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know that the recluse of Weston (1787) did mark the crossing of the horizon of the new and brilliant orb of song in the rude North ; or metaphorically, it gladdens us to find that William Cowper was among the first to recognize the extraordinariness of Robert Burns's Poems. At this point it is inevitable that we give the letter to Samuel Rose, Esq., wherein his gift of Burns's Poems is acknowledged. It is fetched from Southey's Cowper (Bohn, 8 vol. iii., pp. 383-4) :—

"Dear Sir,— Weston, July 24, 1787.

"This is the first time I have written these six months, and nothing but the constraint of obligation could induce me to write now. I cannot be so wanting to myself as not to endeavour at least to thank you, both for the visits with which you have favoured me, and the Poems that you sent me ; in my present state of mind I taste nothing, nevertheless I read, partly from habit, and partly because it is the only thing that I am capable of.

"I have read Burns's Poems, and have read them twice, and though they be written in a language that is new to me, and many of them on subjects much inferior to the author's ability, I think them on the whole a very extraordinary production. He is, I believe, the lower rank of life since Shakespeare (I should rather say since Prior) who need not be in consideration of his origin, and the disadvantage under which he has laboured. It will be pity if he should not hereafter divest himself of barbarism, and content himself with writing pure English, in which he appears perfectly qualified to excel. He who can command admiration, dishonours himself if he aim no higher than to raise a laugh.

"I am, dear sir, with my best wishes for your prosperity, and with Mrs. Unwin's re-

spects, Your obliged and affectionate humble ser-

WM. COWPER."

We must return upon this characteristic letter. I have now to state that it is my good fortune to possess the identical copy of Burns's Poems that was thus acknowledged. I cannot be mistaken in assuming that a detailed account of it will prove acceptable to admirers of both poets. The title-page is as follows :—

POEMS  
CHIEFLY IN THE  
SCOTTISH DIALECT  
BY  
ROBERT BURNS.  
—  
THIRD EDITION.  
—  
LONDON :  
PUBLISHED FOR A. STRAHAN ; T. CADELL, IN THE  
STRAND ; AND W. CREECH, EDINBURGH.

MDCCLXXXVII.

It is a goodly octavo, pp. xlvi. and 372. It is in the original boards, with rough uncut edges. It seems to me a handsomer book than the Edinburgh edition of the same year. The Burn's portrait must have been re-engraved for it by Beugo. On the front board is Cowper's bookplate.

It would appear that the poet continued to be the bookplate that he had had engraved on his appointment as clerk of the Journals of the House of Lords, notwithstanding his precipitate retreat from the too public post. For in the copy of Henry Vaughan's "Silex Scintillans" (1650) ; in his "Thucydides" (Foulis, 8 vol. in 4, 1759), which has also his dated

autograph in each volume ; and in his MS. Commonplace Book—all of which are in my library—it is also inserted.\*

But besides the bookplate, there are markings throughout, that testify to the care and sustained interest with which Cowper read the Poems. One little undesigned coincidence ratifies the statement in the letter that he had read the Poems twice. For whereas the dotted and lined markings, on evidently the first reading, are in red pencil, a second less minute series are in blue pencil.

I would now proceed to place on record the whole of the markings. They begin with the Dedication (leaves misplaced in the making up.) The following opening sentences have a red dotted line along the margin :—

"A Scottish Bard, proud of the name, and whose highest ambition is to sing in his Country's service, where should he so properly look for patronage as to the illustrious names of his native Land [The nobleman and gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt] ; those who bear the honours and inherit the virtues of their Ancestors ! The Poetic Genius of my Country found me as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha—at the plough ; and threw her inspiring mantle over me. She bade me sing the loves, the joys, the rural scenes and rural pleasures of my natal Soil, in my native tongue ; I tuned my wild, artless notes, as she inspired.—She whispered me to come to this ancient metropolis of Caledonia, and lay my Songs under your honoured protection : I now obey her dictates."

*En passant*, Is not the famous "New Preface" of Wordsworth only an enlargement of the pregnant words on the sources and resources of poetry here presented ?

Similarly marked is this :—

"I was bred to the Plough, and am independent. I come to claim the common Scottish name with you, my illustrious Countrymen ; and to tell the world that I glory in the title.—I come to congratulate my Country, that the blood of her ancient heroes still runs uncontaminated."

I have thus far quoted in full. In the sequel, assuming that every reader interested in the matter has his Burns, I must content myself almost wholly with references to the places, going onward from page 1 to the close. It lies on the surface that as in his letter he states "the language was new" to him, many of the words puzzled him and necessitated resource to the appended Glossary. The following words have a red or blue pencil line drawn under them :—Page 14, "messin" (=a small dog). Page 15, "gash" (=sagacious) ; "sheugh" (=ditch) ; "baws'nt" (=having a white stripe down the face) ; "tousie" (=shaggy) ; "hur-dies" (=loins) ; "fain" (=fond) ; "pack" (=intimate) ; "kain" (=fowls, etc., paid as rent) ; "stechin" (=crammed) ; "pechan" (=stomach) ; "smytrie" (=numerous) ; "dud-die" (=ragged) ; "darg" (=day's labour) ; "thack and rape" (=necessaries) ; "bairdly" (=broad-built) ; "broek" (=animal) ; "poor-tith" (=poverty) ; "grushie" (=thriving growth) ; "ferlie" (=wonder) ; "luntin pipe" (=smoking) ; "sneeshing mull" (=snuff-box) ; "fawsont" (=decent, seemly) ; "gentle" (=noble) ; "foughten" (=harassed) ; "jads" (=jades). These are drawn wholly from "The Twa Dogs, a Tale." There are like under-lings throughout, and several deeply dented, as though the reader were impatient to get at the meaning. It scarcely seems needful to similarly record the remaining interrogated words.

\*I also possess a long autograph letter to Lady Austen, and I mention this here in order to note that it illustrates the loose and perfunctory fashion with which Southey edited (?) Cowper's Letters. A humorous postscript on his turkey and its brood is left out entirely.

Most of them (I fear) would perplex present-day Scots, not to say Englishmen. In "The Twa Dogs" there are several *bits* marked off with blue or red lines, e.g. (blue), "I've noticed on our Laird's court-day" to "But surely poor folk maun be wretches" ; (blue) this couplet, graphic and memorable :—

"My heart has been sae fain to see them,  
That I for joy hae barkit wi' them."

Then the stinging rebuke of the "fast"-living gentry :—

"For Britain's guid ! for her destruction !  
Wi' dissipation, feud and faction."

Noted too is Luath's kindly mitigation of Caesar's censure :

"Except for breakin' o' their timmer,  
Or speakin' lightly o' their Limmer,  
Or shootin' o' a hare or moorcock,  
The ne'er-a-bit they're ill to poor folk."

Robert Burns was no vulgar demagogue to rail against "the classes" as such. Following this (blue) is enclosure of the admirable lines, "A country fellow at the plough" down to "Wi' ev'n down want o' wark are curst." The six closing lines of the poem are red lined throughout, and the reader might do worse than turn to them.

The next poem ("Scotch Drink"), in common with "To a Haggis" and "To a Louse," was doubtless one of those designated in the letter as "subjects much inferior to the author's ability." Nevertheless, stanza iii. is dot-lined on the margin—"Let husky wheat the laughs adorn," etc.

The "Postscript" to "The Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer" seems to have specially arrested Cowper : stanzas i. to v. are blue lined. They abide of the "brave translunary things" of the Poet.

In "Death and Dr. Hornbook," stanzas i., iv., and last are blue lined, the last red lined. They are undoubtedly the three finest stanzas of the poem.

The "Brigs of Ayr" has a hand drawn in red pencil (*scribble*) at the commencement, and probably it was this "pure English" portion that led to the remark that Burns was perfectly qualified to excel in English as distinguished from the "barbarism" (!) of the Scottish Dialect ! The gentle heart of the reader was doubtless touched by the denunciation of the cruelty of sportsmen in the lines, "The thundering guns are heard on ev'ry side" down to "Sires, mothers, children in one carnage lie." This is blue pencilled. Then, red lined, is the vivid description of the moon-lighted, frosty river—"The tide-swoln Firth," etc., down to

"The chilly frost, beneath the silver beam  
Crept, gently crusting o'er the glittering stream."

The "Address to the Deil" has stanza ii., "Hear me, auld Hangie," etc., blue enclosed, and the two closing stanzas red lined, "And now, auld Cloots," etc.

"A Dream" has stanzas ii. and iii. blue enclosed. Evidently the reader approved of the sound advice and sarcasm addressed to the monarch and his wayward sons. Stanzas x. and xi., to the "Prince of Wales," are blue marked. "The Vision," duan second, has the immortal stanzas, "With future hope I oft would gaze" to "Struck thy young eye," and "I saw thy pulse's maddening play," and "Thou canst not learn," etc., to the end, "in light away," are blue and red lined, and in part underlined. The "Address to the Unco Guid" has stanzas vii. and viii. wholly red underlined—perhaps the highest level of insight and form reached by Burns. Stanza xxv.