

out as their trysting place. None of Burns' biographies, so far as I have seen, suggest any criminality in their intercourse. They were solemnly betrothed the second Sunday in May, 1786. The trysting place was on the banks of a little river near the castle. With the brook running between them they dipped water in their hands and holding it up, "covenanted to love each other so long as woods grow and water flows." They exchanged bibles; Mary's copy, a volume of the cheapest works; Robert's, two volumes elegantly bound. He had written in the first volume, "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely; I am the Lord."—Leviticus, chap. XIX, v. 12. In the second volume he wrote:—"Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oath."—St. Matthew, chap. V, v. 33. On the blank leaf of each volume is written in the bold, manly hand of the bard,

ROBERT BURNS, Mossiel.

The two names originally inscribed in the books have been almost obliterated. Opposite that of Burns in the first volume is his Royal Arch Mason-Mark.

After this affective parting on the banks of the running stream, Mary gave up her engagement on Whit Sunday, 1786. Then she crossed the Firth of Clyde to visit some relations at Cowal preparatory to her marriage. On returning she remained several weeks at her father's house in Glenoch, during which she received weekly letters from Burns. The circumstance of a girl in her humble condition having so much correspondence set the tongues of gossips a-wagging, and one of them informed Mr. Camp-

bell, "that Burns was a strange character and a great scoffer at women," but Mary laughed and declared herself willing to trust his scoffing. Unfortunately the correspondence was destroyed by Mr. Campbell after his daughter's death, which occurred the following October as the result of a malignant fever. The news reached Burns probably the 20th. Upon the anniversary of the day, three years afterward, the affecting and sublime ode was composed. Burns was living at the time at Ellisland and had spent the day in the harvest field. As night came on, a great melancholy seized him and instead of returning to the house he threw himself upon the bundles of straw, with his eyes fixed upon a star that was gleaming in the west with uncommon brilliancy. Whether he had any particular association with that luminary is not known, but until its going down at midnight he lay in poetic frenzy; then entering the house wrote off the entire song as it stands. In sending it to Mr. Geo. Thomson, the music publisher, he requested that it be set to the plaintive air, "The Death of Captain Cook."

Three years later (November 14, 1792) Burns gave evidences of continued devotion to the memory of Mary Campbell by composing the following lines, only second in pathos and feeling to the other. In his letter enclosing it to his music publisher, George Thomson, he declares that "the subject is one of the most interesting passages of my youthful days. Perhaps after all, 'tis the still-glowing prejudice of my heart that throws a borrowed lustre over the merits of the composition." In reply, Mr. Thomson says, "your verses upon Highland Mary are just come to hand. They breathe the genuine spirit of poetry and, like the music, (Kathrine Ogie) will last for ever. Such verses, united to such an air, with the delicate harmony of Ple'sl superadded, might form a treat worthy of being presented to Apollo himself. I have