] of his age; and Maxwell Burns, who died the 25th April, 1799, aged 2 years and 9 months; also of Francis Wallace Burns, who died the 9th of July, 1803, aged 14 years."

A general movement for the erection of a public monument was not made till 6th January, 1814, when a meeting took place in Dumfries, at which it was determined by those present that "a mausoleum ought to be reared over the grave of Burns." A committee was at the same time formed including noblemen, gentlemen, clergymen, and some of the principal citizens of Dumfries, for the purpose of collecting subscriptions and superintending the erection of the proposed building. Money being liberally forwarded, not only from the various parts of Scotland, but from other parts of the United Kingdom, from the East and West Indies, and from America, the committee were soon enabled to proceed to the more interesting part of their duty. A plan by Mr. Thomas Frederick Hunt, of London, of a plain Doric temple reared above a sepulchral vault, having been selected from those furnished by various competing architects, the foundation-stone was laid with masonic honours by Mr. William Miller of Dalswinton, provincial grand-master of the Dumfries district, on the 5th of June, 1815. The procession, which was escorted by the Dumfries yeomanry cavalry, was composed of the magistrates, committee of management, subscribers, and the grand committee of the seven incorporated trades with their colours, and about 420 freemasons. A disappointing piece of sculpture by an artist named Turnerelli, representing Burns at the plough, while his genius Coila in very substance is throwing an actual mantle of inspiration over him, is placed against the back wall of the mausoleum. All that can be said in its favour is that its meaning is intelligible, and that if it does not satisfy fastidious art critics, it appeals successfully to the popular eye and heart. The spot where Burns was originally buried at the north corner of the churchyard was too confined for the erection, which was consequently built on a site in the south-east, thus necessitating the removal of the poet's remains and those of his two sons—a duty which was performed with all delicacy on 19th September, 1815, as described in vol. i. pp. 168–70. The whole cost of the building was about £1500. The remains of Mrs. Burns were deposited in the vault beside those of her husband in April, 1834; and it also contains the remains of the poet's sons, Robert, who died in 1857, James Glencairn,

who died in 1865, and William Nicol, who died in 1872.

The credit of originating a monument to Burns on the spot of his birthplace is due to Sir Alexander Boswell of Auchinleck, son of the biographer of Johnson. Sir Alexander (then only Mr. Boswell), in concert with one other gentleman, being deeply impressed with the claims of Burns upon his countrymen, and believing that an appeal for funds to erect a memorial for him on the banks of the Doon would be heartily responded to, ventured to call a public meeting in Ayr for the purpose of taking the question into consideration. The day arrived and with it the hour of meeting; but not a single individual except Mr. Boswell and his friend came to take part in it. To all appearance they had miscalculated the public feeling on the subject; and, under such circumstances, the most of men would have retired from the field and thought no more about the matter. Mr. Boswell and his friend thought differently; they believed that accidental circumstances might be in a great measure the cause of the failure of the meeting—that even in Ayr there was no want of feeling on the subject—but that, should local sympathy fail, there were Scottish hearts under all latitudes which would throb at the idea of rearing a suitable mark of the fame of Burns beside the banks and braes of bonnie Doon. Accordingly, with all due formality, Mr. Boswell was voted by his friend into the chair; a resolution to commence a subscription for the monument was moved by the same friend, and passed unanimously; a minute of the proceedings was drawn up and signed by the chairman, and the meeting was then dissolved. The friends next advertised the resolution which had been unanimously passed at the meeting, and subscriptions began to pour in. By the beginning of 1820 the sum of £1600 was collected, and it was resolved to commence the building on the anniversary of the poet's birthday that year. Accordingly on the appointed day the foundation-stone was laid by Mr. Boswell as deputy grand-master, a number of masonic bodies having marched in procession from Ayr to the place selected between the new and old bridges over the Doon, accompanied by a vast concourse of spectators. The monument was finished on the 4th July, 1823, when Mr.

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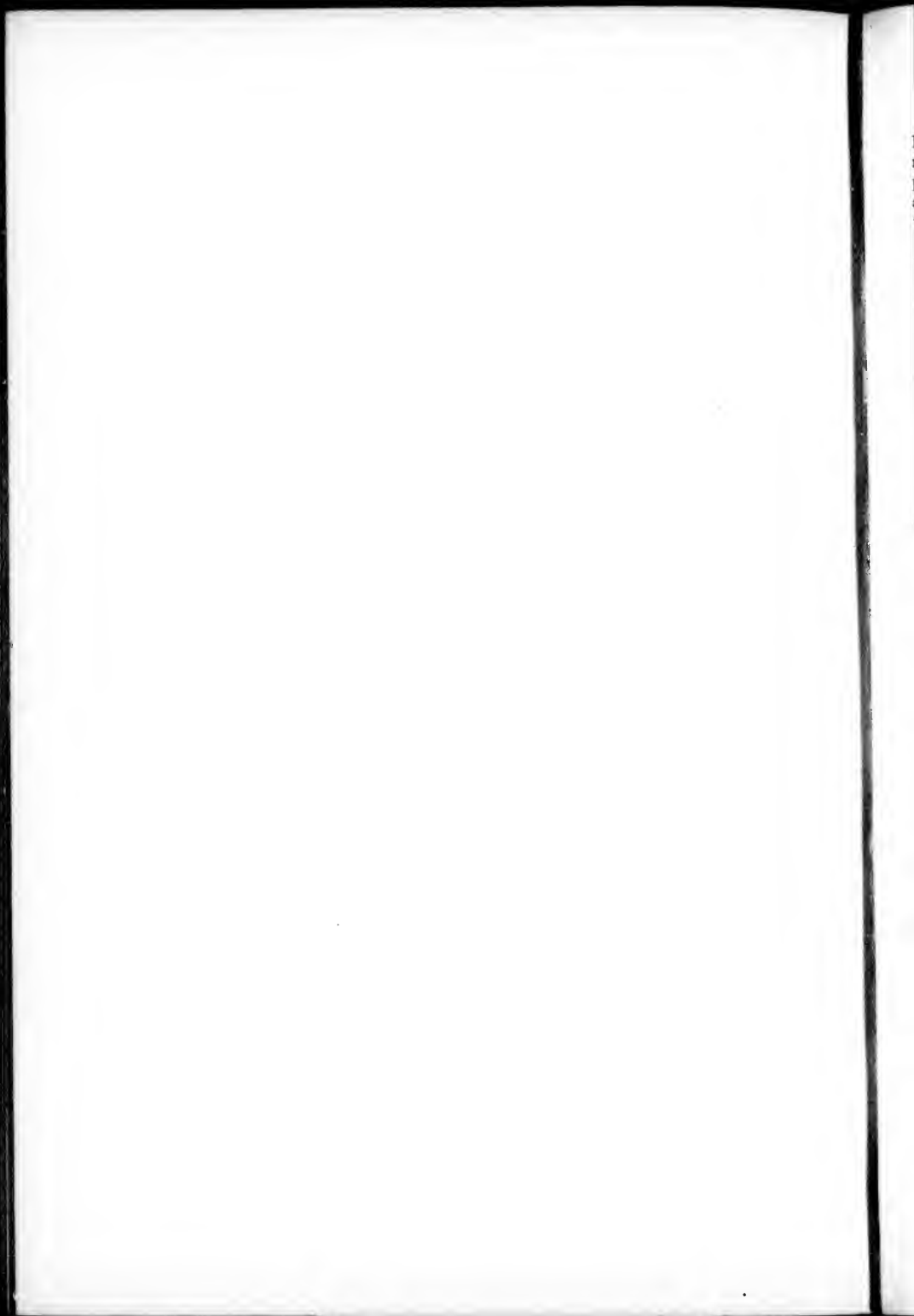


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Fullarton of Skeldon, in the presence of a numerous assemblage of freemasons and subscribers, placed the tripod on the summit and delivered an appropriate address. The building, which was designed gratuitously by Mr. Thomas Hamilton, junr., of Edinburgh, recalls the purest days of Grecian architecture. It was meant by Mr. Hamilton to be in some measure a revival of the celebrated choragic monument of Lysicrates at Athens. It consists of a triangular basement (representative of the three divisions of Ayrshire, Cunningham, Kyle, and Carrick), upon which rises a circular peristyle supporting a cupola. The peristyle consists of nine Corinthian pillars 30 feet in height, representative of the number of the muses. They were designed from the three remaining columns of the Comitium in the Forum at Rome. Above the cupola rises a gilt tripod, supported by three inverted dolphins—fishes sacred to Apollo, and hence selected as ornaments proper to the monument of a poet. The whole building, which is 60 feet in height, stands in an inclosed plot of ground about an acre in extent, beautifully laid out and well stocked with shrubs and flowers, and in which is a grotto containing Thom's statues of "Tam o' Shanter" and "Souter Johnny." A small chamber in the basement of the pile forms a kind of Burns museum, among the relics preserved being "Highland Mary's" Bible. The total cost of the monument was £3350.

The idea of erecting a monument to Burns in Edinburgh originated with Mr. John Forbes Mitchell of Bombay; and the object at first contemplated was a colossal statue of the poet, to be raised in the open air in some conspicuous part of the Scottish capital. A considerable sum was collected in India, chiefly through the exertions of Mr. Mitchell, who after his return to England continued these exertions, and did not rest till he had placed the business in the hands of a respectable committee. The first of a series of "festivals" to promote the subscriptions was held in London on 24th April, 1819, under the presidency of the Duke of Sussex, son of George III., and supported by Sir James Mackintosh; Sir Francis Burdett; Flaxman, the sculptor; Crabbe, the poet; Tom Moore; Robert Owen; John Gladstone; &c.; while Scott and Campbell were prevented by illness from attending. In 1824 the state of

the subscriptions warranted a start being made with the work, so an agreement was made with John Flaxman, the first British sculptor of his day, not for a colossal bronze statue, as originally intended, but for a marble statue of the size of life. To enable the sculptor to transmit the features of the poet to posterity as faithfully as possible, he was supplied with Nasmyth's well-known portrait. The engraving made from that portrait by Benger was likewise sent him, being considered to possess excellencies of its own. In portraying his figure and general appearance, the sculptor was guided by descriptions furnished by several friends who had a vivid recollection of the poet. As a whole, the statue may be accepted as presenting a fair characteristic representation of the general aspect of the poet, as well as being an excellent work of art. When the statue was completed, the committee found they had a surplus of about £1300 in hand, with which they resolved to erect a monumental structure for its reception. An elegant design was furnished gratuitously by Mr. T. Hamilton, the architect of the Ayr monument, and the structure, which is in the style of a Greek peripteral temple inclosing a cella on a quadrangular base, and surmounted by a cupola supporting a tripod with winged fabulous creatures, was erected on a prominent site on the southern terrace of the Calton Hill. It was finished in 1831, the total cost of statue and temple being about £3300. It was found that the space within the monument was too confined for the statue, which was first removed to the library hall of the university, and afterwards to the National Gallery, where it forms a prominent feature among the works of sculpture. The interior of the monumental structure is now appropriated as a museum for depositing Burns memorials—prominent among which is a fine bust of the poet by W. Brodie—and is one of the well-known sights of the city.

At the formation of the Glasgow Burns Club in 1859, and at every successive anniversary meeting, the desirability of erecting a monument to the memory of Burns in the western metropolis was mooted, but the project assumed no definite shape till 1872, when Dr. Hedderwick of the *Evening Citizen* was the means of organizing a shilling subscription for this object. The scheme was heartily responded

to by the public. Subscriptions flowed in from all parts of the civilized world, including China, India, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, the United States, Canada, and other distant places. When the success of the movement was assured, the committee decided that the memorial should be placed in George Square—where a number of eminent men were already represented in a similar way—and that it should take the form of an upright statue. Mr. George E. Ewing, a prominent local sculptor, was invited to submit a design model, which met with the approval of the committee, and he was commissioned to proceed with the work. The working men of the West of Scotland having entered so heartily and spontaneously into the movement, the committee thought proper to consult the representatives of the trades of Glasgow as to what part the working men might like to take in the inauguration ceremonies. These were fixed to take place on 25th January, 1877, being the 118th anniversary of the poet's birth, and it was decided that there should be a muster of the trades and other bodies on the Green, whence there should be a procession through some of the principal streets to George Square. The committee had secured the services of the late Lord Houghton to unveil the statue, a task for which he had the double qualifications of holding a high social position and a distinguished place in literature. On the day fixed the ceremony took place in presence of over 30,000 spectators. The statue is 9 feet high, and placed on a pedestal of gray granite, 12 feet high, which has four indentations with *basso-relievos*. The poet stands musing in contemplative mood over the daisy which he holds in his left hand, while a Kilmarnock bonnet is held lightly in his right. The pose is easy and unconsciously dignified, while the face bears a pensive expression. The poet leans on the stump of a tree, over which hangs a Scottish plaid. His dress is that of the well-to-do farmer of the period—loosely hanging coat, long open vest, knee-breeches, rough worsted stockings, and buckled shoes. The figure presents in point of physique a splendid specimen of the Scottish peasant. As a work of art the statue is all that could be desired, though a section of the public has been disappointed with it as a likeness of

Burns. The features are fuller and heavier than what people have been accustomed to consider the Burns face—the Nasmyth portrait and the engraving from it being the most common standard; but we have Sir Walter Scott's declaration that Burns's countenance was more massive than it looks in any of his portraits, so the sculptor may have hit the real Burns closer than is generally supposed.

On the evening of the day following the inauguration of the Glasgow monument, a public meeting was held at Kilmarnock, at which it was unanimously agreed that a statue be erected in some suitable place in this town in honour of the poet. In June the same year it was suggested at a meeting of the general committee that, as the subscriptions had far exceeded expectations, an ornamental building should be erected, and a marble statue of the poet placed in it. A prominent site was secured in the Kay Park, and the memorial stone of the monumental building was laid with masonic ceremony by Mr. Cochran-Patriek of Woodside, on 14th Sept. 1878. It is a two-story building, Scotch baronial in style, with a tower rising to a height of 80 feet. The situation is elevated, and from the top of the tower fine views are obtained of the town and the surrounding districts. A handsome stone staircase leads up in front to a projecting portion of the upper story, and here in a shrine is a fine marble statue of Burns by W. G. Stevenson of Edinburgh. The figure, which is 8 feet high, represents the poet, attired in a tight-fitting coat and knee-breeches, leaning against the trunk of a tree, with a book in the one hand and a pencil in the other. The head is turned slightly to the right, which gives the spectator in front of the figure the view of the features as they are shown in the familiar portrait by Nasmyth. Behind are three rooms used as a museum, and containing a number of interesting relics connected with the poet. The inauguration took place on Saturday 9th August, 1879, in presence of from 40,000 to 50,000 persons, and the statue was unveiled by Colonel Alexander, M.P., a descendant of the family to which belonged the lady who inspired Burns's poem, "The lass o' Ballochmyle." The building cost over £1500, and the statue £800. In connection with the inauguration, the committee offered a silver medal

fuller and heavier than accustomed to the Nasmyth portrait it being the most to have Sir Walter Burns's countenance looks in any of his may have hit the real thing supposed.

The day following the Glasgow monument, at Kilmarnock, at which it was agreed that a statue should have a place in this town. In June the same year the unveiling of the general descriptions had far surpassed the ornamental building of the marble statue of the eminent site was secured. The memorial stone was laid with the inscription of Cochrane-Patrick of 1878. It is a two-story building in style, with a height of 80 feet. The statue is from the top of the pedestal to the main of the town. The statue is a handsome front to a projecting porch and here in a shrine of Burns by W. G. The figure, which is the poet, attired in knee-breeches, leaning with a book in the left hand. The head is turned, which gives the statue the view of the poet in the familiar portrait. There are three rooms containing a number of busts of the poet. The statue was unveiled on Saturday 9th of June, at a cost of from 40,000 to 50,000. The statue was unveiled by a descendant of the poet, the lady who was the lass o' Balloch. The statue cost over £1500, and the poet was inaugurated with a silver medal

for the best piece of poetry suitable to the occasion. Sixty-five competing poems were sent in, and the first place was assigned by the adjudicators to Mr. Alexander Anderson, but as his poem considerably exceeded the prescribed limit, the committee felt bound to award it to the author of the second best poem, Mr. Alexander G. Murdoch. They at the same time recommended another medal to be presented to Mr. Anderson in recognition of the high merit of his poem.*

When the replica in bronze of Sir John Steell's colossal statue of Sir Walter Scott, which graces the Edinburgh monument, was presented to the city of New York by resident Scotsmen in August, 1871, the suggestion was made that Burns should have a place beside him. The outcome of this suggestion was that a commission was given to Steell for a colossal sitting statue of Burns which was to cost 2000 guineas. The statue is erected immediately opposite that of Sir Walter Scott in the Central Park, and represents the poet at the moment of the composition of "Mary in Heaven." The poet is represented in sitting posture, his seat being the fork of an old elm-tree, with broken limb rising on either side so as to form the arm-rests of a rustic chair. With head thrown back he is understood to be gazing at the "lingering star;" and while the pensive abstraction of the features is in a manner emphasized by the erect position of the body, as of one whose attention is thoroughly aroused, the idea of complete preoccupation is, at the same time, admirably carried out in the careless disposition of the limbs. The right elbow rests on one limb of the tree, which is hidden by drapery; the hand being held in front, with a pen between the fingers, as if ready to record the poet's quick-springing fancies. The right leg is drawn back, and the left thrust considerably forward; both having an appearance of muscular relaxation, which is significantly repeated in the left arm, as it rests, with drooping hand, upon the projecting stump. In the head as well as in the costume the artist has been mainly guided by the Nasmyth portrait. The antiquated coat and waistcoat appear at the throat; while the ample skirt of the former falls freely behind; and the legs are encased

in knee-breeches and coarse worsted stockings, through which the leg muscles plainly assert themselves. The poet's connection with agriculture is suggested by the ploughshare lying near his right foot; this, again, being half hidden by a scroll bearing the first two stanzas of "Mary in Heaven." The pedestal is of Aberdeen granite, and measures 6 feet high, by 8 feet 4 inches, by 9 feet 8 inches. The statue was unveiled in the presence of a very large assemblage on 2d October, 1880, when Mr. George W. Curtis delivered a powerful oration on the life and character of the great peasant poet.

A movement to erect a memorial to Burns in Dundee was set on foot 30th January, 1877, at a preliminary meeting at which a committee was appointed. In a few months £700 was subscribed, and at a public meeting held in October a resolution to erect a monument was cordially passed. The committee were much struck with the statue Sir John Steell was engaged on for New York, and negotiations with the American committee resulted in permission being granted to Sir John Steell to give a replica of the statue he was then preparing for the Central Park, at the reduced price of 1000 guineas—one half of the price agreed on for the American contract. The statue occupies a site within the grounds of the Albert Institute, and rests on a pedestal of red Peterhead granite weighing about 20 tons. The pedestal is 6½ feet high, while the statue (which is described above in the New York monument) measures rather over 9 feet in height. The inauguration took place on Saturday, 16th October, 1880, when there was a great procession of the trades and other bodies, the statue being unveiled by Mr. Frank Henderson, M.P.

The year 1877 also witnessed the organization of a movement for the erection of a statue of Burns in Dumfries. At first the movement was looked on with much favour, but soon the interest began to wane; and had it not been for the enthusiasm of Mr. Hamilton, a member of the town council, Mr. McDowall, the author of the *History of Dumfries*, and one or two others, the whole scheme would have been a failure. By their exertions the subscriptions continued slowly to come in from all parts of the country, and also from admirers

* Mr. Anderson's poem will be found in the present volume, p. 230.

of the poet in distant parts of the world. In the autumn of 1880 a bazaar was held in Dumfries in aid of the fund, and the sum thus realized assured the success of the scheme. Mrs. D. O. Hill was commissioned to execute the monument, which was at last inaugurated on 6th April, 1882. The statue, which is erected on the open space in front of Greyfriars Church, is cut in Sicilian marble and stands on a pedestal of Binnie stone. It represents the poet as in the act of meditating one of his immortal lyrics. Resting easily upon an old tree root, the figure has a slight forward stoop, the right foot being firmly planted on the ground, while the left leg, drawn up so that the heel rests on a projecting knob of the old stump, supports the elbow of the corresponding arm, leaving the hand to hang free, with just enough of muscular tension to keep hold of a bunch of daisies. The right hand again is thrust into the folds of a plaid which crosses the body diagonally from the left shoulder, one end being partially shown in front, the other falling behind, where it has been turned to account as a piece of drapery. The head is turned towards the right shoulder, with the eyes set as if gazing into the distance, as one may do when wrapped in reverie. A collie snuggles at the right foot in an attitude finely expressive of canine affection. Near by lies a broad bonnet half covering a well-thumbed song-book, a rustic flageolet being added in further suggestion of his relations with the muses. The costume other than the plaid is that derived from the Nasmyth portrait, which has also, of course, been referred to as the chief authority for the features. The cost of the statue was £800, with £120 additional for the pedestal. As was the case at the Kilmarnock demonstration, a silver medal was offered for the best poem relating to the statue. Thirty-two competed; and the medal was gained by Mr. W. Stewart Ross, a native of Caerlaverock, a second prize being given to Mr. Robert Hunter, Hawick. As usual an enormous procession formed the chief feature of the inaugural proceedings. The unveiling ceremony was performed by the Earl of Rosebery, who delivered an eloquent speech on the occasion, concluding thus:—"There he is (pointing to the statue), the image of the man who once stood shunned in your streets, to stand

for ever as the glory of your burgh. The respectabilities who shunned him have disappeared. His troubles, his sorrows, his faults, his failings, have vanished; the troubles of his life are no more, the clouds that surrounded his death-bed have disappeared, but his memory, his triumph, and his tomb abide with you for ever."

On Saturday, 26th July, 1884, the Earl of Rosebery, in the unavoidable absence of the Prince of Wales, who was to have presided on the occasion, unveiled a monument to Burns on the Thames Embankment, London, in presence of the late Lord Houghton, Robert Browning, and a host of notabilities. The monument was the gift of Mr. John Gordon Crawford, a retired Glasgow merchant, for many years resident in London. The statue, which is by Sir John Steell, is a replica with some variations of those erected in Dundee and New York. It rests on a pedestal of Peterhead granite with a lower base of Aberdeen granite, and bears the inscription, "Robert Burns: 1759-1796," with the following quotation from the author's preface to the first Edinburgh edition of his poems:—"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 natal soil, in my native tongue: I tuned my wild artless notes as she inspired."

The suggestion to place a bust of Burns in Westminster Abbey was made at the time the Glasgow monument was erected, and was received with the greatest favour. In order to extend the movement as widely as possible, the amount of individual subscriptions was limited to not more than one shilling. When the lists were closed they contained some 20,000 contributors, belonging to all parts of the world, and including all ranks, from the Prince of Wales downwards. The bust, which is by Sir John Steell, is erected on a corbel, ornamented in harmony with the style of the surrounding portions of the building. It stands about 15 feet from the Abbey floor, and about 3 feet from the bust of Shakspeare, while on the left of the great dramatist is the memorial of another eminent Scottish poet, James Thomson, author of "The Seasons." The

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sculptor in his treatment of the subject has largely adhered to the leading features of the Nasmyth portrait, modified by information from other sources. The inaugural ceremony was performed by the Earl of Rosebery on 7th March, 1885, in presence of a large and influential gathering. The Earl having unveiled the bust and handed it over to the safe-keeping of Dean Bradley and the chapter of Westminster, the dean accepted the charge in a graceful speech, and the proceedings terminated

with a dinner given by the London Burns club to the committee and the representatives of Burns clubs and societies present on the occasion.

The committee who erected the monument to the memory of Tannahill at Paisley by means of the proceeds of annual open-air concerts on Gleniffer Braes, have, since their object was attained, continued these concerts with the view of erecting a suitable monument to Burns in that town.

PORTRAITS OF BURNS.

Alexander Nasmyth, who is accounted the father of Scottish landscape painting, was a fashionable portrait painter at the time Burns made his appearance in Edinburgh. They probably became intimate through Miller of Dalquinton (subsequently Burns's landlord), to whom Nasmyth owed many a favour, and a portrait of the poet was immediately commenced for the adornment of the forthcoming Edinburgh edition of the poems. The portrait painted by Nasmyth was engraved in stipple by John Benge, another familiar friend of the poet's. He took the greatest pains with the face, and had the advantage of special sittings from Burns, the result being that the engraving was regarded by some who knew Burns as the most faithful likeness in existence, not even excepting Nasmyth's original. The picture is painted on canvas, its size being 15½ by 12¾ inches upright. It was bequeathed to the nation by the poet's last surviving son, Colonel Wm. Nicol Burns, and is preserved in the National Gallery, Edinburgh. It has been frequently engraved, and is the most familiar of all the portraits of the poet. An excellent engraving of it by H. T. Ryall accompanies this work. On the back of the picture is the following inscription by Nasmyth himself:—"Painted from Mr. Robert Burns, by his friend, Alexander Nasmyth, Edinbro', April, 1787;" and also a certificate written by the poet's eldest son:—

"I hereby certify that this is the original portrait of the poet by Alexander Nasmyth, landscape painter in Edinburgh, and is the only authentic portrait of

him in existence, or at least the only portrait of the poet whose authenticity is indisputable. Dumfries, April 8th, 1834. (Signed) Robert Burns."

Nasmyth executed two copies of this original, one for George Thomson, which was afterwards touched up by Sir Henry Raeburn, and is now in the National Portrait Gallery, London, and another, in 1824, for Mr. Elias Cathcart of Auchendrane, near Ayr. A copy of this portrait by Steven is in the cenotaph at Alloway. Nasmyth also prepared a small drawing in pencil of Burns, from which an engraving was made for Lockhart's *Life of Burns*, in 1828. Of this picture Lockhart says:—"Mr. Nasmyth has prepared for the present memoir, a sketch of the poet at full length, as he appeared in Edinburgh in the first hey-day of his reputation: dressed in tight jockey boots, and very tight buckskin breeches, according to the fashion of the day, and (Jacobite as he was) in what was considered as the Fox livery, viz. a blue coat and buff waistcoat, with broad blue stripes. The surviving friends of Burns, who have seen this picture, are unanimous in pronouncing it to furnish a very lively representation of the bard as he first attracted public notice on the streets of Edinburgh. The scenery of the background is very nearly that of Burns's native spot—the river and bridge of Doon, near Alloway Kirk." Nasmyth also painted for himself a cabinet full-length portrait of Burns on panel, size 24 by 17¾ inches upright, as a memento of his friend, which was acquired after Nasmyth's death by Sir Hugh Hume Campbell, Bart. of Marchmont. In

reference to this portrait Mr. James Nasmyth, son of the artist, and inventor of the steam-hammer, wrote to Sir Hugh Hume Campbell:—

"I perfectly remember my father painting the small full-length portrait of Burns to which you refer. So far as my memory serves me as to the date it would be about 1827 or 1828. The above-named picture was executed after the pencil sketch now in the possession of Mr. David Laing. The vignette [in Lockhart's *Life*] was, I believe, done from this drawing, or a small copy of it. The small full-length portrait painting now in your possession was done without any direct copying from the drawing; my father's motive in producing this painting was to enable him to leave his record, in that way, of his remembrance of the general personal appearance of Burns, as well as his style of dress, which, in fact, was simply that of the period."

Mr. Colin Rae-Brown possesses a portrait of Burns which, he says (on what evidence we know not), was specially painted by Nasmyth for the landlord of a well-known tavern—"The Howff," in George Square, Glasgow. When the building of which "the Howff" formed part was taken down, in 1857, the portrait, with the rest of the tavern furniture, was sold, and passed into the possession of Mr. Malcolm Rankine, carver and gilder, Glasgow, by whom it was presented to Mr. Rae-Brown. The picture is a life-sized half-length and when cleaned of the tavern smoke-grime in 1862 displayed an oval setting in red, with the corners filled in by representations of roses, convolvuluses, heart's-ease, and the thistle—also a bagpipe, shepherd's reed, rake, reaping-hook, and a roll of printed music.

Another portrait of Burns in oil was painted by Mr. Peter Taylor, an artist of whom little is known. It is of kit-kat size, half length, and represents the poet with buckskin breeches, blue coat, and broad-brimmed, low-crowned hat. Its existence was unknown to the public till 1829, when Constable published an engraving of it under the auspices of Sir Walter Scott. It would appear from Mrs. Taylor's story, that the poet gave her husband three sittings for this portrait, which, after her husband's death, she jealously preserved. Gilbert Burns, Robert Ainslie, Mr. Gray, and others who inspected the painting, expressed their opinion that the painting was a free, bold, and striking likeness of Burns. On seeing the engraving Mrs. Burns declared she had no doubt that the por-

trait was an original, and as to the likeness, the upper part of the face was very striking, though there was an undue fullness about the lower part. It represents the poet with a somewhat more aquiline countenance than he is usually represented with, and has thus been declared to bear a striking resemblance to Gilbert Burns. The correctness of the likeness to Burns was, however, testified to without the slightest qualification by Jessie Lewars, Clarinda, John Syme, and Mrs. Dunlop. On Mrs. Taylor's death the portrait was bequeathed to Mr. William Taylor of Scotston Park, Linlithgowshire, who lent it for exhibition to the Crystal Palace committee at the Centenary, 1859.

When Burns was in Edinburgh, a person named Miers was practising there as a producer of silhouette portraits, which he professed to execute at a two-minutes' sitting, and which cost in frames from six shillings to half a guinea. Their felicity as likenesses, and their cheapness, 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. One of Miers's "shades" may be seen in the Burns monument at Edinburgh.

One of the most remarkable portraits of Burns is a drawing executed on tinted paper with red chalk by a notable, though little known, portrait painter, Archibald Skirving, son of the author of "Johnnie Cope." Its size is 21½ by 16½ inches. It represents the poet in one of his more thoughtful moods. His features display that massiveness which his friends and biographers have always described as peculiarly characteristic of his visage, and the want of which in Nasmyth's portrait has always been considered its principal defect. The head is nearly life-size, with a portion of the neck and shoulders merely indicated. Though at first sight it appears as if executed in a slight and sketchy manner, closer examination reveals the conscientious carefulness with which it has been wrought. The touch is extremely delicate, the treatment broad and massive, combined with great clearness of effect. As a work of art it rivals the productions of the very foremost artists of later times. It is not supposed that Burns ever gave Skirving any formal sittings for this

portrait, but the artist had full opportunities for observing Burns under a variety of circumstances, and of noting the changes of expression which under different impulses so altered his appearance. Skirving set so much store by this portrait of Burns, and a portrait he had made of the hereculean John Rennie, the eminent engineer, that he would not part with either of them, though often solicited by admirers of the poet for the one, and by Mr. Rennie himself for the other. On the decease of Skirving, the two portraits were purchased by Mr. Rennie, and this portrait of the poet is now in the possession of Sir Theodore Martin. It has been "all engraved in stipple by William Holl, size 14 by 11½ inches" (the engraving being published in 1859), but the most perfect translation of this picture is the engraving in line by Herbert Bourne which adorns the present work.

James Tannock of Kilmarnock, a painter of moderate attainments, executed several portraits of Burns, the best known of which was painted for the Kilbarchan Burns Club.

David Allan, the distinguished painter of Scottish life, introduced a portrait of Burns into a drawing of the "Cotter's Saturday Night," which he executed for Thomson, who presented it to Burns. The latter says of it:—"My phiz is sac kenspeckle, that the very joiner's apprentice whom Mrs. Burns employed to break up the parcel . . . knew it at once."²

Writing to Mrs. Walter Riddell from Dumfries, 29th January, 1796, Burns says:—"Appropos to pictures, I am just sitting to Reid in this town for a miniature, and I think he has hit by far the best likeness of me ever taken. When you are at any time so idle in town as to call at Reid's painting-room, and mention to him that I spoke of such a thing to you, he will show it to you, else he will not; for both the miniature's existence and its destiny are an inviolable secret, and therefore very properly trusted, in part, to you." This miniature has continued in its original mystery.

It must not be confounded with the miniature mentioned in a letter to George Thomson dated

May, 1795, in which Burns says:—"There is an artist of very considerable merit just now in this town [Dumfries] who has hit the most remarkable likeness of what I am at this moment, that I think ever was taken of anybody. It is a small miniature, and as it will be in your town getting itself be-crystallized, &c., I have some thoughts of suggesting to you to prepare a vignette taken from it, to my song, "Contented wi' little, and cantie wi' mair," in order that the portrait of my face and the picture of my mind may go down the stream of Time together." This portrait is also probably lost.

The late Mr. Henry G. Bohn was in possession of a miniature which may be one or other of the above-mentioned. He describes it as differing from Nasmyth's and the numerous small copies of it, in "having an inclination of the head towards the left shoulder instead of the right, as well as in being more intellectual, and of a later period, probably when he was thirty-five or thirty-six years of age. It is set in gold, with hair at the back, which seems too gray to have been his own; is glazed on both sides, and on the frame is engraved "Robert Burns."

Dr. Hately Waddell identifies the "small miniature" mentioned by Burns to Thomson with what he calls the "Kerry portrait," from its possessor, an Irish gentleman, styling himself "the O'Connor-Kerry." This portrait is painted on a panel 8½ inches long by 7 inches broad (not exactly the size of miniature one would "be-crystallize"), and represents a repulsive-looking man—certainly not Burns—dressed in a dark-brown coat with bright fancy buttons; the waistcoat double-breasted, of a quiet pattern, and the neckcloth, of white cambric, rolled carelessly about the neck. It is painful to look at the face, it has such a weary, worn-out, defeated look—like the face of a man within sight of the grave. There is a companion picture by the same hand, done also on mahogany, which is believed by Dr. Waddell to be a portrait of the poet's eldest son. Dr. Waddell is also possessor of what is said to be a portrait of Burns painted at Irvine when the poet was quite a young man. It is a poor work of art and of doubtful authenticity.

¹ The shoulders and portion of the bust that appear in the engraving by Holl are not in the original picture.

² See letter in present volume, p. 170.

THE BIOGRAPHIES OF BURNS.

Immediately after the death of Burns numerous biographical sketches began to appear in the periodical press. In Oct. and Nov. 1796, there appeared in the *Aberdeen Magazine* a sketch of his Life and Writings, said to be from the pen of BISHOP JOHN SKINNER, son of the author of "Tullochgorman," and who had met the poet during his Northern tour. In January, 1797, "Some account of the Life and Writings of Robert Burns, the Ayrshire poet" formed the leading paper in the *Scots Magazine*, while in the *Monthly Magazine* for March and July of the same year an "Original Memoir of the late Robert Burns," initialed "H.," formed an important item. The author was ROBERT HERON, a personal acquaintance of the poet, and his memoir was published afterwards in a thin octavo volume (Edin. 1797). Chambers characterizes it as "a very rare and interesting composition, which is often quoted, but seldom seen," and which presents "not only an uncommonly clear view of the life and character of Burns, but also a specimen of the animated and nervous, though somewhat turgid, style of Heron, whose literary history is scarcely less remarkable than that of Burns."

In 1800 appeared Currie's celebrated edition with Life by the editor. DR. CURRIE became personally acquainted with Burns in 1792, and upon the death of the poet he was induced, at the request of his old friend Mr. Syme, to become the editor of a complete edition of the poet's works, to which he added a memoir. This memoir was executed with surprising delicacy towards the memory of the poet and the feelings of his surviving friends, as well as with due consideration for the interests of truth and virtue. Currie's edition long retained its place as the standard version of the Life and Works of Burns.

In 1804 the *Lives of Scottish Poets*, by DAVID IRVING, afterwards librarian to the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, was published. It included a memoir of Burns, a somewhat able though sketchy performance.

ALEXANDER CHALMERS, the editor of the *British Essayists* and the *English Poets from*

Chaucer to Cowper, wrote a "Memoir of Burns," which was prefixed to an edition of the poet's works, published by Crdell in 1804.

JOSIAH WALKER, latterly professor of Humanity in the University of Glasgow, was introduced to Burns by Dr. Blacklock in Edinburgh in 1787. They again met at Blair during Burns's Northern tour, Walker being then acting in the capacity of tutor in the Duke of Athole's family. He also visited the poet towards the end of 1795 in Dumfries. In 1811 he produced a Life of Burns, which was published in the edition of Burns issued at Edinburgh for the trustees of James Morison (of Perth, who had projected it) in two vols. 8vo. This life is severely handled in Professor Wilson's Essay, published in this edition.

ALEXANDER PETERKIN, Sheriff-substitute of Orkney, published an edition of Burns in 1813 with a Life, which, among other new matter, contained letters relating to the later years of the poet's life by Findlater, and James Gray.

The Rev. HAMILTON PAUL, the Ayrshire clerical humorist and poet, prefixed a Life of Burns to an edition of his works published at Ayr in 1819. It contained a variety of particulars inaccessible to previous biographers.

THOMAS CAMPBELL, the poet, gave a short "Life of Robert Burns" in his *Specimens of the British Poets: with biographical and critical notices*, 1819.

JOHN GIBSON LOCKHART's "Life of Robert Burns" was written for *Constable's Miscellany* and was published in 1828 in two forms—the one in 16mo (vol. xxiii. of the *Miscellany*), and the other in 8vo to match with the volumes of Currie and Cromek. A revised and enlarged edition appeared in 1830. This biography is written with a perfect understanding and feeling of Burns's genius and character, and without that exaggeration of weak enthusiasm which is so sickening in many of the biographies of the poet. It is given entire with explanatory and corrective notes in this edition.

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM wrote the "Life of Burns" prefixed to his edition of the poet published in 1834. A great deal of the matter,

and many of the anecdotes in this "Life," were altogether new if some were not altogether true.

JAMES HOGG, the Ettrick Shepherd, published a life of Burns in the edition known as *Hogg and Motherwell's* in 1835, but, with the exception of the extensive importations from Lockhart's *Life* and Carlyle's Essay which it contains, it is nearly worthless.

ROBERT CHAMBERS published *Life and Works of Burns* chronologically arranged, 1851. For this work Dr. Chambers made diligent and laborious original investigations, gathering many hitherto unrecorded facts from the surviving acquaintances of the poet, and especially from his sister Mrs. Begg, to whose benefit and that of her daughters the whole profits of the work were generously devoted.

The Rev. GEORGE GILFILLAN published a "Life of Burns" in connection with *Nichol's British Poets* in 1856, and his last work was a new "Life" for the *National Burns* (1878-79), the latter portion of which was not published for some time after his death.

ALEXANDER SMITH, poet and essayist, wrote a "Biographical Memoir" for the *Golden Treasury Burns* in 1865; it also appears in the *Globe* edition, 1868. It is one of the finest biographical essays in the language.

PRINCIPAL SHARP of St. Andrews: "Robert Burns" (*English Men of Letters*), 1879. A readable and fairly-accurate biography, but narrow-minded and unsympathetic.

JOHN STUART BLACKIE, Emeritus-Professor: "Life of Robert Burns," 1888, "Great Writers" series (edited by Erle S. Robertson). An excellent biography of the poet—fresh, readable, sympathetic, and reasonably full and accurate.

Among other biographers may be mentioned:

—SIR HARRIS NICOLAS: "Memoir of Burns" in the Aldine edition of the poet, 1839.—JOHN JOHNSTONE: "Memoir" in *Specimens of the Lyrical, Descriptive, and Narrative Poets of Great Britain*, 1828.—DR. ROBERT CARRUTHERS: "Life" in *Chambers's Cyclopaedia of English Literature*, 1843.—SAMUEL TYLER, LL.D.: "Burns as a Poet and as a Man," 1849.—JOHN TILLOTSON: "Life of Burns" in *Lives of Eminent Men*, 1856.—PATRICK EDWARD DOVE: "Biographical Sketch of Robert Burns," 1859.—REV. JAMES WHITE, Nonchurch: "Robert Burns, a Memoir," 1859.—WILLIAM GUNNYON: "Original Memoir of Burns," 1865, in Nimmo's edition of the poet's work.—DR. HATELY WADDELL: "Life of Burns, a Spiritual Biography," in *Critical and Analytical edition*, 1867.—WM. M. ROSSETTI: "Critical Memoir of Burns," 1871, accompanying the poems in Moxon's series of poets.—WM. SCOTT DOUGLAS: "Chronological Summary of the Life and Writings of Burns," *Kilmarnock Burns*, 1871 (improved edition, 1876).—PROF. JOHN NICHOL: "Burns," in *Ency. Brit.* (9th ed.), 1876.—LESLIE STEPHEN, "Burns" in *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. vii. 1886.



LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL EDITIONS OF BURNS'S WORKS,
AND OF
WORKS CONNECTED WITH THE POET.

POEMS, CHIEFLY IN THE SCOTTISH DIALECT, by Robert Burns. Kilmarnock, printed by John Wilson. 1786.¹

POEMS, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect, by Robert Burns. Edinburgh: printed for the author and sold by William Creech. 1787.²

¹ This edition was published 31st July, 1786, the impression consisting of 612 copies. So rare have copies now become that in the *Burns Calendar* published in 1874, £17, £18, 18s., and £10 are quoted as prices given for single copies. Since then, however, far higher prices have been realized. At the Gardyne sale, in July, 1885 a copy brought £40; two copies were sold in London, about 1880, for £55 and £70; while at the Laing sale, in December, 1879, a copy brought £90. The latter, however, contained some lines in Burns's autograph, and had a holograph letter of John Gibson Lockhart's prefixed. It is curious to note, looking at these prices, that the whole expense of printing and publishing the entire edition was but £35, 17s. One copy of the author's "proposals for publishing" has been preserved; it runs as follows:

" April 14th, 1786.

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

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

'Set out the hunt side of your shin,
For pride in poets is nae sin:
Glory's the prize for which they rin,
And Fame's their joy:
And wha blaws best his horn shall win,
An wherefore no?"

ALLAN RAMSAY.

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

Then follows the names of sixteen subscribers, to one of which, "William Lorrimer," is added, apparently in the poet's handwriting,—"Copy sent per Charles Crichton. The Blockhead refused it."

In 1867 a fac-simile reprint of this rare volume was produced by Mr. M'Kie, Kilmarnock, and a London publisher has also issued a fac-simile reprint in commemoration of the centenary of the publication (1886).

² Reprinted by Creech during the same year.

POEMS, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect, by Robert Burns. London, printed for A. Strachan; T. Cadell, in the Strand; and W. Creech, Edinburgh. 1787.³

POEMS, &c., 12mo. Dublin, W. Gilbert. 1789.

POEMS, &c., 2 vols. 8vo. Edin., Creech. 1790.

POEMS, &c., 12mo. Belfast, Wm. Magee. 1790.

³ The following document concerning the above edition is of interest:—

"Memorandum of agreement betwixt Mr. Creech and Mr. Burns, respecting the property of Mr. Burns's Poems.

"By advice of friends, Mr. Burns having resolved to dispose of the property of his Poems, and having consulted with Mr. Henry M'Kenzie upon the subject, Mr. Creech met with Mr. Burns at Mr. M'Kenzie's house upon Tuesday, the 17th April, 1787, in the evening, and they three having retired and conversed upon the subject, Mr. Burns and Mr. Creech referred the sum to be named by Mr. M'Kenzie, as being well acquainted with matters of this kind, when Mr. M'Kenzie said he thought Mr. Burns should have a Hundred Guinea for the property of his Poems. Mr. Creech said that he agreed to the proposal, but as Scotland was amply supplied with the very numerous edition now printed, he would write to Mr. Cadell of London, to know if he would take a share of the book; but, at any rate, Mr. Burns should have the money named by Mr. M'Kenzie, which Mr. Burns most cordially agreed to, and to make over the property upon these terms whenever Mr. Creech required him. Upon Monday, the 23rd April, 1787, Mr. Creech informed Mr. Burns that he had remained in town, expecting Mr. Cadell's answer for three days as to his taking a share of the property of the Poems, but that he received no answer, yet he would do as formerly proposed, and agreed to take the whole upon himself, that Mr. Burns might be at no uncertainty in the matter.

"Upon this both parties considered the transaction as finished.

" EDINBURGH, October 23rd, 1787.

"On demand, I promise to pay to Mr. Robert Burns, or order, One Hundred Guinea. Value received.

(Signed) WILLIAM CREECH.

"Received the contents,

(Signed) ROBERT BURNS."

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and W. Creech,

Gilbert. 1789.

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ILLIAM CREECH.

ROBERT BURNS."

THE SCOTS MUSICAL MUSEUM, a Collection of
Six Hundred Scots Songs, &c., 6 vols. 8vo.
Edinburgh, James Johnson. 1787-1803.¹

POEMS, &c., 2 vols. 8vo. Edin., Creech. 1793.

THE MELODIES OF SCOTLAND: with Sym-
phonies and Accompaniments for the Piano-
forte, Violin, &c. The whole collected by
George Thomson, F.A.S.E. 5 vols. music
folio (to which a sixth was finally added).
1793-1841.²

POEMS, &c., 2 vols. 8vo. Edin., Creech. 1794.

POEMS, &c., 2 vols. 8vo. London, Cadell and
Davis. 1797.

POEMS, &c., 2 vols. 8vo. Edin., Creech. 1798.

POEMS, &c., 2 vols. 8vo. Edin., Creech. 1800.

THE WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS: with an ac-
count of his Life, and a Criticism on his
Writings: to which are prefixed some ob-
servations on the character and condition of
the Scottish peasantry, 4 vols. 8vo. Liver-
pool: printed by J. M'Creery, for T. Cadell,
Junr., and W. Davies, Strand, London; and
W. Creech, Edinburgh. 1800.³

POEMS ASCRIBED TO ROBERT BURNS, the Ayr-
shire Bard, not contained in any edition of
his works hitherto published. (Glasgow,
printed by Chapman & Lang, for T. Stewart.
1801.⁴

POEMS BY ROBERT BURNS, with his Life and
Character, 2 vols. 18mo, embellished with
engravings. Edinburgh, Oliver & Co. 1801.⁵

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO CLARINDA. By Robert
Burns, the Ayrshire Poet. Never before
published, 12mo. Glasg., Stewart. 1802.⁶

POEMS, &c., including a number of Original
Pieces never before published. To which is
added an Appendix, consisting of his Cor-
respondence with Clarinda, &c., 18mo.
Glasgow, Stewart & Macgown. 1802.

¹ This work included about 180 songs written or
collected by Robert Burns.

² This collection includes about 100 songs by Burns.

³ Currie's celebrated edition. A second edition was
published in 1801, "Printed by R. Noble, in the Old
Bailey, for T. Cadell, Junr., and W. Davies, Strand,
London; and W. Creech, Edinburgh." The second
edition contains some poems and letters not in the
first, and also an essay by Gilbert Burns, on the
effects of refinement of taste among labouring men.
A third edition was issued the same year; a fourth
in 1803; a fifth in 1806; a sixth in 1809; and a seventh
in 1813.

BURNS'S POEMS, with his Life and Character.
Portrait and Engravings by R. Scott, 2 vols.
18mo. Kirkcaldy, J. Crerar. 1802.

THE POETICAL WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS: a
new edition: including the Pieces published
in his Correspondence, with his Songs and
Fragments. Edited by Alex. Chalmers.
3 vols. 18mo. London, Cadell and Davies.
1804.

RELIQUES OF ROBERT BURNS; consisting chiefly
of original Letters, Poems, and Critical Obser-
vations on Scottish Songs: collected and
published by R. H. Cromek, 8vo. London,
printed by J. M'Creery, for T. Cadell and
W. Davies, Strand. 1808.

SELECT SCOTTISH SONGS, Ancient and Modern:
with Critical Observations and Biographical
Notices, by Robert Burns. Edited by R. H.
Cromek, 2 vols. 8vo. London, Cadell. 1810.

POEMS BY ROBERT BURNS: with an Account of
his Life, and Miscellaneous Remarks on his
Writings. By Josiah Walker. 2 vols. 8vo
(portrait and other engravings). Edinburgh,
printed for the trustees of the late James
Morison. 1811.

LIFE AND WORKS OF BURNS (as by Currie), with
a Review of his Life and Writings, by Alex-
ander Peterkin, 4 vols. 8vo. Edinburgh,
Macredie & Co. 1813.

POEMS AND SONGS OF ROBERT BURNS: with a
Life of the Author, &c., by the Rev. Hamil-
ton Paul, 12mo. Ayr. 1819.

WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS,⁷ with many addi-
tions by Gilbert Burns, 4 vols. 8vo. Lon-
don, Cadell and Davies. 1820.

POEMS, &c., 2 vols. fcap. 8vo. Pickering,
London. 1830.

WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS; with his Life by
Allan Cunningham, 8 vols. fcap. 8vo.
London, Cochrane and Macrone. 1834.

⁴ Included the "Jolly Beggars," "Holy Willie's
Prayer," &c., here printed for the first time.

⁵ Life abridged from Currie.

⁶ Clarinda intrusted twenty-five of Burns's letters
to a person who professed to be writing a life of the
poet. By a gross breach of confidence, however, an
entire copy of the lot was made and here published.
The edition was interdicted, but notwithstanding the
letters continued to appear in various editions up till
Clarinda's death in 1841.

⁷ Currie's eighth edition.

- WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS. Edited by the Ettrick Shepherd and William Motherwell, with a new Memoir by the former, 5 vols. fcap. 8vo. Glasg., Fullarton & Coy. 1835.
- THE PROSE WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS. With the Notes of Currie and Cromek, and many by Robert Chambers, roy. 8vo. Edinburgh, Chambers. 1838-9.
- THE COMPLETE WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS. Illustrated by Bartlett, Allom, and other artists. With a new Life of the Poet, and Notices Critical and Biographical. By Allan Cunningham, 2 vols. 4to. London, Virtue. 1839.
- THE LIFE, LETTERS, and LAND OF BURNS. Illustrated by Bartlett, Allom, &c., with Memoir, &c., by Allan Cunningham, 4to, 2 vols. London, Virtue. 1839.
- JOHNSON'S SCOTTISH MUSICAL MUSEUM, with Notes and Illustrations by the late William Stenhouse, and additional Illustrations by David Laing and Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe. 6 vols. 8vo. Edinburgh, Blackwood. 1839.
- THE POETICAL WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS, with Memoir by Sir Harris Nicolas. (Aldine Poets.) 3 vols. 12mo. Lond., Pickering. 1839.
- THE CONTEMPORARIES OF BURNS, and the more recent poets of Ayrshire, with Selections from their Writings. By James Paterson. Edin., Paton. 1840.
- THE LAND OF BURNS, a Series of Landscapes and Portraits, illustrative of the Life and Writings of the Scottish poet. The Landscapes from paintings made expressly for the work, by D. O. Hill, R.S.A. The Literary Department by Professor Wilson and Robert Chambers, 2 vols. 4to. Glasgow, Blackie & Son. 1840.
- WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS; with Life by Cunningham, and Notes by Gilbert Burns, Byron, Campbell, Carlyle, Chambers, Cromek, Hazlitt, Hogg, Lockhart, Motherwell, Scott, Wilson, Wordsworth, &c., 1 vol. 8vo. London, Tegg. 1840.
- CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN BURNS and CLARINDA; with a Memoir of Mrs. M'Lehose (Clarinda). Arranged and Edited by her grandson, W. C. M'Lehose, 8vo. Edin., Tait. 1843.
- THE WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS: with Dr. Currie's Life of the Poet, and an Essay on his Genius and Character, by Professor Wilson; also numerous Notes, Annotations, and Appendices. Illustrated by twenty-one authentic portraits and sixty-one views by D. O. Hill, R.S.A. 2 vols. super-roy. 8vo. Glasgow, Blackie & Son. 1846.
- NOTES ON HIS NAME AND FAMILY: by James Burnes, K.H., F.R.S. Edin., printed for private circulation. 1851.
- LIFE AND WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS, Edited by Robert Chambers, 4 vols. 12mo. Edin., W. & R. Chambers. 1851.¹
- The Same Work (Library Edition), 4 vols. roy. 8vo. 1856.
- POETICAL WORKS. 2 vols. 8vo. Edinburgh, Nichol. 1856.²
- POEMS and SONGS OF BURNS. (Elzevir edition.) 2 vols. 24mo. London, Bell & Daldy. 1863.
- POETICAL WORKS, with Life by Wm. Gunnayon, 8vo. Edinburgh, Nimmo. 1865.
- THE POEMS OF ROBERT BURNS. Edited from the best printed and manuscript authorities, with Prefatory Memoir by Alex. Smith. (Golden Treasury Series.) 2 volumes, 12mo. London and Cambridge, Macmillan. 1865.
- LIFE AND WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS: Critical and Analytical Edition, by P. Hatley Waddell, LL.D. Illustrated. 2 vols. 4to. Glasgow, Wilson. 1867.
- POEMS AND SONGS BY ROBERT BURNS: with Illustrations by eminent Scottish Artists. (The Edina Burns.) 4to. Edinburgh, Nimmo. 1868.
- POEMS, SONGS, and LETTERS, being the Complete Works of Robert Burns, edited from the best printed and manuscript authorities with Glossarial Index and a Biographical Memoir by Alexander Smith. London, Macmillan. 1868. (Globe edition.)

¹ In this edition the life and works are interwoven, so as to present the latter, prose and poetry, in chronological order.

² "Nichol's *British Poets*:" with Memoirs and Dissertations by the Rev. Geo. Gilfillan.

BURNS: with Dr. [unclear], and an Essay on [unclear], by Professor Wil- [unclear], Annotations, and [unclear] by twenty-one [unclear] sixty-one views by [unclear] vols. super-roy. 8vo. 1846.

FAMILY: by James [unclear] Edin., printed for [unclear] 51.

BERT BURNS, Edited [unclear] vols. 12mo. Edin., 1851.¹

(Edition), 4 vols. roy.

8vo. Edinburgh,

BURNS. (Elzevir edi- [unclear] London, Bell &

by Wm. Gunnyon, [unclear] 1865.

BURNS. Edited from [unclear] manuscript authorities, [unclear] by Alex. Smith. (ies.) 2 volumes, [unclear] bridge, Macmillan.

BERT BURNS: Critical [unclear] by P. Hately Wad- [unclear] 2 vols. 4to. Glas-

OBERT BURNS: with [unclear] Scottish Artists. [unclear] 4to. Edinburgh,

ERS, being the Com- [unclear] Burns, edited from [unclear] manuscript authorities [unclear] and a Biographical [unclear] Smith. London, [unclear] lobe edition.)

works are interwoven, [unclear] prose and poetry, in

with Memoirs and Dis- [unclear]

POETICAL WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS, edited by W. M. Rossetti. Illustrated. London, Moxon. 1871.

THE COMPLETE POETICAL WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS: with New Annotations, Biographical Notices, &c., by W. Scott Douglas. Kilmarnock, M'Kie. 1871.

The Same. Revised and Extended edition. Kilmarnock. 1876.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE GLENRIDDELL MSS. OF BURNS'S POEMS, with several poems never before published. Edited by Henry A. Bright (printed for private circulation). Liverpool, post 4to. 1874.

BURNS CALENDAR: a Manual of Burnsiana: relating events in the poet's history, names associated with his Life and Writings, a concise Bibliography, &c., 4to. Kilmarnock. 1876.

THE NATIONAL BURNS, edited by Rev. George Gilfillan, including the Airs of all the Songs, and an original Life of Burns by the editor. Illustrations. 2 vols. 4to. Glasgow, Mac- kenzie. 1878.

COMPLETE WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS, in Prose and Verse, edited by W. Scott Douglas, with Explanatory Notes and Glossary, Portraits, Vignettes, Frontispieces, Facsimiles, Maps, and Music, 6 vols. 8vo. Edinburgh, Paterson. 1877-79.

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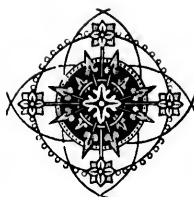
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