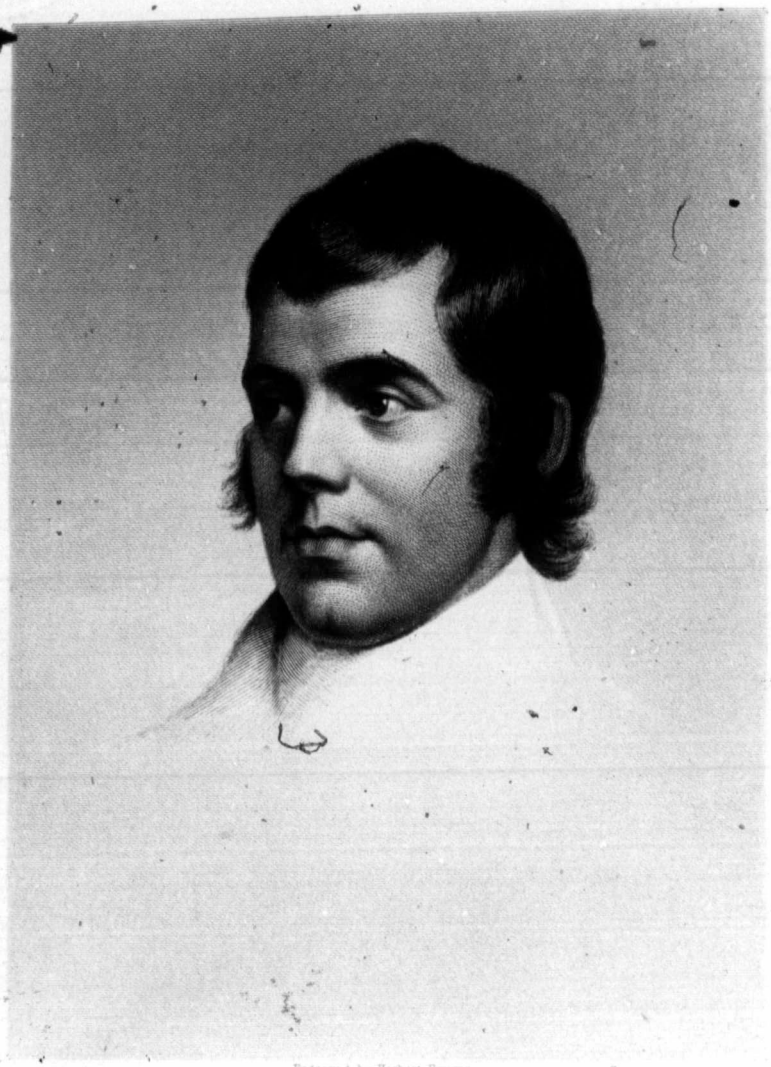
THE WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS.



Engraved by Herbert Bourne.

ROBERT BURNS.

FROM THE ORIGINAL DRAWING BY ARCHIBALD SKIRVING IN THE POSSESSION OF SIR THEODORE MARTIN, K.C.B.

Blackie & Son, London, Glasgow & Edinburgh.

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AND

THE WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS.

WITH

A SERIES OF AUTHENTIC

PICTORIAL ILLUSTRATIONS,

MARGINAL GLOSSARY, NUMEROUS NOTES, AND APPENDIXES:

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. I.

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BLACKIE & SON.
1889.

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PREFACE.

The first edition of Burns's poems appeared in 1786, or just a little over one hundred years ago. It was printed at Kilmarnock, to be sold by subscription for the modest sum of three shillings, and formed a small volume entitled, "Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect, by Robert Burns." The author was then a young man of twenty-seven, and known only in his own immediate neighbourhood; but this unpretending little book, and the somewhat larger Edinburgh edition which soon followed it, were enough to make his name a household word among Scotchmen, and to show that Scotland had given birth to a great national poet. Since then Burns's fame has gone on increasing, edition after edition of his writings has been published, and copies have been sold by the hundred thousand.

Among the chief of the larger editions of Burns's works was one brought out, about forty years ago, by the publishers of the present edition. It had a long lease of public favour, and was generally regarded as not unworthy of the poet. Since its publication, however, much fresh matter that should be incorporated in any comprehensive edition of Burns has been accumulated; additional poems and letters of his have been made public, and a considerable number of new facts relating to his life have become known. This result has been brought about chiefly by the labours of such painstaking editors as Robert Chambers, Hately Waddell, George Gilfillan, and especially W. Scott Douglas, the first and last of whom in particular have added in a surprising manner to the bulk of Burns's published writings and to the known facts of his life. With these additions to our knowledge of Burns's life and writings the demand among readers for copies of his works has more than kept pace, and, indeed, seems to be without limit. For as the population of the British islands continues to increase, as the English speaking communities throughout the world continue to multiply, so also do the admirers of Scotland's National Bard, by whom his works and life are more and more studied. Hence the issue of the present

edition, in which the most recent available matter has been incorporated, and which, it is believed, will better than any other enable readers to form a complete and just estimate both of the man and of his writings.

Among the chief features of this edition are the following:—

The writings of Burns are here presented in two sections, of which the one contains the poetry, the other the prose. Both sections are arranged chronologically, the pieces following each other according to their dates, so that the development of the poet's genius and his literary career may be readily studied and placed in connection with all the facts of his life. With the same object in view the year of the poet's age to which each poem belongs is inserted at the top of the page where the piece occurs. Numerous notes are appended to the author's text, giving the reader a vast amount of useful, and indeed indispensable, information in regard to persons, places, occurrences, local usages, &c., connected with or referred to by Burns. Without such a commentary many references and allusions would not be understood, nor would the poems and letters possess anything like the same interest. A certain number of the notes are critical in their character—they may point out special beauties, or may indicate where the poet has been less happy in his efforts. These latter notes are chiefly selected from writers of eminence who have had Burns for their theme.

The poems are treated on the self-interpreting plan, that is, the Scottish words and expressions, such as occur especially in the best and most characteristic of Burns's poems, are rendered intelligible to all by means of marginal explanations accompanying each piece that requires such aid. To those unacquainted with the dialect that Burns often used this must prove a most valuable feature, as it will enable any one readily to apprehend the meaning of even the most difficult passages, while the troublesome necessity of consulting a glossary is entirely avoided. Parallel with each line will be found the necessary interpretation, so that the reader carries the sense along with him without stopping, and only very rarely does a more detailed explanation require to be furnished in a note. But it is well to remember that the difficulty of understanding Burns is apt to be exaggerated, and that many of his poems present few and trifling peculiarities of dialect and others none at all.

The Life of the poet given in this edition, that namely written by John Gibson Lockhart, the son-in-law and biographer of Sir Walter Scott, is the only one that has acquired the character of a classic. It forms an eminently

readable and extremely fair-minded account of Burns's life, one in which the poet's greatness is fully recognized, and his defects and failings treated with gentleness and charity. The Life is supplemented by notes and an extensive appendix, adding very considerably to the information supplied by Lockhart, and giving results obtained by the most recent investigations and discoveries. But the most valuable supplement to the Life will be found in the letters and the notes accompanying them, taken in conjunction with the poems belonging to corresponding periods.

The two Essays included in this edition are studies on the poet and his writings that all readers must be glad to possess. Carlyle's essay has been universally recognized as one of the best and most sympathetic estimates of Burns ever written, and one of the ablest of its author's contributions to the department of literature to which it belongs. The eloquent and enthusiastic tribute of the renowned "Christopher North" to his fellow-poet and fellow-countryman, if a less celebrated composition, will be found to have merits of its own fully entitling it to the place here assigned it.

Among other features of the present edition attention may be drawn to the account which it contains of the great centenary celebration of the poet's birthday held in 1859 (with quotations from the chief addresses delivered on the occasion); the description of monuments erected to him, and of the portraits of him that exist; the selection of poems in his honour by well-known writers; the account of the chief editions of his works that have been published, and of the translations of his poems into foreign languages, &c.

Altogether, it may safely be said that in no other edition is there accumulated such a quantity of valuable matter calculated to throw light, from all points of view, upon Burns the poet and Burns the man. Readers will here possess Burns's works complete, in the best sense of the word, only a few trifling pieces unworthy of the poet being omitted and a few rather coarse passages suppressed.

The Pictorial Illustrations will no doubt be regarded as worthy of the text they accompany. The Landscapes embrace the principal scenes identified with the Life and Writings of the Poet, and thereby include views of much of the most attractive scenery of Scotland and of many localities rendered interesting by historical as well as by poetical associations. They are from finished pictures, by D. O. Hill, R.S.A., an artist fully acquainted with the scenes, alive to the

poetical and other associations connected with them, and whose faithful representations are rendered in a poetic spirit. The portraits are all from authentic originals. Besides two portraits of the Poet himself—the one from Nasmyth's well-known picture, the other from the remarkable drawing by Skirving—they present the likenesses of persons intimately connected with Burns by friendship or by association with his Muse.

GLASGOW, *December, 1887.*

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* See account of the original drawing in Appendix to Vol. V.

INDEX TO FIRST LINES OF POEMS AND SONGS IN THIS VOLUME.

THE

WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS.

LIFE OF THE POET

BY J. G. LOCKHART.

CHAPTER I.

[Birth:—the poet's father and family:—their alleged Jacobitism:—William Burnes settles in Ayrshire:—marriage:—character:—the poet's mother:—family removes to Mount Oliphant:—death of their landlord and removal to Lochlea:—death of the poet's father:—education of the Burnes family:—life at Mount Oliphant:—Robert and Gilbert at school at Dalrymple:—Robert studies French with Murdoch at Ayr:—reading:—friends in Ayr:—Burns' first love and song.][1]

My father was a farmer upon the Carrick border,
And carefully he brought me up in decency and order.

ROBERT BURNS was born on the 25th of January, 1759, in a clay-built cottage, about two miles to the south of the town of Ayr, and in the immediate vicinity of the Kirk of Alloway, and the "Auld Brig o' Doon." About a week afterwards, part of the frail dwelling, which his father had constructed with his own hands, gave way at midnight; and the infant poet and his mother were carried through the storm, to the shelter of a neighbouring hovel.

The father, William *Burnes* or *Burness* (for so he spelt his name), was the son of a farmer in Kincardineshire, whence he removed at nineteen years of age,[2] in consequence of domestic embarrassments. The farm on which the family lived formed part of the estate forfeited, after the Rebellion of 1715, by the noble house of Keith-Marischal; and the poet took pleasure in believing that his humble ancestors shared the principles and the fall of their chiefs. "Though my fathers" (said he after his fame was established) "had not illustrious honours and vast properties to hazard in the contest—though they left their cottages only to add so many units more to the unnoted crowd that followed their leaders, yet what they could they did, and what they had they lost. . . . They shook hands with ruin, for what they esteemed the cause of their king and their country."[3] Indeed, after William Burnes settled in the west of Scotland, there prevailed a vague notion that he himself had *been out* in the insurrection of 1745-6; but though Robert would fain have interpreted his father's silence in favour of a tale which flattered his imagination, his brother Gilbert always treated it as a mere fiction; and such it was. It is easy to suppose, that when any obscure northern stranger fixed himself in those days in the Low Country, such rumours were likely enough to be circulated concerning him. [It is not improbable that some members of the family had gone "out" with the young Earl Marischal in 1715, but it is tolerably certain that none of the poet's more immediate ancestors, at least

[1] [Passages that do not belong to the Life as written by Lockhart, but are now inserted to supplement or correct his text or notes, are inclosed in square brackets.]

[2] [An error. A letter of recommendation given to William Burnes by three Kincardineshire gentlemen, dated 9th May, 1748, shows that he was at least twenty-seven years of age when he left his father's house.]

[3] Letter to Lady Winifred Maxwell Constable, 16th December, 1789. [The letter will be found in its proper place in the poet's Correspondence.]

on the father's side, "shook hands with ruin," on account of any connection they had with that rising. His grandfather settled on his farm of Clochnahill about that time, and remained there till 1748, while his great-grandfather and several of his grand-uncles were for long thriving farmers in the neighbourhood, some of them or their families till after Burns's own death.][1]

William Burnes laboured for some years in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh as a gardener, and then found his way into Ayrshire. [In 1749 he was employed in laying out the Meadows, or Hope Park, on the south side of Edinburgh, ground which was formerly covered with a lake called the Borough Loch.] At the time when Robert was born, he was gardener and overseer to a gentleman of small estate, Mr. Ferguson of Doonholm: but resided on a few acres of land, which he had on lease from another proprietor, and where he had originally intended to establish himself as a nurseryman. He married Agnes Brown in December, 1757, and the poet was their first-born.

William Burnes seems to have been, in his humble station, a man eminently entitled to respect. He had received the ordinary learning of a Scottish parish school, and profited largely, both by that, and by his own experience in the world. "I have met with few" (said the poet,[2] after he himself had seen a good deal of mankind) "who understood men, their manners, and their ways, equal to my father." He was a strictly religious man. There exists in his handwriting a little manual of theology, in the form of a dialogue, which he drew up for the use of his children, and from which it appears that he had adopted more of the Arminian than of the Calvinistic *doctrine;* a circumstance not to be wondered at, when we consider that he had been educated in a district which was never numbered among the strongholds of the Presbyterian church.[3] The affectionate reverence with which his children ever regarded him, is attested by all who have described him as he appeared in his domestic circle; but there needs no evidence, beside that of the poet himself, who has painted, in colours that will never fade, "the saint, the father, and the husband," of the "Cottar's Saturday Night."

Agnes Brown, the wife of this good man, is described as "a very sagacious woman, without any appearance of forwardness, or awkwardness of manner;"[4] and it seems that, in features, and, as he grew up, in general address, the poet resembled her more than his father.[5] She had an inexhaustible store of ballads and traditionary tales, and appears to have nourished his infant imagination by this means, while her husband paid more attention to "the weightier matters of the law."

These worthy people laboured hard for the support of an increasing family. William was occupied with Mr. Ferguson's service, and Agnes, like the Wyfe of Auchtermuchtie, who ruled

> Baith calvis and kye,
> And a' the house baith in and out,—

contrived to manage a small dairy as well as her children. But though their honesty and diligence merited better things, their condition continued to be very uncomfortable; and our poet (in his letter to Dr. Moore) accounts distinctly for his being born and bred "a very poor man's son," by the remark, that "stubborn ungainly integrity, and headlong, ungovernable irascibility, are disqualifying circumstances."

These defects of temper did not, however, obscure the sterling worth of William Burnes in the eyes of Mr. Ferguson; who, when the gardener expressed a wish to try his fortune on a farm of his then vacant, and confessed at the same time his inability to meet the charges of stocking it, at once advanced £100 towards the removal of the difficulty. Burnes accordingly removed to this farm (that of Mount Oliphant, in the parish of Ayr) at Whitsuntide, 1766, when his eldest son was between six and seven years of age. But the soil proved to be

[1] [See APPENDIX—"Paternal Ancestry of Burns."]

[2] Letter of Burns to Dr. Moore, 2d August, 1787. [This autobiographical letter will be found complete in the present volume following the Life.]

[3] [This manual as it exists is in the handwriting of Murdoch, the teacher, who had either extended it from notes, or written it from the dictation of William Burnes at Mount Oliphant. See vol v.]

[4] Letter of Mr. Mackenzie, surgeon at Irvine. Morison, vol. ii. p. 261. [Morison's edition of Burns was published at Edinburgh in 1811 in two volumes.]

[5] Morison, vol. ii. p. 262. [She lived till 14th January, 1820, thus surviving her distinguished son nearly a quarter of a century.]

of a most ungrateful description; and Mr. Ferguson dying, and his affairs falling into the hands of a harsh *factor* (who afterwards sat for his picture in the "Twa Dogs"), Burnes was glad to give up his bargain at the end of six years.[1] He then removed about ten miles to a larger and better farm, that of Lochlea, in the parish of Tarbolton. But here, after a short interval of prosperity, some unfortunate misunderstanding took place as to the conditions of the lease; the dispute was referred to arbitration; and, after three years of suspense, the result involved Burnes in ruin. The worthy man lived to know this decision; but death saved him from witnessing its necessary consequences. He died of consumption on the 13th February, 1784. Severe labour, and hopes only renewed to be baffled, had at last exhausted a robust but irritable structure and temperament of body and of mind.

In the midst of the harassing struggles which found this termination, William Burnes appears to have used his utmost exertions for promoting the mental improvement of his children—a duty rarely neglected by Scottish parents, however humble their station and scanty their means. Robert was sent, in his sixth year, to a small school at Alloway Mill, about a mile from the house in which he was born. But Campbell, the teacher, being in the course of a few months removed to another situation, Burnes and four or five neighbours engaged Mr. John Murdoch to supply his place, lodging him by turns in their own houses, and insuring to him a small payment of money quarterly. Robert Burns, and Gilbert his next brother, were the aptest and favourite pupils of this worthy man, who has, in a letter published at length by Currie, detailed, with honest pride, the part which he had in the early education of our poet. He became the frequent inmate and confidential friend of the family, and speaks with enthusiasm of the virtues of William Burnes, and of the peaceful and happy life of his humble abode.

"He was," says Murdoch,[2] "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. A look of disapprobation was felt; a reproof was severely so; and a stripe with the *taws*, even on the skirt of the coat, gave heartfelt pain, produced a loud lamentation, and brought forth a flood of tears.

"He had the art of gaining the esteem and good-will of those that were labourers under him. I think I never saw him angry but twice; the one time it was with the foreman of the band, for not reaping the field as he was desired; and the other time, it was with an old man, for using smutty innuendoes and *double entendres*. . . .

"In this mean cottage, of which I myself was at times an inhabitant, I really believe there dwelt a larger portion of content than in any palace in Europe. The 'Cottar's Saturday Night' will give some idea of the temper and manners that prevailed there."[3]

[1] [There is an error here. Burnes had an option of removing at the end of every sixth year. At the end of the first six years he attempted to fix himself in a better farm, but failing in that attempt, he had to tackle a second six, and remained in all eleven years at Mount Oliphant, viz. from Whitsunday, 1766, to Whitsunday, 1777.]

[2] [Murdoch was about eighteen years of age when, in May, 1765, he took possession of the school, a small thatched building directly opposite Burns's Cottage. He ultimately went to London, where he published several educational works. In his latter days he sank into poverty, and a fund was raised for his relief. He died, April 20, 1824, aged seventy-seven; and from the obituary notice published in the London papers we learn that the celebrated Talleyrand was one of several distinguished foreigners who learned English from Burns's schoolmaster. His account of the Burns household will be found complete in the appendix to Lockhart's Life, as here published.]

[3] [Burns's birthplace, or as it is now commonly called "Burns's Cottage," is a low-roofed, one-storied structure of a very humble order on the highroad from Ayr to Maybole, and at a little distance from Alloway Kirk and the Auld Brig o' Doon. The road, when Burns's father built his house, ran in a more westerly direction than the present highway, the whole of his garden-ground lying between the two. The cottage consisted of a "but" or kitchen end to the left of the doorway, a "ben" or room end to the right, with an "awmrie" or partition press between, facing the door. At the back of this press and facing the kitchen fireplace was the recess which contained the bed in which the poet was born. On the family's removing to Mount Oliphant the cottage, with its surrounding garden-acres, was sold to the Corporation of Shoemakers in Ayr, for £120. About the beginning

The boys, under the joint tuition of Murdoch and their father, made rapid progress in reading, spelling, and writing; they committed psalms and hymns to memory with extraordinary ease—the teacher taking care (as he tells us) that they should understand the exact meaning of each word in the sentence ere they tried to get it by heart. "As soon," says he, "as they were capable of it, I taught them to turn verse into its natural prose order; sometimes to substitute synonymous expressions for poetical words; and to supply all the ellipses. Robert and Gilbert were generally at the upper end of the class, even when ranged with boys by far their seniors. The books most commonly used in the school were the *Spelling Book*, the New Testament, the Bible, Mason's *Collection of Prose and Verse*, Fisher's *English Grammar*."—"Gilbert always appeared to me to possess a more lively imagination, and to be more of the wit, than Robert. I attempted to teach them a little church-music. Here they were left far behind by all the rest of the school. Robert's ear, in particular, was remarkably dull, and his voice untunable. It was long before I could get them to distinguish one tune from another. Robert's countenance was generally grave, and expressive of a serious, contemplative, and thoughtful mind. Gilbert's face said, 'Mirth, with thee I mean to live;' and certainly, if any person who knew the two boys had been asked which of them was the most likely to court the Muses, he would never have guessed that Robert had a propensity of that kind."

"At those years," says the poet himself, in 1787, "I was by no means a favourite with anybody. I was a good deal noted for a retentive memory, a stubborn sturdy something in my disposition, and an enthusiastic idiot piety. I say *idiot* piety, because I was then but a child. Though it cost the schoolmaster some thrashings, I made an excellent English scholar; and by the time I was ten or eleven years of age, I was a critic in substantives, verbs, and particles. In my infant and boyish days, too, I owed much 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, cantraips, giants, enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poetry; 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 than I am in such matters, yet it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idle terrors. The earliest composition that I recollect taking pleasure in, was *The Vision of Mizra*, 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 ear:

> 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 since, were, the *Life of Hannibal*, and the *History of Sir William Wallace*. Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn,

of the century, a miller named Goudie, who, in addition to his ordinary calling, kept a small public-house near the "Auld Brig' o' Doon," conceived the idea of removing his business to Burns's Cottage. He had some recollections of Burns, whether real or manufactured: and retailed them over a dram for upwards of forty years, much to the scandal of all lovers of the poet's memory, and the associations connected with his father's dwelling The accommodations have been extended since the poet's time, by additions at both gables, and by the erection of a handsome hall, in 1849. In it have been held numerous social gatherings and Burns's festivals, the most notable of which, perhaps, is the centenary festival presided over by Dr. Hately Waddell. The first meeting celebrating the anniversary of the poet's birth was held in the cottage on the 25th January, 1801, when Mr. Crawford of Doonside, John Ballantine, to whom Burns addressed the "Twa Brigs;" Robert Aiken, to whom he dedicated the "Cottar's Saturday Night," and other friends and admirers of the poet, met under the presidency of the Rev. Hamilton Paul. After Miller Goudie's death, the business carried on in the cottage changed hands several times, and ultimately the selling of drink was banished from the cottage proper and confined to the adjoining hall. This arrangement continued till 1880, when the "Burns Monument Trustees" purchased the property from the Ayr Corporation of Shoemakers for £4000, and converted it into a kind of Burns museum.]

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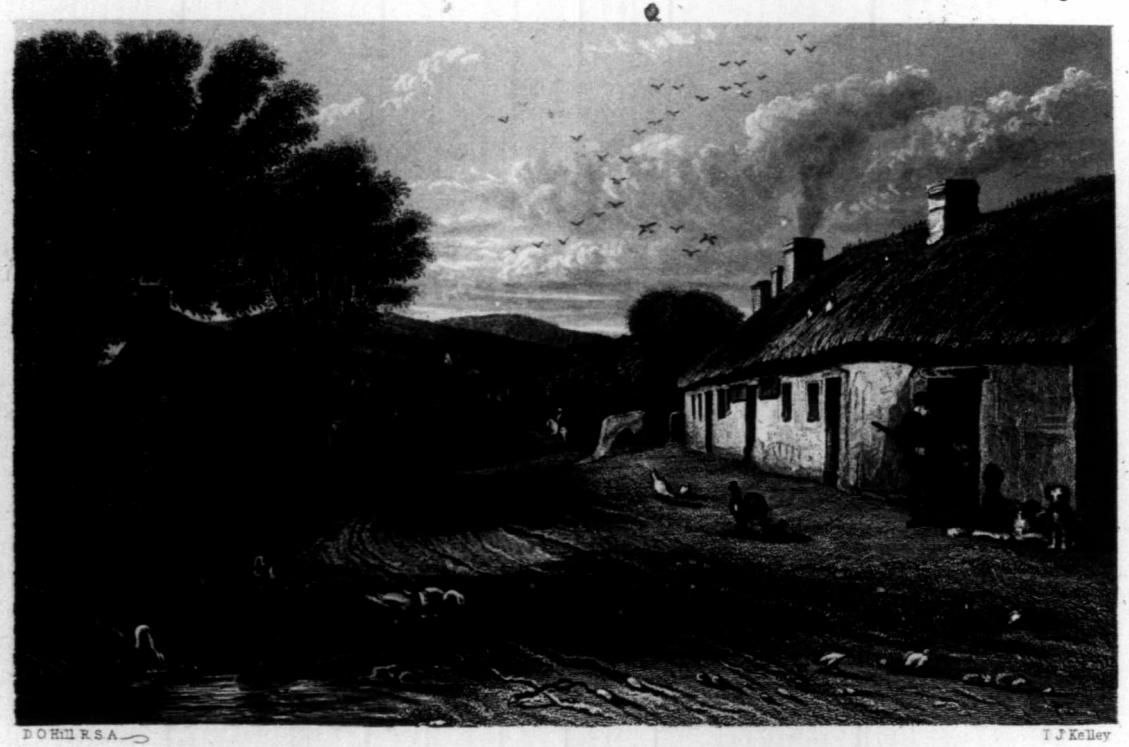

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that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bagpipe, and wish myself tall enough to be a soldier; while the story of Wallace poured a tide of Scottish prejudice into my veins, which will boil along there till the floodgates of life shut in eternal rest."[1]

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, then
> 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 miles to pay my respects to the Leglen Wood,[2] 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, when he left for a time that part of the country. "There being no school near us," says Gilbert Burns, "and our little services being already 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 received all the education they ever received."

[1] Autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore, 1787.—[The "Hannibal" mentioned above was lent by Mr. Murdoch; the "Wallace," by Kirkpatrick, a blacksmith in the vicinity of Mount Oliphant, the father of "Handsome Nell," the heroine of the poet's first song. The old woman of whom he speaks was a Betty Davidson, the widow of a cousin of Mrs. Burnes. William Burnes used to invite her to spend a few months at a time with his family, which kindness she requited by giving what assistance she could in the household work. Her cheery disposition and her stock of eery lore made her a great favourite with the children.]

[2] [The Leglen Wood is situated in a peninsula formed by a remarkable bend in the river Ayr on the estate of Auchencruive, parish of St. Quivox, about three miles from the mouth of the river, and nearly six from Mount Oliphant. According to Blind Harry it was a favourite hiding-place of Wallace.]

Gilbert tells an anecdote which must not be omitted here, since it furnishes an early instance of the liveliness of his brother's imagination. Murdoch, being on a visit to the family, read aloud one evening part of the tragedy of "Titus Andronicus;" the circle listened with the deepest interest until he came to act ii. sc. 5, where Lavinia is introduced "with her hands cut off, and her tongue cut out." At this the children entreated, with one voice, in an agony of distress, that their friend should read no more. "If you will not hear the play out," said William Burnes, "it need not be left with you."—"If it be left," cries Robert, "I will burn it." His father was about to chide him for this return to Murdoch's kindness, but the good young man interfered, saying he liked to see so much sensibility, and left the "School for Love," in place of his truculent tragedy. At this time Robert was nine years of age.

"Nothing," continues Gilbert Burns, "could be more retired 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. Indeed, the greatest part of the land in the vicinity was at that time possessed by shopkeepers, and people of that stamp, who had retired from business, or who kept their farm, in the country, at the same time that they followed business in town. My father 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 us in 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 industry scarcely to be equalled. My father had been a subscriber to Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*. From this Robert collected a com-

petent knowledge of ancient history; for *no book was so voluminous as to slacken his industry, or so antiquated as to damp his researches.*" A collection of letters, by eminent English authors, is mentioned as having fallen into Burns's hands much about the same time, and greatly delighted him.

When he was about thirteen or fourteen years old, his father sent him and Gilbert "week about, during the summer quarter," to the parish school of Dalrymple, two or three miles distant from Mount Oliphant,[1] for the improvement of their penmanship. The good man could not pay two fees; or his two boys could not be spared at the same time from the labour of the farm!

"We lived very poorly," says the poet. "I was a dexterous ploughman for my age; and the next eldest to me (Gilbert) could drive the plough very well, and help me to thrash the corn. A novel-writer might perhaps have viewed these scenes with some satisfaction, but so did not I. My indignation yet boils at the recollection of the scoundrel factor's insolent letters, which used to set us all in tears."

Gilbert Burns gives his brother's situation at this period in greater detail—"To the buffetings of misfortune," says he, "we could only oppose hard labour and the most rigid economy. We lived very sparingly. For several years butcher's meat was a stranger in the house,[2] while all the members of the family exerted themselves to the utmost of their strength, and rather beyond it, in the labours of the farm. My brother, at the age of thirteen, assisted in thrashing the crop of corn, and at fifteen was the principal labourer on the farm, for we had no hired servant, male or female. The anguish of mind we felt at our tender years, under these straits and difficulties, was very great. To think of our father growing old (for he was now above fifty), broken down with the long-continued fatigues of his life, with a wife and five other children, and in a declining state of circumstances, these reflections produced in my brother's mind and mine sensations of the deepest distress. 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."

The year after this, Burns was able to gain three weeks of respite, one before, and two after the harvest, from the labours which were thus straining his youthful strength. His tutor Murdoch was now established in the town of Ayr, and the boy spent one of those weeks in revising the English grammar with him; the other two were given to French. He laboured enthusiastically in the new pursuit, and came home at the end of a fortnight with a dictionary and a *Télémaque*, of which he made such use in his leisure hours, by himself, that in a short time (if we may believe Gilbert) he was able to understand any ordinary book of French prose. His progress, whatever it really amounted to, was looked on as something of a prodigy; and a writing-master in Ayr, a friend of Murdoch, insisted that Robert Burns must next attempt the rudiments of the Latin tongue. He did so, but with little perseverance, we may be sure, since the results were of no sort of value. Burns's Latin consisted of a few scraps of hackneyed quotations, such as many that never looked into Ruddiman's *Rudiments* can apply on occasion, quite as skilfully as he ever appears to have done. The matter is one of no importance; we might perhaps safely dismiss it with parodying what Ben Jonson said

[1] [The farm of Mount Oliphant is situated on a slope which rises to the east of Doonholm House, the steading being about two miles from the Bridge of Doon. The buildings which constitute the steading have been renewed in recent times, and now there is probably not a single stone standing that was there in Burns's father's time. It commands an extensive and most interesting prospect, having the banks and braes of Doon immediately beneath, the spires of Ayr on the one hand, and the hoary ruins of Greenan and Newark Castles on the other, while the Firth of Clyde opens its vast expanse in the distance, backed by the ever-impressive Arran mountains, and leading the eye away towards the north to the far promontories of Cunningham and Renfrewshire, and the dim blue of the Argyleshire Highlands.]

[2] [This was no rare thing among the rural population of Scotland then, and till much later. Living on a farm the Burns family would have milk, butter, cheese, eggs, and an occasional fowl at least.]

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Island of Arran in distance.

Island of Arran in distance.

Doonside Castle.

Town of Ayr.

D.O.Hill.R.A. W.Miller.

THE BANKS OF DOON.

BURNS'S MONUMENT AND BRIDGE OF DOON IN THE DISTANCE.

FROM THE GROUNDS OF DOONSIDE, WHERE BURNS'S FATHER WAS GARDENER.

Blackie & Son, London, Glasgow & Edinburgh.

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[1] Autobiogr

of Shakespeare; he had little French, and no Latin; and yet it is proper to mention, that he is found, years after he left Ayrshire, writing to Edinburgh in some anxiety about a copy of Molière.

He had read, however, and read well, ere his sixteenth year elapsed, no contemptible amount of the literature of his own country. In addition to the books which have already been mentioned, he tells us that, before the family quitted Mount Oliphant, he had read "the *Spectator*, some plays of Shakespeare, Pope (the *Homer* included), Tull and Dickson *on Agriculture*, Locke *on the Human Understanding*, Justice's *British Gardener's Directory*, Boyle's *Lectures*, Taylor's *Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin*, *A Select Collection of English Songs*, Hervey's *Meditations*" (a book which has ever been very popular among the Scottish peasantry), "and the Works of Allan Ramsay;" and Gilbert adds to this list, *Pamela* (the first novel either of the brothers read), two stray volumes of *Peregrine Pickle*, two of *Count Fathom*, and a single volume of "some English historian," containing the reign of James I. and his son. The *Collection of Songs*, says Burns,[1] "was my *vade mecum*. I pored over them, driving my cart, or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse; carefully noticing the true tender or sublime, from affectation or fustian; and I am convinced I owe to this practice much of my critic-craft, such as it is."

He derived, during this period, considerable advantages from the vicinity of Mount Oliphant to the town of Ayr—a place then, and still distinguished by the residence of many respectable gentlemen's families, and a consequent elegance of society and manners, not common in remote provincial situations. To his friend, Mr. Murdoch, he no doubt owed, in the first instance, whatever attentions he received there from people older as well as higher than himself: some such persons appear to have taken a pleasure in lending him books, and surely no kindness could have been more useful to him than this. As for his coevals, he himself says, very justly, "It is not commonly at that green age that our young gentry have a due sense of the distance between them and their ragged play-fellows. *My* young superiors," he proceeds, "never insulted the *clouterly* appearance of my plough-boy carcass, the two extremes of which were often exposed to all the inclemencies of all the seasons. They would give me stray volumes of books: among them, even then, I could pick up some observation: and one[2] whose heart I am sure not even the Munny Begum scenes have tainted, helped me to a little French. Parting with these, my young friends and benefactors, as they occasionally went off for the East or West Indies, was often to me a sore affliction—but I was soon called to more serious evils." The condition of the family during the last two years of their residence at Mount Oliphant, when the struggle which ended in their removal was rapidly approaching its crisis, has been already described; nor need we dwell again on the untimely burden of sorrow, as well as toil, which fell to the share of the youthful poet, and which would have broken altogether any mind wherein feelings like his had existed, without strength like his to control them.

The removal of the family to Lochlea, in the parish of Tarbolton, took place when Burns was in his sixteenth year.[3] He had some time before this made his first attempt in verse, and the occasion is thus described by himself in his letter to Moore:—

"This kind of life—the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing moil of a galley-

[1] Autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore, 1787.

[2] The allusion here is to one of the sons of Dr. John Malcolm, afterwards highly distinguished in the service of the East India Company.

[3] [This is a mistake; the poet had completed his eighteenth year when the Burnes family removed to Lochlea in 1777. The farm of Lochlea, to which the Burnes family removed on leaving Mount Oliphant, is situated about three miles from Tarbolton, and occupies a gentle slope verging on a low-lying tract of land which at one time formed the bed of the loch from which the place takes its name. During draining operations in 1878 the remains of a very complete crannog or lake-dwelling were discovered in the bed of the loch. In the poet's time the steading consisted of a one-storied thatched dwelling-house, with a barn on the one side and a stable and byre on the other. The old dwelling-house has now been converted into a stable, and a commodious residence has been erected in its stead. The barn, which the poet is said to have roofed with his own hand, has given place to a more modern erection which, at least, contains one stone of the old fabric, and which bears the inscription "The Lintel of the Poet's Barn. Rebuilt 1870."]

slave, brought me to my sixteenth year; a little before which period I first committed the sin of Rhyme. You know our country custom of coupling a man and woman together as partners in the labours of harvest. In my fifteenth autumn my partner was a bewitching creature, a year younger than myself. My scarcity of English denies me the power of doing her justice in that language; but you know the Scottish idiom—she was a *bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass.* In short, she, altogether unwittingly to herself, initiated me in that delicious passion, which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and bookworm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our dearest blessing here below! How she caught the contagion I cannot tell: you medical people talk much of infection from breathing the same air, the touch, &c.; but I never expressly said I loved her. Indeed, I did not 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 ratan, when I looked and fingered over her little hand, to pick out the cruel nettle-stings and thistles. Among her other love-inspiring qualities, she sang sweetly; and it was her favourite reel, to which I attempted giving an embodied vehicle 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 sang a song, which was said to be composed by a small country laird's son, on one of his father's maids, with whom he was in love; and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well as he; for, excepting that he could smear sheep, and cast peats, his father living in the moorlands, he had no more scholar-craft than myself.

"Thus with me began love and poetry; which at times have been my only, and till within the last twelve months, have been my highest enjoyment."[1]

The earliest of the poet's productions is the little ballad,

O, once I loved a bonnie lass,
Ay, and I love her still,
And while that honour warms my breast,
I'll love my handsome Nell, &c.

Burns himself characterizes it as "a very puerile and silly performance;" yet it contains here and there lines of which he need hardly have been ashamed at any period of his life:—

She dresses aye sae clean and neat,	always
Baith decent and genteel,	both
And then there's something in her gait	
Gars ony dress look weel.	makes

"Silly and puerile as it is," said the poet, long afterwards, "I am always pleased with this song, as it recalls to my mind those happy days when my heart was yet honest, and my tongue sincere. . . . 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." (MS. Memorandum-book, August, 1783.)

In his first epistle to Lapraik (1785) he says,

Amaist as soon as I could spell,	almost
I to the crambo-jingle fell,	rhyme
Tho' rude and rough;	
Yet crooning to a body's sell	one's self
Does weel enough.	enough

And in some nobler verses, entitled "On my Early Days," we have the following passage:

I mind it weel in early date,	remember
When I was beardless, young and blate,	bashful
And first could thrash the barn,	
Or haud a yokin' o' the pleugh,	hold
An', tho' forfoughten sair enough,	exhausted
Yet unco proud to learn—	very
When first among the yellow corn	
A man I reckon'd was,	
An' wi' the lave ilk merry morn	others each
Could rank my rig and lass—	ridge
Still shearing and clearing	
The tither stookit raw,	other row
Wi' claivers and haivers	gossip and nonsense
Wearing the day awa'—	

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 useful plan or book could make,	
Or sing a sang, at least:	song
The rough bur-thistle spreading wide	
Amang the bearded bear,	barley
I turned the weeder-clips aside,	weeding-shears
And spared the symbol dear.	

He is hardly to be envied who can contem-

[1] Autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore. [The previous twelve months had seen him emerge from obscurity and become famous, this no doubt was one of his "highest enjoyments."]

plate without emotion this exquisite picture of young nature and young genius. It was amidst such scenes that this extraordinary being felt those first indefinite stirrings of immortal ambition, which he has himself shadowed out under the magnificent image of the "blind gropings of Homer's Cyclops, around the walls of his cave."[1]

CHAPTER II.

[Robert and Gilbert as farm-labourers:—Robert's supremacy as a farm-worker:—goes to dancing-school:—the rural beauties of Tarbolton:—early productions:—rural courtship:—Kirkoswald:—early literary correspondence:—poems written at Lochlea:—life at Irvine:—Alison Begbie:—letter to his father:—friendship with Richard Brown:—becomes a freemason:—Bachelor's Club:—discussions:—club ball:—David Sillar:—correspondence with James Burnes:—birth of an illegitimate child.]

O enviable early days,
When dancing thoughtless pleasure's maze,
To care and guilt unknown!
How ill exchanged for riper times,
To feel the follies, or the crimes
Of others—or my own!

As has been already mentioned, William Burnes now quitted Mount Oliphant for Lochlea, in the parish of Tarbolton, where, for some little space, fortune appeared to smile on his industry and frugality.[2] Robert and Gilbert were employed by their father as regular labourers—he allowing them £7 of wages each *per annum;* from which sum, however, the value of any home-made clothes received by the youths was exactly deducted. Robert Burns's person, inured to daily toil, and continually exposed to all varieties of weather, presented, before the usual time, every characteristic of robust and vigorous manhood. He says himself, that he never feared a competitor in any species of rural exertion; and Gilbert Burns, a man of uncommon bodily strength, adds, that neither he, nor any labourer he ever saw at work, was equal to the youthful poet, either in the corn-field, or the severer tasks of the thrashing-floor. Gilbert says, that Robert's literary zeal slackened considerably after their removal to Tarbolton. He was separated from his acquaintances of the town of Ayr, and probably missed not only the stimulus of their conversation, but the kindness that had furnished him with his supply, such as it was, of books. But the main source of his change of habits about this period was, it is confessed on all hands, the precocious fervour of one of his own turbulent passions.

"In my seventeenth year," says Burns, "to give my manners a brush, I went to a country dancing-school. My father had an unaccountable antipathy against these meetings; and my going was, what to this moment I repent, in opposition to his wishes. My father was subject to strong passions; from that instance of disobedience in me, he took a sort of dislike to me, which I believe was one cause of the dissipation which marked my succeeding years.[3] I say dissipation, compara-

[1] Letter to Dr. Moore.

[2] [In his autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore Burns says, "The nature of the bargain was such as to throw a little ready money into his (the father's) hands at the commencement of his lease, otherwise the affair would have been impracticable." Probably the landlord advanced some money in lieu of better house accommodation, or for certain improvements to be effected. The rate of wages at which the brothers were paid was that current at the time.]

[3] "I wonder," says Gilbert, "how Robert could attribute to our father that lasting resentment of his going to a dancing-school against his will, of which he was incapable. I believe the truth was, that about this time he began to see the dangerous impetuosity of my brother's passions, as well as his not being amenable to counsel, which often irritated my father, and which he would naturally think a dancing-school was not likely to correct. But he was proud of Robert's genius, which he bestowed more expense on cultivating than on the rest of the family—and he was equally delighted with his warmth of heart, and conversational powers. He had indeed that dislike of dancing-schools which Robert mentions; but so far overcame it during Robert's first month of attendance, that he permitted the rest of the family that were fit for it, to accompany him during the second month. Robert excelled in dancing, and was for some time distractedly fond of it." [Gilbert here refers to a later period at Tarbolton, during the time when the father was laid down in his last illness, and when the strictness of his rules would necessarily be relaxed. The "country dancing-school" of the

tively with the strictness, and sobriety, and regularity of Presbyterian country life; for though the Will-o'-wisp meteors of thoughtless whim were almost the sole lights of my path, yet early ingrained piety and virtue kept me for several years afterwards within the line of innocence. The great misfortune of my life was to want an aim. I saw my father's situation entailed on me perpetual labour. The only two openings by which I could enter the temple of fortune, were the gate of niggardly economy, or the path of little chicaning bargain-making. The first is so contracted an aperture, I could never squeeze myself into it;—the last I always hated—there was contamination in the very entrance! Thus abandoned of aim or view in life, with a strong appetite for sociability, as well from native hilarity, as from a pride of observation and remark; a constitutional melancholy or hypochondriacism that made me fly solitude; add to these incentives to social life, my reputation for bookish knowledge, a certain wild logical talent, and a strength of thought, something like the rudiments of good sense; and it will not seem surprising that I was generally a welcome guest where I visited, or any great wonder that, always where two or three met together, there was I among them. But far beyond all other impulses of my heart, was *un penchant pour l'adorable moitié du genre humain.* My heart was completely tinder, and was eternally lighted up by some goddess or other; and, as in every other warfare in this world, my fortune was various, sometimes I was received with favour, and sometimes I was mortified with a repulse. At the plough, scythe, or reap-hook, I feared no competitor, and thus I set absolute want at defiance; and as I never cared further for my labours than while I was in actual exercise, I spent the evenings in the way after my own heart. A country lad seldom carries on a love adventure without an assisting confidant. I possessed a curiosity, zeal, and intrepid dexterity, that recommended me as a proper second on these occasions, and I dare say, I felt as much pleasure in being in the secret of half the loves of the parish of Tarbolton, as ever did statesman in knowing the intrigues of half the courts of Europe."

In regard to the same critical period of Burns's life, his excellent brother writes as follows:—"The seven years we lived in Tarbolton parish (extending from the seventeenth to the twenty-fourth of my brother's age)[1] were not marked by much literary improvement; but, during this time, the foundation was laid of certain habits in my brother's character, which afterwards became but too prominent, and which malice and envy have taken delight to enlarge on. Though, when young, he was bashful and awkward in his intercourse with women, yet when he approached manhood, his attachment to their society became very strong, and he was constantly the victim of some fair enslaver. The symptoms of his passion were often such as nearly to equal those of the celebrated Sappho. I never indeed knew that he *fainted, sunk, and died away;* but the agitations of his mind and body exceeded anything of the kind I ever knew in real life. He had always a particular jealousy of people who were richer than himself, or who had more consequence in life. His love, therefore, rarely settled on persons of this description. When he selected any one out of the sovereignty of his good pleasure to whom he should pay his particular attention, she was instantly invested with a sufficient stock of charms, out of the plentiful stores of his own imagination; and there was often a great dissimilitude between his fair captivator, as she appeared to others, and as she seemed when invested with the attributes he gave her. One generally reigned paramount in his affections; but as Yorick's affections poured out toward Madame de L— at the remise door, while the eternal vows of Eliza were upon him, so Robert was frequently encountering other attractions, which formed so many underplots in the drama of his love."

Thus occupied with labour, love, and dancing, the youth "without an aim" found leisure occasionally to clothe the sufficiently various moods of his mind in rhymes. It was as early as seventeen, he tells us,[2] that he wrote some stanzas which begin beautifully:

text is one which Burns secretly attended at Dalrymple in 1775, in absolute defiance of his father's commands.]

[1] [From 1777 to 1784, consequently from the nineteenth to the twenty-sixth year of his age.]

[2] Cromek's *Reliques of Robert Burns* (1808), p. 242.

I dream'd I lay where flowers were springing
  Gayly in the sunny beam;
Listening to the wild birds singing,
  By a falling crystal stream.
Straight the sky grew black and daring,
  Thro' the woods the whirlwinds rave,
Trees with aged arms were warring,
  O'er the swelling drumlie wave. turbid
Such was life's deceitful morning, &c.

On comparing these verses with those on "Handsome Nell," the advance achieved by the young bard in the course of two short years must be regarded with admiration; nor should a minor circumstance be entirely overlooked, that in the piece which we have just been quoting, there occurs but one Scotch word. It was about this time also, that he wrote a ballad of much less ambitious vein, which, years after, he says, he used to con over with delight, because of the faithfulness with which it recalled to him the circumstances and feelings of his opening manhood.

—My father was a farmer upon the Carrick border,
And carefully he brought me up in decency and order.
He bade me act a manly part, tho' I had ne'er a farthing;
For without an honest manly heart, no man was worth regarding.

Then out into the world my course I did determine;
Tho' to be rich was not my wish, yet to be great was charming;
My talents they were not the worst, nor yet my education;
Resolved was I at least to try to mend my situation.
. . . . . .
No help, nor hope, nor view had I, nor person to befriend me;
So I must toil, and sweat, and broil, and labour to sustain me.
To plough and sow, to reap and mow, my father bred me early;
For one, he said, to labour bred, was a match for fortune fairly.

Thus all obscure, unknown and poor, thro' life I'm doom'd to wander;
Till down my weary bones I lay in everlasting slumber.
No view, nor care, but shun whate'er might breed me pain or sorrow;
I live to-day, as well's I may, regardless of to-morrow, &c.

These are the only two of his very early productions in which we have nothing expressly about love. The rest were composed to celebrate the charms of those rural beauties who followed each other in the dominion of his fancy—or shared the capacious throne between them; and we may easily believe that one who possessed, with other qualifications, such powers of flattering, feared competitors as little in the diversions of his evenings as in the toils of his day.

The rural lover, in those districts, pursues his tender vocation in a style, the especial fascination of which town-bred swains may find it somewhat difficult to comprehend. After the labours of the day are over, nay, very often after he is supposed by the inmates of his own fireside to be in his bed, the happy youth thinks little of walking many long Scotch miles to the residence of his mistress, who, upon the signal of a tap at her window, comes forth to spend a soft hour or two beneath the harvest moon, or if the weather be severe (a circumstance which never prevents the journey from being accomplished), amidst the sheaves of her father's barn. This "chappin' out,"[1] as they call it, is a custom of which parents commonly wink at, if they do not openly approve, the observance; and the consequences are far, very far, more frequently quite harmless, than persons not familiar with the peculiar manners and feelings of our peasantry may find it easy to believe. Excursions of this class form the theme of almost all the songs which Burns is known to have produced about this period,—and such of these juvenile performances as have been preserved are, without exception, beautiful. They show how powerfully his boyish fancy had been affected by the old rural minstrelsy of his own country, and how easily his native taste caught the secret of its charm. The truth and simplicity of nature breathe in every line—the images are always just, often originally happy—and the growing refinement of his ear and judgment may be traced in the terser language and more mellow flow of each successive ballad.

The best of his songs written at this time is that beginning,—

It was upon a Lammas night,
  When corn rigs are bonnie, ridges
Beneath the moon's unclouded light,
  I held awa to Annie.

[1] [That is, "tapping out," tapping or knocking to make the girl come out.]

The time flew by wi' tentless heed, careless
Till, 'tween the late and early,
Wi' sma' persuasion she agreed
To see me through the barley, &c.

The heroine of this ditty was a daughter of the poet's friend—"rude, rough, ready-witted Rankine."

We may let him carry on his own story. "A circumstance," says he,[1] "which made some alteration on my mind and manners, was, that I spent my nineteenth summer[2] on a smuggling coast, a good distance from home, at a noted school,[3] to learn mensuration, surveying, dialling, &c., in which I made a good progress. But I made a greater progress in the knowledge of mankind. The contraband trade was at that time very successful, and it sometimes happened to me to fall in with those who carried it on. Scenes of swaggering riot and roaring dissipation were till this time new to me; but I was no enemy to social life. Here, though I learnt to fill my glass, and to mix without fear in a drunken squabble, yet I went on with a high hand with my geometry, till the sun entered Virgo, a month which is always a carnival in my bosom, when a charming *fillette*, who lived next door to the school, overset my trigonometry, and set me off at a tangent from the sphere of my studies. I, however, struggled on with my *sines* and *cosines* for a few days more; but stepping into the garden one charming noon to take the sun's altitude, there I met my angel like

Proserpine, gathering flowers,
Herself a fairer flower.—

"It was in vain to think of doing any more good at school. The remaining week I staid, I did nothing but craze the faculties of my soul about her, or steal out to meet her; and the two last nights of my stay in this country, had sleep been a mortal sin, the image of this modest and innocent girl had kept me guiltless.[4]

"I returned home very considerably improved. My reading was enlarged with the very important addition of Thomson's and Shenstone's works; I had seen human nature in a new phasis; and I engaged several of my school-fellows to keep up a literary correspondence with me. This improved me in composition. I had met with a collection of letters by the wits of Queen Anne's reign, and I pored over them most devoutly; I kept copies of any of my own letters that pleased me; and a comparison between them and the composition of most of my correspondents flattered my vanity. I carried this whim so far, that though I had not three farthings' worth of business in the world, yet almost every post brought me as many letters as if I had been a broad plodding son of day-book and ledger.

"My life flowed on much in the same course till the twenty-third year. *Vive l'amour, et vive la bagatelle*, were my sole principles of action. The addition of two more authors to my library gave me great pleasure: Sterne and M'Kenzie—*Tristram Shandy* and the *Man of Feeling*—were my bosom favourites. Poesy was still a darling walk for my mind; but it was only indulged in according to the

[1] Autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore.

[2] [Dr. Currie admits having altered "seventeenth," as written by Burns, to "nineteenth," as it stands in the text; but beyond the statement that the alteration was made at the suggestion of Gilbert Burns, no reason is given. Currie's edition of Burns's works, with life, was published in 1800 (Liverpool, 4 vols.) for behoof of the widow and family of the poet.]

[3] [The parish school of Kirkoswald, the teacher of which, Hugh Rodger, enjoyed great local fame as a geometrician and practical land-surveyor. The poet's mother was a native of the parish, and during Burns's attendance at the school he lived with his maternal uncle, Samuel Brown, at Ballochneil, a little over a mile from Kirkoswald village, walking every morning to the little seminary and returning at night. Not far from Ballochneil was the farm of Shanter, the residence of the immortal "Tam o' Shanter," whose real name was Douglas Graham. The accompanying engraving gives a view of the churchyard and village of Kirkoswald, with the tombstone of Tam in the foreground. The artist, however, while giving the form of the stone correctly, has taken the liberty of putting this worthy's fictitious appellation on it, and has represented his tailless mare drooping her head over the grave and his dog lying on it, while his wife Kate sits a "waefu' woman" on a neighbouring stone. In reality the inscriptions on the stone are of the usual type. In the churchyard are also the graves of Burns's maternal grandfather and great-grandfather, whose tombstone was publicly restored in 1883.]

[4] [This "charming *fillette*," as the poet calls her, was a Peggy Thomson, and the early attachment seems to have been renewed temporarily some nine years later. She ultimately became the wife of John Neilson, an early acquaintance of the poet's. On the publication of his poems he presented a copy to Peggy accompanied with the lines beginning "Once fondly loved, and still remember'd dear," &c.]

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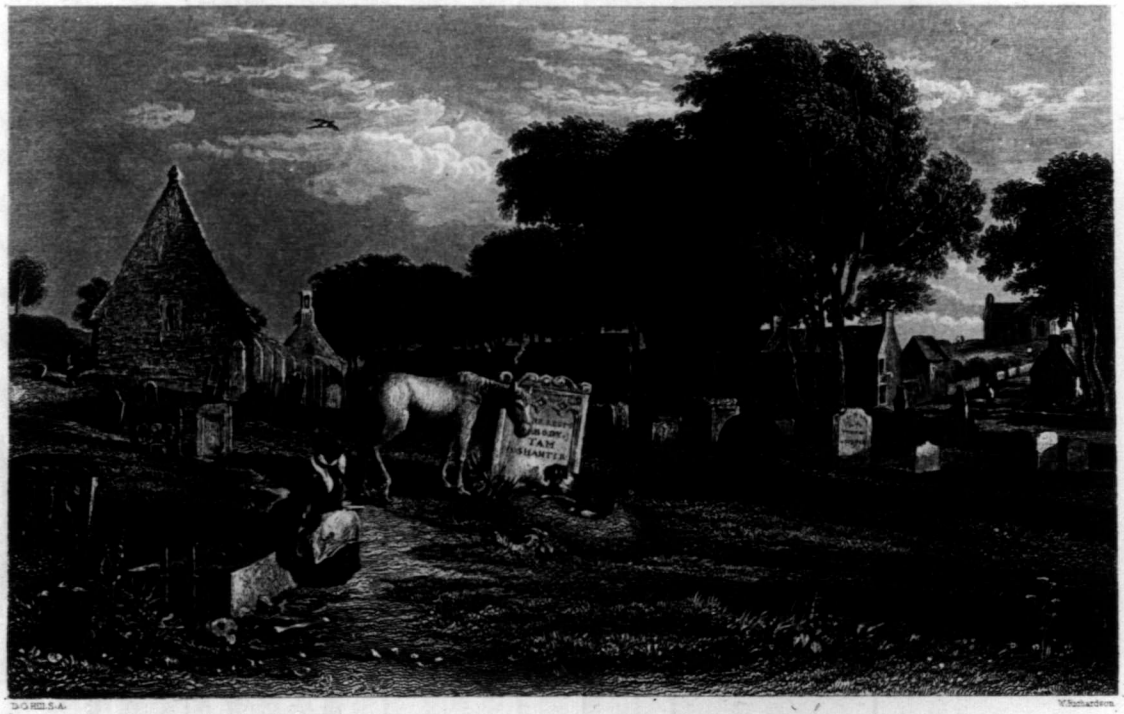

D.O.H.R.S.A. W.Richardson

KIRKOSWALD

AND TAM O' SHANTER'S GRAVE.

Blackie & Son, London, Glasgow, & Edinburgh.

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humour of the hour. I had usually half a dozen or more pieces on hand; I took up one or other, as it suited the momentary tone of the mind, and dismissed the work as it bordered on fatigue. My passions, once lighted up, raged like so many devils, till they found vent in rhyme; and then the conning over my verses, like a spell, soothed all into quiet."

Of the rhymes of those days, a few, when he wrote his letter to Moore, had appeared in print. "Winter, a Dirge," an admirably versified piece, is of their number; the "Death of Poor Mailie, Mailie's Elegy," and "John Barleycorn;" and one charming song, inspired by the Nymph of Kirkoswald, whose attractions put an end to his trigonometry.

Now westlin' winds, and slaughtering guns,
Bring Autumn's pleasant weather;
The moorcock springs, on whirring wing,
Amang the blooming heather. . . .
—Peggy dear, the evening's clear,
Thick flies the skimming swallow;
The sky is blue, the fields in view,
All fading green and yellow;
Come let us stray our gladsome way, &c.

"John Barleycorn" is a clever old ballad, very cleverly new-modelled and extended; but the "Death and Elegy of Poor Mailie" deserve more attention. The expiring animal's admonitions touching the education of the "poor toop lamb, her son and heir," and the "yowie, sillie thing," her daughter, are from the same peculiar vein of sly homely wit, embedded upon fancy, which he afterwards dug with a bolder hand in the "Twa Dogs," and perhaps to its utmost depth, in his "Death and Doctor Hornbook." It need scarcely be added, that Poor Mailie was a real personage, though she did not actually die until some time after her last words were written. She had been purchased by Burns in a frolic, and became exceedingly attached to his person.

Thro' all the town she trotted by him,
A lang half-mile she could descry him;
Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spie him,
She ran wi' speed;
A friend mair faithfu' ne'er came nigh him,
Than Mailie dead.

These little pieces are in a much broader dialect than any of their predecessors. His merriment and satire were, from the beginning, Scotch.

Notwithstanding the luxurious tone of some of Burns's pieces produced in those times, we are assured by himself (and his brother unhesitatingly confirms the statement), that no positive vice mingled in any of his loves, until after he reached his twenty-third year. He has already told us, that his short residence "away from home" at Kirkoswald, where he mixed in the society of seafaring men and smugglers, produced an unfavourable alteration on some of his habits; but in 1781–2 he spent six months at Irvine; and it is from this period that his brother dates a serious change.

"As his numerous connections," says Gilbert, "were governed by the strictest rules of virtue and modesty (from which he never deviated till his twenty-third year), he became anxious to be in a situation to marry. This was not likely to be the case while he remained a farmer, as the stocking of a farm required a sum of money he saw no probability of being master of for a great while. He and I had for several years taken land of our father, for the purpose of raising flax on our own account; and in the course of selling it, Robert began to think of turning flax-dresser, both as being suitable to his grand view of settling in life, and as subservient to the flax-raising."[1] Burns, accordingly, went to a half-brother of his mother's, by name Peacock, a flax-dresser in Irvine, with the view of learning this new trade, and for some time he applied himself diligently; but misfortune after misfortune attended him. The shop accidentally caught fire during the carousal of a New-year's-day morning, and Robert "was left, like a true poet, not worth a sixpence."—"I was obliged," says he,[2] "to give up this scheme; the clouds of misfortune were gathering thick round my father's head; and what was worst of all, he was visibly far gone in a consumption; and to crown my distresses, a *belle fille* whom I adored, and who had pledged her soul to meet me in the field of matrimony, jilted me, with peculiar circumstances of mortification. The

[1] Mr. Sillar [an early friend of Burns] assured Mr. Robert Chambers that this notion originated with William Burnes, who thought of becoming entirely a lint-farmer; and, by way of keeping as much of the profits as he could within his family, of making his eldest son a flax-dresser.

[2] Autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore.

finishing evil that brought up the rear of this infernal file, was, my constitutional melancholy being increased to such a degree, that for three months I was in a state of mind scarcely to be envied by the hopeless wretches who have got their mittimus—'Depart from me ye cursed!'"

[Shortly before the poet's visit to Irvine, a young woman named Ellison or Alison Begbie was the subject of his ardent attentions with a serious view to future marriage. She was the daughter of a small farmer near Galston, and was, at the time, in service with a family who lived on the banks of the Cessnock, about two miles to the east of Lochlea. She is the heroine of the songs the "Lass of Cessnock Banks, Peggy Alison, and Mary Morison," the two latter being better-sounding substitutions for the somewhat unpoetical name Ellison Begbie. Four love-letters addressed to her appear in the Correspondence,[1] but after some intimacy and letter writing the poet's suit was rejected, and the lady married another sweetheart. She is generally supposed to have been the *belle fille* referred to, but Dr. Hately Waddell asserts that a Miss Janet Wilson, a native of Irvine or the neighbourhood, and who married Mr. Ronald of Bennals, has the honour of being the one who rejected Burns.]

The following letter, addressed by Burns to his father, three days before the unfortunate fire took place, will show abundantly that the gloom of his spirits had little need of that aggravation. When we consider by whom, to whom, and under what circumstances, it was written, the letter is every way a remarkable one:—

"Honoured Sir,

"I have purposely delayed writing, in the hope that I should have the pleasure of seeing you on New-year's-day; but work comes so hard upon us, that I do not choose to be absent on that account, as well as for some other little reasons, which I shall tell you at meeting. My health is nearly the same as when you were here, only my sleep is a little sounder; and, on the whole, I am rather better than otherwise, though I mend by very slow degrees. The weakness of my nerves has so debilitated my mind that I dare neither review past wants, nor look forward into futurity; for the least anxiety or perturbation in my breast produces most unhappy effects on my whole frame. Sometimes, indeed, when for an hour or two my spirits are a little lightened, I *glimmer* a little into futurity; but my principal, and indeed my only pleasurable employment, is looking backwards and forwards in a moral and religious way. 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.

> The soul, uneasy, and confined at home,
> Rests and expatiates in a life to come.

"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.[2] As for this world, I despair of ever making a figure in it. I am not formed for the bustle of the busy, nor the flutter of the gay. I shall never again be capable of entering into such scenes. Indeed, I am altogether unconcerned at the thoughts of this life. I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably await me, and I am in some measure prepared, and daily preparing, to meet them. I have just time and paper to return you my grateful thanks for the lessons of virtue and piety you have given me, which were so much neglected at the time of giving them, but which I hope have been remembered ere it is yet too late. Present my dutiful respects to my mother, and my compliments to Mr. and

[1] [See letters to Ellison Begbie in their proper place at the beginning of the poet's Correspondence.]

[2] The verses of Scripture here alluded to, are 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."

Mrs. Muir;[1] and, with wishing you a merry New-year's-day I shall conclude.

"I am, honoured Sir, your dutiful son,
ROBERT BURNESS."

"P.S.—My meal is nearly out; but I am going to borrow till I get more."

"This letter," says Dr. Currie, "written several years before the publication of his Poems, when his name was as obscure as his condition was humble, displays the philosophic melancholy which so generally forms the poetical temperament, and that buoyant and ambitious spirit which indicates a mind conscious of its strength. At Irvine, Burns at this time possessed a single room for his lodgings, rented, perhaps, at the rate of a shilling a week. He passed his days in constant labour as a flax-dresser, and his food consisted chiefly of oatmeal sent to him from his father's family. The store of this humble, though wholesome nutriment, it appears, was nearly exhausted, and he was about to borrow till he should obtain a supply. Yet even in this situation, his active imagination had formed to itself pictures of eminence and distinction. His despair of making a figure in the world, shows how ardently he wished for honourable fame; and his contempt of life, founded on this despair, is the genuine expression of a youthful and generous mind. In such a state of reflection, and of suffering, the imagination of Burns naturally passed the dark boundaries of our earthly horizon, and rested on those beautiful representations of a better world, where there is neither thirst, nor hunger, nor sorrow, and where happiness shall be in proportion to the capacity of happiness."

Unhappily for himself and for the world, it was not always in the recollections of his virtuous home and the study of his Bible, that Burns sought for consolation amidst the heavy distresses which "his youth was heir to." Irvine is a small seaport; and here, as at Kirkoswald, the adventurous spirits of a smuggling coast, with all their jovial habits, were to be met with in abundance. "He contracted some acquaintance," says Gilbert, "of a freer manner of thinking and living than he had been used to, whose society prepared him for overleaping the bounds of rigid virtue, which had hitherto restrained him."

I owe to Mr. Robert Chambers, author of *Traditions of Edinburgh*, the following note of a conversation which he had in June, 1826, with a respectable old citizen of this town:—"Burns was, at the time of his residence among us, an older-looking man than might have been expected from his age—very darkly complexioned, with a strong eye—of a thoughtful appearance, amounting to what might be called a gloomy attentiveness; so much so, that when in company which did not call forth his brilliant powers of conversation, he might often be seen, for a considerable space together, leaning down on his palm, with his elbow resting on his knee. He was in common silent and reserved; but when he found a man to his mind, he constantly made a point of attaching himself to his company, and endeavouring to bring out his powers. It was among women alone that he uniformly exerted himself and uniformly shone. People remarked even then, that when Robert Burns did speak, he always spoke to the point, and in general with a sententious brevity. His moody thoughtfulness, and laconic style of expression, were both inherited from his father, who, for his station in life, was a very singular person."

[The tissue of Burns's thoughts and habits was a mixed one. He is found in Irvine, at one time amusing himself with disputes in churchyards on points of Calvinistic theology, at another enjoying the society of the loose characters of a smuggling seaport; again bewailing his being jilted by "a *belle fille*" whom he had adored, at another time entering upon a connection which ended in his enduring public censure before a congregation, and finally writing that letter to his father, in which he expresses himself tired of the world, and transported at the thought that he shall soon be in a better. Who could expect, from the desponding and moralizing tone of that letter that, four days after, he would be engaged in the New-Year merry-making, in the course of which his shop caught fire and was reduced to ashes!]

Burns himself thus sums up the results of his residence at Irvine:—"From this adventure I learned something of a town life; but

[1] [The tenants of Tarbolton Mill, the "Willie's Mill" of "Death and Dr. Hornbook."]

the principal thing which gave my mind a turn, was a friendship I formed with a young fellow, a very noble character, but a hapless son of misfortune. He was the son of a simple mechanic; but a great man in the neighbourhood, taking him under his patronage, gave him a genteel education, with a view of bettering his situation in life. The patron dying just as he was ready to launch out into the world, the poor fellow in despair went to sea; where, after a variety of good and ill fortune, a little before I was acquainted with him, he had been set ashore by an American privateer, on the wild coast of Connaught, stripped of everything. . . . His mind was fraught with independence, magnanimity and every manly virtue. I loved and admired him to a degree of enthusiasm, and of course strove to imitate him. In some measure I succeeded; I had pride before, but he taught it to flow in proper channels. His knowledge of the world was vastly superior to mine; and I was all attention to learn. He was the only man I ever saw who was a greater fool than myself, where woman was the presiding star; but he spoke of illicit love with the levity of a sailor—which hitherto I had regarded with horror. *Here his friendship did me a mischief.*" [The young man here referred to was Richard Brown, with whom Burns kept up an after correspondence, and who was one of the first to discern his latent genius, and to encourage him to aspire to the character of a poet. When the contents of Burns' Letter to Moore were related to him, he exclaimed, "Illicit love! levity of a sailor! When I first knew Burns he had nothing to learn in that respect."]

Professor Walker, when preparing to write his sketch of the Poet's Life, was informed by an aged inhabitant of Irvine, that Burns's chief delight while there was in discussing religious topics, particularly in those circles which usually gather in a Scotch churchyard after service. The senior added that Burns commonly took the high Calvinistic side in such debates; and concluded with a boast "that the lad" was indebted to himself in a great measure for the gradual adoption of "more liberal opinions," [a statement that seems more than doubtful. It is well known that his early training partook little of extreme Calvinism, and the following extract from David Sillar's letter to Mr. Aiken of Ayr (part of which is given further on), proves the liberality of the views held by Burns prior to his residence in Irvine:—"He had in his youth paid considerable attention to the arguments for and against the doctrine of original sin, then making considerable noise in your neighbourhood, and having perused Dr. Taylor's work on that subject, and *Letters on Religion Essential to Man*,[1] when he came to Tarbolton, his opinions were of consequence favourable to what you Ayr people call the moderate side. . . . The slightest insinuation of Taylor's opinions made his neighbours suspect, and some even avoid him, as an heretical and dangerous companion."]

It was during the same period, that the poet was first initiated in the mysteries of freemasonry, "which was," says his brother, "his first introduction to the life of a boon companion." He was introduced to St. David's Lodge of Tarbolton by John Rankine, a very dissipated man, of considerable talents, to whom he afterwards indited a poetical epistle, which will be noticed in its place. [A disruption took place in the St. David's Lodge in June, 1782, and the separating body, to which Burns adhered, reconstituted themselves under the old charter, dated 1711, as the St. James's Tarbolton Lodge, of which he subsequently officiated as Depute Master.]

"Rhyme," Burns says, "I had given up" (on going to Irvine); "but meeting with Fergusson's *Scottish Poems*, I strung anew my wildly-sounding lyre with emulating vigour." Neither flax-dressing nor the tavern could keep him long from his proper vocation. But it was probably this accidental meeting with Fergusson, that in a great measure finally determined the "Scottish" character of Burns's poetry; and, indeed, but for the lasting sense of this obligation, and some natural sympathy with the personal misfortunes of Fergusson's life, it would be difficult to account for the very high terms in which Burns always mentions his productions.

Shortly before Burns went to Irvine, he, his brother Gilbert, and some seven or eight young

[1] ["Letters concerning the Religion Essential to Man, as it is distinct from what is merely an accession to it. In two parts: translated from the French. Glasgow, printed for Robert Urie, 1761."]

men besides, all of the parish of Tarbolton, had formed themselves into a society, which they called the Bachelor's Club; and which met one evening in every month for the purposes of mutual entertainment and improvement. That their cups were but modestly filled is evident; for the rules of the club did not permit any member to spend more than threepence at a sitting. A question was announced for discussion at the close of each meeting; and at the next they came prepared to deliver their sentiments upon the subject-matter thus proposed. Burns and David Sillar (to whom the "Epistle to Davie, a Brother-poet" was afterwards addressed, and who subsequently published a volume of verses not without merit) were employed by the rest to draw up the regulations of the Society: and some stanzas prefixed to *Sillar's* Scroll of Rules "first introduced Burns and him to each other as brother rhymers."[1] Of the sort of questions discussed, we may form some notion from the minute of one evening, still extant in Burns's hand-writing.—QUESTION FOR HALLOWE'EN (Nov. 11, 1780).—"Suppose a young man, bred a farmer, but without any fortune, has it in his power to marry either of two women, the one a girl of large fortune, but neither handsome in person nor agreeable in conversation, but who can manage the household affairs of a farm well enough; the other of them a girl every way agreeable in person, conversation, and behaviour, but without any fortune: which of them shall he choose?" Burns, as may be guessed, took the imprudent side in this discussion.

"On one solitary occasion," says he, "we resolved to meet at Tarbolton in July, on the race-night and have a dance in honour of our society. Accordingly, we did meet, each one with a partner, and spent the night in such innocence and merriment, such cheerfulness and good-humour, that every brother will long remember it with delight." There can be no doubt that Burns would not have patronized this sober association so long, unless he had experienced at its assemblies the pleasure of a stimulated mind; and as little, that to the habit of arranging his thoughts and expressing them in somewhat of a formal shape, thus early cultivated, we ought to attribute much of that conversational skill which, when he first mingled with the upper world, was generally considered as the most remarkable of all his personal accomplishments.—Burns's associates of the Bachelor's Club, must have been young men possessed of talents and acquirements, otherwise such minds as his and Gilbert's could not have persisted in measuring themselves against theirs; and we may believe, that the periodical display of the poet's own vigour and resources, at these club meetings, and (more frequently than his brother approved) at the Freemason Lodges of Irvine and Tarbolton, extended his rural reputation; and, by degrees, prepared persons not immediately included in his own circle, for the extraordinary impression which his poetical efforts were ere long to create all over "the Carrick border."

Mr. David Sillar[2] gives an account of the beginning of his own acquaintance with Burns, and introduction into this Bachelor's Club, which will always be read with much interest. —"Mr. Robert Burns was some time in the parish of Tarbolton prior to my acquaintance with him. His social disposition easily procured him acquaintance; but a certain satirical seasoning with which he and all poetical geniuses are in some degree influenced, while it set the rustic circle in a roar, was not unaccompanied with its kindred attendant, suspicious fear. I recollect hearing his neighbours observe, he had a great deal to say for himself, and that they suspected his principles. He wore the only tied hair in the parish; and in the church, his plaid, which was of a particu-

[1] I quote from a letter of Mr. Sillar, 29th November, 1828, the lines—

> Of birth and blood we do not boast,
> No gentry does our Club afford,
> But ploughmen and mechanics we
> In nature's simple dress record:
> Let nane e'er join us who refuse
> To aid the lads that haud the ploughs, hold
> To choose their friends and wale their wives, select
> To ease the labours of their lives.

These lines, therefore (hitherto ascribed to Burns), are in fact the lawful property of Mr. Sillar.

[2] David Sillar, a native of Tarbolton, became in 1784 a schoolmaster at Irvine; and having, in the course of a long life, realized considerable property, was appointed chief magistrate of that town. [It is said that as Sillar grew rich he grew penurious, and that when requested to subscribe to the mausoleum fund and afterwards to the Ayr monument to Burns, he refused. He died in 1830.]

lar colour, I think fillemot, he wrapped in a particular manner round his shoulders. These surmises, and his exterior, had such a magnetical influence on my curiosity, as made me particularly solicitous of his acquaintance. Whether my acquaintance with Gilbert was casual or premeditated, I am not now certain. By him I was introduced, not only to his brother, but to the whole of that family, where in a short time, I became a frequent, and, I believe, not unwelcome visitant. After the commencement of my acquaintance with the bard, we frequently met upon Sundays at church, when, between sermons, instead of going with our friends or lasses to the inn, we often took a walk in the fields. In these walks, I have frequently been struck with his facility in addressing the fair sex: and many times, when I have been bashfully anxious how to express myself, he would have entered into conversation with them with the greatest ease and freedom; and it was generally a death-blow to our conversation, however agreeable, to meet a female acquaintance. Some of the few opportunities of a noon-tide walk that a country life allows her laborious sons, he spent on the banks of the river, or in the woods in the neighbourhood of Stair, a situation peculiarly adapted to the genius of a rural bard. Some book (generally one of those mentioned in his letter to Mr. Murdoch)[1] he always carried and read, when not otherwise employed. It was likewise his custom to read at table. In one of my visits to Lochlea, in time of a sowen supper, he was so intent on reading, I think *Tristram Shandy*, that his spoon falling out of his hand, made him exclaim, in a tone scarcely imitable, 'Alas, poor Yorick!' Such was Burns, and such were his associates, when I was admitted a member of the Bachelor's Club."[2]

The misfortunes of William Burnes thickened apace, as has already been seen, and were approaching their crisis at the time when Robert came home from his flax-dressing experiment at Irvine. I have been favoured with copies of some letters addressed by the poet soon afterwards to his cousin, "Mr. James Burness, writer in Montrose," which cannot but gratify every reader.[3] They are worthy of the strong understanding and warm heart of Burns; and, besides opening a pleasing view of the manner in which domestic affection was preserved between his father and the relations from whom the accidents of life had separated that excellent person in boyhood, they appear to me—written by a young and unknown peasant in a wretched hovel, the abode of poverty, care, and disease—to be models of native good taste and politeness.

"Lochlea, 21st June, 1783.

"Dear Sir,—My father received your favour of the 10th curt.; and as he has been for some months very poorly in health, and is, in his own opinion, and indeed in almost every body else's, in a dying condition; he has only, with great difficulty, written a few farewell lines to each of his brothers-in-law. For this melancholy reason, I now hold the pen for him, to thank you for your kind letter, and to assure you, sir, that it shall not be my fault if my father's correspondence in the north die with him. My brother writes to John Caird; and to him I must refer you for the news of our family. I shall only trouble you with a few particulars relative to the present wretched state of this country. Our markets are exceedingly high; oatmeal 17*d.* and 18*d.* per peck, and not to be got even at that price. We have indeed been pretty well supplied with quantities of white peas from England and elsewhere; but that resource is likely to fail us; and what will become of us then, particularly the very poorest sort, Heaven only knows. This country, till of late, was flourishing incredibly in the manufacture of silk, lawn, and carpet weaving; and we are still carrying on a good deal in that way, but much reduced from what it was. We had also a fine trade in the shoe way, but now entirely ruined, and hundreds driven to a starving condition on account of it. Farming is also at a very low ebb with us. Our lands, generally speaking, are mountainous and barren; and our landholders, full of ideas of farming gathered from the English and the Lothians, and other rich soils in Scotland, make no allowance for the odds

[1] 15th January, 1783.

[2] Letter to Mr. Aiken of Ayr, in Morison's *Burns*, vol. ii. pp. 257–260.

[3] These letters first appeared in the 1820 re-issue of Currie's edition.

of the quality of land, and consequently stretch us much beyond what, in the event, we will be found able to pay. We are also much at a loss for want of proper methods in our improvements of farming. Necessity compels us to leave our old schemes, and few of us have opportunities of being well informed in new ones. In short, my dear sir, since the unfortunate beginning of this American war, and its as unfortunate conclusion, this country has been, and still is, decaying very fast. Even in higher life, a couple of our Ayrshire noblemen, and the major part of our knights and squires, are all insolvent. A miserable job of a Douglas, Heron & Co.'s Bank, which no doubt you have heard of, has undone numbers of them; and imitating English and French, and other foreign luxuries and fopperies, has ruined as many more. There is a great trade of smuggling carried on along our coasts, which, however destructive to the interests of the kingdom at large, certainly enriches this corner of it; but too often at the expense of our morals. However, it enables individuals to make, at least for a time, a splendid appearance; but Fortune, as is usual with her when she is uncommonly lavish of her favours, is generally even with them at the last; and happy were it for numbers of them if she would leave them no worse than when she found them.

"My mother sends you a small present of a cheese; 'tis but a very little one, as our last year's stock is sold off; but if you could fix on any correspondent in Edinburgh or Glasgow, we would send you a proper one in the season. Mrs. Black promises to take the cheese under her care so far, and then to send it to you by the Stirling carrier.

"I shall conclude this long letter with assuring you, that I shall be very happy to hear from you, or any of our friends in your country, when opportunity serves. My father sends you, probably for the last time in this world, his warmest wishes for your welfare and happiness; and my mother and the rest of the family desire to enclose their compliments to you, Mrs. Burness, and the rest of your family, along with,—Dear Sir, your affectionate Cousin,

"ROBERT BURNESS."

In the second of these letters, the poet announces the death of his father. It is dated Lochlea, 17th February, 1784.

"DEAR COUSIN,—I would have returned you my thanks for your kind favour of the 13th December sooner, had it not been that I waited to give you an account of that melancholy event, which, for some time past, we have from day to day expected. On the 13th curt. 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 the 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 will ever honour and revere. I expect, therefore, my dear sir, you will not neglect any opportunity of letting me hear from you, which will ever very much oblige.—My dear Cousin, yours sincerely,

"ROBERT BURNESS."

Among other evils from which the excellent William Burnes thus escaped, was an affliction that would, in his eyes, have been severe. Our youthful poet had not, as he confesses, come unscathed out of the society of those persons of "liberal opinions" with whom he consorted in Irvine; and he expressly attributes to their lessons, the scrape into which he fell soon after "he put his hand to the plough again." He was compelled, according to the then all but universal custom of rural parishes in Scotland, to do penance in church, before the congregation, in consequence of the birth of an illegitimate child; and whatever may be thought of the propriety of such exhibitions, there can be no difference of opinion as to the culpable levity with which he describes the nature of his offence, and the still more reprehensible bitterness with which, in his Epistle to Rankine, he inveighs against the clergymen, who, in rebuking him, only performed what was then a regular part of the clerical duty, and a part of it that could never have been at

all agreeable to the worthy man whom he satirizes under the appellation of "Daddie Auld."[1] The "Poet's Welcome to an Illegitimate Child" was composed on the same occasion—a piece in which some very manly feelings are expressed, along with others which it can give no one pleasure to contemplate. There is a song in honour of the same occasion, or a similar one about the same period, the "Rantin' Dog the Daddie o't," which exhibits the poet as glorying, and only glorying, in his shame.

When I consider his tender affection for the surviving members of his own family, and the reverence with which he ever regarded the memory of the father whom he had so recently buried, I cannot believe that Burns has thought fit to record in verse all the feelings which this exposure excited in his bosom. "To waive (in his own language) the quantum of the sin," he who, two years afterwards, wrote the "Cottar's Saturday Night," had not, we may be sure, hardened his heart to the thought of bringing additional sorrow and unexpected shame to the fireside of a widowed mother. But his false pride recoiled from letting his jovial associates guess how little he was able to drown the whispers *of the still small voice;* and the fermenting bitterness of a mind ill at ease within itself, escaped (as may be too often traced in the history of satirists) in the shape of angry sarcasms against others, who, whatever their private errors might be, had at least done him no wrong.

It is impossible not to smile at one item of consolation which Burns proposes to himself on this occasion:—

—The mair they talk, *I'm kend the better;* known
E'en let them clash! gossip

This is indeed a singular manifestation of "the last infirmity of noble minds."

CHAPTER III.

[Removal to Mossgiel:—theological discussions:—Church parties—the New-Lights and Auld-Lights:—Gavin Hamilton—his feud with Mr. Auld:—Dr. Macgill's case:—the "Twa Herds:"—"Holy Willie's Prayer:"—the "Ordination," "Kirk's Alarm," and "Holy Fair:"—"Epistle to Davie," and first idea of becoming an author; Gilbert's account of this period's poems:—"Dr. Hornbook:"—the inequality of human condition:—"Life and Age of Man:"—the "Cottar's Saturday Night" and "Holy Fair:"—West Indian project:—Highland Mary:—Jean Armour:—acknowledgment of marriage:—birth of twins:—legal steps taken to secure his children's maintenance.]

The star that rules my luckless lot
Has fated me the russet coat,
And damn'd my fortune to the groat:
But in requit,
Has bless'd me wi' a random shot
O' country wit.

Three months before the death of William Burnes, Robert and Gilbert took the farm of Mossgiel, in the neighbouring parish of Mauchline, with the view of providing a shelter for their parents in the storm, which they had seen gradually thickening, and knew must soon burst; and to this place the whole family removed on William's death.[2] "It was stocked by the property and individual savings of the whole family (says Gilbert), and was

[1] There is much humour in some of the verses; as,

'Twas ae nicht lately in my fun,
I gaed a roving wi' my gun, went
An' brought a paitrick to the grun', partridge
A bonnie hen,
And, as the twilight was begun,
Thought nane wad ken, &c.

[2] [The farm of Mossgiel (originally Mossgavel), which consisted of 118 acres, the rent being £90, is situated about a mile from Mauchline, on the road to Tarbolton and Irvine. Two other farms also bear the same name, being distinguished respectively as West Mossgiel and South Mossgiel, while the farm on which the poet resided is known as East Mossgiel. It occupies the summit of a ridge which separates the valley of the Ayr from that of the Cessnock and commands views of much scenic beauty. The house, in the poet's day, consisted of a one-storied cottage, and though called "the auld clay biggin," in the "Vision," was well built, having been erected by Gavin Hamilton, who was the principal tenant, as a pleasant country retreat for himself and his family. It was on the usual plan of farm-houses of the day, and consisted of a "but and ben" (kitchen and parlour), with a garret above, to which a trap-stair gave access, in the lobby behind the door. The garret was divided into three small apartments, two of which were used as bed-rooms and the third as a lumber-room. The middle apartment of the three, lighted by a skylight

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MOSSGIEL FARM HOUSE.

NEAR MAUCHLINE.

Blackie & Son, London, Glasgow, & Edinburgh.

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a joint concern among us.[1] 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, as well as during the preceding period at Lochlea, Robert's expenses never, in any one year, exceeded his slender income."

"I entered on this farm," says the poet,[2] "with a full resolution, *Come, go to, I will be wise.* I read farming books, I calculated crops, I attended markets, and, in short, in spite of the *devil, and the world, and the flesh,* I believe I should have been a wise man; but the first year, from unfortunately buying bad seed, the second, from a late harvest, we lost half our crops. This overset all my wisdom, and I returned *like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.*"

"At the time that our poet took the resolution of becoming *wise,* he procured," says Gilbert, "a little book of blank paper, with the purpose expressed on the first page, of making farming memorandums. These *farming memorandums* are curious enough," Gilbert slyly adds, "and a specimen may gratify the reader."[3]—Specimens accordingly he gives, as follows:—

O why the deuce should I repine
And be an ill-foreboder?
I'm twenty-three, and five foot nine—
I'll go and be a sodger, &c.

O leave novells, ye Mauchline belles,
Ye're safer at your spinning wheel;
Such witching books are baited hooks
For rakish rooks—like Rob Mossgiel.

Your fine Tom Jones and Grandisons,
They make your youthful fancies reel,
They heat your veins, and fire your brains,
And then ye're prey for Rob Mossgiel, &c. &c.

The four years during which Burns resided on this cold and ungrateful farm of Mossgiel, were the most important of his life. It was then that his genius developed its highest energies; on the works produced in those years his fame was first established, and must ever continue mainly to rest: it was then also that his personal character came out in all its brightest lights, and in all but its darkest shadows; and indeed, from the commencement of this period, the history of the man may be traced, step by step, in his own immortal writings.

Burns now began to know that Nature had meant him for a poet; and diligently, though as yet in secret, he laboured in what he felt to be his destined vocation. Gilbert continued for some time to be his chief, often indeed his only confidant; and anything more interesting and delightful than this excellent man's account of the manner in which the poems included in the first of his brother's publications were composed, is certainly not to be found in the annals of literary history.

The reader has already seen, that long before the earliest of them was known beyond the domestic circle, the strength of Burns's understanding, and the keenness of his wit, as displayed in his ordinary conversation, and more particularly at masonic meetings and debating clubs (of which he formed one in Mauchline, on the Tarbolton model, immediately on his removal to Mossgiel), had made his name known to some considerable extent in the country about Tarbolton, Mauchline, and Irvine; and thus prepared the way for his poetry. Professor Walker gives an anecdote on this head, which must not be omitted: Burns already numbered several clergymen among his acquaintances; indeed, we know from himself, that at this period he was not a

window placed in the sloping roof, formed the bedroom of the two brothers Robert and Gilbert, and contained a small table at which the poet wrote many of his most famous pieces, with a drawer in which his productions were stored. The "ben" end of the house was the celebrated "spence" of the "Vision," the scene of "Coila's" inspiratory visit to the bard. In 1859 great alterations were made upon the house. It was completely gutted, and a story added to it, so that the present substantial two-storied slated building bears little resemblance to the dwelling which sheltered the poet and his family. No portion of the original structure now remains except the shell of old walls, which reach half-way up the present. The outhouses which form an angle round a paved court are all modern. Gilbert Burns continued on the farm till 1800, when he removed to Dinning, in Dumfriesshire, a farm belonging to Sir C. S. Menteath of Closeburn.]

[1] [When William Burnes died his sons and the two eldest daughters ranked as creditors of their father for arrears of wages. The farm must have been very imperfectly stocked if they had no more to start with than their joint savings.]

[2] Letter to Dr. Moore.

[3] [This quotation is in Dr. Currie's own words, and not in those of Gilbert Burns as stated in the text.]

little flattered, and justly so, no question, with being permitted to mingle occasionally in their society.[1] One of these gentlemen told the professor, that after entering on the clerical profession, he had repeatedly met Burns in company, "where," said he, "the acuteness and originality displayed by him, the depth of his discernment, the force of his expressions, and the authoritative energy of his understanding, had created a sense of his power, of the extent of which I was unconscious, till it was revealed to me by accident. On the occasion of my second appearance in the pulpit, I came with an assured and tranquil mind, and though a few persons of education were present, advanced some length in the service with my confidence and self-possession unimpaired; but when I saw Burns, who was of a different parish, unexpectedly enter the church, I was affected with a tremor and embarrassment, which suddenly apprised me of the impression which my mind, unknown to itself, had previously received." The professor adds, that the person who had thus unconsciously been measuring the stature of the intellectual giant, was not only a man of good talents and education, but "remarkable for a more than ordinary portion of constitutional firmness."[2]

Every Scotch peasant who makes any pretension to understanding, is a theological critic—at least such *was* the case—and Burns, no doubt, had long ere this time distinguished himself considerably among those hard-headed groups that may usually be seen gathered together in the churchyard after the service is over. It may be guessed, that from the time of his residence at Irvine, his strictures were too often delivered in no reverent vein. "Polemical divinity," says he to Dr. Moore, in 1787, "about this time, was putting the country half mad,[3] and I, ambitious of shining in conversation-parties on Sundays, at funerals, &c., used to puzzle Calvinism with so much heat and indiscretion, that I raised the hue and cry of heresy against me, which has not ceased to this hour." There are some plain allusions to this matter in Mr. David Sillar's letter, already quoted; and a friend has told Allan Cunningham "that he first saw Burns on the afternoon of the Monday of a Mauchline sacrament, lounging on horseback at the door of a public-house, holding forth on religious topics to a whole crowd of country people, who presently became so much shocked with his

[1] Letter to Dr. Moore, *sub initio*.

[2] Life prefixed to Morison's *Burns*, p. xlix. [The clergyman here referred to is Dr. Alexander Niven, afterwards minister of Dunkeld (born 1759, died 1833), then a young licentiate of divinity, acting as tutor in the family of Hamilton of Sundrum, in the parish of Coylton.]

[3] The following account of the *Buchanites*, a set of fanatics, now forgotten, who made much noise in the south and west of Scotland, about the period in question, is taken from one of the poet's letters to his cousin (Mr. Burnes of Montrose), with which I have been favoured since this narrative was first published. It is dated Mossgiel, August, 1784. "We have been surprised with one of the most extraordinary phenomena in the moral world, which, I dare say, has happened in the course of this last century. We have had a party of the Presbytery Relief, as they call themselves, for some time in this country. A pretty thriving society of them has been in the burgh of Irvine for some years past, till about two years ago, a Mrs. Buchan from Glasgow came and began to spread some fanatical notions of religion among them, and, in a short time, made many converts among them, and, among others, their preacher, one Mr. Whyte, who, upon that account, has been suspended and formally deposed by his brethren. He continued, however, to preach in private to his party, and was supported, both he, and their spiritual mother, as they affect to call old Buchan, by the contributions of the rest, several of whom were in good circumstances; till, in spring last, the populace rose and mobbed the old leader Buchan, and put her out of the town; on which, all her followers voluntarily quitted the place likewise, and with such precipitation, that many of them never shut their doors behind them; one left a washing on the green, another a cow bellowing at the crib without meat, or any body to mind her; and, after several stages, they are fixed at present in the neighbourhood of Dumfries. Their tenets are a strange jumble of enthusiastic jargon; among others, she pretends to give them the Holy Ghost by breathing on them, which she does with postures and practices that are scandalously indecent; they have likewise disposed of all their effects, and hold a community of goods, and live nearly an idle life, carrying on a great farce of pretended devotion in barns and woods, where they lodge and lie all together, and hold likewise a community of women, as it is another of their tenets that they can commit no moral sin. I am personally acquainted with most of them, and I can assure you the above mentioned are facts."

[Elspeth Simpson or Buchan was a native of Banff, and was born in 1738, and married Robert Buchan, a painter in Glasgow. In 1779 she began to prophesy the end of the world, and in 1782 she joined Whyte in Irvine a few months after Burns had left that town. The last of her disciples died in Crochetford, Kirkcudbrightshire, in 1846, and had the bones of "Lucky" Buchan interred with him.]

levities, that they fairly hissed him from the ground."

To understand Burns's situation at this time, at once patronized by a number of clergymen, and attended with "a hue and cry of heresy," we must remember his own words, that "polemical divinity was putting the country half mad." Of both the parties which, ever since the Revolution of 1688, have pretty equally divided the Church of Scotland, it so happened that some of the most zealous and conspicuous leaders and partisans were then opposed to each other, in constant warfare, in this particular district; and their feuds being of course taken up among their congregations, and spleen and prejudice at work, even more furiously in the cottage than in *the manse*, he who, to the annoyance of the one set of belligerents, could talk like Burns, might count pretty surely—with whatever alloy his wit happened to be mingled, in whatever shape the precious "circulating medium" might be cast—on the applause and countenance of the enemy. And it is needless to add, they were the less scrupulous sect of the two that enjoyed the co-operation, such as it was then, and far more important, as in the sequel it came to be, of our poet.

William Burnes, as we have already seen, though a most exemplary and devout man, entertained opinions very different from those which commonly obtained among the rigid Calvinists of his district. The worthy and pious old man himself, therefore, had not improbably infused into his son's mind its first prejudice against these persons; though, had he lived to witness the manner in which Robert assailed them, there can be no doubt his sorrow would have equalled his anger. The jovial spirits with whom Burns associated at Irvine, and afterwards, were of course habitual deriders of the manners, as well as the tenets of the

Orthodox, orthodox, wha believe in John Knox.

We have already observed the effect of the young poet's own first collision with the ruling powers of Presbyterian discipline; but it was in the very act of settling at Mossgiel that Burns formed the connection, which, more than any circumstance besides, influenced him as to the matter now in question. The farm belonged to the estate of the Earl of Loudoun, but the brothers held it on a sub-lease from Mr. Gavin Hamilton, writer (*i.e.* attorney), in Mauchline, a man, by every account, of engaging manners, open, kind, generous, and high-spirited, between whom and Robert Burns, in spite of considerable inequality of condition, a close and intimate friendship was ere long formed. Just about this time it happened that Hamilton was at open feud with Mr. Auld, the minister of Mauchline (the same who had already *rebuked* the poet), and the ruling elders of the parish, in consequence of certain irregularities in his personal conduct and deportment, which, according to the usual strict notions of kirk-discipline, were considered as fairly demanding the vigorous interference of these authorities. The notice of this person, his own landlord, and, as it would seem, one of the principal inhabitants of the village of Mauchline at the time, must, of course, have been very flattering to our polemical young farmer. He espoused Gavin Hamilton's quarrel warmly. Hamilton was naturally enough disposed to mix up his personal affair with the standing controversies whereon Auld was at variance with a large and powerful body of his brother clergymen; and by degrees the Mauchline writer's ardent *protégé* came to be as vehemently interested in the church-politics of Ayrshire, as he could have been in politics of another order, had he happened to be a freeman of some open borough, and his patron a candidate for the honour of representing it in St. Stephen's.

Cromek has been severely criticised for some details of Gavin Hamilton's dissensions with his parish minister;[1] but perhaps it might have been well to limit the censure to the tone and spirit of the narrative,[2] since there is no doubt that these petty squabbles had a large share in directing the early energies of Burns's poetical talents. Even in the west of Scotland, such matters would hardly excite much notice nowadays, but they were quite enough to produce a world of vexation and controversy forty years ago; and the English reader, to whom all such details are denied, will certainly never be able to comprehend either the merits or the demerits of many of Burns's most remarkable productions. Since

[1] *Edinburgh Review*, vol. xiii. p. 273.
[2] *Reliques*, p. 164, &c.

I have touched on this matter at all, I may as well add, that Hamilton's family, though professedly adhering (as, indeed, if they were to be Christians at all in that district, they must needs have done) to the Presbyterian Establishment, had always lain under a strong suspicion of Episcopalianism. Gavin's great grandfather had been curate of Kirkoswald in the troubled times that preceded the Revolution, and incurred great and lasting popular hatred, in consequence of being supposed to have had a principal hand in bringing a thousand of the "Highland host" into that region in 1677–8. The district was commonly said not to have entirely recovered the effects of that savage visitation in less than a hundred years; and the descendants and representatives of the Covenanters, whom the curate of Kirkoswald had the reputation at least of persecuting, were commonly supposed to regard with anything rather than ready good-will, his descendant, the witty writer of Mauchline. A well-nursed prejudice of this kind was likely enough to be met by counter-spleen, and such seems to have been the truth of the case. The lapse of another generation has sufficed to wipe out every trace of feuds, that were still abundantly discernible, in the days when Ayrshire first began to ring with the equally zealous applause and vituperation of—

> Poet Burns,
> And his priest-skelping turns.

It is impossible to look back now to the civil war, which then raged among the churchmen of the west of Scotland, without confessing, that on either side there was much to regret, and not a little to blame. Proud and haughty spirits were unfortunately opposed to each other; and in the superabundant display of zeal as to doctrinal points, neither party seems to have mingled much of the charity of the Christian temper. The whole exhibition was most unlovely—the spectacle of such indecent violence among the leading ecclesiastics of the district, acted unfavourably on many men's minds—and no one can doubt, that in the at best unsettled state of Robert Burns's principles, the unhappy effect must have been powerful indeed as to him.

Macgill and Dalrymple, the two ministers of the town of Ayr, had long been suspected of entertaining heterodox opinions on several points, particularly the doctrine of original sin and the Trinity; and the former at length published an essay, which was considered as demanding the notice of the church courts. More than a year was spent in the discussions which arose out of this; and at last Dr. Macgill was fain to acknowledge his errors, and promise that he would take an early opportunity of apologizing for them to his own congregation from the pulpit—which promise, however, he never performed. The gentry of the country took, for the most part, the side of Macgill, who was a man of cold unpopular manners, but of unreproached moral character, and possessed of some accomplishments, though certainly not of distinguished talents. The bulk of the lower orders espoused, with far more fervid zeal, the cause of those who conducted the prosecution against this erring doctor. Gavin Hamilton and all persons of his stamp, were of course on the side of Macgill; Auld, and the Mauchline elders, were his enemies. Mr. Robert Aiken, a writer in Ayr, a man of remarkable talents, particularly in public speaking, had the principal management of Macgill's cause before the presbytery, and, I believe, also before the synod. He was an intimate friend of Hamilton, and through him had about this time formed an acquaintance, which soon ripened into a warm friendship, with Burns. Burns, therefore, was from the beginning a zealous, as in the end he was perhaps the most effective, partisan of the side on which Aiken had staked so much of his reputation. Macgill, Dalrymple, and their brethren, suspected, with more or less justice, of leaning to heterodox opinions, are the "New Light" pastors of his earliest satires.

The prominent antagonists of these men, and chosen champions of the "Auld Light" in Ayrshire, it must now be admitted on all hands, presented, in many particulars of personal conduct and demeanour, as broad a mark as ever tempted the shafts of a satirist. These men prided themselves on being the legitimate and undegenerate descendants and representatives of the haughty Puritans, who chiefly conducted the overthrow of Popery in Scotland, and who ruled for a time, and would fain have continued to rule, over both king and people, with a more tyrannical dominion that ever the Catholic

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priesthood itself had been able to exercise amidst that high-spirited nation. With the horrors of the Papal system for ever in their mouths, these men were in fact as bigoted monks, and almost as relentless inquisitors, in their hearts, as ever wore cowl and cord—austere and ungracious of aspect, coarse and repulsive of address and manners—very Pharisees as to the lesser matters of the law, and many of them, to all outward appearance at least, overflowing with pharisaical self-conceit as well as monastic bile. That admirable qualities lay concealed under this ungainly exterior, and mingled with and checked the worst of these gloomy passions, no candid man will permit himself to doubt; and that Burns has grossly overcharged his portraits of them, deepening shadows that were of themselves sufficiently dark, and excluding altogether those brighter, and perhaps softer, traits of character, which redeemed the originals within the sympathies of many of the worthiest and best of men, seems equally clear. Their bitterest enemies dared not at least to bring against them, even when the feud was at its height of fervour, charges of that heinous sort, which they fearlessly, and I fear justly, preferred against their antagonists. No one ever accused them of signing the articles, administering the sacraments, and eating the bread of a Church whose fundamental doctrines they disbelieved, and, by insinuation at least, disavowed.

The law of church patronage was another subject on which controversy ran high and furious in the district at the same period; the actual condition of things on this head being upheld by all the men of the New Light, and condemned as equally at variance with the precepts of the gospel and the rights of freemen by not a few of the other party, and, in particular, by certain conspicuous zealots in the immediate neighbourhood of Burns. While this warfare raged, there broke out an intestine discord within the camp of the faction which he loved not. Two of the foremost leaders of the Auld Light party quarrelled about a question of parish boundaries; the matter was taken up in the Presbytery of Irvine, and there, in the open court, to which the announcement of the discussion had drawn a multitude of the country people, and Burns among the rest, the reverend divines, hitherto sworn friends and associates, lost all command of temper, and abused each other *coram populo*, with a fiery virulence of personal invective, such as has long been banished from all popular assemblies, wherein the laws of courtesy are enforced by those of a certain unwritten code.

"The first of my poetic offspring that saw the light," says Burns, "was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists, both of them *dramatis personæ* in my 'Holy Fair.' I had a notion myself that the piece had some merit; but to prevent the worst, I gave a copy of it to a friend who was very fond of such things, and told him I could not guess who was the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clever. With a certain description of the clergy, as well as laity, it met with a roar of applause."

This was the "Holy Tuilzie, or Twa Herds," a piece not given either by Currie or Gilbert Burns, though printed by Mr. Paul,[1] and omitted, certainly for no very intelligible reason, in editions where the "Holy Fair," the "Ordination," &c. found admittance. The two *herds*, or pastors, were Mr. Moodie, minister of Riccarton, and that favourite victim of Burns's, John Russell, then minister at Kilmarnock, and afterwards of Stirling.[2]

"From this time," Burns says, "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, the author of this terrible infliction had unquestionably established his right. Sir Walter Scott 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."[3] Burns's reverend editor Mr. Paul, nevertheless, presents "Holy

[1] [Currie's edition, as already mentioned, was published in 1800. The eighth edition of this was published in 1820 with additions by Gilbert Burns. The Rev. Hamilton Paul's edition came out in 1819.]

[2] See note to the "Twa Herds."

[3] *Quarterly Review*, No. i. p. 22.

Willie's Prayer" at full length;[1] and even calls on the friends of religion to bless the memory of the poet who took such a judicious method of "leading the liberal mind to a rational view of the nature of prayer."

"This," says that bold commentator, "was not only the prayer of Holy Willie, but it is merely the metrical version of every prayer that is offered up by those who call themselves the pure reformed Church of Scotland. In the course of his reading and polemical warfare, Burns embraced and defended the opinions of Taylor of Norwich, Macgill, and that school of divines. He could not reconcile his mind to that picture of the Being, whose very essence is love, which is drawn by the high Calvinists, or the representatives of the Covenanters—namely, that he is disposed to grant salvation to none but a few of their sect; that the whole Pagan world, the disciples of Mahomet, the Roman Catholics, the Lutherans, and even the Calvinists who differ from them in certain tenets, must, like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, descend to the pit of perdition, man, woman, and child, without the possibility of escape; but such are the identical doctrines of the Cameronians of the present day, and such was Holy Willie's style of prayer. The hypocrisy and dishonesty of the man, who was at the time a reputed saint, were perceived by the discerning penetration of Burns, and *to expose them he considered it his duty.* The terrible view of the Deity exhibited in that able production is precisely the same view which is given to Him, in different words, by many devout preachers at present. They inculcate, that the greatest sinner is the greatest favourite of Heaven—that a reformed bawd is more acceptable to the Almighty than a pure virgin, who has hardly ever transgressed even in thought—that the lost sheep alone will be saved, and that the ninety-and-nine out of the hundred will be left in the wilderness, to perish without mercy—that the Saviour of the world loves the elect, not from any lovely qualities which they possess, for they are hateful in his sight, but 'he loves them because he loves them.' Such are the sentiments which are breathed by those who are denominated High Calvinists, and from which the soul of a poet who loves mankind, and who has not studied the system in all its bearings, recoils with horror. . . . The gloomy forbidding representation which they give of the Supreme Being, has a tendency to produce insanity, and lead to suicide."[2]—*Life of Burns.*

Mr. Paul may be considered as expressing in the above, and in other passages of a similar tendency, the sentiments with which even the most audacious of Burns's anti-Calvinistic satires were received among the Ayrshire divines of the New Light. That performances so blasphemous should have been, not only pardoned, but applauded by ministers of religion, is a singular circumstance, which may go far to make the reader comprehend the exaggerated state of party feeling in Burns's native county, at the period when he first appealed to the public ear; nor is it fair to pronounce sentence upon the young and reckless satirist, without taking into consideration the undeniable fact—that in his worst offences of this kind, he was encouraged and abetted by those who, to say nothing more about their professional character and authority, were almost the only persons of liberal education whose society he had any opportunity of approaching at the period in question. Had Burns received, at this time, from his clerical friends and patrons, such advice as was tendered, when rather too late, by a layman who was as far from bigotry on religious subjects as any man in the world, this great genius might have made his first approaches to the public notice in a very different character.

"Let your bright talents"—(thus wrote the excellent John Ramsay of Ochtertyre, in October, 1787)—"let those bright talents which the Almighty has bestowed on you, be

[1] I leave this passage as it stood originally; but am happy in having it in my power to add, on Mr. Paul's own authority, that he had no hand either in selecting the poems for the edition in question, or superintending the printing of it. He merely contributed the brief memoir prefixed, and critical notes appended to it; and "considered his contributions as a *jeu-d'esprit.*" After this explanation, my text may safely be left to the interpretation of every candid reader.

[2] According to every account, Holy Willie was no very consistent character. I find it stated in Cromek's MSS. that he met with his death by falling, when drunk, into a wet ditch; and indeed this story seems to be alluded to in more than one of Burns's own letters. [He was also convicted of pilfering money from "the plate" used in taking up the church-door collections for the poor.]

henceforth employed to the noble purpose of supporting the cause of truth and virtue. An imagination so varied and forcible as yours may do this in many different modes; nor is it necessary to be always serious, which you have been to good purpose; good morals may be recommended in a comedy, or even in a song. Great allowances are due to the heat and inexperience of youth;—and few poets can boast, like Thomson, of never having written a line, which, dying, they would wish to blot. In particular, I wish you to keep clear of the thorny walks of satire, which makes a man an hundred enemies for one friend, and is doubly dangerous when one is supposed to extend the slips and weaknesses of individuals to their sect or party. About modes of faith, serious and excellent men have always differed; and there are certain curious questions, which may afford scope to men of metaphysical heads, but seldom mend the heart or temper. Whilst these points are beyond human ken, it is sufficient that all our sects concur in their views of morals. You will forgive me for these hints." Few such hints, it is likely, ever reached his ears in the days when they might have been most useful—days of which the principal honours and distinctions are thus alluded by himself:—

> I've been at drunken writers' feasts;
> Nay, been bitch-fou 'mang godly priests. dead-drunk

It is amusing to observe how soon even really bucolic bards learn the tricks of their trade: Burns knew already what lustre a compliment gains from being set in sarcasm, when he made Willie call for special notice to

> ——Gawn Hamilton's deserts,.....
> He drinks, and swears, and plays at cartes; cards
> Yet has sae mony takin' arts
> Wi' grit and sma',
> Frae God's ain priests the people's hearts
> He steals awa, &c.

Nor is his other patron, Aiken, introduced with inferior skill, as having merited Willie's most fervent execrations by his "glib-tongued" defence of the heterodox doctor of Ayr:

> Lord! visit them wha did employ him,
> And for thy people's sake destroy 'em.

Burns owed a compliment to this gentleman's elocutionary talents. "I never knew there was any merit in my poems," said he, "until Mr. Aiken *read them* into repute."

Encouraged by the "roar of applause" which greeted these pieces, thus orally promulgated and recommended, he produced in succession various satires, wherein the same set of persons were lashed; as, the "Ordination;" the "Kirk's Alarm," &c. &c.; and last, and best undoubtedly, the "Holy Fair,"[1] in which, unlike the others that have been mentioned, satire keeps its own place, and is subservient to the poetry of Burns. This was, indeed, an extraordinary performance; no partisan of any sect could whisper that malice had formed its principal inspiration, or that its chief attraction lay in the boldness with which individuals, entitled and accustomed to respect, were held up to ridicule; it was acknowledged, amidst the sternest mutterings of wrath, that national manners were once more in the hands of a national poet; and hardly denied by those who shook their heads the most gravely over the indiscretions of particular passages, or even by those who justly regretted a too prevailing tone of levity in the treatment of a subject essentially solemn, that the Muse of "Christ's Kirk on the Green" had awakened, after the slumber of ages, with all the vigour of her regal youth about her, in "the auld clay biggin'" of Mossgiel. The "Holy Fair" however, created admiration, not surprise, among the circle of domestic friends who had been admitted to watch the steps of his progress in an art, of which, beyond that circle, little or nothing was heard until the youthful poet produced at length a satirical masterpiece. It is not possible to reconcile the statements of Gilbert and others, as to some of the minutiæ of the chronological history of Burns's previous performances; but there can be no doubt, that although from choice or accident his first provincial fame was that of a satirist, he had, some time before any of his philippics on the Auld Light divines made their appearance, exhibited to those who enjoyed his personal confidence, a range of imaginative power hardly inferior to what the "Holy Fair" itself displays; and,

[1] [The "Holy Fair" was not "the last" of the polemical satires; it was written in August, 1785, the "Ordination" in February 1786, and the "Kirk's Alarm" in August, 1786.]

at least, such a rapidly improving skill in poetical language and versification, as must have prepared them for witnessing, without wonder, even the most perfect specimens of his art.

Gilbert says, "that among *the earliest* of his poems" was the "Epistle to Davie," and Mr. Walker believes that this was written very soon after the death of William Burnes. This piece is in the very intricate and difficult measure of the "Cherry and the Slae;"[1] and, on the whole, the poet moves with ease and grace in his very unnecessary trammels; but young poets are careless beforehand of difficulties which would startle the experienced; and great poets may overcome any difficulties if they once grapple with them; so that I should rather ground my distrust of Gilbert's statement, if it must be literally taken, on the celebration of "Jean" with which the epistle terminates: and after all, she is celebrated in the concluding stanzas, which may have been added some time after the first draught. The gloomy circumstances of the poet's personal condition, as described in this piece, were common, it cannot be doubted, to all the years of his youthful history; so that no particular date is to be founded upon these; and if this was the first, certainly it was not the last occasion, on which Burns exercised his fancy in the colouring of the very worst issue that could attend a life of unsuccessful toil.

> The last o't, the warst o't
> Is only just to beg—

But Gilbert's recollections, however on trivial points inaccurate, will always be more interesting than anything that could be put in their place.

"Robert," says he, "often composed without any regular plan. When anything made a strong impression on his mind, so as to rouse it to poetic exertion, he would give way to the impulse, and embody the thought in rhyme. If he hit on two or three stanzas to please him, he would then think of proper introductory, connecting, and concluding stanzas; hence the middle of a poem was often first produced. It was, I think, in summer, 1784,[2] when, in the interval of harder labour, he and I were weeding in the garden (kail-yard), that he repeated to me the principal part of this epistle (to Davie). I believe the first idea of Robert's becoming an author was started on this occasion. I was much pleased with the epistle, and said to him I was of opinion it would bear being printed, and that it would be well received by people of taste; that I thought it at least equal, if not superior, to many of Allan Ramsay's epistles; and that the merit of these, and much other Scotch poetry, seemed to consist principally in the knack of the expression—but here, there was a strain of interesting sentiment, and the Scotticism of the language scarcely seemed affected, but appeared to be the natural language of the poet; that, besides, there was certainly some novelty in a poet pointing out the consolations that were in store for him when he should go a-begging. Robert seemed very well pleased with my criticism, and we talked of sending it to some magazine, but as this plan afforded no opportunity of knowing how it would take, the idea was dropped.

"It was, I think, in the winter following, as we were going together with carts for coal to the family (and I could yet point out the particular spot), that the author first repeated to me the 'Address to the Deil.' The curious idea of such an address was suggested to him, by running over in his mind the many ludicrous accounts and representations we have, from various quarters, of this august personage. 'Death and Doctor Hornbook,' though not published in the Kilmarnock edition, was produced early in the year 1785. The schoolmaster of Tarbolton parish, to eke up the scanty subsistence allowed to that useful class of men, had set up a shop of grocery goods. Having accidentally fallen in with some medical books, and become most hobby-horsically attached to the study of medicine, he had added the sale of a few medicines to his little

[1] [That is the "Cherry and the Sloe," a Scottish poem by Alexander Montgomery, published in 1595.]

[2] It has been already mentioned that Sillar removed from Tarbolton to Irvine in 1784; which circumstance seems to confirm the account in the text. [The poem bears date January, 1785, but the concluding stanzas, as the poem now appears, referring to the poet's consuming passion for Jean, must have been added after that date, as his intercourse with her would seem not to have begun till April of that year.]

trade.[1] He had got a shop-bill printed, at the bottom of which, overlooking his own incapacity, he had advertised, that 'Advice would be given in common disorders at the shop gratis.' Robert was at a mason-meeting in Tarbolton, when the dominie unfortunately made too ostentatious a display of his medical skill. As he parted in the evening from this mixture of pedantry and physic, at the place where he describes his meeting with Death, one of those floating ideas of apparitions, he mentions in his letter to Dr. Moore, crossed his mind; this set him to work for the rest of the way home. These circumstances he related when he repeated the verses to me next afternoon, as I was holding the plough, and he was letting the water off the field beside me. The 'Epistle to John Lapraik' was produced exactly on the occasion described by the author. He says in that poem, 'On Fasten-e'en we had a rockin'.' I believe he has omitted the word *rocking* in the glossary. It is a term derived from those primitive times, when the country-women employed their spare hours in spinning on the rock or distaff. This simple implement is a very portable one, and well fitted to the social inclination of meeting in a neighbour's house; hence the phrase of *going a-rocking*, or *with the rock*. As the connection the phrase had with the implement was forgotten when the rock gave place to the spinning-wheel, the phrase came to be used by both sexes on social occasions, and men talk of going with their rocks as well as women. It was at one of these *rockings* at our house, when we had twelve or fifteen young people with their *rocks*, that Lapraik's song beginning, 'When I upon thy bosom lean,'[2] was sung, and we were informed who was the author. The verses to the 'Mouse' and 'Mountain Daisy' were composed on the occasions mentioned, and while the author was holding the plough; I could point out the particular spot where each was composed. Holding the plough was a favourite situation with Robert for poetic compositions, and some of his best verses were produced while he was at that exercise. Several of the poems were produced for the purpose of bringing forward some favourite sentiment of the author. He used to remark to me, that he could not well conceive a more mortifying picture of human life, than a man seeking work. In casting about in his mind how this sentiment might be brought forward, the elegy, 'Man was made to Mourn,' was composed. 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 introducing family worship. To this sentiment of the author the world is indebted for the 'Cottar's Saturday Night.' The hint of the plan and title of the poem were taken from Fergusson'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 favourable, 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 in one of these walks that I first had the pleasure of hearing the author repeat the 'Cottar's Saturday Night.' I do not recollect to have read or heard anything by which I was more highly *electrified*. The fifth and sixth stanzas, and the eighteenth, thrilled with peculiar ecstasy through my soul."

The poems mentioned by Gilbert Burns in the above extract, are among the most popular of his brother's performances; and there may be a time for recurring to some of their peculiar merits as works of art. It may be mentioned here, that John Wilson, *alias* Dr. Hornbook, was not merely compelled to shut up shop as an apothecary, or druggist rather, by the satire which bears his name; but so irresistible was the tide of ridicule, that his pupils, one by one, deserted him, and he abandoned his school-craft also. Removing to Glasgow, and turning himself successfully to commercial pursuits, Dr. Hornbook survived the local storm which

[1] [See notes appended to "Death and Doctor Hornbook."]

[2] Burns was never a fastidious critic; but it is not very easy to understand his admiration of Lapraik's poetry. Emboldened by Burns's success, he, too, published; but the only one of his productions that is ever remembered now is this; and even this survives chiefly because Burns has praised it. [It has since been discovered that Lapraik filched the song almost in its entirety from Ruddiman's *Magazine*, 14th October, 1773. Burns, who gave it high praise, touched it up, and inserted it in Johnson's *Museum*.]

he could not effectually withstand, and was often heard in his latter days, when waxing cheerful and communicative over a bowl of punch "in the Saltmarket," to bless the lucky hour in which the dominie of Tarbolton provoked the castigation of Robert Burns. In those days the Scotch universities did not turn out doctors of physic by the hundred, according to the modern fashion introduced by the necessities of the French revolutionary war; Mr. Wilson's was probably the only medicine-chest from which salts and senna were distributed for the benefit of a considerable circuit of parishes; and his advice, to say the least of the matter, was perhaps as good as could be had, for love or money, among the wise women who were the only rivals for his practice. The poem which drove him from Ayrshire was not, we may believe, either expected or designed to produce any such serious effect. Poor Hornbook and the poet were old acquaintances, and in some sort rival wits at the time in the mason-lodge.

In "Man was made to Mourn," whatever might be the casual idea that set the poet to work, it is but too evident that he wrote from the habitual feelings of his own bosom. The indignation with which he through life contemplated the inequality of human condition, and particularly,—and who shall say, with absolute injustice?—the contrast between his own worldly circumstances and intellectual rank, was never more bitterly, nor more loftily expressed, than in some of these stanzas:—

> See yonder poor o'erlabour'd wight,
> So abject, mean, and vile,
> Who begs a brother of the earth
> To give him leave to toil!
> If I'm design'd yon lordling's slave—
> By nature's laws design'd—
> Why was an independent wish
> E'er planted in my mind?

The same feeling, strong, but triumphed over in the moment of inspiration, as it ought ever to have been in the plain exercise of such an understanding as his, may be read in every stanza of the "Epistle to Davie":—

> It's no in titles nor in rank,
> It's no in wealth like Lon'on bank,
> To purchase peace and rest;
> It's no in books, it's no in lear, learning
> To mak us truly blest. . . .
> Think ye, that such as you and I,
> Wha drudge and drive through wet and dry,
> Wi' never-ceasing toil;
> Think ye, are we less blest than they,
> Wha scarcely tent us in their way heed
> As hardly worth their while? . . .

In "Man was made to Mourn," Burns appears to have taken many hints from an ancient ballad, entitled the "Life and Age of Man," which begins thus:—

> Upon the sixteenth hunder year of God, and fifty-three,
> Frae Christ was born, that bought us dear as writings testifie:
> On January, the sixteenth day, as I did lie alone,
> With many a sigh and sob did say—Ah! man is made to moan!

"I had an old grand-uncle," says the poet, in one of his letters to Mrs. Dunlop, "with whom my mother lived in her girlish years; the good old man, for such he was, was blind long ere he died; during which time his highest enjoyment was to sit down and cry, while my mother would sing the simple old song of the "Life and Age of Man."[1]

The "Cottar's Saturday Night" is, perhaps, of all Burns's pieces, the one whose exclusion from the collection, were such things possible nowadays, would be the most injurious, if not to the genius, at least to the character, of the man. In spite of many feeble lines, and some heavy stanzas, it appears to me, that even his genius would suffer more in estimation, by being contemplated in the absence of this poem, than of any other single performance he has left us. Loftier flights he certainly has made, but in these he remained but a short while on the wing, and effort is too often perceptible; here the motion is easy, gentle, placidly undulating. There is more of the conscious security of power, than in any other of his serious pieces of considerable length; the whole has the appearance of coming in a full stream from the fountain of the heart—a stream that soothes the ear, and has no glare on the surface. It is delightful to turn from any of the pieces which present so great a genius as writhing under an inevitable burden, to this, where his buoyant energy seems not even to feel the pressure. The miseries of toil and penury, who shall affect

[1] This ballad may be seen in Cromek's *Select Scottish Songs*, preface to vol. i.

to treat as unreal? Yet they shrink to small dimensions in the presence of a spirit thus exalted at once, and softened, by the pieties of virgin love, filial reverence, and domestic devotion.

That he who thus enthusiastically apprehended, and thus exquisitely painted, the artless beauty and solemnity of the feelings and thoughts that ennoble the life of the Scottish peasant, could witness observances in which the very highest of these redeeming influences are most powerfully and gracefully displayed, and yet describe them in a vein of unmixed merriment—that the same man should have produced the "Cottar's Saturday Night" and the "Holy Fair" about the same time—will ever continue to move wonder and regret.

"The annual celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the rural parishes of Scotland, has much in it," says the unfortunate Heron, "of those old Popish festivals, in which superstition, traffic, and amusement, used to be strangely intermingled. Burns saw and seized in it one of the happiest of all subjects to afford scope for the display of that strong and piercing sagacity, by which he could almost intuitively distinguish the reasonable from the absurd, and the becoming from the ridiculous; of that picturesque power of fancy which enables him to represent scenes, and persons, and groups, and looks, and attitudes, and gestures, in a manner almost as lively and impressive, even in words, as if all the artifices and energies of the pencil had been employed; of that knowledge which he had necessarily acquired of the manners, passions, and prejudices of the rustics around him; of whatever was ridiculous, no less than whatever was affectingly beautiful in rural life."[1] This is very good so far as it goes; but who ever disputed the exquisite graphic truth, so far as it goes, of the poem to which the critic refers? The question remains as it stood; is there then nothing besides a strange mixture of superstition, traffic, and amusement, in the scene which such an annual celebration in a rural parish of Scotland presents? Does nothing of what is "affectingly beautiful in rural life" make a part in the original which was before the poet's eyes? Were "Superstition," "Hypocrisy," and "Fun," the only influences which he might justly have impersonated? It would be hard, I think, to speak so even of the old Popish festivals to which Mr. Heron alludes; it would be hard, surely, to say it of any festival in which, mingled as they may be with sanctimonious pretenders, and surrounded with giddy groups of onlookers, a mighty multitude of devout men are assembled for the worship of God, beneath the open heaven, and above the tombs of their fathers.[2]

Let us beware, however, of pushing our censure of a young poet, mad with the inspiration of the moment, from whatever source derived, too far. It can hardly be doubted that the author of the "Cottar's Saturday Night" had felt, in his time, all that any man can feel in the contemplation of the most sublime of the religious observances of his country; and as little, that had he taken up the subject of this rural sacrament in a solemn mood he might have produced a piece as gravely beautiful, as his "Holy Fair" is quaint, graphic, and picturesque. A scene of family worship, on the other hand, I can easily imagine to have come from his hand as pregnant with the ludicrous as that "Holy Fair" itself. The family prayers of the Saturday's night, and the rural celebration of the eucharist, are parts of the same system—the system which has made the people of Scotland what they are—and what, it is to be hoped, they will continue to be. And when men ask of themselves what this great national poet really thought of a system in which minds immeasurably inferior to his can see so much to venerate, it is surely just that they should pay more attention to what he has delivered under the gravest sanction. In noble natures, we may be sure, the source of tears lies nearer the heart than that of smiles.

Mr. Hamilton Paul does not desert his post on occasion of the "Holy Fair;" he defends

[1] Heron's *Memoirs of Burns* (Edinburgh, 1797), p. 14. [Robert Heron, a very prolific miscellaneous writer (born 1764, died 1807), wrote one of the earliest memoirs of Burns's life, published in 1797. He was a man of decided talent if not genius, but his life was marred by his own unsteadiness and eccentricity.]

[2] [It may here be remarked that, as will be understood from the notes to the poem, Burns in the "Holy Fair" deals entirely with the externals of the celebration,—the actual dispensation of the sacrament *in the church* he does not venture to touch on.]

that piece as manfully as "Holy Willie;" and, indeed, expressly applauds Burns for having endeavoured to explode "abuses discountenanced by the General Assembly." The General Assembly would no doubt say, both of the poet and the commentator, *non tali auxilio*.

"Hallowe'en," a descriptive poem, perhaps even more exquisitely wrought than the "Holy Fair," and containing nothing that could offend the feelings of anybody, was produced about the same period. Burns's art had now reached its climax; but it is time that we should revert more particularly to the personal history of the poet.

He seems to have very soon perceived, that the farm of Mossgiel could at the best furnish no more than the bare means of existence to so large a family; and wearied with the "prospects drear," from which he only escaped in occasional intervals of social merriment, or when gay flashes of solitary fancy, for they were no more, threw sunshine on everything, he very naturally took up the notion of quitting Scotland for a time, and trying his fortune in the West Indies, where, as is well known, the managers of the plantations are, in the great majority of cases, Scotchmen of Burns's own rank and condition. His letters show that on two or three different occasions, long before his poetry had excited any attention, he had applied for, and nearly obtained appointments of this sort, through the intervention of his acquaintances in the seaport of Irvine.[1] Petty accidents, not worth describing, interfered to disappoint him from time to time; but at last a new burst of misfortune rendered him doubly anxious to escape from his native land; and but for an accident, which no one will call petty, his arrangements would certainly have been completed.

But we must not come quite so rapidly to the last of his Ayrshire love-stories.

How many lesser romances of this order were evolved and completed during his residence at Mossgiel, it is needless to inquire; that they were many, his songs prove, for in those days he wrote no love-songs on imaginary heroines.[2] "Mary Morison," "Behind yon hills where Stinchar flows," "On Cessnock banks there lives a lass," belong to this period,[3] and there are three or four inspired by Mary Campbell—the object of by far the deepest passion that Burns ever knew, and which he has accordingly immortalized in the noblest of elegiacs.

In introducing to Mr. Thomson's notice the song—

> Will you go to the Indies, my Mary,
> And leave auld Scotia's shore?—
> Will you go to the Indies, my Mary,
> Across the Atlantic's roar?

Burns says, "In my very early years, when I was thinking of going to the West Indies, I took this farewell of a dear girl;" and, afterwards, in a note on—

> Ye banks, and braes, and streams around
> The castle o' Montgomerie;
> Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
> Your waters never drumlie; turbid
> There summer first unfauld her robes,
> And there the langest tarry,
> For there I took the last farewell
> O' my sweet Highland Mary,

he adds,—"After a pretty long tract of the most ardent reciprocal affection, we met by appointment on the second Sunday of May, in a sequestered spot by the banks of Ayr, where we spent a day in taking a farewell before she should embark for the West Highlands, to arrange matters among her friends for our projected change of life. At the close of the autumn following, she crossed the sea to meet me at Greenock, where she had scarce landed when she was seized with a malignant fever, which hurried my dear girl to her grave in a few days, before I could even hear of her illness;" and Mr. Cromek, speaking of the same "day of parting love," gives, though without mentioning his authority, some further particulars which no one would willingly believe to be apocryphal. "This adieu," says that zealous inquirer into the details of Burns's story, "was performed with all those simple and striking ceremonials, which rustic sentiment has devised to prolong tender emotions, and to impose awe. The lovers stood on each side

[1] [There is no authority for saying that Burns ever contemplated trying his fortunes in the West Indies prior to 1786. Though he speaks of "thinking of going to the West Indies in my very early years,' he refers to his 28th year, 1786. See below.]

[2] Letter to Thomson, 26th Oct. 1792.

[3] [These songs certainly belong to the period before he took up his residence at Mossgiel.]

of a small purling brook—they laved their hands in the limpid stream—and, holding a Bible between them, pronounced their vows to be faithful to each other. They parted—never to meet again." It is proper to add, that Mr. Cromek's story, which even Allan Cunningham was disposed to receive with suspicion, has been confirmed very strongly by the accidental discovery of a Bible, presented by Burns to "Mary Campbell," which was found in the possession of her sister at Ardrossan. Upon the boards of the first volume is inscribed, in Burns's handwriting,—"And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, I am the Lord.—Levit. chap. xix. v. 12." On the second volume,—"Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths.—St. Matth. chap. v. 33." And, on a blank leaf of either—"Robert Burns, Mossgiel," with his *mason-mark*.

How lasting was the poet's remembrance of this pure love, and its tragic termination, will be seen hereafter.

Highland Mary, however, seems to have died before her lover had made any more serious attempts in poetry.[1] In the Epistle to Mr. Sillar, the very earliest, according to Gilbert, of these essays, the poet celebrates "his Davie and his Jean."

This was Jean Armour, the daughter of a respectable man, a mason in the village of Mauchline, where she was at the time the reigning toast,[2] and who afterwards became the wife of our poet. There are numberless allusions to her maiden charms in the best pieces which he produced at Mossgiel.

The time is not yet come, in which all the details of this story can be expected. Jean Armour found herself "as ladies wish to be that love their *lords*." And how slightly such a circumstance might affect the character and reputation of a young woman in her sphere of rural life at that period, every Scotchman will understand—to any but a Scotchman, it might, perhaps, be difficult to explain. The manly readiness with which the young rustics commonly come forward to avert, by marriage, the worst consequences of such indiscretions, cannot be denied; nor, perhaps, is there any class of society, in any country, in which *matrimonial* infidelity is less known than among the female peasantry of Scotland.

Burns's worldly circumstances were in a most miserable state when he was informed of Miss Armour's condition; and the first announcement of it staggered him like a blow. He saw nothing for it but to fly the country at once; and, in a note to James Smith of Mauchline, the confidant of his amour, he thus wrote:—"Against two things I am fixed as fate—staying at home, and owning her conjugally. The first, by Heaven, I will not do!—the last, by hell, I will never do!—A good God bless you, and make you happy, up to the warmest weeping wish of parting friendship. . . . If you see Jean, tell her I will meet her; so help me, God, in my hour of need."

The lovers met accordingly; and the result of the meeting was what was to be anticipated from the tenderness and the manliness of Burns's feelings. All dread of personal inconvenience yielded at once to the tears of the woman he loved, and ere they parted he gave into her keeping a written acknowledgment of marriage, which, when produced by a person in Miss Armour's condition, is, according to the Scots law, to be accepted as legal evidence of an *irregular* marriage having really taken place; it being of course understood that the marriage was to be formally avowed as soon as the consequences of their imprudence could no longer be concealed from her family.

The disclosure was deferred to the last moment, and it was received by the father of Miss Armour with equal surprise and anger. Burns, confessing himself to be unequal to the maintenance of a family, proposed to go immediately to Jamaica, where he hoped to find better fortunes. He offered, if it were rejected, to abandon his farm, which was ere now a hopeless concern, and earn bread at least for his wife and children as a daily labourer at home; but nothing could appease the indigna-

[1] [The story of Highland Mary, the true facts regarding which were unknown to Lockhart, is given in Appendix.]

[2] In Mauchline there dwells six proper young belles,
The pride o' the place and its neighbourhood a';
Their carriage and dress, a stranger would guess,
In Lon'on or Paris they'd gotten it a':

Miss Miller is fine, *Miss Markland's* divine,
Miss Smith she has wit, and *Miss Betty* is braw;
There's beauty and fortune to get wi' *Miss Morton*,
But *Armour's* the jewel for me o' them a'.

tion of Armour, who, Professor Walker hints, had entertained previously a very bad opinion of Burns's whole character. By what arguments he prevailed on his daughter to take so strange and so painful a step we know not; but the fact is certain, that, at his entreaty, she destroyed the document, which must have been to her the most precious of her possessions —the only evidence of her marriage.[1]

It was under such extraordinary circumstances that Miss Armour became the mother of twins.[2]

Burns's love and pride, the two most powerful feelings of his mind, had been equally wounded. His anger and grief together drove him, according to every account, to the verge of absolute insanity; and some of his letters on this occasion, both published and unpublished, have certainly all the appearance of having been written in as deep a concentration of despair as ever preceded the most awful of human calamities. His first thought had been, as we have seen, to fly at once from the scene of his disgrace and misery; and this course seemed now to be absolutely necessary. He was summoned to find security for the maintenance of the children whom he was prevented from legitimating, and such was his poverty that he could not satisfy the parish officers. I suppose security for some four or five pounds a year was the utmost that could have been demanded from a person of his rank; but the man who had in his desk the immortal poems to which we have been referring above, either disdained to ask, or tried in vain to find, pecuniary assistance in his hour of need; and the only alternative that presented itself to his view was America or a jail.

Who can ever learn without grief and indignation, that it was the victim of *such* miseries who, at this moment, could pour out such a strain as the "Lament?"

O thou pale orb, that silent shines,
While care-untroubled mortals sleep!
Thou seest a wretch that inly pines,
And wanders here to wail and weep!
With woe I nightly vigils keep,
Beneath thy wan unwarming beam;
And mourn, in lamentation deep,
How *life* and *love* are all a dream.

No idly-feigned poetic plaints,
My sad love-lorn lamentings claim;
No shepherd's pipe—Arcadian strains;
No fabled tortures, quaint and tame.
The plighted faith; the mutual flame;
The oft attested Pow'rs above;
The *promised Father's tender name;*
These were the pledges of my love!

[1] [Another statement regarding the destruction of the document is, that Jean's father snatched it from her in a sudden fit of anger, threw it on the fire, and commanded her to think herself no longer the wife of Burns. It may be remarked that the destruction of the paper only destroyed evidence; it could not annul the marriage.]

[2] [After the destruction of the important document Miss Armour was sent off to Paisley, evidently with the purpose of preventing communication between her and her poet lover. On 9th July Burns writes to his friend Richmond in Edinburgh that he had called on Jean after her return and received a somewhat chilling reception. "However," he adds, "the priest, I am informed, will give me a certificate as a single man if I comply with the rules of the church, which for that very reason I intend to do. I am going to put on sackcloth and ashes this day. I am indulged so far as to appear in my own seat." Delinquents like Burns had to do penance on three several Sundays. Burns began his course of public repentance on 9th July, and should have finished on the 23d. For some reason or other two Sundays were omitted, and Burns made his last appearance along with Jean and some other offenders on 6th August, as shown by the following extract from the session records:—"1786, August 6th.—Robert Burns, John Smith, Mary Lindsay, Jean Armour, and Angus Auld appeared before the congregation professing their repentance for the sin of fornication, and they, having each appeared two several Sabbaths formerly, were this day rebuked and absolved from the scandal."

It appears that the Rev. Mr. Auld, by whom these guilty parties were rebuked, was accustomed to write down the rebukes he administered to offenders in a small volume, which is still in existence, and which shows him to have been a faithful minister, and, by no means, a severe or unkindly man. The rebuke delivered to Burns and his fellow-sinners as noted down in this curious volume is as follows:—"You appear there to be rebuked, and, at the same time, making profession of repentance for the sin of fornication. The frequency of this sin is just matter of lamentation among Christians, and affords just ground of deep humiliation to the guilty persons themselves. We call you to reflect seriously in contrition of heart on all the instances of your sin and guilt, on their numbers, high aggravation, and unhappy consequences; and say, having done foolishly, we'll do so no more. Beware of returning again to your sin, as some of you have done, like the dog to his vomit, or like the sow that is washed, to her wallowing in the mire." By the law of Scotland a subsequent marriage between the father and mother legitimates children born out of wedlock; hence it is, probably, that antenuptial incontinence is looked upon rather too leniently among the lower classes.]

CHAPTER IV.

[Jamaica engagement:—resolution to publish his poems:—publication of first edition:—preparations for sailing:—growing fame:—Dugald Stewart, Dr. Blair, Mrs. Dunlop:—"Lass of Ballochmyle":—hopes of an excise appointment:—visit to Dr. Laurie:—Dr. Blacklock's letter:—Burns resolves to visit Edinburgh.]

He saw misfortune's cauld *nor'-east*
Lang mustering up a bitter blast;
A gillet brak his heart at last,
Ill may she be!
So, took a berth afore the mast——.

Jamaica was now his mark; and after some little time and trouble, the situation of assistant-overseer on the estate of a Dr. Douglas in that colony, was procured for him by one of his friends in the town of Irvine. Money to pay for his passage, however, he had not; and it at last occurred to him, that the few pounds requisite for this purpose might be raised by the publication of some of the finest poems that ever delighted mankind.

His landlord Gavin Hamilton, Mr. Aiken, and other friends, encouraged him warmly; and after some hesitation, he at length resolved to hazard an experiment which might perhaps better his circumstances; and, if any tolerable number of subscribers were procured, could not make them worse than they were already. His rural patrons exerted themselves with success in the matter; and so many copies were soon subscribed for, that Burns entered into terms with a printer[1] in Kilmarnock, and began to copy out his performances for the press. He carried his MSS. piecemeal to the printer; and, encouraged by the ray of light which unexpected patronage had begun to throw on his affairs, composed, while the printing was in progress, some of the best poems of the collection. The tale of the "Twa Dogs," for instance, with which the volume commenced, is known to have been written in the short interval between the publication being determined on and the printing begun. His own account of the business to Dr. Moore is as follows:—

"I gave up my part of the farm to my brother: in truth, it was only nominally mine; and made what little preparation was in my power for Jamaica.[2] But before leaving my native land, I resolved to publish my poems. I weighed my productions as impartially as was in my power: I thought they had merit; and it was a delicious idea that I should be called a clever fellow, even though it should never reach my ears—a poor negro-driver—or, perhaps, a victim to that inhospitable clime, and gone to the world of spirits. I can truly say, that, *pauvre inconnu* as I then was, I had pretty nearly as high an idea of myself and of my works as I have at this moment, when the public has decided in their favour. It ever was my opinion, that the mistakes and blunders, both in a rational and religious point of view, of which we see thousands daily guilty, are owing to their ignorance of themselves. To know myself, had been all along my constant study. I weighed myself alone; I balanced myself with others; I watched every means of information, to see how much ground I occupied as a man and as a poet: I studied assiduously Nature's design in my formation—where the lights and shades in character were intended. 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, for which I got subscriptions for about three hundred and fifty.[3]—My

[1] John Wilson.

[2] [While his poems were in the press Burns executed a deed (still in existence) formally assigning over to his brother Gilbert all the goods that he might leave behind him on his departure for Jamaica, as well as the profits that might arise from the publication of his poems; Gilbert on the other hand undertaking to bring up and educate the poet's illegitimate child Elizabeth, daughter of Elizabeth Paton. No mention is made of Jean Armour or her possible offspring.]

[3] [His "Proposals for publishing by Subscription, Scottish Poems by Robert Burns," were dated April 14th, 1786. The work was to be "elegantly printed, in one volume octavo. Price, stitched, Three Shillings." On July 31, 1786, the volume was issued, and the whole edition was disposed of as follows:—Mr. Aiken of Ayr disposed of 145 copies; Mr. Robert Muir of Kilmarnock, 72 copies; James Smith of Mauchline, 41 copies; Gavin Hamilton, 40 copies; Gilbert Burns, 70 copies; John Kennedy, Dumfries House, 20 copies;

vanity was highly gratified by the reception I met with from the public; and besides, I pocketed, all expenses deducted, nearly 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 wafting 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.

I had been for some days skulking from covert to covert, under all the terrors of a jail; as some ill-advised people had uncoupled the merciless pack of the law at my heels. I had taken the last farewell of my few friends; my chest was on the way to Greenock; I had composed the last song I should ever measure in Caledonia, "The gloomy night is gathering fast," when a letter from Dr. Blacklock to a friend of mine, overthrew all my schemes, by opening new prospects to my poetic ambition."

To the above rapid narrative of the poet, we may annex a few details, gathered from his various biographers and from his own letters.

While his sheets were in the press (June—July, 1786) it appears that his friends, Hamilton and Aiken, revolved various schemes for procuring him the means of remaining in Scotland; and having studied some of the practical branches of mathematics, as we have seen, and in particular *gauging*, it occurred to himself that a situation in the excise might be better suited to him than any other he was at all likely to obtain by the intervention of such patrons as he possessed.

He appears to have lingered longer after the publication of the poems than one might suppose from his own narrative, in the hope that these gentlemen might at length succeed in their efforts in his behalf. The poems were received with favour, even with rapture, in Ayrshire, and ere long over the adjoining counties. "Old and young," thus speaks Robert Heron, "high and low, grave and gay, learned or ignorant, were alike delighted, agitated, transported. I was at that time resident in Galloway, contiguous to Ayrshire, and I can well remember how even ploughboys and maid-servants would have gladly bestowed the wages they earned the most hardly, and which they wanted to purchase necessary clothing, if they might but procure the works of Burns." The poet soon found that his person also had become an object of general curiosity, and that a lively interest in his personal fortunes was excited among some of the gentry of the district, when the details of his story reached them, as it was pretty sure to do, along with his modest and manly preface.[1] Among others, the celebrated Professor

John Logan, of Laight, 20 copies; Mr. M'Whinnie, Writer, Ayr, 20 copies; David Sillar, Irvine, 14 copies; William Niven, Maybole, 7 copies; Walter Morton, Cumnock, 6 copies; John Neilson, Kirkoswald, 5 copies. Wilson himself disposed of 70 copies, while copies were supplied to William Parker, Thomas Samson, Ralph Sellars, and John Rankine. On August 28, 559 copies had been disposed of, and there then remained on hand only 13 copies. The expense of printing and publishing the whole edition amounted to £35, 17*s.*, a sum that would little more than purchase a single copy now, they have become so rare.]

[1] *Preface to the First Edition.*

"The following trifles are not the production of the poet, who, with all the advantages of learned art, and, perhaps, amid the elegancies and idleness of upper life, looks down for a rural theme, with an eye to Theocritus or Virgil. To the author of this, these, and other celebrated names their countrymen are, at least in their original language, *a fountain shut up, and a book sealed.* Unacquainted with the necessary requisites for commencing poet by rule, he sings the sentiments and manners he felt and saw in himself and rustic compeers around him, in his and their native language. Though a rhymer from his earliest years, at least from the earliest impulse of the softer passions, it was not till very lately that the applause, perhaps the partiality, of friendship, wakened his vanity so far as to make him think any thing of his worth showing; and none of the following works were composed with a view to the press. To amuse himself with the little creations of his own fancy, amid the toil and fatigues of a laborious life; to transcribe the various feelings, the loves, the griefs, the hopes, the fears in his own breast; to find some kind of counterpoise to the struggles of a world, always an alien scene, a task uncouth to the poetical mind,—these were his motives for courting the Muses, and in these he found poetry to be its own reward.

"Now that he appears in the public character of an author, he does it with fear and trembling. So dear is fame to the rhyming tribe, that even he, an obscure, nameless bard, shrinks aghast at the thought of being branded as an impertinent blockhead, obtruding his nonsense on the world; and, because he can make a shift to jingle a few doggerel Scotch rhymes together, looking upon himself as a poet of no small consequence, forsooth!

"It is an observation of that celebrated poet Shen-

Dugald Stewart of Edinburgh and his accomplished lady, then resident at their beautiful seat of Catrine, began to notice him with much polite and friendly attention. Dr. Hugh Blair, who then held an eminent place in the literary society of Scotland, happened to be paying Mr. Stewart a visit, and on reading the "Holy Fair," at once pronounced it the "work of a very fine genius;" and Mrs. Stewart, herself a poetess, flattered him perhaps still more highly by her warm commendations.[1] But, above all, his little volume happened to attract the notice of Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop,[2] a lady of high birth and ample fortune, enthusiastically attached to her country, and interested in whatever appeared to concern the honour of Scotland. This excellent woman, while slowly recovering from the languor of an illness, laid her hands accidentally on the new production of the provincial press, and opened the volume at the "Cottar's Saturday Night." "She read it over," says Gilbert, "with the greatest pleasure and surprise; the poet's description of the simple cottagers operated on her mind like the charm of a powerful exorcist, repelling the demon *ennui*, and restoring her to her wonted inward harmony and satisfaction." Mrs. Dunlop instantly sent an express to Mossgiel, distant sixteen miles from her residence, with a very kind letter to Burns, requesting him to supply her, if he could, with half-a-dozen copies of the book, and to call at Dunlop as soon as he could find it convenient. Burns was from home, but he acknowledged the favour conferred on him in an interesting letter, still extant; and shortly afterwards commenced a personal acquaintance with one that never afterwards ceased to befriend him to the utmost of her power. His letters to Mrs. Dunlop form a very large proportion of all his subsequent correspondence, and, addressed as they were to a person whose sex, age, rank, and benevolence inspired at once profound respect and a graceful confidence, will ever remain the most pleasing of all the materials of our poet's biography.

At the residences of these new acquaintance, Burns was introduced into society of a class which he had not before approached; and of the manner in which he stood the trial, Mr. Stewart thus writes to Dr. Currie:

"His manners were then, as they continued ever afterwards, simple, manly, and independent; strongly expressive of conscious genius and worth; but without anything that indicated forwardness, arrogance, or vanity. He took his share in conversation, but not more than belonged to him; and listened with apparent attention and deference, on subjects where his want of education deprived him of the means of information. If there had been a little more of gentleness and accommodation in his temper, he would, I think, have been still more interesting; but he had been accustomed to give law in the circle of his ordinary acquaintance; and his dread of anything approaching to meanness or servility, rendered his manner somewhat decided and hard. Nothing, perhaps, was more remarkable among his various attainments than the fluency and

stone, whose divine elegies do honour to our language, our nation, and our species, that '*Humility* has depressed many a genius to a hermit, but never raised one to fame!' If any critic catches at the word *genius* the author tells him, once for all, that he certainly looks upon himself as possessed of some poetic abilities, otherwise his publishing in the manner he has done, would be a manœuvre below the worst character, which, he hopes, his worst enemy will ever give him. But to the genius of a Ramsay, or the glorious dawnings of the poor, unfortunate Fergusson, he, with equal unaffected sincerity, declares that, even in his highest pulse of vanity, he has not the most distant pretensions. These two justly admired Scotch poets he has often had in his eye in the following pieces; but rather with a view to kindle at their flame, than for servile imitation.

"To his subscribers, the author returns his most sincere thanks. Not the mercenary bow over a counter, but the heart-throbbing gratitude of the bard, conscious how much he owes to benevolence and friendship for gratifying him, if he deserves it, in that dearest wish of every poetic bosom—to be distinguished. He begs his readers, particularly the learned and the polite, who may honour him with a perusal, that they will make every allowance for education and circumstances of life; but if, after a fair, candid, and impartial criticism, he shall stand convicted of dulness and nonsense, let him be done by as he would in that case do by others—let him be condemned, without mercy, to contempt and oblivion.'

[1] [There is some confusion here; Helen Bannatine, Dugald Stewart's first wife, was at that time suffering from an illness, of which she died the following year. Helen D'Arcy Cranstoun, "the poetess," did not become Mrs. Stewart till 1790.]

[2] This lady was the daughter of Sir Thomas Wallace, Baronet, of Craigie, supposed to represent the family of which the great hero of Scotland was a cadet.

precision, and originality of his language, when he spoke in company, more particularly as he aimed at purity in his turn of expression, and avoided, more successfully than most Scotchmen, the peculiarities of Scottish phraseology. At this time, Burns's prospects in life were so extremely gloomy, that he had seriously formed a plan of going out to Jamaica in a very humble situation, not, however, without lamenting that his want of patronage should force him to think of a project so repugnant to his feelings, when his ambition aimed at no higher an object than the station of an exciseman or gauger in his own country."

The provincial applause of his publication, and the consequent notice of his superiors, however flattering such things must have been, were far from administering any essential relief to the urgent necessities of Burns's situation. Very shortly after his first visit to Catrine, where he met with the young and amiable Basil Lord Daer, whose condescension and kindness on the occasion he celebrates in some well-known verses, we find the poet writing to his friend, Mr. Aiken of Ayr, in the following sad strain:—"I have been feeling all the various rotations and movements within respecting the excise. There are many things plead strongly against it; the uncertainty of getting soon into business, the consequences of my follies, which may perhaps make it impracticable for me to stay at home; and besides, 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. Even in the hour of social mirth, my gaiety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner. All these reasons urge me to go abroad; and to all these reasons I have only one answer—the feelings of a father. This, in the present mood I am in, overbalances everything that can be laid in the scale against it."

He proceeds to say that he claims no right to complain. "The world has in general been kind to me, fully up to my deserts. I was for some time past fast getting into the pining distrustful snarl of the misanthrope. I saw myself alone, unfit for the struggle of life, shrinking at every rising cloud in the chance-directed atmosphere of fortune, while all defenceless, I looked about in vain for a cover. It never occurred to me, at least never with the force it deserved, that this world is a busy scene, and man a creature destined for a progressive struggle; and that, however I might possess a warm heart, and inoffensive manners (which last, by the by, was rather more than I could well boast), still, more than these passive qualities, there was something to be *done*. When all my schoolfellows and youthful compeers were striking off, with eager hope and earnest intent, on some one or other of the many paths of busy life, I was 'standing idle in the market-place,' or only left the chase of the butterfly from flower to flower, to hunt fancy from whim to whim. You see, sir, that if to *know* one's errors, were a probability of *mending* them, I stand a fair chance; but, according to the reverend Westminster divines, though conviction must precede conversion, it is very far from always implying it."

In the midst of all the distresses of this period of suspense, Burns found time, as he tells Mr. Aiken, for some "vagaries of the Muse;" and one or two of these may deserve to be noticed here, as throwing light on his personal demeanour during this first summer of his fame. The poems appeared in July, and one of the first persons of superior condition (Gilbert, indeed, says *the* first) who courted his acquaintance in consequence of having read them, was Mrs. Stewart of Stair, a beautiful and accomplished lady. Burns presented her on this occasion with some MS. songs; and among the rest, with one in which her own charms were celebrated, in that warm strain of compliment which our poet seems to have all along considered the most proper to be used whenever fair lady was to be addressed in rhyme.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

* * * * * * * *

How pleasant thy banks and green valleys below,
Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow—
There oft, as mild evening sweeps over the lea,
The sweet-scented birk shades my Mary and me.[1]

[1] [On this occasion the poet sent a parcel of "songs,

It was in the spring of the same year, that he had happened, in the course of an evening ramble on the banks of the Ayr, to meet with a young and lovely unmarried lady, of the family of Alexander of Ballochmyle; and now (Sept. 1786), emboldened, we are to suppose, by the reception his volume had met with, he inclosed to her some verses, which he had written in commemoration of that passing glimpse of her beauty, and conceived in a strain of luxurious fervour, which certainly, coming from a man of Burns's station and character, must have sounded very strangely in a delicate maiden's ear.

Oh, had she been a country maid,
And I the happy country swain,
Though sheltered in the lowest shed,
That ever rose on Scotia's plain!
Through weary winter's wind and rain,
With joy, with rapture, I would toil,
And nightly to my bosom strain
The bonny lass of Ballochmyle.

Burns is said by Allan Cunningham to have resented bitterly the silence in which Miss Alexander received this tribute to her charms. I suppose we may account for his over-tenderness to young ladies in pretty much the same way that Professor Dugald Stewart does, in the letter above quoted, for "a certain want of gentleness" in his method of addressing persons of his own sex. His rustic experience among the fair could have had no tendency to whisper the lesson of reserve.

The autumn of this eventful year was drawing to a close, and Burns, who had already lingered three months in the hope which he now considered vain, of an excise appointment, perceived that another year must be lost altogether, unless he made up his mind, and secured his passage to the West Indies. The Kilmarnock edition of his poems was, however, nearly exhausted; and his friends encouraged him to produce another at the same place, with the view of equipping himself the better for his voyage. But "Wee Johnnie"[1] would not undertake the new impression, unless Burns advanced the price of the paper required for it; and with this demand the poet had no means of complying. Mr. Ballantine, the chief magistrate of Ayr (the same gentleman to whom the poem on the "Twa Brigs of Ayr" was afterwards inscribed), offered to furnish the money; and probably his kind offer would have been accepted; but ere this matter could be arranged, the prospects of the poet were, in a very unexpected manner, altered and improved.

Burns went to pay a parting visit to Dr. Lawrie, minister of Loudoun, a gentleman from whom and his accomplished family he had previously received many kind attentions. After taking farewell of this benevolent circle, the poet proceeded, as the night was setting in, "to convey his chest," as he says, "so far on the road to Greenock, where he was to embark in a few days for America." And it was under these circumstances that he composed the song already referred to, which he meant as his farewell dirge to his native land, and which ends thus:[2]—

Farewell, old Coila's hills and dales,
Her heathy moors and winding vales,
The scenes where wretched fancy roves,
Pursuing past unhappy loves.
Farewell, my friends! farewell, my foes!
My peace with these—my love with those—
The bursting tears my heart declare,
Farewell, the bonny banks of Ayr.

Dr. Lawrie had given Burns much good counsel, and what comfort he could, at parting, but prudently said nothing of an effort which he had previously made in his behalf. He had sent a copy of the poems, with a sketch of the author's history, to his friend Dr. Thomas Blacklock of Edinburgh, with a

&c.," in all eight separate pieces to Mrs. Stewart, but "Afton Water" was not one of them. That song was not written for several years after, and it was in 1791 that she received a copy of it along with a dozen others now deposited in the monument at Alloway. Mrs. Stewart has as little claim to be considered the heroine of the song as she had to the beauty which Lockhart credits her with.]

[1] [John Wilson, the printer, was for long considered the subject of the epitaph "On Wee Johnnie," but the real hero was an ill-conditioned cow-feeder at Mauchline, who had given Burns some annoyance.]

[2] [Burns appears to have given a slightly different version of the circumstances under which this poem was composed to Professor Walker, who met him at breakfast in Dr. Blacklock's. Instead of proceeding with his chest "so far on the road to Greenock," he left Dr. Lawrie's *on his way home* across a wide stretch of solitary moor (Galston Moor). He goes on to describe how the weather added discomfort of body to cheerlessness of mind, and under these circumstances the poem was composed.]

request that he would introduce both to the notice of those persons whose literary opinions were at the time most listened to in Scotland, in the hope that, by their intervention, Burns might yet be rescued from the necessity of expatriating himself. Dr. Blacklock's answer reached Dr. Lawrie a day or two after Burns had made his visit, and composed his dirge; and it was not yet too late. Lawrie forwarded it immediately to Gavin Hamilton, who carried it to Burns. It is as follows:—

[Edinburgh, Sept. 4, 1786.]

"I ought to have acknowledged your favour long ago, not only as a testimony of your kind remembrance, but as it gave me an opportunity of sharing one of the finest, and perhaps one of the most genuine entertainments of which the human mind is susceptible. A number of avocations retarded my progress in reading the poems; at last, however, I have finished that pleasing perusal. Many instances have I seen of Nature's force or beneficence exerted under numerous and formidable disadvantages; but none equal to that with which you have been kind enough to present me. There is a pathos and delicacy in his serious poems, a vein of wit and humour in those of a more festive turn, which cannot be too much admired, nor too warmly approved; and I think I shall never open the book without feeling my astonishment renewed and increased. It was my wish to have expressed my approbation in verse; but whether from declining life, or a temporary depression of spirits, it is at present out of my power to accomplish that intention.

"Mr. Stewart, Professor of Morals in this University, had formerly read me three of the poems, and I had desired him to get my name inserted among the subscribers; but whether this was done, or not, I never could learn. I have little intercourse with Dr. Blair, but will take care to have the poems communicated to him by the intervention of some mutual friend. It has been told me by a gentleman, to whom I showed the performances, and who sought a copy with diligence and ardour, that the whole impression is already exhausted. It were, therefore, much to be wished, for the sake of the young man, that a second edition, more numerous than the former, could immediately be printed; as it appears certain that its intrinsic merit, and the exertion of the author's friends, might give it a more universal circulation than anything of the kind which has been published in my memory."

We have already seen with what surprise and delight Burns read this generous letter. Although he had ere this conversed with more than one person of established literary reputation, and received from them attentions, of which he was ever after grateful,—the despondency of his spirits appears to have remained as dark as ever, up to the very hour when his landlord produced Dr. Blacklock's letter; and one may be pardoned for fancying, that in his "Vision," he has himself furnished no unfaithful representation of the manner in which he was spending what he looked on as one of the last nights, if not the very last, he was to pass at Mossgiel, when the friendly Hamilton unexpectedly entered the melancholy dwelling.

There, lanely, by the ingle-cheek — chimney-corner
I sat, and eyed the spewing reek, — smoke
That fill'd, wi' hoast-provoking smeek, — cough- smoke
The auld clay-biggin', — -building
And heard the restless rattans squeak — rats
About the riggin'. — roof

All in this mottie mistie clime, — dusty
I backward mused on wasted time,
How I had spent my youthfu' prime,
An' done nae thing,
But stringin' blethers up in rhyme — nonsense
For fools to sing.

Had I to gude advice but harkit,
I might by this hae led a market,
Or strutted in a bank an' clarkit
My cash account.
While here, half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit, — -shirted
Is a' the amount.

"Dr. Blacklock," says Burns, "belonged to a set of critics, for whose *applause* I had not *dared to hope*. His opinion that I would meet with encouragement in Edinburgh, fired me so much, that away I posted for that city, 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."[1]

[1] Letter to Moore. [By this one would naturally imagine that Burns set out for Edinburgh at once on seeing Dr. Blacklock's letter, but the fact is he did not leave Ayrshire till some two months later. It is not quite correct that he had no acquaintance in

Two of the biographers of Burns have had the advantage of speaking from personal knowledge of the excellent man whose interposition was thus serviceable. "It was a fortunate circumstance," says Walker, "that the person whom Dr. Lawrie applied to, merely because he was the only one of his literary acquaintances with whom he chose to use that freedom, happened also to be the person best qualified to render the application successful. Dr. Blacklock was an enthusiast in his admiration of an art which he had practised himself with applause. He felt the claims of a poet with a paternal sympathy, and he had in his constitution a tenderness and sensibility that would have engaged his beneficence for a youth in the circumstances of Burns, even though he had not been indebted to him for the delight which he received from his works; for if the young men were enumerated whom he drew from obscurity, and enabled by education to advance themselves in life, the catalogue would naturally excite surprise. . . . He was not of a disposition to discourage with feeble praise, and to shift off the trouble of future patronage, by bidding him relinquish poetry, and mind his plough."[1]

"There was never, perhaps," thus speaks the unfortunate Heron, whose own unmerited sorrows and sufferings would not have left so dark a stain on the literary history of Scotland, had the kind spirit of Blacklock been common among his lettered countrymen[2]—"There was never, perhaps, one among all mankind whom you might more truly have called *an angel upon earth*, than Dr. Blacklock. He was guileless and innocent as a child, yet endowed with manly sagacity and penetration. His heart was a perpetual spring of benignity. His feelings were all tremblingly alive to the sense of the sublime, the beautiful, the tender, the pious, the virtuous. Poetry was to him the dear solace of perpetual blindness."

Such was the amiable old man, whose life Mackenzie has written, and on whom Johnson "looked with reverence."[3] The writings of Blacklock are forgotten (though some of his songs in the *Museum* deserve another fate), but the memory of his virtues will not pass away until mankind shall have ceased to sympathize with the fortunes of Genius, and to appreciate the poetry of Burns.

[All thoughts of the West Indies seem now to have been given up by Burns. Indeed, one cannot help thinking that while talking and writing of his coming exile he had always hopes of something turning up to render it unnecessary. Certain it is that a place in the excise had been occupying his thoughts for some time, and we find that the furtherance of the excise scheme was a motive perhaps equally strong with the proposed publication of a second edition of his poems in attracting him to Edinburgh. In a letter he received from Sir John Whitefoord within a week of his arrival in the capital, occurs the following passage:—"I have been told you wish to be made a gauger; I submit it to your consideration, whether it would not be more desirable, if a sum could be raised by subscription for a second edition of your poems, to lay it out in the stocking of a small farm. I am persuaded it would be a line of life much more agreeable to your feelings, and in the end more satisfactory." By Currie it was represented that Burns trudged to Edinburgh on foot; but Gilbert expressly stated that he rode on a pony borrowed from a friend, and sent back by another friend returning to Ayrshire.]

[Gilbert Burns has given the following account of friends whom Burns's character and genius procured him before he left Ayrshire or attracted the notice of the world:—

"The farm of Mossgiel, at the time of our coming to it (Martinmas, 1783), was the property of the Earl of Loudoun, but was held in tack by Mr. Gavin Hamilton, writer in Mauchline, from whom we had our bargain; who had thus an opportunity of knowing, and showing a sincere regard for my brother,

Edinburgh; he had for one, an intimate friend there, John Richmond, an Ayrshire companion, whose lodgings he shared in the capital.]

[1] Morison, vol. i. p. ix.

[2] [Some facts as to Heron are given in note, p. 31. He seems to have been chiefly the author of his own misfortunes.]

[3] "This morning I saw at breakfast Dr. Blacklock the blind poet, who does not remember to have seen light, and is read to by a poor scholar in Latin, Greek, and French. He was originally a poor scholar himself. I looked on him with reverence."—Letter to Mrs. Thrale, Edinburgh, August 17, 1773.

before he knew that he was a poet. The poet's estimation of him, and the strong outlines of his character, may be collected from the dedication to this gentleman. When the publication was begun, Mr. H. entered very warmly into its interests, and promoted the subscription very extensively. Mr. Robert Aiken, writer in Ayr, is a man of worth and taste, of warm affections, and connected with a most respectable circle of friends and relations. It is to this gentleman the 'Cottar's Saturday Night' is inscribed. The poems of my brother, which I have formerly mentioned, no sooner came into his hands, than they were quickly known, and well received in the extensive circle of Mr. Aiken's friends, which gave them a sort of currency, necessary in this wise world, even for the good reception of things valuable in themselves. But Mr. Aiken not only admired the poet; as soon as he became acquainted with him, he showed the warmest regard for the man, and did everything in his power to forward his interest and respectability. The 'Epistle to a Young Friend' was addressed to this gentleman's son, Mr. A. H. Aiken, now of Liverpool. He was the oldest of a young family, who were taught to receive my brother with respect, as a man of genius and their father's friend.

"The 'Brigs of Ayr' is inscribed to John Ballantine, Esq., banker in Ayr; one of those gentlemen to whom my brother was introduced by Mr. Aiken. He interested himself very warmly in my brother's concerns, and constantly showed the greatest friendship and attachment to him. When the Kilmarnock edition was all sold off, and a considerable demand pointed out the propriety of publishing a second edition, Mr. Wilson, who had printed the first, was asked if he would print the second, and take his chance of being paid from the first sale. This he declined, and when this came to Mr. Ballantine's knowledge, he generously offered to accommodate Robert with what money he might need for that purpose; but advised him to go to Edinburgh, as the fittest place for publishing. When he did go to Edinburgh, his friends advised him to publish again by subscription, so that he did not need to accept this offer. Mr. William Parker, merchant in Kilmarnock, was a subscriber for thirty-five copies of the Kilmarnock edition. This may perhaps appear not deserving of notice here; but if the comparative obscurity of the poet, at this period, be taken into consideration, it appears to me a greater effort of generosity, than many things which appear more brilliant in my brother's future history.

"Mr. Robert Muir, merchant in Kilmarnock, was one of those friends Robert's poetry had procured him, and one who was dear to his heart. This gentleman had no very great fortune, or long line of dignified ancestry; but what Robert says of Captain Matthew Henderson, might be said of him with great propriety, that 'he held the patent of his honours immediately from Almighty God.' Nature had indeed marked him a gentleman in the most legible characters. He died while yet a young man, soon after the publication of my brother's first Edinburgh edition. Sir William Cunningham of Robertland paid a very flattering attention, and showed a good deal of friendship for the poet. Before his going to Edinburgh, as well as after, Robert seemed peculiarly pleased with Professor Stewart's friendship and conversation.

"But of all the friendships which Robert acquired in Ayrshire and elsewhere, none seemed more agreeable to him than that of Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop; nor any which has been more uniformly and constantly exerted in behalf of him and his family, of which, were it proper, I could give many instances. Robert was on the point of setting out for Edinburgh before Mrs. Dunlop had heard of him. About the time of my brother's publishing in Kilmarnock, she had been afflicted with a long and severe illness, which had reduced her mind to the most distressing state of depression. In this situation, a copy of the printed poems was laid on her table by a friend; and happening to open on the 'Cottar's Saturday Night,' she read it over with the greatest pleasure and surprise; the poet's description of the simple cottagers operating on her mind like the charm of a powerful exorcist, expelling the demon *ennui*, and restoring her to her wonted inward harmony and satisfaction.—Mrs. Dunlop sent off a person express to Mossgiel, distant fifteen or sixteen miles, with a very obliging letter to my brother, desiring him to send her half a dozen copies of his poems, if he had them to spare, and

begging he would do her the pleasure of calling at Dunlop House as soon as convenient. This was the beginning of a correspondence which ended only with the poet's life. The last use he made of his pen was writing a short letter to this lady a few days before his death."]

CHAPTER V.

[Arrival in Edinburgh:—introduction to the gentry and literati of the capital:—Mackenzie's notice of Burns's poems:—masonry:—notes on Burns in Edinburgh, by Dugald Stewart, Prof. Walker, and Sir Walter Scott:—Scottish literature:—Burns and the Edinburgh philosophers:—diary:—new connections formed in Edinburgh:—conversational powers:—Burns and Dr. Blair:—sarcastic and malapropos remarks:—Edinburgh lawyers:—tavern-life:—William Nicol:—letters:—publication of second edition of poems:—erects tombstone to Fergusson:—leaves Edinburgh.]

> Edina! Scotia's darling seat!
> All hail thy palaces and towers,
> Where once beneath a monarch's feet
> Sat legislation's sovereign powers;
> From marking wildly-scatter'd flow'rs,
> As on the banks of Ayr I stray'd,
> And singing, lone, the lingering hours,
> I shelter'd in thy honour'd shade.

There is an old Scottish ballad which begins thus:—

> As I came in by Glenap,
> I met an aged woman,
> And she bade me cheer up my heart,
> For the best of my days was coming.

This stanza was one of Burns's favourite quotations; and he told a friend[1] many years afterwards, that he remembered humming it to himself, over and over, on his way from Mossgiel to Edinburgh. Perhaps the excellent Blacklock might not have been particularly flattered with the circumstance had it reached his ears.

Although he repaired to the capital with such alertness, solely [as he has represented] in consequence of Blacklock's letter to Lawrie, it appears that he allowed some weeks to pass ere he presented himself to the doctor's personal notice.[2] He found several of his old Ayrshire acquaintances established in Edinburgh, and, I suppose, felt himself constrained to give himself up for a brief space to their society. He printed, however, without delay, a prospectus of a second edition of his poems, and being introduced by Mr. Dalrymple of Orangefield to the Earl of Glencairn, that amiable nobleman easily persuaded Creech, then the chief bookseller in Edinburgh (who had attended his son as travelling-tutor), to undertake the publication. The honourable Henry Erskine, Dean of the Faculty of Advocates, the most agreeable of companions and the most benignant of wits, took him also, as the poet expresses it, "under his wing." The kind Blacklock received him with all the warmth of paternal affection when he did wait on him, and introduced him to Dr. Blair and other eminent *literati;* his subscription lists were soon filled; Lord Glencairn made interest with the Caledonian Hunt (an association of the most distinguished members of the northern aristocracy), to accept the dedication of the forthcoming edition, and to subscribe individually for copies.[3] Several noblemen, especially of the west of Scotland, came forward with subscription moneys considerably beyond the usual rate. In so small a capital, where everybody knows everybody, that which becomes a favourite topic in one circle of society, soon excites an universal interest; and before Burns had been a fortnight in Edinburgh, we find him writing to his earliest patron, Gavin Hamilton, in these terms:—"For my own affairs, I am in a fair way of becoming as eminent as Thomas à Kempis or John Bunyan; and you may expect henceforth to see my birthday inscribed among the wonderful

[1] David Maculloch, Esq., brother to the Laird of Ardwell.

[2] Burns reached Edinburgh before the end of November; and yet Dr. Lawrie's letter admonishing him to wait on Blacklock is dated December 22.

[3] [Burns wrote to some of his Ayrshire friends to the effect that the Caledonian Hunt had one and all subscribed for his volume, and that moreover they were to pay one guinea each for it. 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."]

events in the Poor Robin and Aberdeen Almanacks, along with the Black Monday and the Battle of Bothwell Bridge."

It will ever be remembered, to the honour of the man who at that period held the highest place in the imaginative literature of Scotland, that he was the first who came forward to avow in print his admiration of the genius and his warm interest in the fortunes of the poet. Distinguished as his own writings are by the refinements of classical arts, Mr. Henry Mackenzie was, fortunately for Burns, a man of liberal genius as well as polished taste; and he, in whose own pages some of the best models of elaborate elegance will ever be recognized, was among the first to feel and the first to stake his own reputation on the public avowal, that the Ayrshire ploughman belonged to the order of beings whose privilege it is to snatch graces "beyond the reach of art." It is but a melancholy business to trace among the records of literary history, the manner in which most great original geniuses have been greeted on their first appeals to the world, by the contemporary arbiters of taste; coldly and timidly, indeed, have the sympathies of professional criticism flowed on most such occasions in past times and in the present, but the reception of Burns was worthy of the "Man of Feeling." After alluding to the provincial circulation and reputation of his poems,[1] "I hope," said the *Lounger*, "I shall not be thought to assume too much, if I endeavour to place him in a higher point of view, to call for a verdict of his country on the merits of his works, and to claim for him those honours which their excellence appears to deserve. In mentioning the circumstance of his humble station, I mean not to rest his pretensions solely on that title, or to urge the merits of his poetry, when considered in relation to the lowness of his birth, and the little opportunity of improvement which his education could afford. These particulars, indeed, must excite our wonder at his productions; but his poetry, considered abstractedly, and without the apologies arising from his situation, seems to me fully entitled to command our feelings, and to obtain our applause." . . . After quoting various passages, in some of which his readers "must discover a high tone of feeling, and power, and energy of expression, particularly and strongly characteristic of the mind and the voice of the poet," and others as showing "the power of genius, not less admirable in tracing the manners, than in painting the passions, or in drawing the scenery of nature," and "with what uncommon penetration and sagacity this Heaven-taught ploughman, from his humble and unlettered condition, had looked on men and manners," the critic concluded with an eloquent appeal in behalf of the poet personally: "To repair," said he, "the wrongs of suffering or neglected merit; to call forth genius from the obscurity in which it had pined indignant, and place it where it may profit or delight the world—these are exertions which give to wealth an enviable superiority, to greatness and to patronage a laudable pride."

We all know how the serious part of this appeal was ultimately attended to; but, in the meantime, whatever gratifications such a mind as his could derive from the blandishments of the fair, the condescension of the noble, and the flattery of the learned, were plentifully administered to "the lion" of the season.

"I was, sir," thus wrote Burns to one of his Ayrshire patrons,[2] a few days after the *Lounger* appeared—"I was, when first honoured with your notice, too obscure; now I tremble lest I should be ruined by being dragged too suddenly into the glare of polite and learned observation;" and he concludes the same letter with an ominous prayer for "better health and more spirits."

Two or three weeks later, we find him writing as follows:—"(January 14, 1787.) I went to a Mason Lodge [St. Andrew's] yesternight, where the M. W. Grand Master Charteris and all the Grand Lodge of Scotland visited. The meeting was numerous and elegant: all the different lodges about town were present in all their pomp. The Grand Master, who presided with great solemnity, among other general toasts gave 'Caledonia and Caledonia's bard, Brother B——,' which rung through the whole assembly with multiplied honours and repeated acclamations. As I had no idea such a thing would happen, I was downright thunderstruck; and trembling in every nerve,

[1] The *Lounger* for Saturday, December 9, 1786.

[2] Letter to John Ballantine, Banker, Ayr, 13th December, 1786.

made the best return in my power. Just as I had finished, one of the grand officers said, so loud that I could hear, with a most comforting accent, 'Very well, indeed,' which set me something to rights again."

And a few weeks later still, he is thus addressed by one of his old associates who was meditating a visit to Edinburgh:—"By all accounts, it will be a difficult matter to get a sight of you at all, unless your company is bespoke a week beforehand. There are great rumours here of your intimacy with the Duchess of Gordon, and other ladies of distinction. I am really told that

Cards to invite, fly by thousands each night;

and if you had one, there would also, I suppose, be 'bribes for your old secretary.' I observe you are resolved to make hay while the sun shines, and avoid, if possible, the fate of poor Fergusson. *Quærenda pecunia primum est—Virtus post nummos*, is a good maxim to thrive by. You seemed to despise it while in this country; but, probably, some philosophers in Edinburgh have taught you better sense."[1]

In this proud career, however, the popular idol needed no slave to whisper whence he had risen, and whither he was to return in the ebb of the spring-tide of fortune. His "prophetic soul" was probably furnished with a sufficient memento every night—when, from the soft homage of glittering saloons, or the tumultuous applause of convivial assemblies, he made his retreat to the humble garret of a *writer's* apprentice, a native of Mauchline, and as poor as himself, whose only bed "Caledonia's Bard" was fain to partake throughout this triumphant winter.[2]

He bore all his honours in a manner worthy of himself; and of this the testimonies are so numerous, that the only difficulty is that of selection. "The attentions he received," says Mr. Dugald Stewart, "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."

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

"He was plainly, but properly dressed, in a style midway between the holiday costume of a farmer, and that of the company with which he now associated. His black hair, without powder, at a time when it was very generally worn, was tied behind, and spread

[1] [This old associate was Peter Stuart, the editor of the *London Evening Star*, to which paper Burns sent the "New Psalm." He was originally from Edinburgh, and had been resident in Ayrshire. Referring to him Burns, writing to Mrs. Dunlop, says:—"You must know that the publisher of one of the most blasphemous party London newspapers is an acquaintance of mine, and, as I am a little tinctured with the 'Buff and Blue' myself, I now and then help him to a stanza."]

[2] "Mr. Richmond of Mauchline told me that Burns spent the first winter of his residence in Edinburgh in his lodgings. They slept in the same bed, and had only one room, for which they paid three shillings a week. It was in the house of a Mrs. Carfrae, Baxter's Close, Lawnmarket, first scale-stair on the left hand in going down, first door in the stair."—*Cromek's MSS.* [What is described in the text as "a humble garret" was not the dingy apartment which might be inferred; it was a large and well-proportioned room, on the first floor of the house, neatly panelled with wood, according to a fashion by no means very antiquated then.]

upon his forehead. Upon the whole, from his person, physiognomy, and dress, had I met him near a seaport, and been required to guess his condition, I should have probably conjectured him to be the master of a merchant vessel of the most respectable class.

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

"In conversation he was powerful. His conceptions and expressions were of corresponding vigour, and on all subjects were as remote as possible from commonplace. Though somewhat authoritative, it was in a way which gave little offence, and was readily imputed to his inexperience in those modes of soothing dissent and softening assertion, which are important characteristics of polished manners. After breakfast I requested him to communicate some of his unpublished pieces, and he recited his farewell song to the 'Banks of Ayr,' introducing it with a description of the circumstances in which it was composed, more striking than the poem itself.

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

"The day after my first introduction to Burns, I supped in company with him at Dr. Blair's. The other guests were very few; and as each had been invited chiefly to have an opportunity of meeting with the poet, the doctor endeavoured to draw him out, and to make him the central figure of the group. Though he therefore furnished the greatest proportion of the conversation, he did no more than what he saw evidently was expected."[1]

To these reminiscences I shall now add those of one who is likely to be heard unwillingly on no subject; and—young as he was in 1786—on few subjects, I think, with greater interest than the personal appearance and conversation of Robert Burns. The following is an extract from a letter of Sir Walter Scott:—

"As for Burns, I may truly say, *Virgilium vidi tantum.* I was a lad of fifteen in 1786–7, when he came first to Edinburgh, but had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in his poetry, and would have given the world to know him; but I had very little acquaintance with any literary people, and less with the gentry of the west country, the two sets that he most frequented. Mr. Thomas Grierson was at that time a clerk of my father's. He knew Burns, and promised to ask him to his lodgings to dinner, but had no opportunity to keep his word, otherwise I might have seen more of this distinguished man. As it was, I saw him one day at the late venerable Professor Ferguson's, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom I remember the celebrated Mr. Dugald Stewart. Of course we youngsters sate silent, looked, and listened. The only thing I remember which was remarkable in Burns's manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of Bunbury's, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on one side—on the other, his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath:—

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

"Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were, and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they

[1] Morison's *Burns*, vol. i. pp. lxxi. lxxii.

occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's, called by the unpromising title of the 'Justice of Peace.' I whispered my information to a friend present, who mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word, which, though of mere civility, I then received, and still recollect, with very great pleasure.

"His person was strong and robust; his manners rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect, perhaps, from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are represented in Mr. Nasmyth's picture, but to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished, as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I would have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school, *i.e.* none of your modern agriculturists, who keep labourers for their drudgery, but the *douce gudeman* who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, which glowed (I say literally *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted, nor did I ever see him again, except in the street, where he did not recognize me, as I could not expect he should. He was much caressed in Edinburgh, but (considering what literary emoluments have been since his day) the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling.

"I remember on this occasion I mention, I thought Burns's acquaintance with English poetry was rather limited, and also, that having twenty times the abilities of Allan Ramsay and of Fergusson, he talked of them with too much humility, as his models; there was, doubtless, national predilection in his estimate.

"This is all I can tell you about Burns. I have only to add that his dress corresponded with his manner. He was like a farmer dressed in his best to dine with the Laird. I do not speak *in malam partem*, when I say, I never saw a man in company with his superiors in station and information, more perfectly free from either the reality or the affectation of embarrassment. I was told, but did not observe it, that his address to females was extremely deferential, and always with a turn either to the pathetic or humorous, which engaged their attention particularly. I have heard the late Duchess of Gordon remark this. I do not know anything I can add to these recollections of forty years since."[1]

Darkly as the career of Burns was destined to terminate, there can be no doubt that he made his first appearance at a period highly favourable for his reception as a British, and especially as a Scottish poet. Nearly forty years had elapsed since the death of Thomson; Collins, Gray, Goldsmith, had successively disappeared; Dr. Johnson had belied the rich promise of his early appearance, and confined himself to prose, and Cowper had hardy begun to be recognized as having any considerable pretensions to fill the long-vacant throne in England. At home—without derogation from the merits either of "Douglas" or the "Minstrel," be it said—men must have gone back at least three centuries to find a Scottish poet at all entitled to be considered as of that high order to which the generous criticism of Mackenzie at once admitted "the Ayrshire Ploughman." Of the form and garb of his composition, much unquestionably and avowedly was derived from his more immediate predecessors, Ramsay and Fergusson; but there was a bold mastery of hand in his picturesque descriptions, to produce anything equal to

[1] [That Burns's personal appearance was one to attract attention we have ample record. It is recorded in Cockburn's *Life of Jeffrey* that "one day, in the winter of 1786-87, Jeffrey was standing on the High Street, staring at a man whose appearance struck him; a person standing at a shop door tapped him on the shoulder, and said, 'Aye, laddie! ye may weel look at that man! That's Robert Burns.' He never saw Burns again."]

which it was necessary to recall the days of "Christ's Kirk on the Green," and "Peebles to the Play:" and in his more solemn pieces, a depth of inspiration, and a massive energy of language, to which the dialect of his country had been a stranger, at least since "Dunbar the Mackar." The muses of Scotland have never indeed been silent; and the ancient minstrelsy of the land, of which a slender portion had as yet been committed to the safeguard of the press, was handed from generation to generation, and preserved, in many a fragment, faithful images of the peculiar tenderness, and peculiar humour, of the national fancy and character—precious representations, which Burns himself never surpassed in his happiest efforts. But these were fragments; and, with a scanty handful of exceptions, the best of them, at least of the serious kind, were very ancient. Among the numberless effusions of the Jacobite Muse, valuable as we now consider them for the record of manners and events, it would be difficult to point out half a dozen strains, worthy, for poetical excellence alone, of a place among the old chivalrous ballads of the Southern, or even of the Highland Border. Generations had passed away since any Scottish poet had appealed to the sympathies of his countrymen in a lofty Scottish strain.

The dialect itself had been hardly dealt with. "It is my opinion," said Dr. Geddes, "that those who, for almost a century past, have written in Scotch, Allan Ramsay not excepted, have not duly discriminated the genuine idiom from its vulgarisms. They seem to have acted a similar part to certain pretended imitators of Spenser and Milton, who fondly imagine that they are copying from those great models, when they only mimic their antique mode of spelling, their obsolete terms, and their irregular constructions." And although I cannot well guess what the doctor considered as the irregular constructions of Milton, there can be no doubt of the general justice of his observations. Ramsay and Fergusson were both men of humble condition, the latter of the meanest, the former of no very elegant habits; and the dialect which had once pleased the ears of kings, who themselves did not disdain to display its powers and elegancies in verse, did not come untarnished through their hands. Fergusson, who was entirely town-bred, smells more of the Cowgate than of the country; and pleasing as Ramsay's rustics are, he appears rather to have observed the surface of rural manners, in casual excursions to Penycuik and the Hunter's Tryste, than to have expressed the results of intimate knowledge and sympathy. His dialect was a somewhat incongruous mixture of the Upper Ward of Lanarkshire and the Luckenbooths; and he could neither write English verses, nor engraft English phraseology on his Scotch, without betraying a lamentable want of skill in the use of his instruments. It was reserved for Burns to interpret the inmost soul of the Scottish peasant in all its moods, and in verse exquisitely and intensely Scottish, without degrading either his sentiments or his language with one touch of vulgarity. Such is the delicacy of native taste, and the power of a truly masculine genius.

This is the more remarkable, when we consider that the dialect of Burns's native district is, in all mouths but his own, a peculiarly offensive one—far removed from that of the favoured districts in which the ancient minstrelsy appears, with rare exceptions, to have been produced. Even in the elder days, it seems to have been proverbial for its coarseness:[1] and the Covenanters were not likely to mend it. The few poets[2] whom the West of Scotland had produced in the old time, were all men of high condition; and who, of course, used the language, not of their own villages, but of Holyrood. Their productions, moreover, in so far as they have been produced, had nothing to do with the peculiar character and feelings of the men of the West. As Burns himself has said,—"It is somewhat singular, that in Lanark, Renfrew, Ayr, &c., there is scarcely an old song or tune, which, from the title, &c., can be guessed to belong to, or be the production of, those counties."

The history of Scottish literature, from the

[1] Dunbar, among other sarcasms on his antagonist Kennedy, says:—

> I haif on me a pair of Lothiane hipps
> Sall fairer Inglis mak, and mair perfyte,
> Than thou can blabber with thy Carrick lipps.

[2] Such as Kennedy, Shaw, Montgomery, and, more lately, Hamilton of Gilbertfield,

> Who bade the brakes of Airdrie long resound
> The plaintive dirge that mourn'd his favourite hound.

union of the crowns to that of the kingdoms, has not yet been made the subject of any separate work at all worthy of its importance; nay, however much we are indebted to the learned labours of Pinkerton, Irving, and others, enough of the *general* obscurity of which Warton complained still continues, to the no small discredit of so accomplished a nation. But how miserably the *literature* of the country was affected by the loss of the court under whose immediate patronage it had, in almost all preceding times, found a measure of protection that will ever do honour to the memory of the unfortunate house of Stuart, appears to be indicated with sufficient plainness in the single fact, that no man can point out any Scottish author of the first rank in all the long period which intervened between Buchanan and Hume. The removal of the chief nobility and gentry, consequent on the legislative union, appeared to destroy our last hopes as a separate nation, possessing a separate literature of our own; nay, for a time to have all but extinguished the flame of intellectual exertion and ambition. Long torn and harassed by religious and political feuds, this people had at last heard, as many believed, the sentence of irremediable degradation pronounced by the lips of their own prince and parliament. The universal spirit of Scotland was humbled; the unhappy insurrections of 1715 and 1745, revealed the full extent of her internal disunion; and England took, in some respects, merciless advantage of the fallen.

Time, however, passed on; and Scotland, recovering at last from the blow which had stunned her energies, began to vindicate her pretensions, in the only departments which had been left open to her, with a zeal and a success which will ever distinguish one of the brightest pages of her history. Deprived of every national honour and distinction which it was possible to remove—all the high branches of external ambition lopped off—sunk at last, as men thought, effectually into a province, willing to take law with passive submission, in letters as well as polity, from her powerful sister—the old kingdom revived suddenly from her stupor, and once more asserted her name in reclamations, which England was compelled not only to hear, but to applaud, and "wherewith all Europe rung from side to side," at the moment when a national poet came forward to profit by the reflux of a thousand half-forgotten sympathies—amidst the full joy of a national pride, revived and re-established beyond the dream of hope.

It will always reflect honour on the galaxy of eminent men of letters, who, in their various departments, shed lustre at that period on the name of Scotland, that they suffered no pedantic prejudices to interfere with their reception of Burns. Had he not appeared personally among them, it may be reasonably doubted whether this would have been so. They were men, generally speaking, of very social habits; living together in a small capital, nay, almost all of them in or about one street; maintaining friendly intercourse continually; not a few of them considerably addicted to the pleasures which have been called, by way of excellence I presume, convivial. Burns's poetry might have procured him access to these circles; but it was the extraordinary resources he displayed in conversation, the strong vigorous sagacity of his observations on life and manners, the splendour of his wit, and the glowing energy of his eloquence when his feelings were stirred, that made him the object of serious admiration among those practised masters of the art of *talk*. There were several of them who probably adopted in their hearts the opinion of Newton, that "poetry is ingenious nonsense." Adam Smith, for one, could have had no very ready respect at the service of such an unproductive labourer as a maker of Scottish ballads; but the stateliest of these philosophers had enough to do to maintain the attitude of equality when brought into personal contact with Burns's gigantic understanding; and every one of them, whose impressions on the subject have been recorded, agrees in pronouncing his conversation to have been the most remarkable thing about him.

And yet it is amusing enough to trace the lingering reluctance of some of those polished scholars, about admitting, even to themselves, in his absence, what it is certain they all felt sufficiently when they were actually in his presence. It is difficult, for example, to read without a smile that letter of Mr. Dugald Stewart, in which he describes himself and Mr. Alison as being surprised to discover that Burns, after reading the latter author's elegant

Essay on Taste, had really been able to form some shrewd enough notion of the general principles of the association of *ideas*.

Burns would probably have been more satisfied with himself in these learned societies, had he been less addicted to giving free utterance in conversation to the very feelings which formed the noblest inspirations of his poetry. His sensibility was as tremblingly exquisite as his sense was masculine and solid; and he seems to have, ere long, suspected that the professional metaphysicians who applauded his rapturous bursts, surveyed them in reality with something of the same feeling which may be supposed to attend a skilful surgeon's inspection of a curious specimen of morbid anatomy. Why should he lay his inmost heart thus open to dissectors, who took special care to keep the knife from their own breasts? The secret blush that overspread his haughty countenance when such suggestions occurred to him in his solitary hours, may be traced in the opening lines of a diary which he began to keep ere he had been long in Edinburgh.

"April 9, 1787. As I have seen a good deal of human life in Edinburgh, a great many characters which are new to one bred up in the shades of life as I have been, I am determined to take down my remarks on the spot. Gray observes, in a letter to Mr Palgrave, that, 'half a word fixed, upon or near the spot, is worth a cartload of recollection.' I don't know how it is with the world in general, but with me, making my remarks is by no means a solitary pleasure. I want some one to laugh with me, some one to be grave with me, some one to please me and help my discrimination, with his or her own remark, and at times, no doubt, to admire my acuteness and penetration. The world is so busied with selfish pursuits, ambition, vanity, interest, or pleasure, that very few think it worth their while to make any observation on what passes around them, except where that observation is a sucker, or branch of the darling plant they are rearing in their fancy. Nor am I sure, notwithstanding all the *sentimental flights of novel writers* and *the sage philosophy of moralists*, whether we are capable of so intimate and cordial a coalition of friendship, *as that one man may pour out his bosom, his every thought and floating fancy, his very inmost soul, with unreserved confidence, to another, without hazard of losing part of that respect which man deserves from man*; or, from the unavoidable imperfections attending human nature, of one day repenting his confidence.

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

And the same lurking thorn of suspicion peeps out elsewhere in this complaint: "I know not how it is; I find I can win *liking*—but not *respect*."[1]

"Burns," says a great living poet, in commenting on the free style in which Dr. Currie did not hesitate to expose some of the weaker parts of his behaviour, very soon after the grave had closed on him,—"Burns was a man of extraordinary genius, whose birth, education, and employments had placed and kept him in a situation far below that in which the writers and readers of expensive volumes are usually found. Critics upon works of fiction have laid it down as a rule, that remoteness of place, in fixing the choice of a subject, and in prescribing the mode of treating it, is equal in effect to distance of time; restraints may be thrown off accordingly. Judge then of the delusions which artificial distinctions impose, when to a man like Dr. Currie, writing with views so honourable, the *social condition* of the individual of whom he was treating, could seem to place him at such a distance from the exalted reader, that ceremony might be discarded with him, and his memory sacrificed, as it were, almost without compunction. This is indeed to be *crushed beneath the sparrow's weight*."[2]

[1] [Burns's exact words are:—"I don't well know what is the reason of it, but some how or other though I am, when I have a mind, pretty generally beloved; yet I never could get the art of commanding respect."]

[2] Wordsworth's letter to a friend of Burns.

It would be idle to suppose that the feelings here ascribed, and justly, no question, to the amiable and benevolent Currie, did not often find their way into the bosoms of those persons of superior condition and attainments, with whom Burns associated at the period when he first emerged into the blaze of reputation; and what found its way into men's bosoms, was not likely to avoid betraying itself to the perspicacious glance of the proud peasant. How perpetually he was alive to the dread of being looked down upon as a man, even by those who most zealously applauded the works of his genius, might perhaps be traced through the whole sequence of his letters. When writing to *men* of high station, at least, he preserves, in every instance, the attitude of self-defence. But it is only in his own secret tables that we have the fibres of his heart laid bare, and the cancer of this jealousy is seen distinctly at its painful work; *habemus reum et confitentem.*

"There are few of the sore evils under the sun give me more uneasiness and chagrin than the comparison how a man of genius, nay of avowed worth, is received everywhere, with the reception which a mere ordinary character, decorated with the trappings and futile distinctions of fortune, meets. I imagine a man of abilities, his breast glowing with honest pride, conscious that men are born equal, still giving *honour to whom honour is due;* he meets, at a great man's table, a Squire something, or a Sir somebody; he knows the *noble* landlord, at heart, gives the bard, or whatever he is, a share of his good wishes, beyond, perhaps, any one at table; yet how will it mortify him to see a fellow, whose abilities would scarcely have made an *eightpenny tailor*, and whose heart is not worth three farthings, meet with attention and notice, that are withheld from the sons 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 at table (the whole company consisted of his lordship, dunderpate, and myself), that I was within half a point of throwing down my gage of contemptuous defiance; but he shook my hand, and looked so benevolently good at parting—God bless him! though I should never see him more, I shall love him until my dying day! I am pleased to think I am so capable of the throes of gratitude, as I am miserably deficient in some other virtues.

"With Dr. Blair I am more at my ease. I never respect him with humble veneration; but when he kindly interests himself in my welfare, or still more, when he descends from his pinnacle, and meets me on equal ground in conversation, my heart overflows with what is called *liking.* When he neglects me for the mere carcass of greatness, or when his eye measures the difference of our points of elevation, I say to myself, with scarcely any emotion, What do I care for him, or his pomp either?"

"It is not easy," says Burns, attempting to be more philosophical—"It is not easy forming an exact judgment of any one; but, in my opinion, Dr. Blair is merely an astonishing proof of what industry and application can do. Natural parts like his are frequently to be met with; his vanity is proverbially known among his own 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 poetry, *a bard of Nature's making can alone take the* pas *of him.* He has a heart not of the very finest water, but far from being an ordinary one. In short, he is a truly worthy and most respectable character."

"Once," says a nice speculator on the "follies of the wise,"[1]—"once we were nearly receiving from the hand of genius the most curious sketches of the temper, the irascible humours, the delicacy of soul, even to its shadowiness, from the warm *shozzos* of Burns, when he began a diary of his heart—a narrative of characters and events, and a chronology of his emotions. It was natural for such a creature of sensation and passion to project such a regular task, but quite impossible to get through it." This most curious document, it is to be observed, has not yet been printed entire. Another generation will, no doubt, see the whole of the confession;[2] however,

[1] D'Israeli on the *Literary Character*, vol. i. p. 136.

[2] [This common-place book was not published in its entirety till 1879 when it appeared in *Macmillan's*

what has already been given, it may be surmised, indicates sufficiently the complexion of Burns's prevailing moods, during his moments of retirement, at this interesting period of his history. It was in such a mood (they recurred often enough) that he thus reproached "Nature—partial nature:"—

> Thou giv'st the ass his hide, the snail his shell,
> The envenom'd wasp victorious guards his cell:
> But, oh! thou bitter stepmother, and hard,
> To thy poor fenceless naked child, the bard. . .
> *In naked feeling and in aching pride,*
> He bears the unbroken blast from every side.[1]

There was probably no blast that pierced this haughty soul so sharply as the contumely of condescension.

"One of the poet's remarks," as Cromek tells us, "when he first came to Edinburgh, was, that between the men of rustic life and the polite world he observed little difference—that in the former, though unpolished by fashion and unenlightened by science, he had found much observation, and much intelligence—but a refined and accomplished woman was a thing almost new to him, and of which he had formed but a very inadequate idea." To be pleased, is the old and the best receipt how to please; and there is abundant evidence that Burns's success among the high-born ladies of Edinburgh, was much greater than among the "stately patricians," as he calls them, of his own sex. The vivid expression of one of them has become proverbial—that she never met with a man, "whose conversation so completely set her off her feet;" and Sir Walter Scott, in his reference to the testimony of the late Duchess of Gordon, has no doubt indicated the twofold source of the fascination. But even here, he was destined to feel ere long something of the fickleness of fashion. He confessed to one of his old friends, before the season was over, that some who had caressed him the most zealously, no longer seemed to know him, when he bowed in passing their carriages, and many more acknowledged his salute but coldly.

It is but too true, that ere this season was over Burns had formed connections in Edinburgh which could not have been regarded with much approbation by the eminent literati in whose society his *début* had made so powerful an impression. But how much of the blame, if serious blame, indeed, there was in the matter, ought to attach to his own fastidious jealousy—how much to the mere caprice of human favour, we have scanty means of ascertaining: no doubt, both had their share; and it is also sufficiently apparent that there were many points in Burns's conversational habits, which men, accustomed to the delicate observances of refined society, might be more willing to tolerate under the first excitement of personal curiosity, than from any very deliberate estimate of the claims of such a genius, under such circumstances developed. He by no means restricted his sarcastic observations on those whom he encountered in the world to the confidence of his note-book; but startled polite ears with the utterance of audacious epigrams, far too witty not to obtain general circulation in so small a society as that of the Northern capital, far too bitter not to produce deep resentment, far too numerous not to spread fear almost as widely as admiration. Even when nothing was farther from his thoughts than to inflict pain, his ardour often carried him headlong into sad scrapes. Witness, for example, the anecdote given by Professor Walker, of his entering into a long discussion of the merits of the popular preachers of the day, at the table of Dr. Blair, and enthusiastically avowing his low opinion of all the rest in comparison with Dr. Blair's own colleague and most formidable rival[2]—a man, certainly endowed with extraordinary graces

Magazine. Notwithstanding the fact that Currie had published extracts from it, Allan Cunningham and Cromek alleged that it was stolen from Burns's lodgings in the latter part of 1787 or beginning of 1788. For many years the MS. lay, unrecognized as the missing common-place book, in the possession of Mr. Macmillan, the publisher. Alexander Smith made use of it in 1865, but described it as a "volume of early scraps understood to have been presented by the poet to Mrs. Dunlop."]

[1] Second Epistle to Graham of Fintry.

[2] [The Rev. Wm. Greenfield, who was professor of rhetoric in the University of Edinburgh, and became colleague to Dr. Blair in Feby. 1787. He had the degree of D.D. afterwards conferred on him, and in 1796 he was elected Moderator of the General Assembly. He was deposed from the ministry for "scandalous conduct" in 1798, and died abroad in 1827. The Rev. Robert Walker, whose name was given by Lockhart in a note as the colleague referred to, died in 1783, three years before Burns saw Edinburgh.]

of voice and manner, a generous and amiable strain of feeling, and a copious flow of language; but having no pretensions either to the general accomplishments for which Blair was honoured in a most accomplished society, or to the polished elegance which he first introduced into the eloquence of the Scottish pulpit. Professor Walker well describes the unpleasing effects of such an *escapade;* the conversation during the rest of the evening, "labouring under that compulsory effort which was unavoidable, while the thoughts of all were full of the only subject on which it was improper to speak." Burns showed his good sense by making no effort to repair this blunder; but years afterwards, he confessed that he could never recall it without exquisite pain. Mr. Walker properly says, it did honour to Dr. Blair that his kindness remained totally unaltered by this occurrence; but the professor would have found nothing to admire in that circumstance, had he not been well aware of the rarity of such good-nature among the *genus irritabile* of authors, orators, and wits.

A specimen (which some will think worse, some better) is thus recorded by Cromek:—"At a private breakfast, in a literary circle of Edinburgh, the conversation turned on the poetical merit and pathos of Gray's *Elegy*, a poem of which he was enthusiastically fond. A clergyman present, remarkable for his love of paradox, and for his eccentric notions upon every subject, distinguished himself by an injudicious and ill-timed attack on this exquisite poem, which Burns, with generous warmth for the reputation of Gray, manfully defended. As the gentleman's remarks were rather general than specific, Burns urged him to bring forward the passages which he thought exceptionable. He made several attempts to quote the poem, but always in a blundering, inaccurate manner. Burns bore all this for a good while with his usual good-natured forbearance, till at length, goaded by the fastidious criticisms and wretched quibblings of his opponent, he roused himself, and with an eye flashing contempt and indignation, and with great vehemence of gesticulation, he thus addressed the old critic: 'Sir, I now perceive a man may be an excellent judge of poetry by square and rule, and after all be a d—d blockhead;'"—so far, Mr. Cromek; and all this was to a clergyman, and at *breakfast*. Even to the ladies, when he suspected them of wishing to make a show of him, he could not help administering a little of his village discipline. A certain stately peeress sent to invite him, without, as he fancied, having sufficiently cultivated his acquaintance beforehand, to her assembly. "Mr. Burns," answered the bard, "will do himself the honour of waiting on the ——— of ———, provided her ladyship will invite also the learned pig."—Such an animal was then exhibiting in the Grassmarket.

While the second edition of poems was passing through the press, Burns was favoured with many critical suggestions and amendments; to one of which only he attended. Blair, reading over with him, or hearing him recite (which he delighted at all times in doing) his "Holy Fair," stopped him at the stanza—

> Now a the congregation o'er
> Is silent expectation,
> For Moodie speels the holy door climbs
> Wi' tidings o' *salvation*.

"Nay," said the doctor, "read *damnation*." Burns improved the wit of the verse, undoubtedly, by adopting the emendation; but he gave another strange specimen of want of *tact*, when he insisted that Dr. Blair, one of the most scrupulous observers of clerical propriety, should permit him to acknowledge the obligation in a note.

But to pass from these trifles—it needs no effort of imagination to conceive what the sensations of an isolated set of scholars (almost all either clergymen or professors) must have been in the presence of this big-boned, black-browed, brawny stranger, with his great flashing eyes, who, having forced his way among them from the plough-tail at a single stride, manifested in the whole strain of his bearing and conversation, a most thorough conviction, that, in a society of the most eminent men of his nation, he was exactly where he was entitled to be; hardly deigned to flatter them by exhibiting even an occasional symptom of being flattered by their notice: by turns calmly measured himself against the most cultivated understandings of his time in discussion; overpowered the *bon mots* of the most celebrated convivialists by broad floods of merriment, impregnated

with all the burning life of genius; astounded bosoms habitually enveloped in the thrice-piled folds of social reserve, by compelling them to tremble—nay, to tremble visibly—beneath the fearless touch of natural pathos; and all this without indicating the smallest willingness to be ranked among those professional ministers of excitement, who are content to be paid in money and smiles for doing what the spectators and auditors would be ashamed of doing in their own persons, even if they had the power of doing it; and,—last and probably worst of all,—who was known to be in the habit of enlivening societies which they would have scorned to approach, still more frequently than their own, with eloquence no less magnificent; with wit in all likelihood still more daring; often enough, as the superiors whom he fronted without alarm might have guessed from the beginning, and had, ere long, no occasion to guess, with wit pointed at themselves.

The lawyers of Edinburgh, in whose wider circles Burns figured at his outset, with at least as much success as among the professional literati, were a very different race of men from these; they would neither, I take it, have pardoned rudeness, nor been alarmed by wit. But being, in those days, with scarcely an exception, members of the landed aristocracy of the country, and forming by far the most influential body (as indeed they still do) in the society of Scotland, they were, perhaps, as proud a set of men as ever enjoyed the tranquil pleasures of unquestioned superiority. What their haughtiness, as a body, was, may be guessed, when we know that inferior birth was reckoned a fair and legitimate ground for excluding any man from the bar. In one remarkable instance, about this very time, a man of very extraordinary talents and accomplishments was chiefly opposed in a long and painful struggle for admission, and, in reality, for no reasons but those I have been alluding to, by gentlemen who, in the sequel, stood at the very head of the Whig party in Edinburgh; and the same aristocratical prejudice has, within the memory of the present generation, kept more persons of eminent qualifications in the back-ground, for a season, than any English reader would easily believe. To this body belonged nineteen out of twenty of those "patricians," whose stateliness Burns so long remembered and so bitterly resented. It might, perhaps, have been well for him had stateliness been the worst fault of their manners. Wine-bibbing appears to be in most regions a favourite indulgence with those whose brains and lungs are subjected to the severe exercises of legal study and forensic practice. To this day, more traces of these old habits linger about the Inns of Court than in any other section of London. In Dublin and Edinburgh, the barristers are even now eminently convivial bodies of men; but among the Scotch lawyers of the time of Burns, the principle of jollity was indeed in its "high and palmy state." He partook largely in those tavern scenes of audacious hilarity, which then soothed, as a matter of course, the arid labours of the northern *noblesse de la robé* (so they are well called in *Redgauntlet*), and of which we are favoured with a specimen in the "High Jinks" chapter of *Guy Mannering*.

The tavern-life is nowadays nearly extinct everywhere; but it was then in full vigour in Edinburgh, and there can be no doubt that Burns rapidly familiarized himself with it during his residence. He had, after all, tasted but rarely of such excesses while in Ayrshire. So little are we to consider his "Scotch Drink," and other jovial strains of the early period, as conveying anything like a fair notion of his actual course of life, that "Auld Nanse Tinnock," or "Poosie Nancie," the Mauchline landlady, is known to have expressed, amusingly enough, her surprise at the style in which she found her name celebrated in the Kilmarnock edition, saying, "that Robert Burns might be a very clever lad, but he certainly was *regardless*, as, to the best of her belief, he had never taken three half mutchkins in her house in all his life."[1] And in addition to Gilbert's testimony to the same purpose, we have on record that of Mr. Archibald Bruce (qualified by Heron, "a gentleman of great worth and discernment"), that he had observed Burns closely during that period of his life, and seen him "steadily resist such solicitations and allurements to convivial enjoyments, as hardly any other person could have withstood."

[1] Mr. R. Chambers's MS. notes, taken during a tour in Ayrshire.

The unfortunate Heron knew Burns well; and himself mingled largely[1] in some of the scenes to which he adverts in the following strong language:—"The enticements of pleasure too often unman our virtuous resolution, even while we wear the air of rejecting them with a stern brow. We resist, and resist, and resist; but, at last, suddenly turn, and passionately embrace the enchantress. The *bucks* of Edinburgh accomplished, in regard to Burns, that in which the *boors* of Ayrshire had failed. After residing some months in Edinburgh, he began to estrange himself, not altogether, but in some measure, from graver friends. Too many of his hours were now spent at the tables of persons who delighted to urge conviviality to drunkenness—in the tavern and in the brothel."[2]

It would be idle *now* to attempt passing over these things in silence; but it could serve no good purpose to dwell on them.

During this winter Burns continued, as has been mentioned, to lodge with John Richmond; and we have the authority of this early friend of the poet for the statement, that while he did so, "he kept good hours."[3] He removed afterwards to the house of Mr. William Nicol (one of the teachers of the High School of Edinburgh), on the Buccleuch road [Buccleuch Pend], and this change is, I suppose, to be considered as a symptom that the keeping of good hours was beginning to be irksome.[4] Nicol was a man of quick parts and considerable learning, who had risen from a rank as humble as Burns's: from the beginning an enthusiastic admirer, and, ere long, a constant associate of the poet, and a most dangerous associate; for, with a warm heart, the man united a fierce irascible temper, a scorn of many of the decencies of life, a noisy contempt of religion, at least of the religious institutions of his country, and a violent propensity for the bottle. He was one of those who would fain believe themselves to be men of genius; and that genius is a sufficient apology for trampling under foot all the old vulgar rules of prudence and sobriety,—being on both points equally mistaken. Of Nicol's letters to Burns, and about him, I have seen many that have never been, and probably that never will be, printed—cumbrous and pedantic effusions, exhibiting nothing that one can imagine to have been pleasing to the poet, except what was probably enough to redeem all imperfections—namely, a rapturous admiration of his genius. This man, nevertheless, was, I suspect, very far from being an unfavourable specimen of the society to whom Heron thus alludes:—"He (the poet) *suffered* himself to be surrounded by a race of miserable beings, who were proud to tell that they had been in company with BURNS, and had seen Burns as loose and as foolish as themselves. He was not yet irrecoverably lost to temperance and moderation; but he was already almost too much captivated with these wanton revels, to be ever more won back to a faithful attachment to *their* more sober charms." Heron adds—"He now also began to contract something of new arrogance in conversation. Accustomed to be, among his favourite associates, what is vulgarly, but expressively, called the cock of the company, he could scarcely refrain from indulging in similar freedom and dictatorial decision of talk, even in the presence of persons who could less patiently endure his presumption;"[5] an account *ex facie* probable, and which sufficiently tallies with some hints in Mr. Dugald Stewart's description of the poet's manners, as he first observed him at Catrine, and with one or two anecdotes already cited from Walker and Cromek.

Of these failings, and indeed of all Burns's failings, it may be safely asserted, that there was more in his history to account and apologize for them, than can be alleged in regard to almost any other great man's imperfections. We have seen, how, even in his earliest days, the strong thirst of distinction glowed within him—how in his first and rudest rhymes he sung

—— to be great is charming;

[1] See Burns's allusions to Heron's own habits, in "Poetical Epistle to Blacklock," 1789.

[2] Heron, p. 27. [3] Notes by Mr. R. Chambers.

[4] [Chambers explains that it was on account of his friend Richmond having in the interval between Burns's departure from Edinburgh (May 5th) and his return (August 7th) taken in another fellow-lodger, that Burns was obliged to accept temporary accommodation in the house of his friend Nicol, who was to be his companion in the contemplated Highland tour.]

[5] Heron, p. 28.

and we have also seen, that the display of talent in conversation was the first means of distinction that occurred to him. It was by that talent that he first attracted notice among his fellow-peasants, and after he mingled with the first Scotchmen of his time, this talent was still that which appeared the most astonishing of all he possessed. What wonder that he should delight in exerting it where he could exert it the most freely—where there was no check upon a tongue that had been accustomed to revel in the license of village-mastery? where every sally, however bold, was sure to be received with triumphant applause—where there were no claims to rival his—no proud brows to convey rebuke, above all, perhaps, no grave eyes to convey regret? "Nonsense," says Cumberland, "talked by men of wit and understanding in the hours of relaxation, is of the very finest essence of conviviality; but it implies a trust in the company not always to be risked." It was little in Burns's character to submit to nice and scrupulous rules, when he knew, that by crossing the street, he could find society who would applaud him the more, the more heroically all such rules were disregarded; and he who had passed from the company of the jolly *bachelors* of Tarbolton and Mauchline, to that of the eminent Scotchmen whose names were honoured all over the civilized world, without discovering any difference that appeared worthy of much consideration, was well prepared to say, with the prince of all free-speakers and free-livers, "I will take mine ease in mine inn!"

But these, assuredly, were not the only feelings that influenced Burns; in his own letters, written during his stay in Edinburgh, we have the best evidence to the contrary. He shrewdly suspected, from the very beginning, that the personal notice of the great and the illustrious was not to be as lasting as it was eager: he foresaw, that sooner or later he was destined to revert to societies less elevated above the pretensions of his birth; and, though his jealous pride might induce him to record his suspicions in language rather too strong than too weak, it is quite impossible to read what he wrote without believing that a sincere distrust lay rankling at the roots of his heart, all the while that he appeared to be surrounded with an atmosphere of joy and hope.

On the 15th of January, 1787, we find him thus addressing his kind patroness, Mrs. Dunlop:—

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

And about the same time 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. I am very willing to admit that I have some poetical abilities; and as few, if any writers, either moral or poetical, are intimately acquainted with the classes of mankind among whom I have chiefly mingled, I may have seen men and manners in a different phasis from what is common, which may assist originality of

thought. . . . I scorn the affectation of seeming modesty to cover self-conceit. That I have some merit, I do not deny; but I see, with frequent wringings of heart, that the novelty of my character, and the honest national prejudice of my countrymen, have borne me to a height altogether untenable to my abilities."—And lastly, April the 23d, 1787, we have the following passage in a letter also to Dr. Moore:—"I leave Edinburgh in the course of ten days or a fortnight. I shall return to my rural shades, *in all likelihood never more to quit them.* I have formed many intimacies and friendships here, *but I am afraid they are all of too tender a construction to bear carriage a hundred and fifty miles.*"

One word more on the subject which introduced these quotations:—Mr. Dugald Stewart, no doubt, hints at what was a common enough complaint among the elegant literati of Edinburgh, when he alludes, in his letter to Currie, to the "not very select society" in which Burns indulged himself. But two points still remain somewhat doubtful; namely, whether, show and marvel of the season as he was, the "Ayrshire ploughman" really had it in his power to live *always* in society which Mr. Stewart would have considered as "very select;" and secondly, whether, in so doing, he could have failed to chill the affection of those humble Ayrshire friends, who, having shared with him all that they possessed on his first arrival in the metropolis, faithfully and fondly adhered to him, after the spring-tide of fashionable favour did, as he foresaw it would do, "recede;" and, moreover, perhaps to provoke, among the higher circles themselves, criticisms more distasteful to his proud stomach than any probable consequences of the course of conduct which he actually pursued.

The second edition of Burns's poems was published early in March, by Creech; there were no less than 1500 subscribers, many of whom paid more than the shop-price of the volume. Although, therefore, the final settlement with the bookseller did not take place till nearly a year after, Burns now found himself in possession of a considerable sum of ready money; and the first impulse of his mind was to visit some of the classic scenes of Scottish history and romance.[1] He had as yet seen but a small part of his own country, and this by no means among the most interesting of her districts—until, indeed, his own poetry made it equal, on that score, to any other.

The magnificent scenery of the capital itself had filled him with extraordinary delight. In the spring mornings, he walked very often to the top of Arthur's Seat, and lying prostrate on the turf, surveyed the rising of the sun out of the sea, in silent admiration; his chosen companion on such occasions being that ardent lover of nature and learned artist, Mr. Alexander Nasmyth.[2] The Braid Hills, to the south of Edinburgh, were also among his favourite morning walks; and it was in some of these that Mr. Dugald Stewart tells us "he charmed him still more by his private conversation than he had ever done in company." "He was," adds the professor, "passionately fond of the beauties of nature; and I recollect once he told me, when I was admiring a distant prospect in one of our morning walks, that the sight of so many smoking cottages gave a pleasure to his mind which none could understand who had not witnessed, like himself, the happiness and the worth which they contained."

[1] "The appellation of a Scottish bard is far my highest pride; to continue to deserve it, is my most exalted ambition. Scottish scenes, and Scottish story, are the themes I could wish to sing. I have no dearer aim than to have it in my power, unplagued with the routine of business, for which, Heaven knows, I am unfit enough, to make leisurely pilgrimages through Caledonia; to sit on the fields of her battles, to wander on the romantic banks of her rivers, and to muse by the stately towers or venerable ruins, once the honoured abodes of her heroes. But these are Utopian thoughts."—*Letter to Mrs. Dunlop, Edinburgh, 22d March,* 1787.

[2] It was to this artist that Burns sat for the portrait engraved in Creech's edition, and since repeated so often, that it must be familiar to all readers. [Nasmyth also prepared a cabinet portrait of the poet at full length as he appeared in Edinburgh, in the first heyday of his reputation; dressed in tight jockey boots, very tight buckskin breeches, according to the fashion of the day, and (Jacobite as he was) in what was considered the "Fox"-livery, viz., a blue coat and buff waistcoat, with broad blue stripes. The sketch, an engraving from which appeared as title-page to the first editions of Lockhart's Life, was said by surviving friends to be a very lively representation of the bard as he first attracted public notice on the streets of Edinburgh.]

Burns was far too busy with society and observation to find time for poetical composition, during his first residence in Edinburgh. Creech's edition included some pieces of great merit, which had not been previously printed; but, with the exception of the "Address to Edinburgh," which is chiefly remarkable for the grand stanzas on the Castle and Holyrood, with which it concludes, all of these appear to have been written before he left Ayrshire. Several of them, indeed, were very early productions. The most important additions were, "Death and Doctor Hornbook," the "Brigs of Ayr," the "Ordination," and the "Address to the Unco Guid." In this edition also, "When Guilford guid our Pilot stood," made its first appearance, on reading which, Dr. Blair uttered his pithy criticism, "Burns's politics always smell of the smithy."

It ought not to be omitted, that our poet bestowed some of the first-fruits of this edition in the erection of a decent tombstone over the hitherto neglected remains of his unfortunate predecessor, Robert Fergusson, in the Canongate churchyard.

The evening before he quitted Edinburgh, the poet addressed a letter to Dr. Blair, in which, taking a most respectful farewell of him, and expressing in lively terms his sense of gratitude for the kindness he had shown him, he thus recurs to his own views of his own past and future condition;—"I have often felt the embarrassment of my singular situation. However the meteor-like novelty of my appearance in the world might attract notice, I knew very well that my utmost merit was far unequal to the task of preserving that character when once the novelty was over. I have made up my mind, that abuse, or almost even neglect, will not surprise me in my quarters." To this touching letter the amiable Blair replied in a truly paternal strain of consolation and advice:—"Your situation," says he, "was indeed very singular; you have had to stand a severe trial. I am happy that you have stood it so well. . . . You are now, I presume, to retire to a more private walk of life. . . . You have laid the foundation for just public esteem. In the midst of those employments, which your situation will render proper, you will not, I hope, neglect to promote that esteem, by cultivating your genius, and attending to such productions of it as may raise your character still higher. At the same time, be not in too great a haste to come forward. Take time and leisure to improve and mature your talents; for, on any second production you give the world, your fate as a poet will very much depend. There is, no doubt, a gloss of novelty which time wears off. As you very properly hint yourself, you are not to be surprised if, in your rural retreat, you do not find yourself surrounded with that glare of notice and applause which here shone upon you. No man can be a good poet without being somewhat of a philosopher. He must lay his account, that any one who exposes himself to public observation, will occasionally meet with the attacks of illiberal censure, which it is always best to overlook and despise. He will be inclined sometimes to court retreat, and to disappear from public view. He will not affect to shine always, that he may at proper seasons come forth with more advantage and energy. He will not think himself neglected if he be not always praised." Such were Blair's admonitions.

And part was heard, and part was lost in air,[1]

Burns had one object of worldly business in his journey; namely, to examine the estate of Dalswinton, near Dumfries, the proprietor of which had, on learning that the poet designed to return to his original calling, expressed a strong wish to have him for his tenant.

[1] On the same occasion, the poet addressed Lord Glencairn in these terms:—

"My Lord,—I go away to-morrow morning early; and allow me to vent the fulness of my heart in thanking your Lordship for all that patronage, that benevolence, and that friendship, with which you have honoured me. With brimful eyes I pray, that you may find in that Great Being, whose image you so nobly bear, that friend which I have found in you. My gratitude is not selfish design—that I disdain—it is not dodging after the heels of greatness—that is an offering you disdain. It is a feeling of the same kind with my devotion.—R. B."

CHAPTER VI.

[Border tour:—epistle to Creech:—return to Mauchline:—favourably received by the Armours:—returns to Edinburgh:—West Highland tour:—Harvieston journey:—Stirling epigram:—unmoved by grandeur of scenery, &c.:—visit to Ramsay of Ochtertyre:—visit to Mrs. Bruce of Clackmannan:—northern tour:—Taymouth:—Blair-Athole:—Inverness:—Gordon Castle:—Aberdeen:—Stonehaven, &c.:—decides on taking the farm of Ellisland:—Clarinda:—Johnson's *Museum*:—ode to Prince Charles:—overturned in a coach and confined to his room for six weeks:—low spirits:—Jean Armour again exposed to the reproaches of her family, and turned out of doors:—Burns secures shelter for her:—applies for a post on the excise, and is appointed:—settlement with Creech:—loan to Gilbert.]

Ramsay and famous Fergusson,
Gied Forth and Tay a lift aboon;
Yarrow and Tweed to monie a tune
Thro' Scotland rings,
While Irving, Lugar, Ayr, and Doon,
Naebody sings.

On the 6th of May [1787], Burns left Edinburgh in company with Mr. Robert Ainslie,[1] son to Mr. Ainslie of Berrywell, in Berwickshire, with the design of perambulating the picturesque scenery of the southern border, and in particular of visiting the localities celebrated by the old minstrels, of whose works he was a passionate admirer; and of whom, by the way, one of the last appears to have been all but a namesake of his own.[2]

This was long before the time when those fields of Scottish romance were to be made accessible to the curiosity of citizens by stage-coaches; and Burns and his friend performed their tour on horseback, the former being mounted on a favourite mare, whom he had named Jenny Geddes, in honour of the zealous virago who threw her stool at the Dean of Edinburgh's head, on the 23d of July, 1637, when the attempt was made to introduce a Scottish Liturgy into the service of St. Giles's; the same trusty animal whose merits have been recorded by Burns, in a letter which must have been puzzling to most modern Scotsmen, before the days of Dr. Jamieson.[3]

Burns passed from Edinburgh to Berrywell, the residence of Mr. Ainslie's family, and visited successively Dunse, Coldstream, Kelso, Floors, and the ruins of Roxburgh Castle, where a holly bush still marks the spot on which James II. of Scotland was killed by the bursting of a cannon; Jedburgh, where he admired the "charming romantic situation of the town, with gardens and orchards intermingled among the houses of a once magnificent cathedral (abbey);" and was struck (as in the other towns of the same district) with the

[1] Afterwards Clerk to the Signet. Among other changes "which fleeting time procureth," this amiable gentleman, whose youthful gaiety made him a chosen associate of Burns, is chiefly known as the author of an Essay on the Evidences of Christianity, and some devotional tracts. [He was born in 1766, was admitted Writer to the Signet in 1789, and died April 11, 1838.]

[2] Nicoll Burn, supposed to have lived towards the close of the 16th [17th?] century, and to have been among the last of the itinerant minstrels. He is [said to be] the author of "Leader Haughs and Yarrow," a pathetic ballad, in the last verse of which his own name and designation are introduced.

Sing Erslington and Cowdenknowes, where Homes had ance commanding,
And Drygrange, wi' the milk-white yowes, 'twixt Tweed and Leader standing.
The bird that flees through Reedpath trees, and Gledswood banks, ilk morrow,
May chant and sing sweet Leader Haughs, and bonny howms of Yarrow.

But minstrel Burn cannot assuage his grief while life endureth,
To see the changes of this age, that fleeting time procureth.
For mony a place stands in hard case, where blythe folk kend nae sorrow,
With Homes that dwelt on Leader side, and Scotts that dwelt on Yarrow.

[Dr. R. Chambers says: "In an old collection of songs, in their original state of *ballants*, I have seen his name printed as 'Burne the violer,' which seems to indicate the instrument upon which he was in the practice of accompanying his recitations. I was told by an aged person at Earlston, that there used to be a portrait of him in Thirlstane Castle, representing him as a douce old man, leading a cow by a straw-rope."]

[3] "My auld ga'd gleyde o' a meere has huchyalled up hill and down brae, as teuch and birnie as a vera devil, wi' me. It's true she's as poor's a sang-maker, and as hard's a kirk, and tipper-taipers when she taks the gate, like a lady's gentlewoman in a minuwae, or a hen on a het girdle; but she's a yauld poutherin girran for a' that. When ance her ring-banes and spavies, her cruiks and cramps, arg fairly soupled, she beets to, beets to, and aye the hindmost hour the tightest," &c. &c.—Letter to Wm. Nicol, *Reliques*, p. 28. [See vol iv. p. 61.]

appearance of "old rude grandeur," and the idleness of decay; Melrose, "that far-famed glorious ruin," Selkirk, Ettrick, and the Braes of Yarrow. Having spent three weeks in this district, of which it has been justly said, that "every field has its battle, and every rivulet its song," Burns passed the Border, and visited Alnwick, Warkworth, Morpeth, Newcastle, Hexham, Wardrue, and Carlisle. He then turned northwards, and rode by Annan and Dumfries to Dalswinton, where he examined Mr. Miller's property, and was so much pleased with the soil, and the terms on which the landlord was willing to grant him a lease, that he resolved to return again in the course of the summer.

Dr. Currie has published some extracts from the journal which Burns kept during this excursion, but they are mostly very trivial.[1] He was struck with the superiority of soil, climate, and cultivation in Berwick and Roxburghshires, as compared with his native county; and not a little surprised when he dined at a Farmers' Club at Kelso, with the apparent wealth of that order of men. "All gentlemen, talking of high matters—each of them keeps a hunter from £30 to £50 value, and attends the Fox-hunting Club in the county." The farms in the west of Scotland are, to this day, very small for the most part, and the farmers little distinguished from their labourers in their modes of life; the contrast was doubtless stronger, forty years ago, between them and their brethren of the Lothians and the Merse.

The magistrates of Jedburgh presented Burns with the freedom of their town: he was unprepared for the compliment, and jealous of obligations, stept out of the room, and made an effort (of course an ineffectual one) to pay beforehand the landlord's bill for the "riddle of claret," which is usually presented on such occasions in a Scotch burgh.

The poet visited, in the course of his tour, Sir James Hall of Dunglas, author of the well-known *Essay on Gothic Architecture*, &c.; Sir Alexander and Lady Harriet Don (daughter to his patron, Lord Glencairn), at Newton-Don; Mr. Brydone, the author of *Travels in Sicily;* the amiable and learned Dr. Somerville of Jedburgh, the historian of Queen Anne, &c.; and, as usual, recorded in his journal his impressions as to their manners and characters. His reception was everywhere most flattering.

He wrote no verses, as far as is known, during this tour, except a humorous epistle to his bookseller, Creech, dated Selkirk, 13th May. In this he makes complimentary allusions to some of the men of letters who were used to meet at breakfast in Creech's apartments in those days—whence the name of *Creech's levee;* and touches, too briefly, on some of the scenery he had visited.

> Up wimpling stately Tweed I've sped,
> And Eden scenes on crystal Jed,
> And Ettrick banks now roaring red,
> While tempests blaw.

Burns returned to Mauchline on the 8th of July. It is pleasing to imagine the delight with which he must have been received by his family after the absence of six months, in which his fortunes and prospects had undergone so wonderful a change. He left them comparatively unknown, his tenderest feelings torn and wounded by the behaviour of the Armours, and so miserably poor, that he had been for some weeks obliged to skulk from the sheriff's officers, to avoid the payment of a paltry debt. He returned, his poetical fame established, the whole country ringing with his praises, from a capital in which he was known to have formed the wonder and delight of the polite and the learned; if not rich, yet with more money already than any of his kindred had ever hoped to see him possess, and with prospects of future patronage and permanent elevation in the scale of society, which might have dazzled steadier eyes than those of maternal and fraternal affection. The prophet had at last honour in his own country: but the haughty spirit that had preserved its balance in Edinburgh, was not likely to lose it at Mauchline; and we have him writing from the *auld clay biggin'* on the 18th of July, in terms as strongly expressive as any that ever came from his pen, of that jealous pride which formed the groundwork of his character; that dark suspiciousness of fortune, which the subsequent course of his history too well justified; that nervous intolerance of condescension, and consummate scorn of meanness, which attended him through life, and made the study

[1] [See the full journal of his "Border Tour" in Appendix.]

of his species, for which nature had given him such extraordinary qualifications, the source of more pain than was ever counterbalanced by the exquisite capacity for enjoyment with which he was also endowed. There are few of his letters in which more of the dark places of his spirit come to light:—"I never, my friend, thought mankind capable of anything very generous; but the stateliness of the patricians of Edinburgh, and the servility of my plebeian brethren (who, perhaps, formerly eyed me askance), since I returned home, have nearly put me out of conceit altogether with my species. I have bought a pocket Milton, which I carry perpetually about me, in order to study the sentiments, the dauntless magnanimity, the intrepid unyielding independence, the desperate daring, and noble defiance of hardship, in that great personage—Satan. . . . The many ties of acquaintance and friendship I have, or think I have, in life, I have felt along the lines, and, d——n them, they are almost all of them of such frail texture, that I am sure they would not stand the breath of the least adverse breeze of fortune."[1]

Among those who, having formerly "eyed him askance," now appeared sufficiently ready to court his society, were the family of Jean Armour. Burns's affection for this beautiful young woman had outlived his resentment of her compliance with her father's commands in the preceding summer; and from the time of this reconciliation, it is probable he always looked forward to a permanent union with the mother of his children.

Burns at least fancied himself to be busy with serious plans for his future establishment; and was very naturally disposed to avail himself, as far as he could, of the opportunities of travel and observation, which an interval of leisure, destined probably to be a short one, might present. Moreover, in spite of his gloomy language, a specimen of which has just been quoted, we are not to doubt that he derived much pleasure from witnessing the extensive popularity of his writings, and from the flattering homage he was sure to receive in his own person in the various districts of his native country; nor can any one wonder, that after the state of high excitement in which he had spent the winter and spring, he, fond as he was of his family, and eager to make them partakers in all his good fortune, should have, just at this time, found himself incapable of sitting down contentedly for any considerable period together in so humble and quiet a circle as that of Mossgiel.

His appetite for wandering appears to have been only sharpened by his Border excursion. After remaining a few days at home, he returned to Edinburgh, and thence he proceeded on another short tour, by way of Stirling, to Inverary, and so back again, by Dumbarton and Glasgow, to Mauchline.[2] Of this second excursion, no journal has been discovered; nor do the extracts from his correspondence, printed by Dr. Currie, appear to be worthy of much notice. In one, he briefly describes the West Highlands as a country "where savage streams tumble over savage mountains, thinly overspread with savage flocks, which starvingly support as savage inhabitants;" and in another, he gives an account of Jenny Geddes running a race *after dinner* with a Highlander's pony—of dancing and drinking till sunrise at a gentleman's house on Loch Lomond; and of other similar matters.—"I have as yet," says he, "fixed on nothing with respect to the serious business of life. I am, just as usual, a rhyming, mason-making, raking, aimless, idle fellow. However, I shall somewhere have a farm soon."

In the course of this tour, Burns visited the mother and sisters of his friend Gavin Hamilton, then residing at Harvieston, in Clackmannanshire, in the immediate neighbourhood of the magnificent scenery of Castle Campbell and the vale of Devon.[3] He was

[1] [Letter to William Nicol, June 18, 1787.]

[2] [This mysterious West Highland journey, which has been connected with his feelings regarding the lately deceased "Highland Mary," was undertaken about the end of June. We first find him writing the well-known epigram on the window of the inn at Inverary, but the route by which he reached that place is certainly unknown. He wrote to Robert Ainslie from Arrochar on June 28, and to James Smith on the 30th—to the latter describing among other things the race mentioned in the text—and returned to Mauchline by Dumbarton and Paisley. It has been said that at Dumbarton he was publicly entertained and presented with the freedom of the town, but no record of such an event has come to light.]

[3] [There is a considerable amount of confusion in this part of Lockhart, partly caused no doubt by a slip of the memory on the part of Dr. Adair, who

especially delighted with one of the young ladies;[1] and, according to his usual custom, celebrated her in a song, in which, in opposition to his usual custom, there is nothing but the respectfulness of admiration.

How pleasant the banks of the clear winding Devon, &c.

At Harviestonbank, also, the poet first became acquainted with Miss Chalmers, afterwards Mrs. Hay, to whom one of the most interesting series of his letters is addressed. Indeed, with the exception of his letters to Mrs. Dunlop, there is, perhaps, no part of his correspondence which may be quoted so uniformly to his honour.

It was on this expedition, that having been visited with a high flow of Jacobite indignation, while viewing the neglected palace at Stirling, he was imprudent enough to write some verses, bitterly vituperative of the reigning family, on the window of his inn. The verses were copied and talked of; and although, the next time Burns passed through Stirling, he himself broke the pane of glass containing them, they were remembered years afterwards to his disadvantage, and even danger. The last couplet, alluding, in the coarsest style, to the melancholy state of the King's health at the time, was indeed an outrage of which no political prejudice could have made a gentleman approve: but he, in all probability, composed his verses after dinner; and surely what Burns would fain have undone, others should have been not unwilling to forget. In this case, too, the poetry "smells of the smith's shop," as well as the sentiment.

Mr. Dugald Stewart has pronounced Burns's epigrams to be, of all his writings, the least worthy of his talents. Those which he composed in the course of his tour, on being refused admittance to see the iron-works at Carron, and on finding himself ill-served at the inn at Inverary, in consequence of the Duke of Argyle's having a large party at the Castle, form no exceptions to the rule. He had never, we may suppose, met with the famous recipe of the Jelly-bag Club; and was addicted to beginning with the point.

The young ladies of Harvieston were, according to Dr. Currie, surprised with the calm manner in which Burns contemplated their fine scenery on Devon-water; and the doctor enters into a little dissertation on the subject, showing, that a man of Burns's lively imagination, might probably have formed anticipations which the realities of the prospect might rather disappoint. This is possible enough; but I suppose few will take it for granted that Burns surveyed any scenes either of beauty or of grandeur without emotion, merely because he did not choose to be ecstatic for the benefit of a company of young ladies. He was indeed very impatient of interruption on such occasions. I have heard, that riding one dark night near Carron, his companion teased him with noisy exclamations of delight and wonder, whenever an opening in the wood permitted them to see the magnificent glare of the furnaces:—"Look, Burns! Good Heavens! look! look! what a glorious sight!"—"Sir," said Burns, clapping spurs to Jenny Geddes, "I would not *look! look!* at your bidding, if it were the mouth of hell!"

Burns spent the month of July at Mossgiel; and Mr. Dugald Stewart, in a letter to Currie, gives some recollections of him as he then appeared.

"Notwithstanding the various reports I heard during the preceding winter, of Burns's predilection for convivial, and not very select society, I should have concluded in favour of

was Burns's companion on his second visit to Harvieston, and who communicated details to Currie in 1799, giving, however, the date August instead of October. The first Harvieston visit is here made part of the West Highland tour of June instead of an episode in the northern tour of August; while the second ten-days' visit to Clackmannanshire is made to take place immediately before the northern tour instead of in the month of October following. The proper order will be seen from the following summary:—Burns set out for the north in company with Nicol on 25th August, 1787. They arrived at Stirling on Sunday afternoon, 26th August, when the offensive verses mentioned in the text were written on the inn window. On the Monday he left Nicol and visited Gavin Hamilton's friends at Harvieston, returning to Stirling in the evening, whence they set out for the north next morning. The travellers returned to Edinburgh on September 16th, after three weeks' absence, and it was not till October (Dr. Adair at this time being his travelling companion) that he revisited Stirling and Harvieston, when he took the opportunity of destroying the pane of glass containing the obnoxious epigram.]

[1] [Charlotte Hamilton, half-sister to Gavin Hamilton and afterwards married to Dr. Adair.]

his habits of sobriety from all of him that ever fell under my own observation. He told me, indeed, himself, that the weakness of his stomach was such as to deprive him entirely of any merit in his temperance. I was, however, somewhat alarmed about the effect of his now comparatively sedentary and luxurious life, when he confessed to me, the first night he spent in my house after his winter's campaign in town, that he had been much disturbed when in bed, by a palpitation at his heart, which, he said, was a complaint to which he had of late become subject.

"In the course of the same season I was led by curiosity to attend for an hour or two a masonic lodge in Mauchline, where Burns presided. He had occasion to make some short unpremeditated compliments to different individuals, from whom he had no right to expect a visit, and everything he said was happily conceived, and forcibly as well as fluently expressed. His manner of speaking in public had evidently the marks of some practice in extempore elocution."[1]

In August [October],[2] Burns revisited Stirlingshire, in company with Dr. Adair, of Harrowgate, and remained ten days at Harvieston. He was received with particular kindness at Ochtertyre, on the Teith, by Mr. Ramsay (a friend of Blacklock), whose beautiful retreat he enthusiastically admired. His host was among the last of that old Scottish line of Latinists, which began with Buchanan, and, I fear, may be said to have ended with Gregory. Mr. Ramsay, among other eccentricities, had sprinkled the walls of his house with Latin inscriptions, some of them highly elegant; and those particularly interested Burns, who asked and obtained copies and translations of them. This amiable man (whose manners and residence were not, I take it, out of the novelist's recollection when he painted Monkbarns) was deeply read in Scottish antiquities, and the author of some learned essays on the older poetry of his country. His conversation must have delighted any man of talents; and Burns and he were mutually charmed with each other. Ramsay advised him strongly to turn his attention to the romantic drama, and proposed the "Gentle Shepherd" as a model: he also urged him to write "Scottish Georgics," observing, that Thomson had by no means exhausted that field. He appears to have relished both hints. "But," says Mr. R., "to have executed either plan, steadiness and abstraction from company were wanting."

"I have been in the company of many men of genius (writes Mr. Ramsay), some of them poets; but I never witnessed such flashes of intellectual brightness as from him, the impulse of the moment, sparks of celestial fire. I never was more delighted, therefore, than with his company two days *tête-à-tête*. In a mixed company I should have made little of him; for, to use a gamester's phrase, he did not know when to play off and when to play on.

"When I asked him whether the Edinburgh literati had mended his poems by their criticisms—'Sir,' said he, 'those gentlemen remind me of some spinsters in my country, who spin their thread so fine, that it is neither fit for weft nor woof."

At Clackmannan Tower, the poet's Jacobitism procured him a hearty welcome from the ancient lady of the place, who gloried in considering herself as a lineal descendant of Robert Bruce. She bestowed on Burns what knighthood the touch of the hero's sword could confer; delighted him by giving as her toast after

[1] It was at this time, I believe, that Burns indited a lively copy of verses, which have never yet (1829) been printed, and which I find introduced with the following memorandum, in a small collection of MSS., sent by the poet to Lady R. Don. "Mr. Chalmers, a gentleman in Ayrshire, a particular friend of mine, asked me to write a poetical epistle to a young lady his dulcinea. I had seen her, but was scarcely acquainted with her, and wrote as follows:"—

MADAM,
Wi' braw new branks in mickle pride, — fine new bridle
And eke a braw new brechan, — horse-collar
My Pegasus I'm got astride,
And up Parnassus pechin'; — panting
Whiles owre a bush wi' downward crush,
The doited beastie stammers; — stupid
Then up he gets, and off he sets,
For sake o' *Willie Chalmers*.

I doubt na, lass, that weel kenned name — known
May cost a pair o' blushes;
I am nae stranger to your fame,
Nor his warm-urged wishes.
Your bonnie face sae mild and sweet,
His honest heart enamours,
And faith ye'll no be lost a whit,
Tho' waired on *Willie Chalmers*. — spent

[See the rest of the poem in its place in this edition.

[2] [See note above p 73.]

dinner, *Hoohi uncos*[1]—"away strangers!" and when he would have kissed her hand at parting, insisted on a warmer salute, saying, "What ails thee at my lips, Robin?" At Dunfermline the poet betrayed deep emotion, Dr. Adair tells us, on seeing the grave of the Bruce; but passing to another mood on entering the adjoining church, he mounted the pulpit, and addressed his companions, who had, at his desire, ascended the *cutty-stool*, in a parody of the *rebuke* which he had himself undergone some time before at Mauchline.

From Dunfermline, the poet crossed the Frith of Forth to Edinburgh; and forthwith set out with his friend Nicol on a more extensive tour than he had as yet undertaken, or was ever again to undertake.[2] Some fragments of his journal have recently been discovered, and are now in my hands; so that I may hope to add some particulars to the account of Dr. Currie. The travellers hired a post-chaise for their expedition—the High School master being, probably, no very skilful equestrian.

"August 25th, 1787.—This day," says Burns, "I leave Edinburgh for a tour, in company with my good friend Mr. Nicol, whose originality of humour promises me much entertainment.—*Linlithgow*—A fertile improved country is West Lothian. The more elegance and luxury among the farmers, I always observe, in equal proportion, the rudeness and stupidity of the peasantry. This remark I have made all over the Lothians, Merse, Roxburgh, &c.; and for this, among other reasons, I think that a man of romantic taste, 'a man of feeling,' will be better pleased with the poverty, but intelligent minds, of the peasantry of Ayrshire (peasantry they are all below the justice of peace), than the opulence of a club of Merse farmers, when he, at the same time, considers the Vandalism of their plough-folks, &c. I carry this idea so far, that an uninclosed, unimproved country, is to me actually more agreeable as a prospect, than a country cultivated like a garden."

It was hardly to be expected that Robert Burns should have estimated the wealth of nations entirely on the principles of a political economist.

Of Linlithgow, he says, "the town carries the appearance of rude, decayed, idle grandeur—charmingly rural retired situation—the old Royal Palace a tolerably fine, but melancholy ruin—sweetly situated by the brink of a loch. Shown the room where the beautiful injured Mary Queen of Scots was born. A pretty good, old Gothic church—the infamous stool of repentance, in the old Romish way, on a lofty situation. What a poor pimping business is a Presbyterian place of worship! dirty, narrow, and squalid, stuck in a corner of old Popish grandeur, such as Linlithgow, and much more, Melrose! Ceremony and show, if judiciously thrown in, are absolutely necessary for the bulk of mankind, both in religious and civil matters."

At Bannockburn he writes as follows: "Here no Scot can pass uninterested. I fancy to myself that I see my gallant countrymen coming over the hill, and down upon the plunderers of their country, the murderers of their fathers, noble revenge and just hate glowing in every vein, striding more and more eagerly as they approach the oppressive, insulting, bloodthirsty foe. I see them meet in glorious triumphant congratulation on the victorious field, exulting in their heroic royal leader, and rescued liberty and independence."[3]

Here we have the germ of Burns's famous "Ode on the Battle of Bannockburn."

At Taymouth the journal merely has—"*described in rhyme.*" This alludes to the "verses written with a pencil over the mantlepiece of the parlour in the inn at Kenmore;" some of which are among his best purely English heroics—

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

[1] A shepherd's cry when strange sheep mingle in the flock [here alluding of course to the reigning dynasty].

[2] [See note 3, p. 73.]

[3] In the last words of Burns's note above quoted, he perhaps glances at a beautiful trait of old Barbour, where he describes Bruce's soldiers as crowding round him at the conclusion of one of his hard-fought days, with as much curiosity as if they had never seen his person before.

> Sic words spak they of their king;
> And for his hie undertaking
> Ferleyit and yernit him for to see,
> That with him ay was wont to be.

Here Poesy might wake her heaven-taught lyre,
And look through Nature with creative fire . . .
Here, to the wrongs of Fate half-reconciled,
Misfortune's lighten'd steps might wander wild;
And Disappointment, in these lonely bounds,
Find balm to soothe her bitter rankling wounds;
Here heart-struck Grief might heavenward stretch her scan,
And injured Worth forget and pardon man

Of Glenlyon we have this memorandum:—"Druid's temple, three circles of stones, the outermost sunk; the second has thirteen stones remaining; the innermost eight; two large detatched ones like a gate to the south-east—*say prayers in it.*"

His notes on Dunkeld and Blair of Athole, are as follows:—"*Dunkeld*—Breakfast with Dr. Stuart—Neil Gow plays; a short, stout-built, Highland figure, with his grayish hair shed on his honest social brow—an interesting face, marked strong sense, kind openheartedness, mixed with unmistrusting simplicity—visit his house—Margaret Gow.—*Friday*—ride up Tummel river to Blair. Fascally, a beautiful romantic nest—wild grandeur of the pass of Killiecrankie—visit the gallant Lord Dundee's stone.[1] *Blair*—sup with the Duchess—easy and happy, from the manners of that family—confirmed in my good opinion of my friend Walker.—*Saturday*—visit the scenes round Blair—fine, but spoilt with bad taste."

Professor Walker, who, as we have seen, formed Burns's acquaintance in Edinburgh, through Blacklock, was at this period tutor in the family of Athole, and from him the following particulars of Burns's reception at the seat of his noble patron are derived. "I had often, like others, experienced the pleasures which arise from the sublime or elegant landscape, but I never saw those feelings so intense as in Burns. When we reached a rustic hut on the river Tilt, where it is overhung by a woody precipice, from which there is a noble waterfall, he threw himself on the heathy seat, and gave himself up to a tender, abstracted, and voluptuous enthusiasm of imagination. It was with much difficulty I prevailed on him to quit this spot, and to be introduced in proper time to supper.

"He seemed at once to perceive and to appreciate what was due to the company and to himself, and never to forget a proper respect for the separate species of dignity belonging to each. He did not arrogate conversation; but when led into it, he spoke with ease, propriety, and manliness. He tried to exert his abilities, because he knew it was ability alone gave him a title to be there. The duke's fine young family attracted much of his admiration; he drank their healths as *honest men and bonny lasses*, an idea which was much applauded by the company, and with which he has very felicitously closed his poem.

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

[Walker in his *Life of Burns* remarks:—"The ill-regulated temper and manners of Mr. Nicol prevented Burns from introducing him to scenes where delicacy and self-denial were so much required. He was therefore left at the inns, while the poet was regaling in the higher circles: an indignity which his proud and untractable spirit could with difficulty brook. At Athole House his impatience was suspended by engaging him in his favourite amusement of angling."]

"Much attention was paid to Burns both before and after the duke's return, of which he was perfectly sensible, without being vain; and at his departure I recommended to him, as the most appropriate return he could make, to write some descriptive verses on any of the scenes with which he had been so much delighted. After leaving Blair, he, by the duke's advice, visited the Falls of Bruar; and in a few days I received a letter from Inverness with the verses inclosed."[2]

[1] It is *not* true that this stone marks the spot where Dundee received his death-wound.

[2] The Banks of the Bruar, whose naked condition called forth "the humble petition," to which Mr. Walker thus refers, have, since those days, been

At Blair, Burns first met with Mr. Graham of Fintry, a gentleman to whose kindness he was afterwards indebted on more than one important occasion; and Mr. Walker expresses great regret that he did not remain a day or two more, in which case he must have been introduced to Mr. Dundas, afterwards Viscount Melville, who was then Treasurer of the Navy, and had the chief management of the affairs of Scotland. This eminent statesman was, though little addicted to literature, a warm lover of his country, and in general, of whatever redounded to her honour; he was, moreover, very especially qualified to appreciate Burns as a companion; and, had such an introduction taken place, he might not improbably have been induced to bestow that consideration on the claims of the poet, which, in the absence of any personal acquaintance, Burns's works ought to have received at his hands.

From Blair, Burns passed "many miles through a wild country, among cliffs gray with eternal snows, and gloomy savage glens, till he crossed Spey; and went down the stream through Strathspey (so famous in Scottish music), Badenoch, &c., to Grant Castle, where he spent half a day with Sir James Grant; crossed the country to Fort George, but called by the way at Cawdor, the ancient seat of Macbeth, where he saw the identical bed in which, *tradition says*, King Duncan was murdered; lastly, from Fort George to Inverness." [1]

From Inverness, Burns went along the Moray Frith to Fochabers, taking Culloden Muir and Brodie House in his way.[2]

"Cross Spey to Fochabers—fine palace, worthy of the noble, the polite, and generous proprietor.—The duke makes me happier than ever great man did; noble, princely, yet mild, condescending, and affable—gay and kind. The duchess charming, witty, kind, and sensible—God bless them."

Burns, who had been much noticed by this noble family when in Edinburgh, happened to present himself at Gordon Castle just at the dinner hour, and being invited to take his place at the table, did so, without for a moment adverting to the circumstance that his travelling companion had been left alone at the inn, in the adjacent village. On remembering this soon after dinner, he begged to be allowed to rejoin his friend; and the Duke of Gordon, who now for the first time learned that he was not journeying alone, immediately proposed to send an invitation to Mr. Nicol to come to the castle. His grace's messenger found the haughty schoolmaster striding up and down before the inn-door in a state of high wrath and indignation, at what he considered Burns's neglect, and no apologies could soften his mood. He had already ordered horses, and the poet finding that he must chose between the ducal circle and his irritable associate, at once left Gordon Castle, and repaired to the inn; whence Nicol and he, in silence and mutual displeasure, pursued their journey along the coast of the Moray Frith. This incident may serve to suggest some of the annoyances to which persons moving, like our poet, on the debatable land between two different ranks of society, must ever be subjected. To play the lion under such circumstances, must be difficult at the best; but a delicate business indeed, when the jackals are presumptuous. This pedant could not stomach the superior success

well cared for, and the river in its present state could have no pretext for the prayer—

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

[1] Letter to Gilbert Burns, Edinburgh, 17th Dec. 1787.

[2] (Extract from *Journal.*)—*Thursday*, Came over Culloden Muir—reflection on the field of battle—breakfast at Kilraick [the local pronunciation of Kilravock]—old Mrs. Rose—sterling sense, warm heart, strong passion, honest pride—all to an uncommon degree—a true chieftain's wife—daughter of Clephane—Mrs. Rose, jun., a little milder than the mother, perhaps owing to her being younger—two young ladies—Miss Rose sung two Gaelic songs—beautiful and lovely—Miss Sophy Brodie, not very beautiful, but most agreeable and amiable—both of them the gentlest, mildest, sweetest creatures on earth, and happiness be with them! Brodie House to lie—Mr. B. truly polite, but not quite the Highland cordiality.—*Friday*, cross the Findhorn to Forres—famous stone at Forres—Mr. Brodie tells me the muir where Shakespeare lays Macbeth's witch-meeting is still haunted—that the country folks won't pass through it at night.—*Elgin*—venerable ruins of the abbey, a grander effect at first glance than Melrose, but nothing near so beautiful.

of his friend—and yet, alas for human nature! he certainly was one of the most enthusiastic of his admirers, and one of the most affectionate of all his intimates. The abridgment of Burns's visit at Gordon Castle "was not only," says Mr. Walker, "a mortifying disappointment, but in all probability a serious misfortune; as a longer stay among persons of such influence might have begot a permanent intimacy, and on their parts, an active concern for his future advancement."[1] But this touches on a subject which we cannot at present pause to consider.

A few days after leaving Fochabers, Burns transmitted to Gordon Castle his acknowledgment of the hospitality he had received from the noble family, in the stanzas—

> Streams that glide in orient plains,
> Never bound by winter's chains, &c.

The duchess, on hearing them read, said she supposed they were Dr. Beattie's, and on learning whose they really were, expressed her wish that Burns had celebrated Gordon Castle in his own dialect. The verses are among the poorest of his productions.

Pursuing his journey along the coast, the poet visited successively Nairn, Forres, Aberdeen, and Stonehaven, where one of his relations, James Burness, writer in Montrose, met him by appointment, and conducted him into the circle of his paternal kindred, among whom he spent two or three days. When Wm. Burness, his father, abandoned his native district, never to revisit it, he, as he used to tell his children, took a sorrowful farewell of his brother on the summit of the last hill from which the roof of their lowly home could be descried; and the old man ever after kept up an affectionate correspondence with his family. It fell to the poet's lot, as we have seen, to communicate his father's last illness and death to the Kincardineshire kindred; and of his subsequent correspondence with Mr. James Burness, some specimens have already been given, by the favour of his son. Burns now formed a personal acquaintance with these good people; and in a letter to his brother Gilbert, we find him describing them in terms which show the lively interest he took in all their concerns.

[1] Morison, vol. i. p. lxxx.

"The rest of my stages," says he, "are not worth rehearsing; warm as I was from Ossian's country, where I had seen his grave, what cared I for fishing-towns and fertile carses?" He arrived once more in Edinburgh, on the 16th of September, having travelled about six hundred miles in two-and-twenty days—greatly extended his acquaintance with his own country, and visited some of its most classical scenery—observed something of Highland manners, which must have been as interesting as they were novel to him—and strengthened considerably among the sturdy Jacobites of the North those political opinions which he at this period avowed.

Of the few poems composed during this Highland tour, we have already mentioned two or three. While standing by the Fall of Fyers, near Loch Ness, he wrote with his pencil the vigorous couplets—

> Among the heathy hills and ragged woods,
> The roaring Fyers pours his mossy floods, &c.

When at Sir William Murray's of Ochtertyre, he celebrated Miss Murray of Lintrose, commonly called "The Flower of Strathmore," in the song—

> Blythe, blythe, and merry was she,
> Blythe was she but and ben, &c.

And the verses, "On Scaring some Water Fowl on Loch-Turit,"[2] were composed while under the same roof. These last, except, perhaps, "Bruar Water," are the best that he added to his collection during the wanderings of the summer.[3] But in Burns's subsequent productions we find many traces of the delight with which he had contemplated nature in these alpine regions.

The poet once more visited his family at Mossgiel, and Mr. Miller at Dalswinton, ere the winter set in; and on more leisurely examination of that gentleman's estate, we find him writing as if he had all but decided to become his tenant on the farm of Ellisland. It was not, however, until he had for the third time visited Dumfriesshire, in March, 1788, that a bargain was actually concluded.

[2] Why, ye tenants of the lake,
For me your wat'ry haunt forsake, &c.

[3] [The visit to Ochtertyre belongs to the Harvieston trip in October. See note 3, p 73.]

More than half of the intervening months were spent in Edinburgh, where Burns found, or fancied, that his presence was necessary for the satisfactory completion of his affairs with the booksellers. It seems to be clear enough, that one great object was the society of his jovial intimates in the capital. Nor was he without the amusement of a little romance to fill up what vacant hours they left him. He formed, about this time, his acquaintance with a lady, distinguished, I believe, for taste and talents, as well as for personal beauty, and the purity of whose character was always above suspicion—the same to whom he addressed the song,

Clarinda, mistress of my soul, &c.,

and a series of prose epistles, which have been separately published, and which, if they present more instances of bombastic language and fulsome sentiment than could be produced from all his writings besides, contain also, it must be acknowledged, passages of deep and noble feeling, which no one but Burns could have penned. One sentence, as strongly illustrative of the poet's character, I may venture to transcribe: "People of nice sensibility and generous minds have a certain intrinsic dignity, which fires at being trifled with, or lowered, *or even too closely approached.*"[1]

At this time the publication called Johnson's *Museum of Scottish Song,*[2] was going on in Edinburgh; and the editor appears to have early prevailed on Burns to give him his assistance in the arrangement of his materials. Though "Green Grow the Rashes" is the only song, entirely his, which appears in the first volume, published in 1787, many of the old ballads included in that volume bear traces of his hand;[3] but in the second volume, which appeared in March 1788, we find no fewer than five songs by Burns; two that have been already mentioned,[4] and three far better than them, viz.:—"Theniel Menzies' bonny Mary," that grand lyric,

Farewell, ye dungeons dark and strong,
The wretch's destiny,
Macpherson's time will not be long
On yonder gallows tree;

both of which performances bespeak the recent impressions of his Highland visit; and, lastly, "Whistle and I'll come to you, my lad."[5] Burns had been, from his youth upwards, an enthusiastic lover of the old minstrelsy and music of his country; but he now studied both subjects with far better opportunities and appliances than he could have commanded previously; and it is from this time that we must date his ambition to transmit his own poetry to posterity, in eternal association with those exquisite airs which had hitherto, in far too many instances, been married to verses that did not deserve to be immortal. It is well known, that from this time Burns composed very few pieces but songs; and whether we ought or ought not to regret that such was the case, must depend on the estimate we make of his songs as compared with his other poems; a point on which critics are to this hour divided, and on which their descendants are not very likely to agree. Mr. Walker, who is one of those that lament Burns's comparative dereliction of the species of composition which he most cultivated in the early days of his inspiration, suggests very sensibly, that if Burns had not taken to song-writing, he would probably have written little or nothing, amidst the various temptations to company and dissipation which now and henceforth surrounded him—to say nothing of the active duties of life in which he was at length about to be engaged.

[1] It is proper to note, that the "Letters to Clarinda" were printed by one who had no right to do so, and that the Court of Session granted an interdict against their circulation. [An authorized edition arranged and edited by Clarinda's grandson, W. C. M'Lehose, was published in 1843. They appear in the present edition in their proper place.]

[2] [The true title is the *Scots Musical Museum*, in Six Volumes, consisting of Six Hundred Scots Songs, with proper basses for the Pianoforte, &c.; by James Johnson.]

[3] [This is incorrect, for his song "Young Peggy blooms our bonniest lass," written on Miss Peggy Kennedy, the unfortunate daughter of a landed proprietor in Carrick, to whom Burns was introduced while she was on a visit to a friend in Mauchline in 1785, follows immediately after "Green Grow the Rashes."]

[4] "Clarinda," and "How pleasant the banks of the clear winding Devon."

[5] [There were more songs than these by Burns in Johnson's second volume, but many of them were unacknowledged.]

Burns was present, on the 31st of December, at a dinner to celebrate the birthday of the unfortunate Charles Edward Stuart, and produced on the occasion an ode, part of which Dr. Currie has preserved.[1] The specimen will not induce any regret that the remainder of the piece has been suppressed. It appears to be a mouthing rhapsody—far, far different indeed from the "Chevalier's Lament," which the poet composed some months afterwards, with probably the tithe of the effort, while riding alone "through a tract of melancholy muirs between Galloway and Ayrshire, it being Sunday."

For six weeks of the time that Burns spent this year in Edinburgh, he was confined to his room, in consequence of an overturn in a hackney-coach. "Here I am," he writes, "under the care of a surgeon, with a bruised limb extended on a cushion, and the tints of my mind vying with the livid horrors preceding a midnight thunder-storm. A drunken coachman was the cause of the first, and incomparably the lightest evil; misfortune, bodily constitution, hell, and myself, have formed a *quadruple alliance* to guarantee the other. I have taken tooth and nail to the Bible, and have got through the five books of Moses, and half-way in Joshua. It is really a glorious book. I sent for my bookbinder to-day, and ordered him to get an 8vo Bible in sheets, the best paper and print in town, and bind it with all the elegance of his craft."[2]

In another letter, which opens gaily enough, we find him reverting to the same prevailing darkness of mood. "I can't say I am altogether at my ease when I see anywhere in my path that meagre, squalid, famine-faced spectre, Poverty, attended, as he always is, by iron-fisted Oppression and leering Contempt. But I have sturdily withstood his buffetings many a hard-laboured day, and still my motto is, I DARE. My worst enemy is *moi-même*. There are just two creatures that I would envy—a horse in his wild state traversing the forests of Asia, or an oyster on some of the desert shores of Europe. The one has not a wish without enjoyment; the other has neither wish nor fear."

One more specimen of this magnificent hypochondriacism may be sufficient.[3] "These have been six horrible weeks. Anguish and low spirits have made me unfit to read, write, or think. I have a hundred times wished that one could resign life as an officer does a commission; for I would not *take in* any poor ignorant wretch by *selling out*. Lately, I was a sixpenny private; and, God knows, a miserable soldier enough: now I march to the campaign a starving cadet, a little more conspicuously wretched. I am ashamed of all this; for, though I do not want bravery for the warfare of life, I could wish, like some other soldiers, to have as much fortitude or cunning as to dissemble or conceal my cowardice."

It seems impossible to doubt that Burns had, in fact, lingered in Edinburgh, in the hope that, to use a vague but sufficiently expressive phrase, something would be done for him. He visited and revisited a farm,—talked and wrote scholarly and wisely about "having a fortune at the plough-tail," and so forth; but all the while nourished, and assuredly it would have been most strange if he had not, the fond dream, that the admiration of his country would ere long present itself in some solid and tangible shape. His illness and confinement gave him leisure to concentrate his imagination on the darker side of his prospects; and the letters which we have quoted, may teach those who may envy the powers and the fame of genius, to pause for a moment over the annals of literature, and think what superior capabilities of misery have been, in the great majority of cases, interwoven with the possession of those very talents, from which all but their possessors derive unmingled gratification.

Burns's distresses, however, were to be still farther aggravated. While still under the hands of his surgeon, he received intelligence from Mauchline that his intimacy with Jean Armour had once more exposed her to the reproaches of her family. The father sternly and at once turned her out of doors; and Burns, unable to walk across his room, had to write to his friends in Mauchline to procure shelter

[1] [Currie printed part of the second section only, but the whole ode has since been oftener than once printed in its entirety. See "Birthday Ode for 31st Dec. 1787."]

[2] Letter to Miss Chalmers, 12th December, 1787.

[3] Letter to Mrs. Dunlop, 21st January, 1788.

for his children, and for her whom he considered as—all but his wife.[1] In a letter to Mrs. Dunlop, written on hearing of this new misfortune, he says, "*I wish I were dead, but I'm no like to die.* I fear I am something like —undone; but I hope for the best. You must not desert me. Your friendship I think I can count on, though I should date my letters from a marching regiment. Early in life, and all my life, I reckoned on a recruiting drum as my forlorn hope. Seriously, though, life at present presents me with but a melancholy path——But my limb will soon be sound, and I shall struggle on."[2]

It seems to have been *now* that Burns at last screwed up his courage to solicit the active interference in his behalf of the Earl of Glencairn. The letter is a brief one. Burns could ill endure this novel attitude, and he rushed at once to his request. "I wish," says he, "to get into the Excise. I am told your lordship will easily procure me the grant from the commissioners; and your lordship's patronage and kindness, which have already rescued me from obscurity, wretchedness, and exile, embolden me to ask that interest. You have likewise put it in my power to save the little tie of *home* that sheltered an aged mother, two brothers, and three sisters, from destruction. There, my lord, you have bound me over to the highest gratitude. My heart sinks within me at the idea of applying to any other of The Great who have honoured me with their countenance. I am ill qualified to dog the heels of greatness with the impertinence of solicitation; and tremble nearly as much at the thought of the cold promise as of the cold denial."

It would be hard to think that this letter was coldly or negligently received; on the contrary, we know that Burns's gratitude to Lord Glencairn lasted as long as his life. But the excise appointment which he coveted was not procured by any exertion of this noble patron's influence. Mr. Alexander Wood, surgeon (still affectionately remembered in Scotland as "kind old Sandy Wood"), happening to hear Burns, while his patient, mention the object of his wishes, went immediately, without dropping any hint of his intention, and communicated the state of the poet's case to Mr. Graham of Fintry, one of the commissioners of excise, who had met Burns at the Duke of Athole's in the autumn, and who immediately had the poet's name put on the roll.

"I have chosen this, my dear friend (thus wrote Burns to Mrs. Dunlop[3]), after mature deliberation. The question is not at what door of Fortune's Palace shall we enter in; but what doors does she open to us? I was not likely to get anything to do. I wanted *an out*, which is a dangerous, an unhappy situation. I got this without any hanging on, or mortifying solicitation. It is immediate bread, and, though poor in comparison of the last eighteen months of my existence, 'tis luxury in comparison of all my preceding life. *Besides, the Commissioners are some of them my acquaintances, and all of them my firm friends.*"

Our poet seems to have kept up an angry correspondence, during his confinement, with his bookseller, Mr. Creech, whom he also abuses very heartily in his letters to his friends in Ayrshire. The publisher's accounts, however, when they were at last made up, must have given the impatient author a very agreeable surprise; for in his letter above quoted, to Lord Glencairn, we find him expressing his hopes that the gross profits of his book might amount to "better than £200," whereas, on the day of settling with Mr. Creech, he found himself in possession of £500, if not of £600.[4]

[1] [Burns's children did not require shelter at this time; Jean's only living child, Robert, was being well cared for, along with the daughter of Elizabeth Paton, at Mossgiel.]

[2] [This extract is from a letter addressed to Miss Margaret Chalmers (not to Mrs. Dunlop), dated 22d January, 1788.]

[3] [This extract is from a letter written to Miss Margaret Chalmers and not to Mrs. Dunlop. It is dated 15th February, 1788.]

[4] Mr. Nicol, the most intimate friend Burns had at this time, writes to Mr. John Lewars, excise-officer at Dumfries, immediately on hearing of the poet's death,—"He certainly told me that he received £600 for the first Edinburgh edition, and £100 afterwards for the copyright" (MS. in my possession). Dr. Currie states the gross product of Creech's edition at £500, and Burns himself, in one of his printed letters, at £400 only. Nicol hints, in the letter already referred to, that Burns had contracted debts while in Edinburgh, which he might not wish to avow on all occasions; and if we are to believe this, and, as

This supply came truly in the hour of need; and it seems to have elevated his spirits greatly, and given him for the time a new stock of confidence; for he now resumed immediately his purpose of taking Mr. Miller's farm, retaining his excise commission in his pocket as a *dernier resort*, to be made use of only should some reverse of fortune come upon him. His first act, however, was to relieve his brother from his difficulties, by advancing £180, or £200, to assist him in the management of Mossgiel. "I give myself no airs on this," he generously says in a letter to Dr. Moore, "for it was mere selfishness on my part. I was conscious that the wrong scale of the balance was pretty heavily charged, and I thought that the throwing a little filial piety and fraternal affection into the scale in my favour, might help to smooth matters at the *grand reckoning*."

CHAPTER VII.

[Marriage:—takes Ellisland, and enters on possession:—excuses for his marriage:—builds a house, and brings his wife home:—company courted by neighbours and visitors:—contributions to Johnson's *Museum*:—extensive correspondence:—farming a failure:—obtains actual employment as an exciseman:—Allan Cunningham's recollections:—perils and temptations of his new vocation:—the "whistle contest:"—Captain Grose:—"Tam o' Shanter:"—legend:—Ellisland anecdotes:—leaves Ellisland:—last visit to Edinburgh:—convivial conversation.]

To make a happy fireside clime
For weans and wife children
That's the true pathos and sublime
Of human life.

Burns, as soon as his bruised limb was able for a journey, rode to Mossgiel, and went through the ceremony of a justice-of-peace marriage with Jean Armour, in the writing-chambers of his friend Gavin Hamilton.[1] He then crossed the country to Dalswinton, and concluded his bargain with Mr. Miller as to the farm of Ellisland, on terms which must undoubtedly have been considered by both parties as highly favourable to the poet; they were indeed fixed by two of Burns's own friends, who accompanied him for that purpose from Ayrshire. The lease was for four successive terms, of nineteen years each,—in

is probable, the expense of printing the subscription edition, should, moreover, be deducted from the £700 stated by Mr. Nicol—the apparent contradictions in these stories may be pretty nearly reconciled. There appears to be reason for thinking that Creech subsequently paid more than £100 for the copyright. If he did not, how came Burns to realize, as Currie states it at the end of his *Memoir*, "nearly nine hundred pounds in all by his poems?"

[1] Burns left Edinburgh for Ayrshire on 18th February, but it was not till sometime in May that Jean obtained a title to be publicly designated "Mrs. Burns," by going through some form in Gavin Hamilton's office, the "kirk" ceremonial not taking place till August. In fact, it would seem that Burns at this time had no intention of making her his wife. He was in the midst of the infatuation about Clarinda, to whom he writes, after having visited Jean:—"I am disgusted with her (Jean). I cannot endure her. . . . I have done with her, and she with me." In March he details to Ainslie how he had sworn her privately and solemnly never to attempt any claim on him as a husband, so that Jean's chance of becoming Mrs. Burns did not look bright at the time Burns left Edinburgh nor for some time after.

The marriage of Burns and Jean Armour was confirmed by the ecclesiastical authorities on Burns and his wife humbling themselves before the session. The following is a copy of the session-clerk's record, the signature of Jean being in the poet's handwriting:—

"1788, August 5, Sess. con.:—Compeared Robert Burns with Jean Armour, his alleged spouse. They both acknowledged their irregular marriage and their sorrow for that irregularity, and desiring that the Session will take such steps as may seem to them proper, in order to the Solemn Confirmation of the said marriage.

"The Session taking this affair under their consideration, agree that they both be rebuked for this acknowledged irregularity, and that they be taken solemnly engaged to adhere faithfully to one another as husband and wife all the days of their life.

"In regard the Session have a title in law to some fine for behoof of the poor, they agree to refer to Mr. Burns his own generosity.

"The above Sentence was accordingly executed, and the Session absolved the said parties from any scandal on this acct. Robt. Burns,

"Willm. Auld, Modr. Jean Armour,

"(Mr. Burns gave a guinea-note for behoof of the poor)."]

all seventy-six years; the rent for the first three years and crops £50; during the remainder of the period £70. Mr. Miller bound himself to defray the expense of any plantations which Burns might please to make on the banks of the river; and the farm-house and offices being in a dilapidated condition, the new tenant was to receive £300 from the proprietor, for the erection of suitable buildings. "The land," says Allan Cunningham, "was good, the rent moderate, and the markets were rising."

Burns entered on possession of his farm at Whitsuntide 1788, but the necessary rebuilding of the house prevented his removing Mrs. Burns thither until the season was far advanced. He had, moreover, to qualify himself for holding his excise commission by six weeks' attendance on the business of that profession at Ayr. From these circumstances, he led this summer a wandering and unsettled life, and Dr. Currie mentions this as one of his chief misfortunes. "The poet," as he says, "was continually riding between Ayrshire and Dumfriesshire; and, often spending a night on the road, sometimes fell into company, and forgot the resolutions he had formed."

What these resolutions were the poet himself shall tell us. On the third day of his residence at Ellisland, he thus writes to Mr. Ainslie: "I have all along hitherto, in the warfare of life, been bred to arms, among the light-horse, the piquet guards of fancy, a kind of hussars and Highlanders of the brain; but I am firmly resolved to sell out of these giddy battalions. Cost what it will, I am determined to buy in among the grave squadrons of heavy armed thought, or the artillery corps of plodding contrivance. . . . Were it not for the terrors of my ticklish situation respecting a family of children, I am decidedly of opinion that the step I have taken is vastly for my happiness."

To all his friends, he expresses himself in terms of similar satisfaction in regard to his marriage. "Your surmise, madam," he writes to Mrs. Dunlop, "is just. I am indeed a husband. I found a once much-loved, and still much-loved female, literally and truly cast out to the mercy of the naked elements, but as I enabled her to *purchase* a shelter; and there is no sporting with a fellow-creature's happiness or misery. . . . The most placid good-nature and sweetness of disposition; a warm heart, gratefully devoted with all its powers to love me; vigorous health and sprightly cheerfulness, set off to the best advantage by a more than commonly handsome figure; these, I think, in a woman, may make a good wife, though she should never have read a page but the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, nor danced in a brighter assembly than a penny-pay wedding."[1] . . . "To jealousy or infidelity I am an equal stranger; my preservative from the first, is the most thorough consciousness of her sentiments of honour, and her attachment to me;[2] my antidote against the last, is my long and deep-rooted affection for her. . . . In household matters, of aptness to learn, and activity to execute, she is eminently mistress, and during my absence in Nithsdale, she is regularly and constantly an apprentice to my mother and sisters in their dairy, and other rural business. . . . You are right, that a bachelor state would have ensured me more friends; but from a cause you will easily guess, conscious peace in the enjoyment of my own mind, and unmistrusting confidence in approaching my God, would seldom have been of the number."[3]

Some months later he tells Miss Chalmers that his marriage "was not, perhaps, in consequence of the attachment of romance,"—he is addressing a young lady—"but," he continues, "I have no cause to repent it. If I have not got polite tattle, modish manners, and fashionable dress, I am not sickened and disgusted with the multiform curse of boarding-school affectation; and I have got the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and the kindest heart in the country. Mrs. Burns believes as firmly as her creed, that I am *le plus bel esprit et le*

[1] Letter to Mrs. Dunlop, 14th June, 1788.

[2] ["Perhaps, after all, these revolutions in the ardent vivacious mind of Burns [that is, his forgetting all his vows and protestations to Clarinda and marrying Jean] are less astounding than the fact (for it is one beyond all question) that the poet was not now, and never had been, exactly the favourite lover of Jean. There was, it seems, another person whom she fancied above him, though, as but too plainly appears, she had been unable to contend against the fascination of those dark eyes in which lay her fate." —Robert Chambers.]

[3] Letter to Mrs. Dunlop, 10th July, 1788.

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Blackie & Son, London, Glasgow, & Edinburgh.

D. O. Hill R.S.A. T. Jeavons

ELLISLAND.

THE POET'S RESIDENCE ON THE NITH.

Blackie & Son, London, Glasgow, & Edinburgh.

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plus honnête homme in the universe; although she scarcely ever, in her life, except the Scriptures and the Psalms of David in Metre, spent five minutes together on either prose or verse —I must except also a certain late publication of Scots Poems, which she has perused very devoutly, and all the ballads of the country, as she has (O the partial lover! you will say) the finest woodnote-wild I ever heard."[1]

It was during this honeymoon, as he calls it, while chiefly resident in a miserable hovel at Ellisland, and only occasionally spending a day or two in Ayrshire, that he wrote the beautiful song,

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; — love
There wildwoods grow, and rivers row, — roll
And many a hill between,
But day and night my fancy's flight
Is ever wi' my Jean.

O blaw, ye westlin winds, blaw saft — western
Amang the leafy trees,
Wi' gentle gale, frae muir and dale, — from
Bring hame the laden bees, — home
And bring the lassie back to me,
That's aye sae neat and clean, — always
Ae blink o' her wad banish care, — one glimpse
Sae lovely is my Jean.[2]

"A discerning reader," says Mr. Walker, "will perceive that the letters in which he announces his marriage to some of his most respected correspondents, are written in that state when the mind is pained by reflecting on an unwelcome step, and finds relief to itself in seeking arguments to justify the deed, and lessen its disadvantages in the opinion of others."[3] I confess I am not able to discern any traces of this kind of feeling in any of Burns's letters on this interesting and important occasion. Mr. Walker seems to take it for granted, that because Burns admired the superior manners and accomplishments of women of the higher ranks of society, he must necessarily, whenever he discovered "the interest which he had the power of creating" in such persons, have aspired to find a wife among them. But it is, to say the least of the matter, extremely doubtful, that Burns, if he had had a mind, could have found any high-born maiden willing to partake such fortunes as his were likely to be, and yet possessed of such qualifications for making him a happy man, as he had ready for his acceptance in his "Bonny Jean." The proud heart of the poet could never have stooped itself to woo for gold; and birth and high breeding could only have been introduced into a farm-house to embitter, in the upshot, the whole existence of its inmates. It is very easy to say, that had Burns married an accomplished woman, he *might* have found domestic evenings sufficient to satisfy all the cravings of his mind—abandoned tavern haunts and jollities for ever—and settled down into a regular pattern-character. But it is at least as possible, that consequences of an exactly opposite nature might have ensued. Any marriage, such as Professor Walker alludes to, would, in his case, have been more unequal, than either of those that made Dryden and Addison miserable for life.[4]

Sir Walter Scott in his *Life* of the former of these great men, has well described the difficult situation of her who has "to endure the apparently causeless fluctuation of spirits incident to one doomed to labour incessantly in the feverish exercise of the imagination." "Unintentional neglect," says he, "and the inevitable relaxation, or rather sinking of spirit, which follows violent mental exertion, are easily misconstrued into capricious rudeness, or intentional offence; and life is embittered by mutual accusation, not the less intolerable because reciprocally unjust."[5] Such were the difficulties under which the domestic peace both of Addison and Dryden went to wreck;

[1] One of Burns's letters, written not long after this [to Mrs. Dunlop, July 10, 1788], contains a passage strongly marked with his haughtiness of character. "I have escaped," says he, "the fantastic caprice, the apish affectation, with all the other blessed boarding-school acquirements which are *sometimes* to be found among females of the upper ranks, but almost universally pervade the misses of the would-be-gentry."

[2] [This stanza, as is now well known, was not written by Burns.]

[3] Morison, vol. i. p. lxxxvii.

[4] [Burns not only aspired to find a wife among "the higher ranks of society," but he actually made a formal offer of marriage to Miss Peggy Chalmers, which was declined on the plea of her pre-engagement to Mr. Lewis Hay. This was well known to his biographer Walker, and was admitted by the lady herself to Thomas Campbell, the poet, who was a familiar visitor during her widowhood.]

[5] *Life of Dryden*, p. 90.

and yet, to say nothing of manners and habits of the highest elegance and polish in either case, they were both of them men of strictly pure and correct conduct in their conjugal capacities; and who can doubt that all these difficulties must have been enhanced tenfold, had any woman of superior condition linked her fortunes with Robert Burns, a man at once of the very warmest animal temperament, and the most wayward and moody of all his melancholy and irritable tribe, who had little vanity that could have been gratified by a species of connection, which, unless he had found a human angel, must have been continually wounding his pride? But, in truth, these speculations are all worse than worthless. Burns, with all his faults, was an honest and high-spirited man, and he loved the mother of his children; and had he hesitated to make her his wife, he must have sunk into the callousness of a ruffian, or that misery of miseries, the remorse of a poet.

The Reverend Hamilton Paul takes an original view of this business: "Much praise," says he, "has been lavished on Burns for renewing his engagement with Jean when in the blaze of his fame. . . . The praise is misplaced. We do not think a man entitled to credit or commendation for doing what the law could compel him to perform. Burns was in reality a married man, and it is truly ludicrous to hear him, aware as he must have been, of the indissoluble power of the obligation, though every document was destroyed, talking of himself as a bachelor."[1] There is no justice in these remarks. It is very true, that, by a merciful fiction of the law of Scotland, the female in Miss Armour's condition, who produces a written promise of marriage, is considered as having furnished evidence of an irregular marriage having taken place between her and her lover; but in this case the female herself had destroyed the document, and lived for many months not only not assuming, but rejecting, the character of Burns's wife; and had she, under such circumstances, attempted to establish a marriage, with no document in her hand, and with no parole evidence to show that any such document had ever existed, to say nothing of proving its exact tenor, but that of her own father, it is clear that no ecclesiastical court in the world could have failed to decide against her. So far from Burns's having all along regarded her as his wife, it is extremely doubtful whether she had ever for one moment considered him as actually her husband, until he declared the marriage of 1788. Burns did no more than justice as well as honour demanded; but the act was one which no human tribunal could have compelled him to perform.[2]

To return to our story. Burns complains sadly of his solitary condition, when living in the only hovel that he found extant on his farm. "I am," says he (September 9th), "busy with my harvest; but for all that most pleasurable part of life called social intercourse, I am here at the very elbow of existence. The only things that are to be found in this country in any degree of perfection, are stupidity and canting. Prose they only know in prayers, &c., and the value of these they estimate as they do their plaiding webs, by the ell. As for the Muses, they have as much idea of a rhinoceros as of a poet."[3] And in another letter (September 16), he says: "This hovel that I shelter in while occasionally here, is pervious to every blast that blows, and every shower that falls, and I am only preserved from being chilled to death by being suffocated by

[1] Paul's *Life of Burns*, p 45.

[2] I am bound to say that, from some criticisms on the first edition of this narrative, published in Scotland, and evidently by Scotch lawyers, it appears, that the case, "*Armour* versus *Burns*," had there ever been such a lawsuit, would have been more difficult of decision than I had previously supposed. One thing, however, is quite clear: Burns himself had no notion, that, in acknowledging his *Jean* as his wife, he was but yielding what legal measures could have extorted from him. Let any one consider, for example, the language of the letter in which he announces his marriage and establishment at Ellisland, to Mr. Burness of Montrose—

"(*Ellisland 9th Feb.* 1789.) . . . Here, at last, I have become stationary, and have taken a farm, and —a wife. . . . My wife is my Jean, with whose story you are partly acquainted. I found I had a much-loved fellow-creature's happiness or misery among my hands, and I durst not trifle with so sacred a deposit. [This sentence occurs at least half a dozen times in letters to different parties, and seems to justify Walker's remark that Burns sought arguments to justify his marriage.] Indeed, I have not any reason to repent the step I have taken, as I have attached myself to a very good wife, and have shaken myself loose of a very bad failing." [See the letter complete in its proper place in the Correspondence.]

[3] Letter to John Beugo, engraver, 9th September, 1788.

smoke. You will be pleased to hear that I have laid aside idle *éclat*, and bind every day after my reapers."[1]

His house, however, did not take much time in building, nor had he reason to complain of want of society long; nor, it must be added, did Burns bind every day after his reapers.

He brought his wife home to Ellisland about the end of November; and few housekeepers start with a larger provision of young mouths to feed than did this couple. Mrs. Burns had lain in this autumn, for the second time, of twins, and I suppose "sonsy, smirking, dear-bought Bess," accompanied her younger brothers and sisters from Mossgiel. From that quarter also Burns brought a whole establishment of servants, male and female, who, of course, as was then the universal custom amongst the small farmers, both of the west and south of Scotland, partook, at the same table, of the same fare with their master and mistress.[2]

Ellisland is beautifully situated on the banks of the Nith, about six miles above Dumfries, exactly opposite to the house of Dalswinton, and those noble woods and gardens amidst which Burns's landlord, the ingenious Mr. Patrick Miller, found relaxation from the scientific studies and researches in which he so greatly excelled.[3] On the Dalswinton side, the river washes lawns and groves; but over against these the bank rises into a long red *scaur*, of considerable height, along the verge of which, where the bare shingle of the precipice all but overhangs the stream, Burns had his favourite walk, and might now be seen striding alone, early and late, especially when the winds were loud, and the waters below him swollen and turbulent. For he was one of those that enjoy nature most in the more serious and severe of her aspects; and throughout his poetry, for one allusion to the liveliness of spring, or the splendour of summer, it would be easy to point out twenty in which he records the solemn delight with which he contemplated the melancholy grandeur of autumn, or the savage gloom of winter. Indeed, I cannot but think, that the result of an exact inquiry into the composition of Burns's poems, would be, that "his vein," like that of Milton, flowed most happily, "from the autumnal equinox to the vernal." Of Lord Byron, we know that his vein flowed best at midnight; and Burns has himself told us, that it was his custom "to take a gloamin' shot at the Muses."

The poet was accustomed to say, that the most happy period of his life was the first winter he spent at Ellisland, for the first time under a roof of his own, with his wife and children about him; and in spite of occasional lapses into the melancholy which had haunted his youth, looking forward to a life of well-regulated, and not ill-rewarded, industry. It is known that he welcomed his wife to her rooftree at Ellisland in the song,

> I hae a wife o' my ain, I'll partake wi' naebody;
> I'll tak cuckold frae nane, I'll gie cuckold to naebody;
> I hae a penny to spend—there, thanks to naebody;
> I hae naething to lend—I'll borrow frae naebody.

In commenting on this "little lively lucky song," as he well calls it, Mr. Allan Cunningham says: "Burns had built his house,—he had committed his seed-corn to the ground,—he was in the prime, nay, the morning of life,—health, and strength, and agricultural skill (?) were on his side,—his genius had been acknowledged by his country, and rewarded by a subscription more extensive than any Scottish poet ever received before; no wonder, therefore, that he broke out into voluntary song, expressive of his sense of importance and independence."[4] Another

[1] Letter to Miss Chalmers, 16th September, 1788.

[2] [Lockhart makes several errors here. Burns's household at this time consisted of himself and his wife, his sister, and a domestic servant, together with two men and two women engaged for out-door work. So far from having a large proportion of young mouths to feed, they had none at all. Robert, Jean's only surviving child, was not brought to Ellisland till the August following, while "Bess" never was in Burns's house after his marriage, but remained at Mossgiel. The statement that the servants "partook at the same table of the same fare with their master and mistress" (trivial though the matter be), is also erroneous, having been directly contradicted by Mrs. Burns herself. The testimony of a William Clark who had been a ploughman to Burns for six months, is quoted by Robert Chambers to the same effect.]

[3] [Mr. Miller's name is known in the history of steam navigation, he having caused to be constructed about this very time one or two small vessels in which steam was successfully employed as a propelling power.]

[4] Cunningham's *Scottish Songs*, vol. iv. p. 86.

song was composed in honour of Mrs. Burns, during the happy weeks that followed her arrival at Ellisland:

> O were I on Parnassus hill,
> Or had of Helicon my fill,
> That I might catch poetic skill,
> To sing how dear I love thee!
>
> But Nith maun be my muse's well, must
> My muse maun be thy bonny sel', self
> On Corsincon I glower, and spell, stare
> And write how dear I love thee![1]

In the next stanza the poet rather transgresses the limits of connubial decorum; but on the whole these tributes to domestic affection are among the last of his performances that one would wish to lose.

Burns, in his letters of the year 1789, makes many apologies for doing but little in his poetical vocation; his farm, without doubt, occupied much of his attention, but the want of social intercourse, of which he complained on his first arrival in Nithsdale, had by this time totally disappeared. On the contrary, his company was courted eagerly, not only by his brother-farmers, but by the neighbouring gentry of all classes; and now, too, for the first time, he began to be visited continually in his own house by curious travellers of all sorts, who did not consider, any more than the generous poet himself, that an extensive practice of hospitality must cost more time than he ought to have had, and far more money than he ever had, at his disposal. Meantime, he was not wholly regardless of the Muses; for, in addition to some pieces which we have already had occasion to notice, he contributed to this year's *Museum*, "The Thames flows proudly to the sea;" "The lazy mist hangs, &c.;" "The day returns, my bosom burns;" "Tam Glen" (one of the best of his humorous songs): the splendid lyrics, "Go fetch to me a pint of wine," and "My heart's in the Highlands" (in both of which, however, he adopted some lines of ancient songs to the same tunes), "John Anderson," in part also a *rifacciamento;* the best of all his bacchanalian pieces, "Willie brewed a peck o' maut," written in celebration of a festive meeting at the country residence, in Dumfriesshire, of his friend Mr. Nicol, of the High School; and lastly, that noblest of all his ballads, "To Mary in Heaven."

This celebrated poem was, it is on all hands admitted, composed by Burns in September, 1789, on the anniversary of the day on which he heard of the death of his early love, Mary Campbell.[2] But Mr. Cromek has thought fit to dress up the story with circumstances which did not occur. Mrs. Burns, the only person who could appeal to personal recollection on this occasion, and whose recollections of all circumstances connected with the history of her husband's poems are represented as being remarkably distinct and vivid, gives what may at first appear a more prosaic edition of the history.[3] According to her, Burns spent that day, though labouring under a cold, in the usual work of his harvest, and apparently in excellent spirits. But as the twilight deepened, he appeared to grow "very sad about something," and at length wandered out into the barn-yard, to which his wife, in her anxiety for his health, followed him, entreating him in vain to observe that frost had set in, and to return to the fireside. On being again and again requested to do so, he always promised compliance—but still remained where

[1] [This poetic compliment to Jean was composed during the summer or autumn of 1788, before she took up her residence at Ellisland.]

[2] [Subsequent inquiries into the episode of Highland Mary would seem to fix the anniversary of her death about the 19th or 20th of October.]

[3] I owe these particulars to Mr. M'Diarmid, the able editor of the *Dumfries Courier*. [Cromek in 1808 describes the poet as on the occasion, wandering "solitary on the banks of the Nith, and about his farmyard, in the extremest agitation of mind nearly the whole night." About twenty years after, the version of the story here given appeared. Doubts have more than once been expressed as to whether this circumstantial account, alleged to have been given by Mrs. Burns, is in all particulars a narrative of actual facts, and whether it may not have received unconscious embellishments in the lapse of time. It certainly seems strange that Burns should have submitted to the perusal of his wife, immediately after its composition, such a noble tribute to another woman, whose memory still apparently possessed his soul, and whose "lover" he still speaks of being. If he did so we cannot help believing that the poet, by this time at anyrate, had no deep and real feeling in regard to his Mary of untimely fate, but found her name and early death useful to him as a basis for the working of his poetic genius. The "groans" that rent his breast might be audible to the Muse, but by mortal ears were certainly not heard. It may be remarked also that the star addressed in the poem is the *morning* star.]

he was, striding up and down slowly, and contemplating the sky, which was singularly clear and starry. At last Mrs. Burns found him stretched on a mass of straw, with his eyes fixed on a beautiful planet "that shone like another moon;" and prevailed on him to come in. He immediately, on entering the house, called for his desk, and wrote, exactly as they now stand, with all the ease of one copying from memory, the sublime and pathetic verses—

> Thou lingering star, with lessening 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, [&c.
> Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

The "Mother's lament for her son," and "Inscription in an Hermitage in Nithsdale," were also written this year.

From the time when Burns settled himself in Dumfriesshire, he appears to have conducted with much care the extensive correspondence in which his celebrity had engaged him; it is, however, very necessary, in judging of the letters, and drawing inferences from their language as to the real sentiments and opinions of the writer, to take into consideration the rank and character of the persons to whom they are severally addressed, and the measure of intimacy which really subsisted between them and the poet. In his letters, as in his conversation, Burns, in spite of all his pride, did something to accommodate himself to his company; and he who did write the series of letters addressed to Mrs. Dunlop, Dr. Moore, Mr. Dugald Stewart, Miss Chalmers, and others, eminently distinguished as these are by purity and nobleness of feeling, and perfect propriety of language, presents himself, in other effusions of the same class, in colours which it would be rash to call his own. In a word, whatever of grossness of thought, or rant, extravagance, and fustian in expression, may be found in his correspondence, ought, I cannot doubt, to be mainly ascribed to his desire of accommodating himself for the moment to the habits and taste of certain buckish tradesmen of Edinburgh, and other such-like persons, whom, from circumstances already sufficiently noticed, he numbered among his associates and friends. That he should have condescended to any such compliances must be regretted; but in most cases, it would probably be quite unjust to push our censure further than this.

The letters that passed between him and his brother Gilbert are among the most precious of the collection; for there, there could be no disguise. That the brothers had entire knowledge of, and confidence in each other, no one can doubt; and the plain, manly, affectionate language, in which they both write, is truly honourable to them and to the parents that reared them.

"Dear Brother," writes Gilbert, January 1, 1789, "I have just finished my New-year's day breakfast in the usual form, which naturally makes me call to mind the days of former years, and the society in which we used to begin them; and when I look at our family vicissitudes, 'through the dark postern of time long elapsed,' I cannot help remarking to you, my dear brother, how good the God of seasons is to us; and that, however some clouds may seem to lour over the portion of time before us, we have great reason to hope that all will turn out well."

It was on the same New-year's day that Burns himself addressed to Mrs. Dunlop a letter, part of which is here transcribed—it certainly cannot be read too often:

"ELLISLAND, *New-Year's-Day Morning*, 1789.

"This, dear madam, is a morning of wishes, and would to God that I came under the apostle James's description!—*the prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* In that case, madam, you should welcome in a year full of blessings; everything that obstructs or disturbs tranquillity and self-enjoyment should be removed, and every pleasure that frail humanity can taste, should be yours. I own myself so little a Presbyterian, that I approve 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, the first Sunday of May, a breezy, blue-skyed noon sometime about the beginning, and a hoary morning and calm

sunny day about the end of autumn; these, time out of mind, have been with me a kind of holiday. I believe I owe this to that glorious paper in the *Spectator*, 'The Vision of Mirza,' a piece that struck my young fancy before I was capable of fixing an idea to a word of three syllables: 'On the 5th day of the moon, which, according to the custom of my forefathers, I always *keep holy*, after having washed myself and offered up my morning devotions, I ascended the high hill of Bagdat, in order to pass the rest of the day in meditation and prayer.'

"We know nothing, or next to nothing, of the substance or structure of our souls, so cannot account for those seeming caprices in them, that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favourite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain daisy, the harebell, the fox-glove, the wild brier-rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never heard the loud, solitary whistle of the curlew, in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of grey plover, in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry.[1] 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."

Few, it is to be hoped, can read such things as these without delight; none, surely, that taste the elevated pleasure they are calculated to inspire, can turn from them to the well-known issue of Burns's history, without being afflicted. It is difficult to imagine anything more beautiful, more noble, than what such a person as Mrs. Dunlop might at this period be supposed to contemplate as the probable tenor of his future life. What fame can bring of happiness he had already tasted: he had overleaped, by the force of his genius, all the painful barriers of society; and there was probably not a man in Scotland who would not have thought himself honoured by seeing Burns under his roof. He had it in his power to place his poetical reputation on a level with the very highest names, by proceeding in the same course of study and exertion which had originally raised him into public notice and admiration. Surrounded by an affectionate family, occupied, but not engrossed, by the agricultural labours in which his youth and early manhood had delighted, communing with nature in one of the loveliest districts of his native land, and, from time to time, producing to the world some immortal addition to his verse—thus advancing in years and in fame, with what respect would not Burns have been thought of; how venerable in the eyes of his contemporaries—how hallowed in those of after generations, would have been the roof of Ellisland, the field on which he "bound every day after his reapers," the solemn river by which he delighted to wander! The plain of Bannockburn would hardly have been holier ground.

The "golden days" of Ellisland, as Dr. Currie justly calls them, were not destined to be many. Burns's farming speculations once more failed; and he himself seems to have been aware that such was likely to be the case before he had given the business many months trial; for, ere the autumn of 1788 was over, he applied to his patron, Mr. Graham of Fintry, for actual employment as an exciseman; and was accordingly appointed to do duty, in that capacity, in the district where his lands were situated. His income, as a revenue officer, was at first only £35; it by and by rose to £50; and sometimes was £70.[2]

[1] [Burns's botanical knowledge appears somewhat weak here; several of the favourites mentioned can by no means be designated "flowers in spring." By the "grey plover" he probably means the *golden* plover, whose "wild cadence" is heard in autumn; the grey plover is a winter shore bird in Scotland.]

[2] Burns writes to Lady H. Don, January 22, 1789:—"My excise salary would pay half my rent, and I could manage the whole business of the division without five guineas of additional expense." [With shares of fines and perquisites derived from seizures of contraband goods, Burns's income was frequently not less than £90 a year.]

These pounds were hardly earned, since the duties of his new calling necessarily withdrew him very often from the farm, which needed his utmost attention, and exposed him, which was still worse, to innumerable temptations of the kind he was least likely to resist.

I have now the satisfaction of presenting the reader with some particulars of this part of Burns's history, derived from a source which every lover of Scotland and Scottish poetry must be prepared to hear mentioned with respect. It happened that at the time when our poet went to Nithsdale, the father of Mr. Allan Cunningham was steward on the estate of Dalswinton: he was, as all who have read the writings of his son will readily believe, a man of remarkable talents and attainments: he was a wise and good man; a fervid admirer of Burns's genius; and one of those sober neighbours who in vain strove, by advice and warning, to arrest the poet in the downhill path, towards which a thousand seductions were perpetually drawing him. Allan Cunningham was, of course, almost a child when he first saw Burns; but he was no common child; and, besides, in what he has to say on this subject, we may be sure we are hearing the substance of his benevolent and sagacious father's observations and reflections. His own boyish recollections of the poet's personal appearance and demeanour will, however, be read with interest.

"I was very young," says Mr. Cunningham, "when I first saw Burns. He came to see my father; and their conversation turned partly on farming, partly on poetry, in both of which my father had taste and skill. Burns had just come to Nithsdale;[1] and I think he appeared a shade more swarthy than he does in Nasmyth's picture, and at least ten years older than he really was at the time. His face was deeply marked by thought, and the habitual expression intensely melancholy. His frame was very muscular and well proportioned, though he had a short neck, and something of a ploughman's stoop; he was strong, and proud of his strength. I saw him one evening match himself with a number of masons; and out of five-and-twenty practised hands, the most vigorous young men in the parish, there was only one that could lift the same weight as Burns.

"He had a very manly face, and a very melancholy look; but on the coming of those he esteemed, his looks brightened up, and his whole face beamed with affection and genius. His voice was very musical. I once heard him read 'Tam o' Shanter,'—I think I hear him now. His fine manly voice followed all the undulations of the sense, and expressed as well as his genius had done, the pathos and humour, the horrible and the awful, of that wonderful performance. As a man feels so will he write; and in proportion as he sympathizes with his author, so will he read him with grace and effect.

"I said that Burns and my father conversed about poetry and farming. The poet had newly taken possession of his farm of Ellisland,—the masons were busy building his house,—the applause of the world was with him, and a little of its money in his pocket,—in short, he had found a resting-place at last. He spoke with great delight about the excellence of his farm, and particularly about the beauty of its situation. 'Yes,' my father said, 'the walks on the river banks are fine, and you will see from your windows some miles of the Nith; but you will also see several farms of fine rich holm,[2] any one of which you might have had. You have made a poet's choice, rather than a farmer's.'

"If Burns had much of a farmer's skill, he had little of a farmer's prudence and economy. I once inquired of James Corrie, a sagacious old farmer, whose ground marched with Ellisland, the cause of the poet's failure. 'Faith,' said he, 'how could he miss but fail, when his servants ate the bread as fast as it was baked? I don't mean figuratively, I mean literally. Consider a little. At that time close economy was necessary to have enabled a man to clear twenty pounds a year by Ellisland. Now, Burns's own handiwork was out of the question; he neither ploughed, nor sowed, nor

[1] [Allan Cunningham must have been "very young," indeed, at this time, seeing that he was born in 1785 (or according to some authorities, 1784), and Burns came to Nithsdale in 1788. His recollections of Burns at this time must be considered rather his father's than his own.]

[2] *Holm* is flat, rich, meadow land, intervening between a stream and the general elevation of the adjoining country. [What is called *haugh* or *carse* land in Scotland.]

reaped, at least like a hard-working farmer; and then he had a bevy of servants from Ayrshire. The lassies did nothing but bake bread, and the lads sat by the fireside, and ate it warm, with ale. Waste of time and consumption of food would soon reach to twenty pounds a year."[1]

"The truth of the case," says Mr. Cunningham, in another letter with which he has favoured me, "the truth is, that if Robert Burns liked his farm, it was more for the beauty of its situation than for the labours which it demanded. He was too wayward to attend to the stated duties of a husbandman, and too impatient to wait till the ground returned in gain the cultivation he bestowed upon it.

"The condition of a farmer, a Nithsdale one I mean, was then very humble. His one-story house had a covering of straw, and a clay floor; the furniture was from the hands of a country carpenter; and, between the roof and floor, there seldom intervened a smoother ceiling than of rough rods and grassy turf—while a huge lang-settle of black oak for himself, and a carved arm-chair for his wife, were the only matters out of keeping with the homely looks of his residence. He took all his meals in his own kitchen, and presided regularly among his children and domestics. He performed family worship every evening—except during the hurry of harvest, when that duty was perhaps limited to Saturday night. A few religious books, two or three favourite poets, the history of his country, and his Bible, aided him in forming the minds and manners of the family. To domestic education, Scotland owes as much as to the care of her clergy and the excellence of her parish-schools.

"The picture out of doors was less interesting. The ground from which the farmer sought support, was generally in a very moderate state of cultivation. The implements with which he tilled his land were primitive and clumsy, and his own knowledge of the management of crops exceedingly limited. He plodded on in the regular slothful routine of his ancestors; he rooted out no bushes; he dug up no stones; he drained not, neither did he inclose; and weeds obtained their full share of the dung and the lime, which he bestowed more like a medicine than a meal on his soil. His plough was the rude old Scotch one; his harrows had as often teeth of wood as of iron; his carts were heavy and low-wheeled, or were, more properly speaking, tumbler-cars, so called to distinguish them from trail-cars, both of which were in common use. On these rude carriages his manure was taken to the field and his crop brought home. The farmer himself corresponded in all respects with his imperfect instruments. His poverty secured him from risking costly experiments; and his hatred of innovation made him intrench himself behind a breastwork of old maxims and rustic saws, which he interpreted as oracles delivered against *improvement*. With ground in such condition, with tools so unfit, and with knowledge so imperfect, he sometimes succeeded in wringing a few hundred pounds *Scots* from the farm he occupied. Such was generally the state of agriculture when Burns came to Nithsdale. I know not how far his own skill was equal to the task of improvement—his trial was short and unfortunate. An important change soon took place, by which he was not fated to profit; he had not the foresight to see its approach, nor, probably, the fortitude to await its coming.

"In the year 1790, much of the ground in Nithsdale was leased at seven, and ten, and fifteen shillings per acre; and the farmer, in his person and his house, differed little from the peasants and mechanics around him. He would have thought his daughter wedded in her degree, had she married a joiner or a mason; and at kirk or market, all men beneath the rank of a 'portioner' of the soil mingled together, equals in appearance and importance. But the war which soon commenced, gave a decided impulse to agriculture; the army and navy consumed largely; corn rose in demand; the price augmented; more land was called

[1] [It ought to be mentioned, however, that Corrie's statement was indignantly denied by Mrs. Burns. Speaking of it to M'Diarmid she declared that "Burns did work, and often like a hard-working farmer." She had seen him, while he had his excise duties to look after, "sow after breakfast two bags of corn for the folk to harrow through the day. . . . There was no waste: on the contrary, everything went on on the principle that is observed in any other well-regulated farm-house." The "bevy of servants from Ayrshire," as has been pointed out previously, is also an exaggeration. Statements made by Allan Cunningham are often to be received with caution.]

into cultivation; and, as leases expired, the proprietors improved the grounds, built better houses, enlarged the rents; and the farmer was soon borne on the wings of sudden wealth above his original condition. His house obtained a slated roof, sash-windows, carpeted floors, plastered walls, and even began to exchange the hanks of yarn with which it was formerly hung, for paintings and pianofortes. He laid aside his coat of home-made cloth; he retired from his seat among his servants; he —I am grieved to mention it—gave up family worship as a thing unfashionable, and became a kind of *rustic gentleman*, who rode a blood-horse, and galloped home on market nights at the peril of his own neck, and to the terror of every modest pedestrian.[1] His daughters, too, no longer prided themselves in well-bleached linen and home-made webs; they changed their linsey-wolsey gowns for silk; and so ungracefully did their new state sit upon them, that I have seen their lovers coming in iron-shod clogs to their carpeted floors, and two of the proudest young women in the parish *skaling* dung to their father's potato-field in silk stockings.

"When a change like this took place, and a farmer could, with a dozen years' industry, be able to purchase the land he rented—which many were, and many did—the same, or a still more profitable change might have happened with respect to Ellisland; and Burns, had he stuck by his lease and his plough, would, in all human possibility, have found the independence which he sought in vain from the coldness and parsimony of mankind."

Mr. Cunningham sums up his reminiscences of Burns at Ellisland, in these terms:—

"During the prosperity of his farm, my father often said that Burns conducted himself wisely, and like one anxious for his name as a man, and his fame as a poet. He went to Dunscore Kirk on Sunday, though he expressed oftener than once his dislike to the stern Calvinism of that strict old divine, Mr. Kirkpatrick; he assisted in forming a reading club; and at weddings, and house-heatings, and *kirns*,[2] and other scenes of festivity, he was a welcome guest, universally liked by the young and the old. But the failure of his farming projects, and the limited income with which he was compelled to support an increasing family and an expensive station in life, preyed upon his spirits; and, during these fits of despair, he was willing too often to become the companion of the thoughtless and the gross. I am grieved to say, that besides leaving the book too much for the bowl, and grave and wise friends for lewd and reckless companions, he was also in the occasional practice of composing songs, in which he surpassed the licentiousness, as well as the wit and humour, of the old Scottish muse. These have unfortunately found their way to the press, and I am afraid they cannot be recalled.[3]

"In conclusion, I may say, that few men have had so much of the poet about them, and few poets so much of the man—the man was probably less pure than he ought to have been, but the poet was pure and bright to the last."

The reader must be sufficiently prepared to hear, that from the time when he entered on his excise duties, the poet more and more neglected the concerns of his farm. Occasionally, he might be seen holding the plough, an exercise in which he excelled, and was proud of excelling, or stalking down his furrows, with the white sheet of grain wrapt about him, a "tenty seedsman;" but he was more commonly occupied in far different pursuits. "I am now," says he, in one of his letters, "a poor rascally gauger, condemned to gallop two hundred miles every week, to inspect dirty bonds and yeasty barrels." [Burns's district, to which he was appointed in the autumn of 1789, comprised ten parishes, with his own parish in the centre.]

Both in verse and in prose he has recorded the feelings with which he first followed his new vocation. His jests on the subject are

[1] Mr. Cunningham's description accords with the lines of Crabbe:

> Who rides his hunter, who his house adorns,
> Who drinks his wine, and his disbursement scorns,
> Who freely lives, and loves to show he can—
> This is the farmer made the gentleman.

[2] *Kirns.*—The harvest-home dances are so called in Scotland.

[3] [This refers to a collection of old-fashioned and highly-spiced Scotch songs of which Burns took the pains to form a MS. collection, and which contained also pieces of similar character written by himself. This collection after Burns's death fell into the hands of a person who had it printed and surreptitiously hawked about the country under the title of the *Merry Muses of Caledonia*. See vol. iv. p. 228.]

uniformly bitter. "I have the same consolation," he tells Mr. Ainslie, "which I once heard a recruiting sergeant give to his audience in the streets of Kilmarnock: 'Gentlemen, for your farther encouragement, I can assure you that ours is the most blackguard corps under the crown, and, consequently, with us an honest fellow has the surest chance of preferment.'" He winds up almost all his statements of his feelings on this matter, in the same strain—

I hae a wife and twa wee laddies,
They maun hae brose and brats o' duddies. rags
Ye ken yoursell, my heart right proud is,
I needna vaunt;
But I'll sned besoms—thraw saugh-woodies, [twist willow ropes cut
Before they want.

On one occasion, however, he takes a higher tone. "There is a certain stigma," says he to Bishop Geddes, "in the name of exciseman; but I do not intend to borrow honour from my profession"—which may perhaps remind the reader of Gibbon's lofty language, on finally quitting the learned and polished circles of London and Paris, for his Swiss retirement; "I am too modest, or too proud, to rate my value by that of my associates."

Burns, in his perpetual perambulations over the moors of Dumfriesshire, had every temptation to encounter, which bodily fatigue, the blandishments of hosts and hostesses, and the habitual manners of those who acted along with him in the duties of the excise, could present. He was, moreover, wherever he went, exposed to perils of his own, by the reputation which he had earned, and by his extraordinary powers of entertainment in conversation; and he pleased himself with thinking, in the words of one of his letters to the Lady Harriet Don, that "one advantage he had in this new business was, the knowledge it gave him of the various shades of character in man—consequently assisting him in his trade as a poet."[1] From the castle to the cottage, every door flew open at his approach; and the old system of hospitality, then flourishing, rendered it difficult for the most soberly inclined guest to rise from any man's board in the same trim that he sat down to it. The farmer, if Burns were seen passing, left his reapers, and trotted by the side of Jenny Geddes, until he could persuade the bard that the day was hot enough to demand an extra libation. If he entered an inn at midnight after all the inmates were in bed, the news of his arrival circulated from the cellar to the garret; and ere ten minutes had elapsed, the landlord and all his guests were assembled round the ingle; the largest punch-bowl was produced; and

Be ours this night—who knows what comes tomorrow?

was the language of every eye in the circle that welcomed him.[2] The highest gentry of the county, whenever they had especial merriment in view, called in the wit and eloquence of Burns to enliven their carousals. The famous song of the "Whistle of worth," commemorates a scene of this kind, more picturesque in some of its circumstances than every day occurred, yet strictly in character with the usual tenor of life among the jovial *squirearchy*. Three gentlemen of ancient descent, had met to determine, by a solemn drinking-match, who should possess *the Whistle*, which a common ancestor of them all had earned ages before, in a bacchanalian contest of the same sort with a noble toper from Denmark; and the poet was summoned to watch over and celebrate the issue of the debate.

Then up rose the bard like a prophet in drink,
Craigdarroch shall soar when creation shall sink;
But if thou wouldst flourish immortal in rhyme,
Come, one bottle more, and have at the sublime.

Nor, as has already been hinted, was he safe from temptations of this kind, even when he was at home, and most disposed to enjoy in quiet the society of his wife and children. Lion-gazers from all quarters beset him; they eat and drank at his cost, and often went away to criticize him and his fare, as if they had done Burns and his *black bowl*[3] great

[1] Letter (unpublished), dated Ellisland, 23d Dec. 1789. [See letter to Bishop Geddes, 3d Feb. 1789.]

[2] These particulars are from a letter of David Macculloch, Esq., who being at this period a very young gentleman, a passionate admirer of Burns, and a capital singer of many of his serious songs, used often, in his enthusiasm, to accompany the poet on his professional excursions.

[3] Burns's famous black punch-bowl, of Inverary marble, was the nuptial gift of his father-in-law Mr. Armour, who himself fashioned it. After passing through many hands, it became the property of Archibald Hastie, Esq., afterwards M.P. for Paisley.

honour in condescending to be entertained for a single evening, with such company and such liquor.

We have on record various glimpses of him, as he appeared while he was half-farmer, half-exciseman; and some of these present him in attitudes and aspects on which it would be pleasing to dwell.[1] For example, the circumstances under which the verses on the "Wounded Hare" were written, are mentioned generally by the poet himself. James Thomson, son of the occupier of a farm adjoining Ellisland, told Allan Cunningham that it was he who wounded the animal. "Burns," said this person, "was in the custom, when at home, of strolling by himself in the twilight every evening, along the Nith, and by the *march* between his land and ours. The hares often came and nibbled our wheat-*braird;* and once, in the gloaming, it was in April, I got a shot at one and wounded her; she ran bleeding by Burns, who was pacing up and down by himself, not far from me. He started, and with a bitter curse, ordered me out of his sight, or he would throw me instantly into the Nith; and had I stayed, I'll warrant he would have been as good as his word, though I was both young and strong."

Among other curious travellers who found their way about this time to Ellisland, was Captain Grose, the celebrated antiquarian, whom Burns briefly described as

> A fine fat fodgel wight— pudgy
> Of stature short, but genius bright;

and who has painted his own portrait, both with pen and pencil, at full length, in his *Olio.* This gentleman's taste and pursuits are ludicrously set forth in the copy of verses—

> Hear, Land o' Cakes and brither Scots,
> Frae Maidenkirk to John o' Groats,
> A chield's amang ye takin notes, &c.

and, *inter alia*, his love of port is not forgotten. Grose and Burns had too much in common not to become great friends. The poet's accurate knowledge of Scottish phraseology and customs was of much use to the researches of the humorous antiquarian; and, above all, it is to their acquaintance that we owe "Tam o' Shanter." Burns told the story as he had heard it in Ayrshire, in a Letter to the Captain, and was easily persuaded to versify it. The poem was the work of one day; and Mrs. Burns well remembers the circumstances. He spent most of the day on his favourite walk by the river, where, in the afternoon, she joined him with some of her children. "He was busily engaged *crooning to himself;* and Mrs. Burns, perceiving that her presence was an interruption, loitered behind with her little ones among the broom. Her attention was presently attracted by the strange and wild gesticulations of the bard, who now, at some distance, was agonized with an ungovernable access of joy. He was reciting very loud, and with the tears rolling down his cheeks, those animated verses which he had just conceived:

> Now, Tam! O Tam! had they been queans
> A' plump and strappin in their teens; [greasy flannel
> Their sarks, instead of creeshie flannen, chemises
> Been snaw-white seventeen-hunder[2] linen,—

[It was not, according to Mrs. Burns, strictly a "nuptial gift;" Burns took a fancy to it on one of his visits to Ayrshire, when his father-in-law presented it to him. It was left at Mr. Hastie's death to the British Museum.]

[1] A writer in the *Edinburgh Literary Journal* [Professor Gillespie of St. Andrews], vol. i. p. 82, has just furnished (1829) the following little anecdote:—"It may be readily guessed with what interest I heard, one Thornhill fair-day, that Burns was to visit the market. Boy as I then was, an interest was awakened in me respecting this extraordinary man, which was sufficient, in addition to the ordinary attraction of a village fair, to command my presence in the market. Burns actually entered the fair about twelve; and man, wife, and lass, were all on the outlook for a peep of the Ayrshire ploughman. I carefully dogged him from stand to stand, and from door to door. An information had been lodged against a poor widow woman of the name of Kate Watson, who had ventured to serve a few of her old country friends with a draught of unlicensed ale, and a lacing of whisky, on this village jubilee. I saw him enter her door, and anticipated nothing short of an immediate seizure of a certain grey-beard and barrel, which, to my personal knowledge, contained the contraband commodities our bard was in quest of. A nod, accompanied by a significant movement of the forefinger, brought Kate to the doorway or *trance*, and I was near enough to hear the following words distinctly uttered:—'Kate, are ye mad? D'ye no ken that the supervisor and me will be in upon you in the course of forty minutes? Guid-by t'ye at present.' Burns was in the street and in the midst of the crowd, in an instant, and I had access to know that his friendly hint was not neglected. It saved a poor widow woman from a fine of several pounds."

[2] The manufacturer's term for fine linen woven on a reed of 1700 divisions.—*Cromek.*

Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair, these breeches
That ance were plush, o' good blue hair,
I wad hae given them off my hurdies, hips
For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies.[1]

To the last, Burns was of opinion that "Tam o' Shanter" was the best of his productions; and although it does not often happen that poet and public come to the same conclusion on such points, I believe the decision in question has been all but unanimously approved of.

The admirable execution of the piece, so far as it goes, leaves nothing to wish for; the only criticism has been, that the catastrophe appears unworthy of the preparation. Burns might have avoided this error—if error it be—had he followed not the Ayrshire, but the Galloway edition of the legend. According to that tradition, the *Cutty-Sark* who attracted the special notice of the bold intruder on the Satanic ceremonial, was no other than the pretty wife of a farmer residing in the same village with himself, and of whose unholy propensities no suspicion had ever been whispered. The Galloway *Tam* being thoroughly sobered by terror, crept to his bed the moment he reached home after his escape, and said nothing of what had happened to any of his family. He was awakened in the morning with the astounding intelligence that his horse had been found dead in the stable, and a woman's hand, clotted with blood, adhering to the tail. Presently it was reported that *Cutty-Sark* had burnt her hand grievously over-night, and was ill in bed, but obstinately refused to let her wound be examined by the village leech. Hereupon Tam, disentangling the bloody hand from the hair of his defunct favourite's tail, proceeded to the residence of the fair witch, and forcibly pulling her stump to view, showed his trophy, and narrated the whole circumstances of the adventure. The poor victim of the black art was constrained to confess her guilty practices in presence of the priest and the laird, and was forthwith burnt alive under their joint auspices, within watermark, on the Solway Firth.

[1] The above is quoted from a MS. journal of Cromek. Mr. M'Diarmid confirms the statement, and adds, that the poet, having committed the verses to writing on the top of his *sod-dyke* [fence of turfs] over the water, came into the house, and read them immediately in high triumph at the fireside.

Such, Mr. Cunningham informs me, is the version of this story current in Galloway and Dumfriesshire: but it may be doubted whether, even if Burns was acquainted with it, he did not choose wisely in adhering to the Ayrshire legend, as he had heard it in his youth. It is seldom that tales of popular superstition are effective in proportion to their completeness of solution and catastrophe. On the contrary, they, like the creed to which they belong, suffer little in a picturesque point of view, by exhibiting a maimed and fragmentary character, that in nowise satisfies strict taste, either critical or moral. Dreams based in darkness, may fitly terminate in a blank: the cloud opens, and the cloud closes. The absence of definite scope and purpose, appears to be of the essence of the mythological *grotesque*.

Burns lays the scene of this remarkable performance almost on the spot where he was born; and all the terrific circumstances by which he has marked the progress of Tam's midnight journey, are drawn from local tradition.

By this time he was cross the ford
Whare in the snaw the chapman smoored, smothered
And past the birks and meikle stane, birches
Whare drucken Charlie brak's neck-bane;
And through the whins, and by the cairn,
Whare hunters fand the murdered bairn; found
And near the thorn, aboon the well, above
Where Mungo's mither hanged hersell.

None of these tragic memoranda were derived from imagination. Nor was "Tam o' Shanter" himself an imaginary character. Shanter is a farm close to Kirkoswald, that smuggling village, in which Burns, when nineteen years old, studied mensuration, and "first became acquainted with scenes of swaggering riot." The then occupier of Shanter, by name Douglas Graham, was, by all accounts, equally what the Tam of the poet appears,—a jolly, careless rustic, who took much more interest in the contraband traffic of the coast, than the rotation of crops. Burns knew the man well; and to his dying day, he, nothing loath, passed among his rural compeers by the name of Tam o' Shanter.[2]

A few words will bring us to the close of Burns's career at Ellisland. Mr. Ramsay of Ochtertyre, happening to pass through Nith-

[2] The above information is derived from Mr. R. Chambers. [See also note 3, p. 24.]

dale, in 1790, met Burns riding rapidly near Closeburn. The poet was obliged to pursue his professional journey, but sent on Mr. Ramsay and his fellow-traveller to Ellisland, where he joined them as soon as his duty permitted him, saying as he entered, "I come, to use the words of Shakspeare, *stewed in haste.*" Mr. Ramsay was "much pleased with his *uxor Sabina qualis*, and his modest mansion, so unlike the habitation of ordinary rustics." He told his guest he was preparing to write a drama, which he was to call "Rob M'Quechan's Elshin," from a popular story of King Robert the Bruce being defeated on the Carron, when the heel of his boot having loosened in the flight, he applied to one Robert M'Quechan to fix it on; who, to make sure, ran his awl nine inches up the King's heel. The evening was spent delightfully. A gentleman of dry temperament, who looked in accidentally, soon partook the contagion, and sat listening to Burns with the tears running over his cheeks. "Poor Burns!" says Mr. Ramsay, "from that time I met him no more."

The summer after, some English travellers, calling at Ellisland, were told that the poet was walking by the river. They proceeded in search of him, and presently, "on a rock that projected into the stream, they saw a man employed in angling, of a singular appearance. He had a cap made of fox's skin on his head; a loose greatcoat, fastened round him by a belt, from which depended an enormous Highland broadsword." (Was he still dreaming of the Bruce?) "It was Burns. He received them with great cordiality, and asked them to share his humble dinner." These travellers also classed the evening they spent at Ellisland, with the brightest of their lives.[1]

Whether Burns ever made any progress in the actual composition of a drama on "Rob M'Quechan's Elshin," we know not. He had certainly turned his ambition seriously to the theatre almost immediately after his first establishment in Dumfriesshire. In a letter (unpublished) to Lady H. Don, dated December 23d, 1789, he thus expresses himself—"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 should find myself unequal to the task, there is no great harm done. Virtue and study are their own reward. I have got Shakspeare, and begun with him; and I shall stretch a point, and make myself master of all the dramatic authors of any repute in both English and French—the only languages which I know." And in another letter to the same person, he recurs to the subject in these terms—"Though the rough material of fine writing is undoubtedly the gift of genius, the workmanship is as certainly the united effort of labour, attention, and pains. Nature has qualified few, if any, to shine in every walk of the muses. I shall put it to the test of repeated trials, whether she has formed me capable of distinguishing myself in any one."

Towards the close of 1791, the poet, finally despairing of his farm, determined to give up his lease, which the kindness of his landlord rendered easy of arrangement: and procuring an appointment to the Dumfries division, which raised his salary from the revenue to £70 per annum, removed his family to the county town, in which he terminated his days. His conduct as an excise-officer had hitherto met with uniform approbation; and he nourished warm hopes of being promoted, when he had thus avowedly devoted himself altogether to the service.

He left Ellisland, however, with a heavy heart. The affection of his neighbours was rekindled in all its early fervour, by the thoughts of parting with him; and the *roup* of his farming-stock and other effects, was, in spite of whisky, a very melancholy scene. The competition for his chattels (says Allan Cunningham) was eager, each being anxious to secure a memorandum of Burns's residence among them.

It is pleasing to know, that among other "titles manifold" to their respect and gratitude, Burns, at the suggestion of Mr. Riddell of Friars' Carse, had superintended the formation of a subscription-library in the parish. His letters to the booksellers on this subject do him much honour: his choice of authors (which business was naturally left to his discretion) being in the highest degree judicious. Such institutions are now common, almost universal, indeed, in the rural districts of

[1] [This story, with other particulars, is also given in Currie's memoir, as being from information supplied by one of the party.]

southern Scotland; but it should never be forgotten that Burns was among the first, if not the very first, to set the example. "He was so good," says Mr. Riddell, "as to take the whole management of this concern; he was treasurer, librarian, and censor, to our little society, who will long have a grateful sense of his public spirit and exertions for their improvement and information."[1]

Once, and only once, did Burns quit his residence at Ellisland to revisit Edinburgh. His object was to close accounts with Creech; that business accomplished, he returned immediately, and he never again saw the capital.[2] He thus writes to Mrs. Dunlop:—"To a man who has a home, however humble and remote, if that home is, like mine, the scene of domestic comfort, the bustle of Edinburgh will soon be a business of sickening disgust—

Vain pomp and glory of the world, I hate you.

"When I must skulk into a corner, lest the rattling equipage of some gaping blockhead should mangle me in the mire, I am tempted to exclaim—what merits had he had, or what demerits have I had, in some state of preexistence, that he is ushered into this state of being with the sceptre of rule, and the key of riches in his puny fist, and I kicked into the world, the sport of folly, or the victim of pride? . . . Often as I have glided with humble stealth through the pomp of Prince's Street, it has suggested itself to me as an improvement on the present human figure, that a man, in proportion to his own conceit of his consequence in the world, could have pushed out the longitude of his common size, as a snail pushes out his horns, or as we draw out a perspective." There is bitterness in this badinage.

It may naturally excite some surprise, that of the convivial conversation of so distinguished a convivialist, so few specimens have been preserved in the memoirs of his life. The truth seems to be, that those of his companions who chose to have the best memory for such things, happened also to have the keenest relish for his wit and his humour when exhibited in their coarser phases. Among a heap of manuscript memoranda with which I have been favoured, I find but little that one could venture to present in print: and the following specimens of that little must, for the present, suffice.

A gentleman who had recently returned from the East Indies, where he had made a large fortune, which he showed no great alacrity about spending, was of opinion, it seems, one day, that his company had had enough of wine, rather sooner than they came to that conclusion: he offered another bottle in feeble and hesitating terms, and remained dallying with the corkscrew, as if in hopes that some one would interfere and prevent further effusion of Bordeaux. "Sir," said Burns, losing temper, and betraying in his mood something of the old rusticity—"Sir, you have been in Asia, and for aught I know, on the Mount of Moriah, and you seem to hang over your *tappit-hen*[3] as remorsefully as Abraham did over his son Isaac—Come, sir, to the sacrifice!"

At another party, the society had suffered considerably from the prosing of a certain well-known provincial *Bore* of the first magnitude; and Burns, as much as any of them, overawed, as it would seem, by the rank of the nuisance, had not only submitted, but condescended to applaud. The grandee, however, being suddenly summoned to another company in the same tavern, Burns immediately addressed himself to the chair, and demanded a bumper. The president thought he was about to dedicate his toast to the distinguished absentee: "I give," said the bard, "I give you the health, gentlemen all—of the waiter that called my Lord ——— out of the room."

He often made extempore rhymes the vehicle of his sarcasm: thus, for example, having heard a person, of no very elevated rank, talk loud and long of some aristocratic festivities in which he had the honour to mingle, Burns, when he was called upon for his song, chanted some verses, of which one has been preserved:—

[1] Letter to Sir John Sinclair, Bart., in the *Statistical Account of Scotland*—Parish of Dunscore.

[2] [It is true that Burns paid only one visit to Edinburgh while resident at Ellisland, but he again visited the Scottish capital on his leaving the farm, when he remained there about a week, and took farewell of "Clarinda," who was on the eye of sailing to the West Indies.]

[3] [A colloquial term for a large-sized liquor measure.]

Of lordly acquaintance you boast,
And the dukes that you dined wi' yestreen,
Yet an insect's an insect at most,
Tho' it crawl on the curl of a queen.

I believe I have already alluded to Burns's custom of carrying a diamond pencil with him in all his wanderings, and constantly embellishing inn-windows and so forth with his epigrams. On one occasion, being storm-stayed at Lamington, in Clydesdale, he went to church; and the indignant beadle, after the congregation dispersed, invited the attention of the clergyman to this stanza on the window by which the noticeable stranger had been sitting:

As cauld a wind as ever blew;
A cauld kirk, and in't but few;
As cauld a minister's ever spak;
Ye'se a' be het or I come back. you'll all be hot ere

Sir Walter Scott possesses (1829) a tumbler, on which are the following verses, written by Burns on the arrival of a friend, Mr. W. Stewart, factor to a gentleman of Nithsdale. The landlady being very wroth at what she considered the disfigurement of her glass, a gentleman present appeased her, by paying down a shilling, and carried off the relic.

You're welcome, Willie Stewart,
You're welcome, Willie Stewart;
There's ne'er a flower that blooms in May,
That's half sae welcome's thou art.
Come, bumpers high, express your joy,
The bowl we maun renew it;
The tappit-hen gae bring her ben, quart-measure
Tae welcome Willie Stewart.
May foes be strang, and friends be slack,
Ilk action may he rue it;
May woman on him turn her back,
That wrangs thee, Willie Stewart.

Since we are among such small matters, perhaps some readers will smile to hear, that Burns very often wrote his name on his books thus—"Robert Burns, Poet;" and that Allan Cunningham remembers a favourite *collie* at Ellisland having the same inscription on his collar.

[As supplementary and partly corrective of what has gone before we shall give the following particulars of Ellisland and Burns's stay there. The farm of Ellisland is situated on the banks of the Nith, between five and six miles from Dumfries. When Burns took it it was an uninclosed and unimproved piece of ground, measuring 170 imperial acres; and the poet undertook to pay a rent of fifty pounds for three years, and seventy for the remainder of the lease, which extended to four periods of nineteen years, or seventy-six years in all. Mr. Miller at the same time agreed to allow the poet £300 for the purpose of building a suitable *onstead* (suit of farm buildings) and inclosing the land. The crop of that summer was also to be Burns's, while he was not to be liable to payment of rent till Martinmas.

The poet seems to have commenced his residence on the farm on the 12th of June, 1788, occupying a small smoky cottage on its outskirts (the abode of the outgoing tenant), while his house was building. His recently wedded Jean at this time remained at Mauchline or Mossgiel, with the one surviving child of four which she had already borne to him. At length, in December, she went to join her husband, and till their new house was finished (some months afterwards) they lived at a place called The Isle, about a mile below Ellisland.

The farmstead, to which, while it survives, some interest must ever be attached, not only as his residence, but as in some measure a creation of his taste, is situated to a poet's wish. Through the centre of a fine alluvial plain skirted by mountains of considerable elevation, the Nith, a broad and copious stream, pursues its way to the Solway. The right or west bank here rises in a gravelly precipice about forty feet above the stream, while the opposite bank consists of a low holm or meadow, out of which, about a mile from Ellisland, rise the towers of Dalswinton. Burns's farm-buildings were situated near the verge of the precipice or *scaur* alluded to, in such a way that, as Mr. Cunningham remarks, their "afternoon shadow fell across the river upon the opposite fields." A common-minded farmer superintending the erection of farm buildings in such a situation, would have placed the dwelling-house with its back to the stream, and its face towards the approach from the public road. But Burns caused it to face the river, though this gave it a northerly aspect. Even in this little arrangement we can see something characteristic of the poet. The house was a simple parallelogram, of one story in height, about sixty feet long, by eighteen in breadth.

Behind it a quadrangle was formed by a stable and cow-house on one hand (east), and a barn (somewhat too small for the farm) on the other (west), a straw-yard for cattle being behind the one, and a stack-yard at the extremity of the other, and on the left hand as we approach the house by its ordinary access. There is a separate garden a little to the east; but this is said to have been formed since Burns's time. From the front of the house a pathway winds down the bank towards a little slip of holm here left by the river, a spot where children rejoice to weave rush-caps and begem the thorn with the gowan, and "lassies use to wash and spread their claiths," as old Allan says. Half-way down the pathway, a copious spring spouts out into a basin, for the supply of the family with water. There is a small separate building at the top of the pathway; but this was raised by the gentleman who bought the farm from Mr. Miller, several years after it had been deserted by Burns.

The house itself has a projection towards the north, which has also been added since the days of Burns, being employed as a kitchen. The house built and possessed by the poet, consists expressly of the parallelogram above described, being divided into four apartments, besides sleeping-places under the slates. At the west end, occupying the full breadth of the house, but enjoying no fine outlook in any direction, is the best room, spence, ben-end, or by whatever other name it might be called. A corresponding room at the east end, partly occupied by beds, was the parlour, or ordinary sitting-room of the poet, the other being reserved for the reception of strangers who required to be treated with ceremony. The former room has a pleasant window to the east, commanding a view of the Nith downwards, and of Dalswinton grounds on the opposite bank. Between these two rooms is a space divided into two small apartments, one of which, adjoining the ordinary sitting-room, was Burns's kitchen, while the other was a bed-room. In this house were born his sons Francis and William, and here he wrote his "Tam o' Shanter," and some of the best of his songs.

William Clark, a respectable old farm-servant, formerly residing at Enrick near Gatehouse, had some interesting recollections of the poet, which have been reported in the following terms:—He lived with Burns as farm-servant during the winter half-year, he believed, of 1789–90. On being hired in the house of one Alexander Robson, who sold ale and spirits in the village of Duncow, Kirkmahoe, he was treated to a dram, and got a shilling as *arles-penny*—that is, earnest-money. Burns kept two men and two women servants; but he invariably, when at home, took his meals with his wife and family in the little parlour. [By this we are to understand that the servants did not dine with him, as the old fashion was in Scotland.] Clark thought he was as good a manager of land as the generality of the farmers in the neighbourhood. The farm of Ellisland was moderately rented, and was susceptible of much improvement, had improvement been in repute. Burns sometimes visited the neighbouring farmers, and they returned the compliment. He kept nine or ten milch-cows, some young cattle, four horses, and several pet-sheep—the latter were great favourites with him. During the winter and spring-time, when he was not engaged with the excise business, he occasionally held the plough for an hour or so for Clark, and was a fair workman. During seed-time Burns might frequently be seen early in the mornings in the fields, with his sowing-sheet; but as business often required his attention from home, he did not sow the whole of his grain. He was a kind and indulgent master, and spoke familiarly to his servants, both in the house and out of it, though, if anything put him out of humour, he was "gey guldersome for a wee while;" but the storm was soon over, and there never was a word of "upcast" afterwards. Clark never saw him really angry but once, and it was occasioned by the carelessness of one of the women servants, who had not cut the potatoes small enough, so that one of the cows had nearly been choked. His looks, gesture, and voice on that occasion were terrible, so that William was glad to get out of his sight; when they met again, he was perfectly calm. When any extra work was done, the men sometimes got a dram; but Clark had lived with masters who were more "flush" in that way to their servants. Clark had no hesitation in declaring that, during the six months he was at Ellisland he never saw his master

intoxicated, or incapable of transacting his ordinary business. In every sense of the word he was the poor man's friend. It was rumoured that Alexander Robson, in Duncow, made a few bushels of malt in a clandestine way in an old barn. Some person, anxious for reward or favour, informed Burns of the circumstances, and on the following night, rather late, a card was thrust under Robson's door, intimating that the exciseman would probably call at a certain hour next day,—a hint to the poor man to put his malt out of the way. Clark recollected hearing Robson's son reading this card to a group of villagers, with whom it made Burns very popular; they unanimously declared him to be "a kind-hearted man, who would not do anybody harm, if he could help it." Burns, when at home, usually wore a broad blue bonnet, a blue or drab long-tailed coat, corduroy breeches, dark blue stockings, and *cootikens* [short spatterdashes]: and in cold weather, a black-and-white checked plaid wrapped round his shoulders, such as shepherds and many other persons still wear. Mrs. Burns was a good and prudent housewife, kept everything in neat and tidy order, was well liked by the servants, and provided plenty of wholesome food. Before Clark left Ellisland he was pressed to stay by his master; and when he came away, Burns gave him a certificate of character, besides paying his wages in full, and giving him a shilling as a fairing.

According to a recollection of his son Robert, the poet gave shelter and succour at Ellisland for about six weeks to a poor broken-down sailor, who had come begging in the extremity of want and wretchedness. The man lay in an outhouse until he recovered some degree of health and strength, when, being able once more to take the road, he departed, leaving as a token of his gratitude a little model of a ship for the amusement of the poet's children.

Burns's expectations from Ellisland, as has been already seen, ended in disappointment, and in November, 1791, having sold off his stock, and much useless furniture, and having obtained a better excise appointment at Dumfries, he removed to that town with his family: thus abruptly breaking off, after a four years' experience, a lease which was to have lasted for more than the term of life assigned to man by the psalmist.]

CHAPTER VIII.

[Dumfries:—intemperance:—hopes of promotion:—Jacobitism:—Whiggish favour for the French Revolution:—Burns suspected:—indiscretions:—story of the captured guns:—Excise-board's investigation:—Burns joins the Dumfries Volunteers:—Election ballads:—Gray and Findlater on Burns in Dumfries:—Thomson's *Melodies*:—correspondence:—Chloris:—"Scots wha hae":—Cowper.]

> The King's most humble servant, I
> Can scarcely spare a minute;
> But I am yours at dinner-time,
> Or else the devil's in it.[1]

The four principal biographers of our poet, Heron, Currie, Walker, and Irving,[2] concur in the general statement, that his moral course, from the time when he settled in Dumfries, was downwards. Heron knew more of the matter personally than any of the others, and his words are these:—"In Dumfries, his dissipation became still more deeply habitual. He was here exposed, more than in the country, to be solicited to share the riot of the dissolute and the idle. Foolish young men, such as writers' apprentices, young surgeons, merchants' clerks, and his brother excisemen, flocked eagerly about him, and from time to time pressed him to drink with them, that they might enjoy his wicked wit. The Caledonian Club, too, and the Dumfries and Galloway Hunt, had occasional meetings at Dumfries after Burns came to reside there, and the poet was of course invited to share their hospitality, and hesitated not to accept the invitation.[3] The morals of the town were,

[1] "The above answer to an invitation was written extempore on a leaf torn from his pocket-book."—*Cromek's MSS.*

[2] [David Irving in *Lives of Scottish Poets*, 1804.]

[3] [Mrs. Burns took strong exception to this passage, but Heron's knowledge of Burns's convivial friends and tavern companions would be more exact than that of Mrs. Burns.]

in consequence of its becoming so much the scene of public amusement, not a little corrupted, and, though a husband and a father, Burns did not escape suffering by the general contamination in a manner which I forbear to describe. In the intervals between his different fits of intemperance, he suffered the keenest anguish of remorse and horrible afflictive foresight. His Jean behaved with a degree of maternal and conjugal tenderness and prudence, which made him feel more bitterly the evils of his misconduct, though they could not reclaim him."

This picture, dark as it is, wants some distressing shades that mingle in the parallel one by Dr. Currie; it wants nothing, however, of which truth demands the insertion. That Burns, dissipated enough long ere he went to Dumfries, became still more dissipated in a town than he had been in the country, is certain. It may also be true that his wife had her own particular causes, sometimes, for dissatisfaction. But 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 temptations from without and from within, than the immense majority of mankind, far from having to contend against, are even able to imagine;—of one, finally, who prayed for pardon, where alone effectual pardon could be found;—and who died ere he had reached that term of life up to which the passions of many, who, their mortal career being regarded as a whole, are honoured as among the most virtuous of mankind, have proved too strong for the control of reason. We have already seen that the poet was careful of decorum in all things during the brief space of his prosperity at Ellisland, and that he became less so on many points, as the prospects of his farming speculation darkened around him. It seems to be equally certain, that he entertained high hopes of promotion in the excise at the period of his removal to Dumfries; and that the comparative recklessness of his latter conduct there, was consequent on a certain overclouding of these professional expectations. The case is broadly stated so by Walker and Paul; and there are hints to the same effect in the narrative of Currie.

The statement has no doubt been exaggerated, but it has its foundation in truth; and by the kindness of Mr. Train,[1] supervisor at Castle Douglas, in Galloway, I shall presently be enabled to give some details which may throw light on this business.

Burns was much patronized when in Edinburgh by the Honourable Henry Erskine, Dean of the Faculty of Advocates, and other leading Whigs of the place—much more so, to their honour be it said, than by any of the influential adherents of the then administration. His landlord at Ellisland (Mr. Miller of Dalswinton), his neighbour, Mr. Riddell of Friars' Carse, and most of the other gentlemen who showed him special attention, belonged to the same political party; and on his removal to Dumfries it so happened, that some of his immediate superiors in the revenue service of the district, and other persons of standing and authority into whose society he was thrown, entertained sentiments of the same description.

Burns, whenever in his letters he talks seriously of political matters, uniformly describes his early Jacobitism as mere "matter of fancy." It may, however, be easily believed, that a fancy like his, long indulged in dreams of that sort, was well prepared to pass into certain other dreams, which had, as calm men now view the matter, but little in common with them, except that both alike involved some feeling of dissatisfaction with "the existing order of things." Many of the old elements of political disaffection in Scotland put on a new shape at the outbreaking of the French Revolution; and Jacobites be-

[1] [Joseph Train, a poet and antiquarian of some ability, but who is best remembered as a kind of legendary and antiquarian jackal to Sir Walter Scott, spent twenty-eight years in the service of the excise, and died in 1852, aged 73. Several of the "finds" he furnished Sir Walter with have since been proved to be "ingenious fabrications of his own."]

came half Jacobins ere they were at all aware in what the doctrines of Jacobinism were to end. The Whigs naturally regarded the first dawn of freedom in France with feelings of sympathy, delight, exultation; in truth, few good men of any party regarded it with more of fear than of hope. The general, the all but universal tone of feeling was favourable to the first assailants of the Bourbon despotism; and there were few who more ardently participated in the general sentiment of the day than Burns.

The revulsion of feeling that took place in this country at large, when wanton atrocities began to stain the course of the French Revolution, and Burke lifted up his powerful voice to denounce its leaders, as, under pretence of love for freedom, the enemies of all social order, morality, and religion, was violent in proportion to the strength and ardour of the hopes in which good men have been eager to indulge, and cruelly disappointed. The great body of the Whigs, however, were slow to abandon the cause which they had espoused; and although their chiefs were wise enough to draw back when they at length perceived that serious plans for overturning the political institutions of our own country had been hatched and fostered, under the pretext of admiring and comforting the destroyers of a foreign tyranny —many of their provincial retainers, having uttered their sentiments all along with provincial vehemence and openness, found it no easy matter to retreat gracefully along with them. Scenes more painful at the time, and more so even now in the retrospect, than had for generations afflicted Scotland, were the consequences of the rancour into which party feelings on both sides now rose and fermented. Old and dear ties of friendship were torn in sunder; society was for a time shaken to its centre. In the most extravagant dreams of the Jacobites there had always been much to command respect: high chivalrous devotion, reverence for old affections, ancestral loyalty, and the generosity of romance. In the new species of hostility, everything seemed mean as well as perilous; it was scorned even more than hated. The very name stained whatever it came near; and men that had known and loved each other from boyhood, stood aloof, if this influence interfered, as if it had been some loathsome pestilence.

There was a great deal of stately Toryism at this time in the town of Dumfries, which was the favourite winter retreat of many of the best gentlemen's families of the south of Scotland. Feelings that worked more violently in Edinburgh than in London acquired additional energy still in this provincial capital. All men's eyes were upon Burns. He was the standing marvel of the place; his toasts, his jokes, his epigrams, his songs, were the daily food of conversation and scandal; and he, open and careless, and thinking he did no great harm in saying and singing what many of his superiors had not the least objection to hear and applaud, soon began to be considered among the local admirers and disciples of the good old king and minister, as the most dangerous of all the apostles of sedition,—and to be shunned accordingly.

A gentleman of that county, whose name I have already more than once had occasion to refer to,[1] has 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, nay, my young friend,—that's all over now;" and quoted, after a pause, some verses of Lady Grizzel Baillie's pathetic ballad:—

His bonnet stood ance fu' fair on his brow,
His auld ane look'd better than mony ane's new;
But now he lets't wear ony way it will hing,
And casts himsell dowie upon the corn-bing. sad

O were we young, as we ance hae been,
We suld hae been galloping doun on yon green,
And linking it ower the lily-white lea,— tripping
And werna my heart light 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

[1] [David M'Culloch, brother to the laird of Ardwell, and whose sister was married to a brother of Sir Walter Scott.]

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. But this incident belongs, probably, to a somewhat later period of our poet's residence in Dumfries.

The records of the excise-office are silent concerning the suspicions which the commissioners of the time certainly took up in regard to Burns as a political offender—according to the phraseology of the tempestuous period, a *democrat*. In that department, as then conducted, I am assured that nothing could have been more unlike the usual course of things, than that a syllable should have been set down in writing on such a subject, unless the case had been one of extremities. That an inquiry was instituted, we know from Burns's own letters —and what the exact termination of inquiry was, can no longer, it is probable, be ascertained.

According to the tradition of the neighbourhood, Burns, *inter alia*, gave great offence by demurring in a large mixed company to the proposed toast, "The health of William Pitt;" and left the room in indignation, because the society rejected what he wished to substitute, namely, "The health of a greater and a better man, George Washington." I suppose the warmest admirer of Mr. Pitt's talents and politics would hardly venture nowadays to dissent substantially from Burns's estimate of the comparative merits of these two great men. The name of Washington, at all events, when contemporary passions shall have finally sunk into the peace of the grave, will unquestionably have its place in the first rank of heroic virtue,—a station which demands the exhibition of victory pure and unstained, over temptations and trials extraordinary in kind, as well as strength. But at the time when Burns, being a servant of Mr. Pitt's government, was guilty of this indiscretion, it is obvious that a great deal "more was meant than reached the ear."

In the poet's own correspondence we have traces of another occurrence of the same sort. Burns thus writes to a gentleman at whose table he had dined the day before:[1]—"I was, I know, drunk last night, but I am sober this morning. From the expressions Captain —— made use of to me, had I had nobody's welfare to care for but my own, we should certainly have come, according to the manner of the world, to the necessity of murdering one another about the business. The words were such as generally, I believe, end in a brace of pistols; but I am still pleased to think that I did not ruin the peace and welfare of a wife and children in a drunken squabble. Farther, you know that the report of certain political opinions being mine, has already once before brought me to the brink of destruction. I dread lest last night's business may be interpreted in the same way. You, I beg, will take care to prevent it. I tax your wish for Mrs. Burns's welfare with the task of waiting on every gentleman who was present to state this to him; and, as you please, show this letter. What, after all, was the obnoxious toast? *May our success in the present war be equal to the justice of our cause*—a toast that the most outrageous frenzy of loyalty cannot object to."

Burns has been commended, sincerely by some, and ironically by others, for putting up with the treatment which he received on this occasion, without calling Captain ——— to account the next morning; and one critic [Sir W. Scott], the last, I am sure, that would have wished to say anything unkindly about the poet, has excited indignation in the breast of Mr. Peterkin,[2] by suggesting that Burns really had not, at any period of his life, those delicate feelings on certain matters, which, it must be admitted, no person in Burns's original rank and station is ever expected to act upon. The question may be safely intrusted to the good sense of all who can look to the case without passion or personal irritation. No human being will ever dream that Robert Burns was a coward; as for the poet's toast about the success of the war, there can be no doubt that only one meaning was given to it by all who heard it uttered; and as little that a gentleman bearing the king's commission in the army, if he was entitled to resent the sentiment at all, lost no part of his right to do so because it was announced in a quibble.

[1] [Letter to Samuel Clark, Jun., Dumfries, dated "Sunday morning" (January, 1794).]

[2] [Mr. Alexander Peterkin, sheriff-substitute of Orkney, author of a *Review of the Life of Robert Burns*, published in 1813.]

Burns, no question, was guilty of unpoliteness as well as indiscretion, in offering any such toasts as these in mixed company; but that such toasts should have been considered as attaching any grave suspicion to his character as a loyal subject, is a circumstance which can only be accounted for by reference to the exaggerated state of political feelings on all matters, and among all descriptions of men, at that melancholy period of disaffection, distrust, and disunion. Who, at any other than that lamentable time, would ever have dreamed of erecting the drinking, or declining to drink, the health of a particular minister, or the approving, or disapproving, of a particular measure of government, into the test of a man's loyalty to his king? The poet Crabbe has, in one of his masterly sketches,[1] given us, perhaps, a more vivid delineation of the jarrings and collisions which were at this period the perpetual curse of society, than the reader may be able to find elsewhere. He has painted the sturdy Tory mingling accidentally in a company of those who would not, like Burns, drink "the health of William Pitt:" and suffering sternly, and sulkily, under the infliction of their, to him, horrible doctrines. . . . .

Now, dinner past, no longer he suppresst
His strong dislike to be a silent guest;
Subjects and words were now at his command—
When disappointment frowned on all he plann'd.
For, hark! he heard, amazed, on every side,
Her church insulted, and her priests belied,
The laws reviled, the ruling powers abused,
The land derided, and her foes excused—
He heard and ponder'd. What to men so vile
Should be his language? For his threatening style
They were too many. If his speech were meek,
They would despise such poor attempts to speak.
—There were reformers of each different sort,
Foes to the laws, the priesthood, and the court:
Some on their favourite plans alone intent,
Some purely angry and malevolent;
The rash were proud to blame their country's laws,
The vain to seem supporters of *a cause;*
One called for change that he would dread to see,
Another sighed for Gallic liberty;
And numbers joining with the forward crew,
For no one reason—but that many do—
—How, said the Justice, can this trouble rise—
This shame and pain, from creatures I despise?—

And he has also presented the champion of loyalty as surrounded with kindred spirits, and amazed with the audacity of an intrusive democrat, with whom he has now no more cause to keep terms than such gentlemen as "Captain ———" were wont to do with Robert Burns.

Is it not known, agreed, confirm'd, confess'd,
That of all peoples we are govern'd best?
—And live there those in such all-glorious state,
Traitors protected in the land they hate,
Rebels still warring with the laws that give
To them subsistence?—Yes, such wretches live!
The laws that nursed them they blaspheme; the laws—
Their Sovereign's glory—and their country's cause;—
And who their mouth, their master fiend? and who
Rebellion's oracle?—You, caitiff, you!
—O could our country from her coasts expel
Such foes, and nourish those that wish her well!
This her mild laws forbid, but *we* may still
From *us* eject them by our sovereign will—
This let us do . . . . .
He spoke, and, seated with his former air,
Look'd his full self, and filled his ample chair;
Took one full bumper to each favourite cause,
And dwelt all night on politics and laws,
With high applauding voice, which gained him high applause.

Burns, eager of temper, loud of tone, and with declamation and sarcasm equally at command, was, we may easily believe, the most hated of human beings, because the most dreaded, among the provincial champions of the administration of which he thought fit to disapprove. But that he ever, in his most ardent moods, upheld the principles of the miscreants, or madmen, whose applause of the French Revolution was but the mask of revolutionary designs at home, after such principles had been really developed by those who maintained them, and understood by him, it may be safely denied. There is not assuredly in all his correspondence (and I have seen much of it that never has been, nor ought to be printed), one syllable to give countenance to such a charge.

His indiscretion, however, did not always confine itself to words; and though an accident now about to be recorded belongs to the year 1792, before the French war broke out, there is reason to believe that it formed the main subject of the inquiry which the excise commissioners thought themselves called upon to institute, touching the politics of our poet.

At that period a great deal of contraband traffic, chiefly from the Isle of Man, was going on along the coasts of Galloway and Ayrshire,

[1] [Crabbe's *Tales:* I. The Dumb Orators.]

and the whole of the revenue-officers from Gretna Green to Dumfries were placed under the orders of a superintendent, residing in Annan, who exerted himself zealously in intercepting the descent of the smuggling vessels. On the 27th February, a suspicious-looking brig was discovered in the Solway Frith, and Burns was one of the party whom the superintendent conducted to watch her motions. She got into shallow water the day afterwards, and the officers were enabled to discover that her crew were numerous, armed, and not likely to yield without a struggle. Lewars, a brother exciseman, an intimate friend of our poet, was accordingly sent to Dumfries for a guard of dragoons; the superintendent, Mr. Crawford, proceeded himself on a similar errand to Ecclefechan; and Burns was left with some men under his orders, to watch the brig, and prevent landing or escape. From the private journal of one of the excisemen (now in my hands), it appears that Burns manifested considerable impatience while thus occupied, being left for many hours in a wet salt-marsh, with a force which he knew to be inadequate for the purpose it was meant to fulfil. One of his comrades hearing him abuse his friend Lewars in particular, for being slow about his journey, the man answered, that he also wished the devil had him for his pains, and that Burns, in the meantime, would do well to indite a song upon the sluggard: Burns said nothing; but after taking a few strides by himself among the reeds and shingle, rejoined his party, and chanted to them the well-known ditty, the "Deil's awa' wi' the Exciseman."[1] Lewars arrived shortly afterwards with his dragoons; and Burns, putting himself at their head, waded, sword in hand, to the brig, and was the first to board her. The crew lost heart, and submitted, though their numbers were greater than those of the assailing force. The vessel was condemned, and, with all her arms and stores, sold by auction next day at Dumfries: upon which occasion, Burns, whose behaviour had been highly commended, thought fit to purchase four carronades, by way of trophy. But his glee went a step further;—he sent the guns, with a letter, to the French Convention, requesting that body to accept of them as a mark of his admiration and respect. The present, and its accompaniment, were intercepted at the custom-house at Dover; and here, there appears to be little room to doubt, was the principal circumstance that drew on Burns the notice of his jealous superiors.[2]

We were not, it is true, at war with France; but every one knew and felt that we were to be so ere long; and nobody can pretend that Burns was not guilty, on this occasion, of a most absurd and presumptuous breach of decorum.

When he learned the impression that had been created by his conduct, and its probable consequences, he wrote to his patron, Mr. Graham of Fintry, the following letter:—

"*December*, 1792.

"SIR,—I have been surprised, confounded, and distracted, by Mr. Mitchell, the collector, telling me, that he has received an order from your board to inquire into my political conduct, and blaming me as a person disaffected to government. Sir, you are a husband and a father. You know what you would feel to see the much-loved wife of your bosom, and your helpless, prattling little ones, turned adrift into the world; degraded and disgraced from a situation in which they had been respectable and respected, and left almost without the necessary support of a miserable existence. Alas! sir, must I think that such soon will be my lot? and from the damned dark insinuations of hellish, groundless envy, too? I believe, sir, I may aver it, and in the sight of Omniscience, that I would not tell a deliberate falsehood, no, not though even worse horrors, if worse can be than those I have mentioned, hung over my head. And I say, that the allegation, whatever villain has made it, is a

[1] [See note to the "Deil's awa' wi' the Exciseman."]

[2] [There are some things in regard to this story of the guns that require clearing up. The French Convention did not exist till September, 1792, so that the carronades if despatched at once would be sent to the Legislative Assembly, or they must have remained for nearly six months in Burns's possession before he foolishly sent them to the later body. The private journal quoted by Lockhart can hardly be supposed to have contained any statement as to Burns's sending them off and their interception at Dover; this appears to rest entirely on the unsupported evidence of Joseph Train. Burns in a letter to Graham of Fintry dated 5th Jan. 1793, gives minute details of his conduct as one suspected of disaffection to government, but does not make the slightest reference to any such episode as the alleged present of guns to the French. See the letter in its proper place.

lie. To the British constitution, on Revolution principles, next, after my God, I am most devoutly attached. You, sir, have been much and generously my friend. Heaven knows how warmly I have felt the obligation, and how gratefully I have thanked you. Fortune, sir, has made you powerful, and me impotent; has given you patronage, and me dependence. I would not, for my single self, call on your humanity: were such my insular, unconnected situation, I would despise the tear that now swells in my eye; I could brave misfortune; I could face ruin; for at the worst, 'death's thousand doors stand open.' But, good God! the tender concerns that I have mentioned, the claims and ties that I see at this moment, and feel around me, how they unnerve courage, and wither resolution! To your patronage, as a man of some genius, you have allowed me a claim; and your esteem, as an honest man, I know is my due. To these, sir, permit me to appeal. By these may I adjure you to save me from that misery which threatens to overwhelm me; and which, with my latest breath I will say it, I have not deserved."

On the 2d of January, 1793, a week or two afterwards, we find him writing to Mrs. Dunlop in these terms:—(The good lady had been offering him some interest with the excise board, in the view of promotion.) "Mr. C.[1] can be of little service to me at present; at least, I should be shy of applying. I cannot possibly be settled as a supervisor for several years. I must wait the rotation of lists, &c. Besides, some envious malicious devil has raised a little demur on my political principles, and I wish to let that matter settle before I offer myself too much in the eye of my superiors. I have set henceforth a seal on my lips, as to these unlucky politics; but to you I must breathe my sentiments. In this, as in everything else, I shall show the undisguised emotions of my soul. War, I deprecate: misery and ruin to thousands are in the blast that announces the destructive demon. But ——"

"The remainder of this letter," says Cromek, "has been torn away by some barbarous hand." I can have no doubt that it was torn away by one of the kindest hands in the world—that of Mrs. Dunlop herself.[2]

The exact result of the excise board's investigation is hidden, as has been said above, in obscurity; nor is it at all likely that the cloud will be withdrawn hereafter. A general impression, however, appears to have gone forth that the affair terminated in something which Burns himself considered as tantamont to the destruction of all hope of future promotion in his profession; and it has been insinuated by almost every one of his biographers, that the crushing of these hopes operated unhappily, even fatally, on the tone of his mind, and, in consequence, on the habits of his life. In a word, the early death of Burns has been (by implication at least) ascribed mainly to the circumstances in question. Even Sir Walter Scott has distinctly intimated his acquiescence in this prevalent notion. "The political predilections," says he, "for they could hardly be termed principles, of Burns, were entirely determined by his feelings. At his first appearance he felt, or affected, a propensity to Jacobitism. Indeed, a youth of his warm imagination in Scotland, thirty years ago,[3] could hardly escape this bias. The side of Charles Edward was that not surely of sound sense and sober reason, but of romantic gallantry and high achievement. The inadequacy of the means by which that prince attempted to regain the crown forfeited by his fathers—the strange and almost poetical adventures which he underwent—the Scottish martial character, honoured in his victories, and degraded and crushed in his defeat—the tales of the veterans who had followed his adventurous standard, were all calculated to impress upon the mind of a poet a warm interest in the cause of the House of Stuart. Yet the impression was not of a very serious cast; for Burns himself acknowledges in one of his letters[4] (*Reliques*, p. 240), that 'to tell the

[1] [Mr. Corbet, general supervisor of excise, Edinburgh.]

[2] [Mr. Scott Douglas states that the missing part of this letter was handed to Currie marked by Gilbert Burns, "intemperate—politics." That editor, after dealing with it "judiciously" by way of deletion and interpolation, inserted it among the correspondence, where it erroneously appears under date Jan. 5, 1792, instead of 1793. It will be found in its proper place in this edition, dated Dec. 31st, 1792, January 2, and January 5, 1793.]

[3] *Quarterly Review* for February, 1809.

[4] [Note to Mr. Riddell on one of his Jacobite songs —"Strathallan's Lament."]

matter of fact, except when my passions were heated by some accidental cause, my Jacobitism was merely by way of *vive la bagatelle.*' The same enthusiastic ardour of disposition swayed Burns in his choice of political tenets, when the country was agitated by revolutionary principles. That the poet should have chosen the side on which high talents were most likely to procure celebrity; that he to whom the fastidious distinctions of society were always odious, should have listened with complacence to the voice of French philosophy, which denounced them as usurpations on the rights of man, was precisely the thing to be expected. Yet we cannot but think, that if his superiors in the excise department had tried the experiment of soothing rather than irritating his feelings, they might have spared themselves the *disgrace* of rendering desperate the possessor of such uncommon talents. For it is *but too certain*, 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. We doubt not, that in that awful period of national discord, he had done and said enough to deter, in ordinary cases, the servants of government from countenancing an avowed partisan of faction. But this partisan was Burns! Surely the experiment of lenity might have been tried, and perhaps successfully. The conduct of Mr. Graham of Fintry, our poet's only shield against actual dismission and consequent ruin, reflects the highest credit on that gentleman."

In the general strain of sentiment in this passage, who can refuse to concur? But I am bound to say, that after a careful examination of all the documents printed, and MSS., to which I have had access, I have great doubts as to some of the principal facts assumed in the eloquent statement. I have before me, for example, a letter of Mr. Findlater, formerly collector at Glasgow, who was, at the period in question, Burns's immediate superior in the Dumfries district, in which that very respectable person distinctly says:—"I may venture to assert, that when Burns was accused of a leaning to democracy, and an inquiry into his conduct took place, he was subjected, in consequence thereof, to no more than perhaps a verbal or private caution to be more circumspect in future. Neither do I believe his promotion was thereby affected, as has been stated. That, had he lived, would, I have every reason to think, have gone on in the usual routine. His good and steady friend, Mr. Graham, would have attended to this. What cause, therefore, was there for depression of spirits on this account? or how should he have been hurried thereby to a premature grave? I never saw his spirit fail till he was borne down by the pressure of disease and bodily weakness; and even then it would occasionally revive, and like an expiring lamp, emit bright flashes to the last."[1]

When the war had fairly broken out, a battalion of volunteers was formed in Dumfries, and Burns was an original member of the corps. It is very true that his accession was objected to[2] by some of his neighbours; but these were overruled by the gentlemen who took the lead in the business, and the poet soon became, as might have been expected, the greatest possible favourite with his brothers in arms. His commanding officer, Colonel De Peyster, attests his zealous discharge of his duties as a member of the corps; and their attachment to him was on the increase to the last. He was their laureate, and in that capacity did more good service to the government of the country, at a crisis of the darkest alarm and danger, than perhaps any one person of his rank and station, with the exception of Dibdin, had the power or the inclination to render. "Burns," says Allan Cunningham, "was a zealous lover of his country, and has stamped his patriotic feelings in many a lasting verse.—His 'Poor and Honest Sodger,' laid hold at once on the public feeling, and it was everywhere sung with an enthusiasm which only began to

[1] Letter to Donald Horne, Esq., W.S., Edinburgh.

[2] One of these objectors some time afterwards thought fit to affect particular civility to Burns, and *inter alia* seduced him one day into his house, where a bottle of champagne was produced, and a small collection of arms submitted to the bard's inspection. Burns well knew the gentleman's recent hostility, and appreciated the motives of his courtesy. "Do tell me, Mr. Burns," said he, "what do you think of this pair of pistols?"—"Why," said Burns, after considering them with all the gravity of a half-tipsy connoisseur —"I think I may safely say for your pistols what nobody would say for the great majority of mankind —they're a credit to their maker."

abate when Campbell's 'Exile of Erin' and 'Wounded Hussar' were published. Dumfries, which sent so many of her sons to the wars, rung with it from port to port; and the poet, wherever he went, heard it echoing from house and hall. I wish this exquisite and useful song, with 'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,' the 'Song of Death,' and 'Does haughty Gaul Invasion Threat,'—all lyrics which enforce a love of country and a martial enthusiasm into men's breasts, had obtained some reward for the poet. His perishable conversation was remembered by the rich to his prejudice—his imperishable lyrics were rewarded only by the admiration and tears of his fellow-peasants."

Lastly, whatever the rebuke of the excise board amounted to—Mr. James Gray, at that time schoolmaster in Dumfries, and seeing much of Burns both as the teacher of his children, and as a personal friend and associate of literary taste and talent, is the only person who gives anything like an exact statement; and according to him Burns was admonished "that it was his business to act, not to think" —in whatever language the censure was clothed, the excise board did nothing from which Burns had any cause to suppose that his hopes of ultimate promotion were extinguished. Nay, if he had taken up such a notion, rightly or erroneously, Mr. Findlater, who had him constantly under his eye, and who enjoyed all his confidence, and who enjoyed then, as he still enjoys, the utmost confidence of the board, must have known the fact to be so. Such, I cannot help thinking, is the fair view of the case: at all events, we know that Burns, the year before he died, was permitted *to act* as a *supervisor;* a thing not likely to have occurred had there been any resolution against promoting him in his proper order to a permanent situation of that superior rank.[1]

On the whole, then, I am of opinion that the excise board have been dealt with harshly, when men of eminence have talked of their conduct to Burns as affixing *disgrace* to them. It appears that Burns, being guilty unquestionably of great indiscretion and indecorum both of word and deed, was admonished in a private manner, that at such a period of national distraction it behoved a public officer, gifted with talents and necessarily with influence like his, very carefully to abstain from conduct which, now that passions have had time to cool, no sane man will say became his situation; that Burns's subsequent conduct effaced the unfavourable impression created in the minds of his superiors; and that he had begun to taste the fruits of their recovered approbation and confidence, ere his career was closed by illness and death. These commissioners of excise were themselves subordinate officers of the government, and strictly responsible for those under them. That they did try the experiment of lenity, to a certain extent, appears to be made out; that *they* could have been justified in trying it to a farther extent, is at the least doubtful. But with regard to the government of the country itself, I must say, I think it is much more difficult to defend them. Mr. Pitt's ministry gave Dibdin a pension of £200 a year for writing his sea songs;[2] and one cannot help remembering, that when Burns did begin to excite the ardour and patriotism of his countrymen by such songs as Mr. Cunningham has been alluding to, there were persons who had every opportunity of representing to the premier the claims of a greater than Dibdin. Lenity, indulgence, to whatever length carried in such quarters as these, would have been at once safe and graceful. What the minor politicians of the day[3] thought of Burns's

[1] [An article which appeared in *Chambers's Journal*, March, 1875, gives some new facts regarding Burns's connection with the excise. Mr. M'Fadzean, of the inland revenue office, found in Somerset House some documents of the old excise office in Edinburgh, from which we learn that Burns was entered on the list of promotion for the office of supervisor on 27th July, 1791, and remained on it till his death. Had he lived he would have been promoted on 12th January, 1797. It appears that an alphabetical list of the names of officers was drawn up with marginal notes concerning the characters of the various officers. Many of these notes are remarkably plain-spoken,—one officer is spoken of as "a bad moral character;" another, "a good officer, but now tipples;" another, "a blundering officer;" and so on. Burns is characterized, first as "Never tried—a poet;" afterwards is interlined, "turns out well;" while the worst said of him is three years afterwards, "the poet does pretty well."]

[2] [He received his pension in 1805.]

[3] Since the first edition of this Life was published, I have found that repeated applications in Burns's behalf *were* made by Mr. Addington, afterwards Viscount Sidmouth. I hope this fact will not be omitted in any future narrative of Burns's history.

poetry, I know not; but Mr. Pitt himself appreciated it as highly as any man. It could not be said of *him*,

> Vaces oportet, Eutyche, à negotiis
> Ut liber animus sentiat vim carminis.

"I can think of no verse," said the great minister, when Burns was no more,—"I can think of no verse since Shakespeare's, that has so much the appearance of coming sweetly from nature."[1]

Had Burns put forth some newspaper squibs upon Lepaux or Carnot, or a smart pamphlet "On the State of the Country," he might have been more attended to in his lifetime. It is common to say, "What is everybody's busines is nobody's business;" but one may be pardoned for thinking that in such cases as this, that which the general voice of the country does admit to be everybody's business, comes in fact to be the business of those whom the nation intrusts with national concerns.

To return to Sir Walter Scott's reviewal—it seems that he has somewhat overstated the political indiscretions of which Burns was actually guilty. Let us hear the counterstatement of Mr. Gray, who, as has already been mentioned, enjoyed Burns's intimacy and confidence during his residence at Dumfries. No one who knows anything of that excellent man, will for a moment suspect him of giving any other than what he believes to be true.

"Burns," says he, "was enthusiastically fond of liberty, and a lover of the popular part of our constitution; but he saw and admired the just and delicate proportions of the political fabric, and nothing could be further from his aim than to level with the dust the venerable pile reared by the labours and the wisdom of ages. That provision of the constitution, however, by which it is made to contain a self-correcting principle, obtained no inconsiderable share of his admiration; he was, therefore, a zealous advocate of constitutional reform. The necessity of this he often supported in conversation with all the energy of an irresistible eloquence; but there is no evidence that he ever went farther. He was a member of no political club. At the time when, in certain societies, the mad cry of revolution was raised from one end of the kingdom to the other, his voice was never heard in their debates, nor did he ever support their opinions in writing, or correspond with them in any form whatever. Though limited to an income which any other man would have considered poverty, he refused £50 a year offered to him for a weekly article, by the proprietors of an opposition paper; and two reasons, equally honourable to him, induced him to reject this proposal. His independent spirit spurned the idea of becoming the hireling of party; and whatever may have been his opinion of the men and measures that then prevailed, he did not think it right to fetter the operations of that government by which he was employed."

In strong confirmation of the first part of this statement by Mr. Gray,[2] we have the following extract from the poet's own private diary, never, in all human probability, designed to meet the public eye—"Whatever may be my sentiments of republics, ancient or modern, I ever abjured the idea of such changes here. A constitution which, in its original principles, experience has proved to be every way fitted for our happiness, it would be insanity to abandon for an untried visionary theory." This surely is not the language of one of those who then said and sung broadly and boldly,

> Of old things all are over old;
> Of good things none are good enough:
> We'll show that we can help to frame
> A world of other stuff.[3]

As to the delicate and intricate question of Parliamentary Reform—it is to be remembered that Mr. Pitt advocated that measure

[1] I am assured that Mr. Pitt used these words at the table of the late Lord Liverpool, soon after Burns's death. How that even might come to be a natural topic at that table, will be seen in the sequel.

[2] Mr. Gray removed from the school of Dumfries to the High School of Edinburgh, in which eminent seminary he for many years laboured with distinguished success. He then became professor of Latin in the institution at Belfast, and is now [1829] in holy orders, and a chaplain of the East India Company in the presidency of Bombay. [He died in India, 1830.]

[3] Wordsworth's "Rob Roy."

at the outset of his career, and never abandoned the principle, although the events of his time were too well fitted to convince him of the inexpediency of making any farther attempts at carrying it into practice; and it is also to be considered that Burns, in his humble and remote situation, was much more likely to seize right principles, than to judge of the safety or expediency of carrying them into effect.

The statement about the newspaper, refers to Mr. Perry of the *Morning Chronicle*, who, at the suggestion of Mr. Miller of Dalswinton, made the proposal referred to, and received for answer a letter which may be seen in the General Correspondence of our poet, and the tenor of which is in accordance with what Mr. Gray has said. Mr. Perry afterwards pressed Burns to settle in London as a regular writer for his paper, and the poet declined to do so, alleging, that however small, his excise appointment was a certainty, which, in justice to his family, he could not think of abandoning.[1]

In conclusion, Burns's abstinence from the political clubs, and affiliated societies of that disastrous period, is a circumstance, the importance of which will be appreciated by all who know anything of the machinery by which the real revolutionists of the era designed, and endeavoured to carry their purposes into execution.

Burns, after the excise inquiry, took care, no doubt, to avoid similar scrapes; but he had no reluctance to meddle largely and zealously in the squabbles of country politics and contested elections; and thus, by merely espousing, on all occasions, the cause of the Whig candidates, kept up very effectually the spleen which the Tories had originally conceived on tolerably legitimate grounds. Of his political verses, written at Dumfries, hardly any specimens have as yet (1829) appeared in print; it would be easy to give many of them, but perhaps some of the persons lashed and ridiculed are still alive—their children certainly are so.

One of the most celebrated of these effusions, and one of the most quotable, was written on a desperately contested election for the Dumfries district of boroughs, between Sir James Johnstone of Westerhall, and Mr. Miller, the younger, of Dalswinton; Burns, of course, maintained the cause of his patron's family. There is much humour in

THE FIVE CARLINES.

There were five Carlines in the south, they fell upon a scheme,
To send a lad to Lunnun town to bring them tidings hame;
Nor only bring them tidings hame, but do their errands there,
And aiblins gowd and honour baith might be that laddie's share. perhaps

There was Maggie by the banks o' Nith,[2] a dame wi' pride eneugh;
And Marjory o' the Monylochs,[3] a carline auld and teugh;
And blinkin Bess o' Annandale,[4] that dwelt near Solway side;
And whisky Jean that took her gill in Galloway sae wide;[5]

And black Joán frae Crichton Peel,[6] o' gipsy kith and kin,
Five wighter carlines war na foun the south countrie within. &c. &c.

[See the poem in its proper place.]

The above is far the best humoured of these productions. The election to which it refers was carried in Mr. Miller's favour, but after a severe contest, and at a very heavy expense.

These political conflicts were not to be mingled in with impunity by the chosen laureate, wit, and orator of the district. He himself, in an unpublished piece, speaks of the terror excited by

— Burns's venom, when
He dips in gall unmix'd his eager pen,
And pours his vengeance in the burning line;

and represents his victims, on one of these electioneering occasions, as leading a choral shout that

—His heresies in church and state,
Might well award him Muir and Palmer's fate.[7]

But what rendered him more and more the object of aversion to one set of people, was sure to connect him more and more strongly

[1] This is stated on the authority of Major Miller.

[2] Dumfries. [3] Lochmaben. [4] Annan. [5] Kirkcudbright. [6] Sanquhar.

[7] [From the "Epistle from Esopus to Maria," first published in Cunningham's *Burns*, 1834.]

with the passions,[1] and, unfortunately for himself and for us, with the pleasures of the other; and we have among many confessions to the same purpose, the following, which I quote as the shortest, in one of the poet's letters from Dumfries to Mrs. Dunlop. "I am better, but not quite free of my complaint (he refers to the palpitation of heart). You must not think, as you seem to insinuate, that in my way of life I want exercise. Of that I have enough; but occasional hard drinking is the devil to me." He knew well what he was doing whenever he mingled in such debaucheries: he had, long ere this, described himself as parting "with a slice of his constitution" every time he was guilty of such excess.

This brings us back to a subject on which it can give no one pleasure to expatiate. As has been already sufficiently intimated, the statements of Heron and Currie on this head, still more those of Mr. Walker and Dr. Irving, are not to be received without considerable deduction. No one of these biographers appears to have had any considerable intercourse with Burns during the latter years of his life, which they have represented in such dark colours every way; and the two survivors of their number are, I doubt not, among those who must have heard, with the highest satisfaction, the counter-statements which their narratives were the means of calling forth from men as well qualified as themselves in point of character and attainment, and much more so in point of circumstance and opportunity, to ascertain and estimate the real facts of a case, which is, at the best, a sufficiently melancholy one.

"Dr. Currie," says Gilbert Burns,[2] "knowing the events of the latter years of my brother's life, only from the reports which had been propagated, and thinking it necessary, lest the candour of his work should be called in question, to state the substance of these reports, has given a very exaggerated view of the failings of my brother's life at that period —which is certainly to be regretted."

"I love Dr. Currie," says the Reverend James Gray, already more than once referred to, "but I love the memory of Burns more, and no consideration shall deter me from a bold declaration of the truth. The poet of the 'Cottar's Saturday Night,' who felt all the charms of the humble piety and virtue which he sung, is charged (in Dr. Currie's narrative) with vices which would reduce him to a level with the most degraded of his species.—As I knew him during that period of his life emphatically called his evil days, *I am enabled to speak from my own observation.* It is not my intention to extenuate his errors because they were combined with genius; on that account, they were only the more dangerous, because the more seductive, and deserve the more severe reprehension; but I shall likewise claim that nothing may be said in malice even against him. . . . It came under my own view professionally, that he superintended the education of his children with a degree of care that I have never seen surpassed by any parent in any rank of life whatever. In the bosom of his family he spent many a delightful hour in directing the studies of his eldest son, a boy of uncommon talents. I have frequently found him explaining to this youth, then not more than nine years of age, the English poets, from Shakspeare to Gray, or storing his mind with examples of heroic virtue, as they live in the pages of our most celebrated English historians. I would ask any person of common candour, if employments like these are consistent with *habitual drunkenness?* It is not denied that he sometimes mingled with society unworthy of him. He was of a social and convivial nature. He was courted 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,

[1] Lord Frederick heard of all his youthful zeal,
And felt as lords upon a canvass feel;
He read the satire, and he saw the use,
That such cool insult and such keen abuse
Might on the wavering minds of voting men produce.
I much rejoice, he cried, such worth to find;
To this the world must be no longer blind.
His glory will descend from sire to son,
The Burns of English race, the happier Chatterton.
CRABBE, in the *Patron.*

[2] Letter to Mr. Peterkin. (Peterkin's preface, p. 82.)

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. I may likewise add, that to the very end of his life, reading was his favourite amusement. I have never known any man so intimately acquainted with the elegant English authors. He seemed to have the poets by heart. The prose authors he could quote either in their own words, or clothe their ideas in language more beautiful than their own. Nor was there ever any decay in any of the powers of his mind. To the last day of his life, his judgment, his memory, his imagination, were fresh and vigorous, as when he composed the 'Cottar's Saturday Night.' The truth is, that Burns was seldom *intoxicated*. The drunkard soon becomes besotted, and is shunned even by the convivial. Had he been so, he could not long have continued the idol of every party. It will be freely confessed, that the hour of enjoyment was often prolonged beyond the limit marked by prudence; but what man will venture to affirm, that in situations where he was conscious of giving so much pleasure, he could at all times have listened to her voice?

"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 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]

Part of Mr. Gray's letter is omitted, only because it touches on subjects, as to which Mr. Findlater's statement must be considered as of not merely sufficient, but the very highest authority.

"My connection with Robert Burns," says that most respectable man,[2] "commenced immediately after his admission into the excise, and continued to the hour of his death.[3] 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: As a proof of which, it may not be foreign to the subject to quote a part of a letter from him to myself, in a case of only *seeming* inattention. 'I know, sir, and regret deeply, that this business glances with a malign aspect on my character as an officer; but, as I am really innocent in the affair, and as the gentleman is known to be an illicit dealer, and particularly as this is the *single* instance of the least shadow of carelessness or impropriety in my conduct as an officer, I shall be peculiarly unfortunate if my character shall fall a sacrifice to the dark manœuvres of a smuggler.' This of itself affords more than a presumption of his attention to business, as it cannot be supposed he would have written in such a style *to me*, but from the impulse of a conscious rectitude in this department of his duty. Indeed, it was not till near the latter end of his days that there was any falling off in this respect; and

[1] Letter in Mr. Peterkin's preface, pp. 93–95.

[2] Ibid. p. 95–96.

[3] Mr. Findlater watched by Burns the night before he died.

this was amply accounted for in the pressure of disease and accumulating infirmities. I will further 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 anything 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 as attentive and affectionate to a high degree."

These statements are entitled to every consideration: they come from men altogether incapable, for any purpose, of wilfully stating that which they knew to be untrue. Yet we are not, on the other hand, to throw out of view altogether the feelings of partial friendship, irritated by exaggerations such as called forth these testimonies. It is scarcely to be doubted that Dr. Currie and Professor Walker took care, ere they penned their painful pages, to converse and correspond with other persons than the enemies of the deceased poet. Here, then, as in most other cases of similar controversy, the fair and equitable conclusion would seem to be, "truth lies between."

To whatever Burns's excesses amounted, they were, it is obvious, and that frequently, the subject of rebuke and remonstrance even from his own dearest friends—even from men who had no sort of objection to potations deep enough in all conscience. That such reprimands, giving shape and form to the thoughts that tortured his own bosom, should have been received at times with a strange mixture of remorse and indignation, none that have considered the nervous susceptibility and haughtiness of Burns's character, can hear with surprise. But this was only when the good advice was oral. No one knew better than he how to answer the written homilies of such persons as were most likely to take the freedom of admonishing him on points of such delicacy; nor is there anything in all his correspondence more amusing than his reply to a certain solemn lecture of William Nicol,[1] the same exemplary schoolmaster who "brewed the peck o' maut which

Rob and Allan came to pree.

. . . "O thou, wisest among the wise, meridian blaze of prudence, full moon of discretion, and chief of many counsellors! how infinitely is thy puddle-headed, rattle-headed, wrong-headed, round-headed slave indebted to thy supereminent goodness, that from the luminous path of thy own right-lined rectitude thou lookest benignly down on an erring wretch, of whom the zigzag wanderings defy all the powers of calculation, from the simple copulation of units, up to the hidden mysteries of fluxions! May one feeble ray of that light of wisdom which darts from thy sensorium, straight as the arrow of heaven, and bright as the meteor of inspiration, may it be my portion, so that I may be less unworthy of the face and favour of that father of proverbs and master of maxims, that antipode of folly, and magnet among the sages, the wise and witty Willy Nicol! Amen! amen! Yea, so be it!

"For me! I am a beast, a reptile, and know nothing!" &c. &c. &c.

To how many that have moralized over the life and death of Burns, might not such a *Tu quoque* be addressed!

The strongest argument in favour of those who denounced the statements of Heron, Currie, and their fellow-biographers, concerning the habits of the poet, during the latter years of his career, as culpably and egregiously exaggerated, still remains to be considered. On the whole, Burns gave satisfaction by his manner of executing the duties of his station in the revenue service; he, moreover, as Mr. Gray tells us (and upon this ground Mr. Gray

[1] [This refers to a letter dated 10th February, 1793, in which Nicol takes Burns to task, in a whimsical, humorous, mock-heroic, but at the same time pointed and friendly style, for the indiscretions into which his political views were apt to lead him.]

could not possibly be mistaken), took a lively interest in the education of his children, and spent more hours in their private tuition than fathers who have more leisure than his excisemanship left him, are often in the custom of so bestowing;[1] and, *lastly*, although he to all men's regret executed, after his removal to Dumfriesshire, no more than one poetical piece of considerable length ("Tam o' Shanter"), his epistolary correspondence, and his songs contributed to Johnson's *Museum*, and to the great collection of Mr. George Thomson,[2] furnish undeniable proof that, in whatever fits of dissipation he unhappily indulged, he never could possibly have sunk into anything like that habitual grossness of manners and sottish degradation of mind, which the writers in question have not hesitated to hold up to the deepest commiseration, if not more than this, of mankind.

Of his letters written at Ellisland and Dumfries, nearly three octavo volumes have been already printed by Currie and Cromek; and it would be easy to swell the collection to double this extent. Enough, however, has been published to enable every reader to judge for himself of the character of Burns's style of epistolary composition. The severest criticism bestowed on it has been that it is too elaborate —that, however natural the feelings, the expression is frequently more studied and artificial than belongs to that species of composition.[3] Be this remark altogether just in point of taste, or otherwise, the fact on which it is founded furnishes strength to our present position. The poet produced in these years a great body of elaborate prose-writing.

We have already had occasion to notice some of his contributions to Johnson's *Museum*. He continued, to the last month of his life, to take a lively interest in that work; and besides writing for it some dozens of excellent original songs, his diligence in collecting ancient pieces hitherto unpublished, and his taste and skill in eking out fragments, were largely, and most happily exerted all along for his benefit. Mr. Cromek saw, among Johnson's papers, no fewer than 184 of the pieces which enter into the collection, in Burns's hand-writing.

His connection with the more important work of Mr. Thomson, commenced in September 1792; and Mr. Gray justly says, that whoever considers his correspondence with the editor, and the collection itself, must be satisfied, that from that time till the commencement of his last illness, not many days ever passed over his head without the production of some new stanzas for its pages. Besides old materials, for the most part embellished with lines, if not verses of his own, and a whole body of hints, suggestions, and criticisms, Burns gave Mr. Thomson about sixty original songs. It is, however, but justice to poor Heron to add, that comparatively few of this number had been made public at the time when he drew up that rash and sweeping state-

[1] "He was a kind and attentive father, and took great delight in spending his evenings in the cultivation of the minds of his children. Their education was the grand object of his life, and he did not, like most parents, think it sufficient to send them to public schools; he was their private instructor, and even at that early age, bestowed great pains in training their minds to habits of thought and reflection, and in keeping them pure from every form of vice. This he considered as a sacred duty, and never, to the period of his last illness, relaxed in his diligence. With his eldest son, a boy of nine years of age, he had read many of the favourite poets, and some of the best historians in our language; and what is more remarkable, gave him considerable aid in the study of Latin. This boy attended the Grammar School of Dumfries, and soon attracted my notice by the strength of his talent and the ardour of his ambition. Before he had been a year at school, I thought it right to advance him a form, and he began to read Cæsar, and gave me translations of that author of such beauty as I confess surprised me. On inquiry, I found that his father made him turn over his dictionary, till he was able to translate to him the passage in such a way that he could gather the author's meaning, and that it was to him he owed that polished and forcible English with which I was so greatly struck. I have mentioned this incident merely to show what minute attention he paid to this important branch of parental duty."—*Letter from the Rev. James Gray to Mr. Gilbert Burns.*

[2] [*The Melodies of Scotland*, with Symphonies and Accompaniments, &c.; 6 vols.]

[3] One of the reviewers of this memoir says, "Burns never considered letter-writing as a species of composition at all," and attributes the excellence of his epistolary style to its "utter carelessness and rapidity." I am reminded by this criticism of a fact, which I should have noticed before; namely, that Burns often gave the same paragraph in different letters addressed to different persons. I have seen some MS. letters of the poet to Lady Harriet Don, in which several of the finest and best known passages of his printed letters to Mrs. Dunlop appear *verbatim*. Such was his "utter rapidity and carelessness."

ment, which Dr. Currie adhered to in some particulars without sufficient inquiry.

The songs in this collection are, by many eminent critics, placed decidedly at the head of all our poet's performances: it is by none disputed that very many of them are worthy of his most felicitous inspiration. He bestowed much more care on them than on his contributions to the *Museum;* and the taste and feeling of the editor secured the work against any intrusions of that over-warm element which was too apt to mingle in his amatory effusions. Burns knew that he was now engaged on a book destined for the eye and ear of refinement; he laboured throughout, under the salutary feeling, "virginibus puerisque canto;" and the consequences have been happy indeed for his own fame—for the literary taste, and the national music of Scotland; and, what is of far higher importance, the moral and national feelings of his countrymen.

In almost all these productions—certainly in all that deserved to be placed in the first rank of his compositions—Burns made use of his native dialect. He did so, too, in opposition to the advice of almost all the lettered correspondents he had—more especially of Dr. Moore, who, in his own novels, never ventured on more than a few casual specimens of Scottish colloquy—following therein the examples of his illustrious predecessor Smollett; and not foreseeing that a triumph over English prejudice, which Smollett might have achieved, had he pleased to make the effort, was destined to be the prize of Burns's perseverance in obeying the dictates of native taste and judgment. Our poet received such suggestions, for the most part in silence—not choosing to argue with others on a matter which concerned only his own feelings; but in writing to Mr. Thomson, he had no occasion either to conceal or disguise his sentiments. "These English songs," says he, "gravel me to death. I have not that command of the language that I have of my native tongue;" and again, "so much for namby-pamby. I may, after all, try my hand at it in Scots verse: There I am always most at home." He, besides, would have considered it as a sort of national crime to do anything that might tend to divorce the music of his native land from her peculiar idiom. The "genius loci" was never worshipped more fervently than by Burns. "I am such an enthusiast," says he, "that in the course of my several 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 Scottish Muse." With such feelings, he was not likely to touch with an irreverent hand the old fabric of our national song, or to meditate a lyrical revolution for the pleasure of strangers. "There is," says he, "a naiveté, 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. One hint more let me give you. Whatever Mr. Pleyel does, let him not alter one *iota* of the original airs; I mean in the song department, but let our Scottish national music preserve its native features. They are, I own, frequently wild and irreducible to the more modern rules; but on that very eccentricity, perhaps, depends a great part of their effect."[1]

Of the delight with which Burns laboured for Mr. Thomson's collection, his letters contain some lively descriptions. "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'!'"

[1] It may amuse the reader to hear, that, in spite of all Burns's success in the use of his native dialect, even the eminently spirited bookseller to whom the manuscript of Waverley was submitted, hesitated for some time about publishing it, on account of the Scots dialect interwoven in the novel.

"Until I am complete master of a tune in my own singing, such as it is, I can never," says Burns, "compose for it. My way is this. I consider the poetic sentiment correspondent to my idea of the musical expression,—then choose my theme,—compose 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 round me that are in unison or 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. Seriously, this at home is almost invariably my way. What cursed egotism!"

In this correspondence with Mr. Thomson, and in Cromek's later publication, the reader will find a world of interesting details about the particular circumstances under which these immortal songs were severally written. They are all, or almost all, in fact, part and parcel of the poet's personal history. No man ever made his muse more completely the companion of his own individual life. A new flood of light has just been poured on the same subject in Mr. Allan Cunningham's *Collection of Scottish Songs;* unless therefore I were to transcribe volumes, and all popular volumes too, it is impossible to go into the details of this part of the poet's history. The reader must be contented with a few general *memoranda; e.g.*

"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 divine 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 the regimen of admiring a fine woman."[1]

"I can assure you I was never more in earnest. . . . 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 raptures they might 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."——So says Burns in introducing to Mr. Thomson's notice one of his many songs in celebration of the "Lassie wi' the Lint-white Locks." "The beauty of Chloris," says, nevertheless, Allan Cunningham, "has added many charms to Scottish song; but that which has increased the reputation of the poet, has lessened that of the man. Chloris was one of those who believe in the dispensing power of beauty, and thought that love should be under no demure restraint. Burns sometimes thought in the same way himself; and it is not wonderful, therefore, that the poet should celebrate the charms of a liberal beauty, who was willing to reward his strains, and who gave him many opportunities of catching inspiration from her presence." And in a note on the ballad which terminates with the delicious stanza:

Let others love the city, and gaudy show at summer noon,
Give me the lonely valley, the dewy eve, and rising moon,
Fair beaming and streaming her silver light the boughs amang;
While falling, recalling, the amorous thrush concludes her sang;
There, dearest Chloris, wilt thou rove, by wimpling burn and leafy shaw,
And hear my vows o' truth and love, and say thou lo'es me best of a'?

the same commentator adds—"such is the glowing picture which the poet gives of youth,

[1] Letter to Mr. Thomson, Oct. 19, 1794.

and health, and voluptuous beauty. But let no lady envy the poetic elevation of poor Chloris; her situation in poetry is splendid—her situation in life merits our pity—perhaps our charity."[1]

Of all Burns's love-songs, the best, in his own opinion was that which begins,

> Yestreen I had a pint o' wine, last night
> A place where body saw na. not

Allan Cunningham says, "If the poet thought so, I am sorry for it;" while Mr. Hamilton Paul fully concurs in the author's own estimate of the performance. "I believe, however," says Cunningham, "'Anna wi' the Gowden Locks' was no imaginary person. Like the dame in the old song, 'She Brew'd Gude Ale for Gentlemen;' and while she served the bard with a pint of wine, allowed her customer leisure to admire her, 'as hostler wives should do.'"[2]

There is in the same collection a love-song, which unites the suffrages, and ever will do so, of all men. It has furnished Byron with a motto, and Scott has said that that motto is "worth a thousand romances."

> Had we never loved sae kindly,
> Had we never loved sae blindly,
> Never met,—or never parted,
> We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

The "Nancy" of this moving strain was, according to Cunningham, another fair and somewhat frail dame of Dumfriesshire.[3]

I envy no one the task of inquiring minutely in how far these traditions, for such unquestionably they are, and faithfully conveyed by Allan Cunningham, rest on the foundation of truth. They refer at worst to occasional errors. "Many insinuations," says Mr. Gray, "have been made against the poet's character as a husband, but without the slightest proof; and I might pass from the charge with that neglect which it merits; but I am happy to say that I have in exculpation the direct evidence of Mrs. Burns herself, who, among many amiable and respectable qualities, ranks a veneration for the memory of her departed husband, whom she never names but in terms of the profoundest respect and the deepest regret, to lament his misfortunes, or to extol his kindnesses to herself, not as the momentary overflowings of the heart in a season of penitence for offences generously forgiven, but an habitual tenderness, which ended only with his life. I place this evidence, which I am proud to bring forward on her own authority, against a thousand anonymous calumnies."[4]

Among the effusions, not amatory, which Burns contributed to Mr. Thomson's collection, the famous song of Bannockburn holds the first place. We have already seen in how lively a manner Burns's feelings were kindled when he visited that glorious field. According to tradition, the tune played when Bruce led his troops to the charge, was "Hey tuttie taitie;" and it was humming this old air as he rode by himself through Glenkens in Galloway, during a terrific storm of wind and rain, that the poet composed his immortal lyric in its first and noblest form.[5] This is one more instance of his delight in the sterner aspects of nature.

> Come, winter, with thine angry howl,
> And raging bend the naked tree—

[1] [The real name of Chloris was Jean Lorimer. See some particulars regarding her in note to the song, "She says she loes me best of a'."

[2] [Anna of the "gowden locks" was certainly no imaginary person, and the poet's admiration of her was anything but purely platonic. The greatest scandal in his life, indeed, was connected with this young woman. See note 4 on this page. That a song which is devoid of all delicacy of sentiment, and simply glorifies the raptures of illicit love, should have been spoken of by Burns as his best, seems to argue on his part an obliquity of judgment, moral as well as critical.]

[3] [The heroine is undoubtedly "Clarinda." See note to song "Ae fond Kiss."]

[4] Letter to Gilbert Burns. [Whatever may have been Burns's conduct after settling in Dumfries and when Mr. Gray knew him, we know that the forementioned Anna became the mother by Burns of a child, a daughter (born 31st March, 1791), which the poet's wife took and nursed along with one of her own. If she showed this forgiveness towards her husband while he was alive it is not likely she would recall any of his failings after his death.]

[5] The last line of each stanza was subsequently lengthened and weakened, in order to suit the tune of "Lewie Gordon," which Mr. Thomson preferred to "Hey tuttie taitie." However, almost immediately after having prevailed on the poet to make this alteration, Mr. Thomson saw his error, and discarded both the change and the air which it was made to suit. [Lockhart above follows Syme's account of the composition of this famous song, an account which contradicts the poet's own express statement; see his letter to Thomson, 1st September, 1793. See also the question discussed in Professor Wilson's Essay, vol. v. of this work.]

"There is hardly," says he in one of his letters, "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 in a cloudy winter day, and hear the stormy winds howling among the trees, and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion: my mind is wrapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to *Him*, who in the pompous language of the Hebrew Bard, 'walks on the wings of the wind.'"[1] When Burns entered a Druidical circle of stones on a dreary moor, he has already told us that his first movement was "to say his prayers." His best poetry was to the last produced amid scenes of solemn desolation.

I may mention here, that during the later years of his life, his favourite book, the usual companion of his solitary rambles, was Cowper's "Task." It is pleasing to know that these illustrious contemporaries, in spite of the widely different circumstances under which their talents were developed, and the, at first sight, opposite sets of opinions which their works express, did justice to each other. No English writer of the time eulogized Burns more generously than Cowper. And in truth they had much in common,

> The stamp and clear impression of good sense;

the love of simplicity; the love of nature; sympathy with the poor; humour; pathos; satire; warm and manly hearts; the pride, the independence, and the melancholy of genius.

Some readers may be surprised to find two such names placed together otherwise than by way of contrast. Let it not be forgotten that Cowper had done little more than building bird-cages and rabbit-hutches at the age when the grave closed on Burns.

CHAPTER IX.

[Burns's irritable and nervous bodily constitution inherited:—the "rhyming tribe:"—letter to Cunningham:—pecuniary difficulties:—correspondence with Thomson:—Thomson's treatment of Burns:—acting supervisor:—death of his daughter:—illness:—imprudent exposure and chill:—racked with rheumatism:—removal to Brow:—Mrs. Riddell:—letter to his cousin at Montrose:—return to Dumfries:—death:—funeral:—birth of a son:—mausoleum erected:—subscription for the benefit of his family:—Currie's edition:—sons of Burns:—Gilbert Burns:—Burns neglected:—poverty:—letter to Peter Hill:—Burns's honesty and charity:—his religious principles:—value of Burns's history and poetry.]

> I dread thee, Fate, relentless and severe,
> With all a poet's, husband's, father's fear.

We are drawing near the close of this great poet's mortal career; and I would fain hope the details of the last chapter may have prepared the humane reader to contemplate it with sentiments of sorrow, pure comparatively, and undebased with any considerable intermixture of less genial feelings.

For some years before Burns was lost to his country, it is sufficiently plain that he had been, on political grounds, an object of suspicion and distrust to a large portion of the population that had most opportunity of observing him. The mean subalterns of party had, it is very easy to suppose, delighted in decrying him on pretexts, good, bad, and indifferent, equally—to their superiors; and hence—who will not willingly believe it?—the temporary and local prevalence of those extravagantly injurious reports, the essence of which Dr. Currie, no doubt, though it his duty, as a biographer, to extract and circulate.

The untimely death of one who, had he lived to anything like the usual term of human existence, might have done so much to increase his fame as a poet, and to purify and dignify his character as a man, was, it is too probable, hastened by his own intemperances and imprudences; but it seems to be extremely improbable, that even if his manhood had been a course of saintlike virtue in all respects, the irritable and nervous bodily constitution which he inherited from his father, shaken as it was by the toils and miseries of his ill-starred youth,

[1] [The poet's Common-place Book, April, 1784, contains a passage almost word for word the same as this.]

could have sustained to anything like the Psalmist's "allotted span," the exhausting excitements of an intensely poetical temperament. Since the first pages of this narrative were sent to the press, I have heard from an old acquaintance of the bard, who often shared his bed with him at Mossgiel,[1] that even at that early period, when intemperance assuredly had had nothing to do with the matter, those ominous symptoms of radical disorder in the digestive system, the "palpitation and suffocation" of which Gilbert speaks, were so regularly his nocturnal visitants that it was his custom to have a great tub of cold water by his bedside, into which he usually plunged more than once in the course of the night, thereby procuring instant, though but shortlived relief. On a frame thus originally constructed, and thus early tried with most severe afflictions, external and internal, what must not have been, under any subsequent course of circumstances, the effect of that exquisite sensibility of mind, but for which the world would never have heard anything either of the sins, or the sorrows, or the poetry of Burns!

"The fates and characters of the rhyming tribe," thus writes the poet himself to Miss Chalmers in 1793,[2] "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. Take a being of our kind, give him a stronger imagination and a more delicate sensibility, which between them will ever engender a more ungovernable set of passions than are the usual lot of man; implant in him an irresistible impulse to some idle vagary, such as arranging wild flowers in fantastic nosegays, tracing the grasshopper to his haunt by his chirping song, watching the frisks of the little minnows in the sunny pool, or hunting after the intrigues of butterflies—in short, send him adrift after some pursuit which shall eternally mislead him from the paths of lucre, and yet curse him with a keener relish than any man living for the pleasures that lucre can purchase; lastly, fill up the measure of his woes by bestowing on him a spurning sense of his own dignity, and you have created a wight nearly as miserable as a poet." In these few short sentences, as it appears to me, Burns has traced his own character far better than any one else has done it since. But with this lot what pleasures were not mingled? "To you, madam," he proceeds, "I need not recount the fairy pleasures the Muse bestows to counterbalance this catalogue of evils. Bewitching poetry is like bewitching women; she has in all ages been accused of misleading mankind from the counsels of wisdom and the paths of prudence, involving them in difficulties, baiting them with poverty, branding them with infamy, and plunging them in the whirling vortex of ruin: yet, where is the man but must own that all our happiness on earth is not worthy the name—that even the holy hermit's solitary prospect of paradisiacal bliss is but the glitter of a northern sun, rising over a frozen region, compared with the many pleasures, the nameless raptures, that we owe to the lovely Queen of the heart of man!"

"What is a poet?" asks one well qualified to answer his own question. "He is a man endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings on of the universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected, more than other men, by absent things, as if they were present: an ability of conjuring up in himself passions which are far indeed from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which

[1] [The old acquaintance is probably John Blane, who was a farm-servant to the poet at Mossgiel (but did not sleep with him), and who afterwards drove the mail-coach between Glasgow and Carlisle for many years. He used to talk freely of his connection with Mossgiel, drawing, doubtless, largely on his own invention or imagination. He was characterized by Mrs. Begg, the poet's sister, as "a leein' body."]

[2] [This is from a letter addressed, not to Miss Chalmers, but to Miss H. Craik, Arbigland, in the stewartry of Kirkcudbright, sometime about 1789 or 1790.]

are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events than anything which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves."[1] So says one of the rare beings who have been able to sustain and enjoy, through a long term of human years, the tear and wear of sensibilities, thus quickened and refined beyond what falls to the lot of the ordinary brothers of their race—feeling more than others can dream of feeling, the joys and the sorrows that come to them as individuals—and filling up all those blanks which so largely interrupt the agitations of common bosoms, with the almost equally agitating sympathies of an imagination to which repose would be death. It is common to say of those who over-indulge themselves in material stimulants, that they *live fast;* what wonder that the career of the poet's thick-coming fancies should, in the immense majority of cases, be rapid too?

That Burns *lived fast,* in both senses of the phrase, we have abundant evidence from himself; and that the more earthly motion was somewhat accelerated as it approached the close, we may believe, without finding it at all necessary to mingle anger with our sorrow. "Even in his earliest poems," as Mr. Wordsworth says, in a beautiful passage of his letter to Mr. Gray, "through the veil of assumed habits and pretended qualities, enough of the real man appears to show that he was conscious of sufficient cause to dread his own passions, and to bewail his errors! We have rejected as false sometimes in the letter, and of necessity as false in the spirit, many of the testimonies that others have borne against him:—but, by his own hand—in words the import of which cannot be mistaken—it has been recorded that the order of his life but faintly corresponded with the clearness of his views. It is probable that he would have proved a still greater poet, if, by strength of reason, he could have controlled the propensities which his sensibility engendered; but he would have been a poet of a different class: and certain it is, had that desirable restraint been early established, many peculiar beauties which enrich his verses could never have existed, and many accessory influences, which contribute greatly to their effect, would have been wanting. For instance, the momentous truth of the passage,[2]

> One point must still be greatly dark, &c.

could not possibly have been conveyed with such pathetic force by any poet that ever lived, speaking in his own voice, unless it were felt that, like Burns, he was a man who preached from the text of his own errors; and whose wisdom, beautiful as a flower, that might have risen from seed sown from above, was, in fact, a scion from the root of personal suffering. Whom did the poet intend should be thought of as occupying that grave over which, after modestly setting forth the moral discernment and warm affections of its 'poor inhabitant,' it is supposed to be inscribed, that

> ———Thoughtless follies laid him low,
> And stain'd his name?

Who but himself,—himself anticipating the too probable termination of his own course? Here is a sincere and solemn avowal—a public declaration from his own will—a confession at once devout, poetical, and human—a history in the shape of a prophecy? What more was required of the biographer than to put his seal to the writing, testifying that the foreboding had been realized, and that the record was authentic?"

In how far the "thoughtless follies" of the poet did actually hasten his end, it is needless to conjecture. They had their share, unquestionably, along with other influences which it would be inhuman to characterize as mere follies—such, for example, as that general depression of spirits, which haunted him from his youth;—or even a casual expression of discouraging tendency from the persons on whose good-will all hopes of substantial advancement in the scale of worldly promotion depended—which, in all likelihood, sat more heavily on such a being as Burns, than a man of plain common sense might guess—or that *partial* exclusion from the species of society our poet

[1] Preface to the second edition of Wordsworth's Poems.

[2] Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentlier sister woman—
Tho' they may gang a kennin' wrang; a little bit
To step aside is human:
One point must still be greatly dark
The moving *why* they do it:
And just as lamely can ye mark,
How far perhaps they rue it.

had been accustomed to adorn and delight, which, from however inadequate causes, certainly did occur during some of the latter years of his life. All such sorrows as these must have acted with twofold harmfulness upon Burns; harassing, in the first place, one of the most sensitive minds that ever filled a human bosom, and, alas! by consequence, tempting to additional excesses;—impelling one who, under other circumstances, might have sought and found far other consolation, to seek too often for it

> In fleeting mirth, that o'er the bottle lives,
> In the false joy its inspiration gives,
> And in associates pleased to find a friend
> With powers to lead them, gladden, and defend,
> In all those scenes where transient ease is found,
> For minds whom sins oppress, and sorrows wound.[1]

The same philosophical poet tells us, that

> ——Wine is like anger, for it makes us strong;
> Blind and impatient, and it leads us wrong;
> The strength is quickly lost, we feel the error long:

but a short period was destined for the sorrows and the errors equally of Burns.

How he struggled against the tide of his misery, let the following letter speak. It was written February 25, 1794, and addressed to Mr. Alexander Cunningham, an eccentric being, but generous and faithful in his friendship to Burns, and, when Burns was no more, to his family.

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

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

"Are you deep in the language of consolation? I have exhausted in reflection every topic of comfort. *A heart at ease* would have been charmed with my sentiments and reasonings; but as to myself, I was like Judas Iscariot preaching the gospel; he might melt and mould the hearts of those around him, but his own kept its native incorrigibility. Still there are two great pillars that bear us up, amid the wreck of misfortune and misery. The ONE is composed of the different modifications of a certain noble, stubborn something in man, known by the names of courage, fortitude, magnanimity. The OTHER is made up of those feelings and sentiments, which, however the sceptic may deny, or the enthusiast disfigure them, are yet, I am convinced, original and component parts of the human soul; those *senses of the mind*, if I may be allowed the expression, which connect us with, and link us to those awful obscure realities—an all-powerful and equally beneficent God—and a world to come, beyond death and the grave. The first gives the nerve of combat, while a ray of hope beams on the field; the last pours the balm of comfort into the wounds which time can never cure.

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

[1] Crabbe's *Edward Shore*, a tale in which that poet has obviously had Burns in his view.

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

> These, as they change, Almighty Father, these
> Are but the varied God,—The rolling year
> Is full of thee;

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

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

The reader has already had occasion to observe, that Burns had in those closing years of his life to struggle almost continually with pecuniary difficulties, than which nothing could have been more likely to pour bitterness intolerable into the cup of his existence. His lively imagination exaggerated to itself every real evil; and this among, and perhaps above, all the rest; at least, in many of his letters we find him alluding to the probability of his being arrested for debts, which we now know to have been of very trivial amount at the worst, which we also know he himself lived to discharge to the utmost farthing, and in regard to which it is impossible to doubt that his personal friends in Dumfries would have at all times been ready to prevent the law taking its ultimate course. This last consideration, however, was one which would have given slender relief to Burns. How he shrunk with horror and loathing from the sense of pecuniary obligation, no matter to whom, we had abundant indications already.[1]

The question naturally arises: Burns was all this while pouring out his beautiful songs for the *Museum* of Johnson and the greater work of Thomson; how did he happen to derive no pecuniary advantages from this continual exertion of his genius in a form of composition so eminently calculated for popularity? Nor, indeed, is it an easy matter to answer this very obvious question. The poet himself, in a letter to Mr. Carfrae, dated 1789, speaks thus: "The profits of the labours of a man of genius are, I hope, as honourable as any profits whatever; and Mr. Mylne's relations are most justly entitled to that honest harvest which fate has denied himself to reap." And yet so far from looking to Mr. Johnson for any pecuniary remuneration for the very laborious part he took in his work, it appears from a passage in Cromek's *Reliques*, that the poet asked a single copy of the *Museum* to give to a fair friend, by way of a great favour to himself—and that that copy and his own were really all he ever received at the hands of the publisher.[2] Of the secret history of Johnson and his book I know nothing; but the correspondence of Burns with Mr. Thomson contains curious enough details concerning his connection with that gentleman's more important undertaking. At the outset, September, 1792, we find Mr. Thomson saying, "We shall esteem your poetical assistance a particular favour, besides paying any reasonable price you shall

[1] The following extract from one of his letters to Mr. Macmurdo, dated December, 1793, will speak for itself:—

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

[2] [This must be a mistake, for Burns presented copies to Charlotte Hamilton, to "Clarinda," to Rev. John Skinner, to Jessie Lewars, and others.]

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." To which Burns replies immediately, "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 prostitution 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, *Gude speed the wark.*" The next time we meet with any hint as to money matters in the correspondence is in a letter of Mr. Thomson, 1st July, 1793, where he says,—"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 inclose 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." To which letter (it inclosed £5) Burns thus replies:—"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 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 bypast transaction, and from that moment commence to be an 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." In November, 1794, we find Mr. Thomson writing to Burns, "Do not, I beseech you, return the books." In May, 1795, "You really make me blush when you tell me you have not merited the drawing from me" (this was a drawing of the "Cottar's Saturday Night," by Allan). "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." On February, 1796, we have Burns acknowledging a "handsome elegant present to Mrs. B ——," which was a worsted shawl. Lastly, on the 12th July of the same year (that is little more than a week before Burns died), he writes to Mr. Thomson in these terms: "After all my boasted independence, cursed 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 put me half distracted. I do not ask 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." To which Mr. Thomson replies—"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 one day for your sake!——Pray, my good sir, is it not possible for you to muster a volume of poetry? . . . Do not shun this method of obtaining the value of your labour; remember Pope published the *Iliad* by subscription. Think of this, my dear Burns, and do not think me intrusive with my advice."

Such are the details of this matter, as recorded in the correspondence of the two individuals concerned. Some time after Burns's death, Mr. Thomson was attacked on account of his behaviour to the poet, in an anonymous novel, which I have never seen, called *Nubilia.*[1]

[1] [*Nubilia* was published in 1809; its author was William Mudford, born 1782, died 1848, for many years editor of the London *Courier*.]

In Professor Walker's *Memoirs*, which appeared in 1811, Mr. Thomson took opportunity of defending himself;[1] and Professor Walker, who enjoyed the personal friendship of Burns, and who also appears to have had the honour of Mr. Thomson's intimate acquaintance, has delivered an opinion on the whole merits of the case, which must necessarily be far more satisfactory to the reader than anything which I could presume to offer in its room. "Burns," says this writer, "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. He would

1 "I have been attacked with much bitterness, and accused of not endeavouring to remunerate Burns for the songs which he wrote for my collection; although there is the clearest evidence for the contrary, both in the printed correspondence between the poet and me, and in the public testimony of Dr. Currie. My assailant, too, without knowing anything of the matter, states that I had enriched myself by the labours of Burns, and, of course, that my want of generosity was inexcusable.

"Now the fact is, that notwithstanding the united labours of all the men of genius who have enriched my collection, I am not yet even 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 additions 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. On this subject, the testimony of Mr. Preston in London, a man of unquestionable and well-known character, who has printed the music for every copy of my work, may be more satisfactory than anything I can say. In August, 1809, he wrote me as follows: 'I am concerned at the very unwarrantable attack which has been made upon you by the author of *Nubilia;* nothing could be more unjust than to say you had enriched yourself by Burns's labours; for the whole concern, though it includes the labours of Haydn, has scarcely afforded a compensation for the various expenses, and for the time employed on the work. When a work obtains any celebrity, publishers are generally supposed to derive a profit ten times beyond the reality; the sale is greatly magnified, and the expenses are not in the least taken into consideration. It is truly vexatious to be so grossly and scandalously abused for conduct, the very reverse of which has been manifest through the whole transaction.'

"Were I the sordid man that the anonymous author calls me, I had a most inviting opportunity to profit much more than I did by the lyrics of our great bard. He had written above fifty songs expressly for my work; they were in my possession unpublished at his death; I had the right and the power of retaining them till I should be ready to publish them; but when I was informed that an edition of the poet's works was projected for the benefit of his family, I put them in immediate possession of the whole of his songs, as well as letters; and thus enabled Dr. Currie to complete the four volumes, which were sold for the family's behoof to Messrs. Cadell and Davies. And I have the satisfaction of knowing that the most zealous friends of the family, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Syme, and Dr. Currie, and the poet's own brother, considered my sacrifice of the prior rights of publishing the songs, as no ungrateful return for the disinterested and liberal conduct of the poet. Accordingly, Mr. Gilbert Burns, in a letter to me, which alone might suffice for an answer to all the novelist's abuse, thus expresses himself: 'If ever I come to Edinburgh, I will certainly call on a person whose handsome conduct to my brother's family has secured my esteem, and confirmed me in the opinion, that musical taste and talents have a close connection with the harmony of the moral feelings.' Nothing is farther from my thoughts than to claim any merit for what I did. I never would have said a word on the subject, but for the harsh and groundless accusation which has been brought forward, either by ignorance or animosity, and which I have long suffered to remain unnoticed, from my great dislike to any public appearance."

To these passages I now add part of a letter addressed to myself by Mr. Thomson, since this memoir was first published. "After the manner in which Burns received my first remittance, I dared not, in defiance of his interdict, repeat the experiment upon a man so peculiarly sensitive and sturdily independent. It would have been presumption, I thought, to make him a second pecuniary offer in the face of his declaration, that if I did, '*he would spurn the past transaction, and commence to be an entire stranger to me.*'

"But, independently of those circumstances, there is an important fact of which you are probably ignorant, that I did not publish above a tenth part of my collection till after the lamented death of our bard; and that while he was alive, I had not derived any benefit worth mentioning from his liberal supply of admirable songs, having only brought out *half a volume* of my work. It was not till some years posterior to his death, and till Dr. Currie had published all the manuscript songs which I put into his hands for the benefit of his widow and family, that *I* brought out the songs along with the music, harmonized by the great composers in Europe. Those who supposed, therefore, that I had enriched myself by the publication of half a volume, were egregiously mistaken. The fact is, that the whole five volumes have yielded me a very scanty compensation for my various outlays upon the work, and for the many years of labour and research which it cost me."

instantly have construed such conduct into a virtual assertion that his prohibition was insincere, and his independence affected; and the more artfully the transaction had been disguised, the more rage it would have excited, as implying the same assertion, with the additional charge, that if secretly made it would not be denied. . . . The statement of Mr. Thomson supersedes the necessity of any additional remarks. When the public is satisfied, when the relations of Burns are grateful, and, above all, when the delicate mind of Mr. Thomson is at peace with itself in contemplating his conduct, there can be no necessity for a nameless novelist to contradict them."

So far, Mr. Walker:—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.[1]

They order these things differently now; a living lyric poet,[2] whom none will place in a higher rank than Burns, has long, it is understood, been in the habit of receiving about as much money annually for an annual handful of songs, as was ever paid to our bard for the whole body of his writings.

Of the increasing irritability of our poet's temperament, amidst the various troubles which preceded his last illness, his letters furnish proofs, to dwell on which could only inflict unnecessary pain. Let one example suffice. "Sunday closes a period of our curst revenue business, and may probably keep me employed with my pen until noon. Fine employment for a poet's pen! Here I sit, altogether Novemberish a d—— melange of fretfulness and melancholy; not enough of the one to rouse me to passion, nor of the other to repose me in torpor; my soul flouncing and fluttering round her tenement, like a wild finch caught amid the horrors of winter, and newly thrust into a cage. Well, I am persuaded that it was of me the Hebrew sage prophesied, when he foretold—'And behold, on whatsoever this man doth set his heart, it shall not prosper!'—Pray that wisdom and bliss may be more frequent visitors of R. B."[3]

Towards the close of 1795 [1794] Burns was, as has been previously mentioned, employed as an acting supervisor of excise. This was apparently a step to a permanent situation of that higher and more lucrative class; and from thence, there was every reason to believe the kind patronage of Mr. Graham might elevate him yet farther. These hopes, however, were mingled and darkened with sorrow. For four months of that year his youngest child lingered through an illness of which every week promised to be the last; and she was finally cut off when the poet, who had watched her with anxious tenderness, was from home on professional business.[4] This was a severe blow, and his own nerves, though as yet he had not taken any serious alarm about his ailments, were ill fitted to withstand it.

"There had need," he writes Mrs. Dunlop, 15th December [1793], "there had much need be many pleasures annexed to the states of husband and father, for, God knows, they have many peculiar cares. I cannot describe to you the anxious, sleepless hours, these ties frequently give me. I see a train of helpless

[1] [We have little doubt that the reasons why Burns refused to accept of money from Thomson were, that he was working along with the latter as a friend, that the work was to him a labour of love, and that he knew that as yet Thomson had derived no pecuniary benefit to speak of from his publication and was not himself in any way a man of means. Creech, on the other hand, was a publisher by profession, and if Burns took hundreds of pounds from him readily enough he knew that Creech was well paid for his share in the transaction. Had Burns lived and Thomson's enterprise been remunerative no doubt the poet would have been quite willing to share in the success. See Carlyle's opinion, in his "Essay," in vol. ii. of this work.]

[2] [Probably Thomas Moore.]

[3] Letter to Mrs. Riddell, November, 1793.

[4] [His youngest daughter, but not his youngest child as stated above, Elizabeth Riddell, died, and was buried at Mauchline in September, 1795.]

little folks; me and my exertions all their stay; and on what a brittle thread does the life of man hang! If I am nipt off at the command of fate—even in all the vigour of manhood as I am, such things happen every day—gracious God! what would become of my little flock? 'Tis here that I envy your people of fortune. A father on his deathbed, taking an everlasting leave of his children, has indeed woe enough; but the man of competent fortune leaves his sons and daughters independency and friends; while I—but I shall run distracted if I think any longer on the subject."

To the same lady, on the 29th of the month [Dec. 1794], he, after mentioning his supervisorship, and saying that at last his political sins seemed to be forgiven him—goes on in this ominous tone—"What a transient business is life! Very lately I was a boy; but t'other day a young man; and I already begin to feel the rigid fibre and stiffening joints of old age coming fast over my frame." We may trace the melancholy sequel in these extracts.[1]

"31*st January*, 1796.—I have lately drunk deep of the cup of affliction. The autumn robbed me of my only daughter and darling child, and that at a distance too, and so rapidly, as to put it out of my power to pay the last duties to her. I had scarcely begun to recover from that shock, when I became myself the victim of a most severe rheumatic fever, and long the die spun doubtful; until, after many weeks of a sick-bed, it seems to have turned up my life, and I am beginning to crawl across my room, and once indeed have been before my own door in the street.

When pleasure fascinates the mental sight,
Affliction purifies the visual ray,
Religion hails the drear the untried night,
That shuts, for ever shuts! life's doubtful day."

But a few days after this, Burns was so exceedingly imprudent as to join a festive circle at a tavern dinner, where he remained till about three in the morning. The weather was severe, and he, being much intoxicated, took no precaution in thus exposing his debilitated frame to its influence. It has been said, that he fell asleep upon the snow on his way home. It is certain, that next morning he was sensible of an icy numbness through all his joints—that his rheumatism returned with tenfold force upon him—and that from that unhappy hour his mind brooded ominously on the fatal issue. The course of medicine to which he submitted was violent; confinement—accustomed as he had been to much bodily exercise—preyed miserably on all his powers; he drooped visibly, and all the hopes of his friends that health would return with summer, were destined to disappointment.

"4*th June*, 1796.[2]—I am in such miserable health as to be utterly incapable of showing my loyalty in any way. Rackt as I am with rheumatisms, I meet every face with a greeting like that of Balak to Balaam—'Come, curse me Jacob: and come defy me Israel.'"

"7*th July*.—I fear the voice of the bard will soon be heard among you no more. For these eight or ten months I have been ailing, sometimes bedfast and sometimes not; but these last three months I have been tortured with an excruciating rheumatism, which has reduced me to nearly the last stage. You actually would not know me if you saw me—pale, emaciated, and so feeble as occasionally to need help from my chair.—My spirit's fled! fled! But I can no more on the subject."

This last letter was addressed to Mr. Cunningham of Edinburgh, from the small village of Brow on the Solway Firth, about ten miles from Dumfries, to which the poet removed about the end of June [4th July]; "the medical folks," as he says, "having told him that his last and only chance was bathing, country quarters, and riding." In separating himself by their advice from his family for these purposes, he carried with him a heavy burden of care. "The deuce of the matter," he writes, "is this, when an exciseman is off duty his salary is reduced. What way, in the name of thrift, shall I maintain myself and keep a horse in country quarters on £35?" He implored his friends in Edinburgh to make interest with the board to grant him his full

[1] [It will be noticed that there is considerable floundering among dates in the last two or three paragraphs. Lockhart has evidently been misled by Currie, who, for some reason unknown, dated the Dunlop letters of this period in such a way as to conceal the fact that there had been a cessation in the correspondence, on the lady's part, of nearly two years.]

[2] The birthday of George III.

salary; "if they do not, I must lay my account with an exit truly *en poète*—if I die not of disease, I must perish with hunger." The application was, I believe, successful; but Burns lived not to profit by the indulgence, or the justice, of his superiors.[1]

Mrs. Riddell of Woodley Park, a beautiful and very accomplished woman, to whom many of Burns's most interesting letters, in the latter years of his life, were addressed, happened to be in the neighbourhood of Brow when Burns reached his bathing quarters, and exerted herself to make him as comfortable as circumstances permitted. Having sent her carriage for his conveyance, the poet visited her on the 5th July; and she has, in a letter published by Dr. Currie, thus described his appearance and conversation on that occasion:—

"I 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 other world?' I replied that it seemed a doubtful case which of us should be there soonest, and that I hoped he would yet live to write my epitaph. (I was then in a poor state of health.) He looked in my face with an air of great kindness, and expressed his concern at seeing me look so ill, with his accustomed sensibility. At table he ate little or nothing, and he complained of having entirely lost the tone of his stomach. We had a long and serious conversation about his present situation, and the approaching termination of all his earthly prospects. He spoke of his death without any of the ostentation of philosophy, but with firmness as well as feeling—as an event likely to happen very soon, and which gave him concern chiefly from leaving his four children so young and unprotected, and his wife in so interesting a situation—in hourly expectation of lying-in of a fifth. He mentioned, with seeming pride and satisfaction, the promising genius of his eldest son, and the flattering marks of approbation he had received from his teachers, and dwelt particularly on his hopes of that boy's future conduct and merit. His anxiety for his family seemed to hang heavy upon him, and the more perhaps from the reflection that he had not done them all the justice he was so well qualified to do. Passing from this subject, he showed great concern about the care of his literary fame, and particularly the publication of his posthumous works. He said he was well aware that his death would occasion some noise, and that every scrap of his writing would be revived against him to the injury of his future reputation: that letters and verses written with unguarded and improper freedom, and which he earnestly wished to have buried in oblivion, would be handed about by idle vanity or malevolence, when no dread of his resentment would restrain them, or prevent the censures of shrill-tongued malice, or the insidious sarcasms of envy, from pouring forth all their venom to blast his fame. He lamented that he had written many epigrams on persons against whom he entertained no enmity, and whose characters he should be sorry to wound; and many indifferent poetical pieces, which he feared would now, with all their imperfections on their head, be thrust upon the world. On this account he deeply regretted having deferred to put his papers into a state of arrangement, as he was now quite incapable of that exertion. The conversation was kept up with great evenness and animation on his side. I have seldom seen his mind greater or more collected. There was frequently a considerable degree of vivacity in his sallies, and they would probably have had a greater share, had not the concern and dejection I could not disguise, damped the spirit of pleasantry he seemed not unwilling to indulge. We parted about sunset on the evening of that day (the 5th of July, 1799), and the next day I saw him again, and we parted to meet no more!"

I do not know the exact date of the following [probably 14th July]:—

To Mrs. Burns.—"Brow, Thursday.—My dearest Love, I delayed writing until I could tell you what effect sea-bathing was likely to produce. It would be injustice to deny that it has eased my pains, and I think has strengthened me; but my appetite is still extremely bad. No flesh or fish can I swallow, porridge

[1] [It appears it was neither to the indulgence nor the justice of his superiors that Burns was obliged, but to the generosity of a young candidate for appointment in the excise named Stobie, who undertook to discharge his official duties, otherwise his full salary would not have been continued. See vol. iv. p. 252.]

and milk are the only things I can taste. I am very happy to hear, by Miss Jess Lewars, that you are all well. My very best and kindest compliments to her and to all the children. I will see you on Sunday. Your affectionate husband, R. B."

There is a very affecting letter to Gilbert, dated the 7th, in which the poet says: "I am dangerously ill, and not likely to get better. God keep my wife and children!" On the 12th he wrote the letter to Mr. George Thomson, above quoted, requesting £5; and addressed another, still more painful, to his affectionate relative Mr. James Burness of Montrose, by whose favour it is now before the reader:—

"MY DEAREST COUSIN,

"When you offered me money assistance, little did I think I should want it so soon. A rascal of a haberdasher, to whom I owe a considerable bill, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process against me, and will infallibly put my emaciated body into jail. Will you be so good as to accommodate me, and that by return of post, with ten pounds? O, James! did you know the pride of my heart, you would feel doubly for me! Alas! I am not used to beg! The worst of it is, my health was coming about finely. You know, and my physician assures me, that melancholy and low spirits are half my disease; guess, then, my horrors since this business began. If I had it settled, I would be, I think, quite well in a manner. How shall I use this language to you? O, do not disappoint me! but strong necessity's curst command!

"I have been thinking over and over my brother's affairs, and I fear I must cut him up; but on this I will correspond at another time, particularly as I shall want your advice.

"Forgive me for once more mentioning *by return of post*. Save me from the horrors of a jail!

"My compliments to my friend James, and to all the rest. I do not know what I have written. The subject is so horrible, I dare not look it over again. Farewell! R. B."

July 12th.

The same date appears also on a letter to his friend Mrs. Dunlop. Of these three productions of the 12th of July, who would not willingly believe that the following was the last?

"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 the 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!"

I give the following anecdote in the words of Mr. M'Diarmid:—"Rousseau, we all know, when dying, wished to be carried into the open air, that he might obtain a parting look of the glorious orb of day. A night or two before Burns left Brow he drank tea with Mrs. Craig, widow of the minister of Ruthwell. His altered appearance excited much silent sympathy, and the evening being beautiful, and the sun shining brightly through the casement, Miss Craig (now Mrs. Henry Duncan) was afraid the light might be too much for him, and rose with the view of letting down the window blinds. Burns 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.'"

On the 18th, despairing of any benefit from the sea, our poet came back to Dumfries. Mr. Allan Cunningham, who saw him arrive, "visibly changed in his looks, being with difficulty able to stand upright, and reach his own door," has given a striking picture, in one of his essays, of the state of popular feeling in the town during the short space which intervened between his return and his death. "Dumfries was like a besieged place. It was known he was dying, and the anxiety, not of the rich and the learned only, but of the mechanics and peasants, exceeded all belief. Wherever two or three people stood together, their talk was of Burns, and of him alone. They spoke of his history—of his person—of

his works—of his family—of his fame—and of his untimely and approaching fate, with a warmth and an enthusiasm which will ever endear Dumfries to my remembrance. All that he said or was saying—the opinions of the physicians (and Maxwell was a kind and a skilful one), were eagerly caught up and reported from street to street, and from house to house."

"His good humour (Cunningham adds) was unruffled, and his wit never forsook him. He looked at one of his fellow-volunteers with a smile, as he stood by the bed-side with his eyes wet, and said, 'John, don't let the awkward squad fire over me.' He repressed with a smile the hopes of his friends, and told them he had lived long enough. As his life drew near a close, the eager, yet decorous solicitude of his fellow-townsmen, increased. It is the practice of the young men of Dumfries to meet in the streets during the hours of remission from labour, and by these means I had an opportunity of witnessing the general solicitude of all ranks and of all ages. His differences with them on some important points were forgotten and forgiven; they thought only of his genius—of the delight his compositions had diffused—and they talked of him with the same awe as of some departing spirit, whose voice was to gladden them no more,"[1]

"A tremor now pervaded his frame," says Dr. Currie on the authority of the physician who attended him; "his tongue was parched; and his mind sunk into delirium, when not roused by conversation. On the second and third day the fever increased, and his strength diminished." On the fourth, July 21st, 1796, Robert Burns died.

"I went to see him laid out for the grave," says Mr. Allan Cunningham; "several elder people were with me. He lay in a plain unadorned coffin, with a linen sheet drawn over his face, and on the bed, and around the body, herbs and flowers were thickly strewn, according to the usage of the country. He was wasted somewhat by long illness; but death had not increased the swarthy hue of his face, which was uncommonly dark and deeply marked—his broad and open brow was pale and serene, and around it his sable hair lay in masses, slightly touched with gray. The room where he lay was plain and neat, and the simplicity of the poet's humble dwelling pressed the presence of death more closely on the heart than if his bier had been embellished by vanity, and covered with the blazonry of high ancestry and rank. We stood and gazed on him in silence for the space of several minutes—we went, and others succeeded us—not a whisper was heard. This was several days after his death."

On the 25th of July [on the evening of Sunday, the 24th], the remains of the poet were removed to the Trades' Hall, where they lay in state until next morning. The volunteers of Dumfries were determined to inter their illustrious comrade (as indeed he had anticipated) with military honours. The chief persons of the town and neighbourhood were anxious to make part of the procession; and not a few travelled from great distances to witness the solemnity. The streets were lined by the fencible infantry of Angusshire, and the cavalry of the Cinque Ports, then quartered at Dumfries, whose commander, Lord Hawkesbury (now Earl of Liverpool[2]), although he had always declined a personal introduction to the poet,[3] officiated as one of the chief mourners. "The multitude who accompanied Burns to the grave might amount," says Cunningham, "to ten or twelve thousand. Not a word was heard. . . . It was an impressive and mournful sight to see men of all ranks and persuasions and opinions mingling as brothers, and stepping side by side down the streets of Dumfries, with the remains of him who had sung of their loves and joys and domestic endearments, with a truth and a tenderness which none perhaps have since equalled. I could, indeed, have wished the military part of the procession away. The scarlet and gold—the banners displayed—the measured step, and the military array—with

[1] In the *London Magazine*, 1824, article, "Robert Burns and Lord Byron." [Allan Cunningham was not quite twelve years of age when Burns died, and it is hard to tell how much of these "recollections" was really his own, how much mere hearsay.]

[2] The second earl of the family, deceased since this memoir was first published. [He became prime minister in 1812, an office which he held till 1827. He died in 1828.]

[3] So Mr. Syme informed Mr. M'Diarmid.

the sounds of martial instruments of music, had no share in increasing the solemnity of the burial scene, and had no connection with the poet. I looked on it then, and I consider it now, as an idle ostentation, a piece of superfluous state, which might have been spared, more especially as his neglected, and traduced, and insulted spirit, had experienced no kindness in the body from those lofty people who are now proud of being numbered as his coevals and countrymen. . . . I found myself at the brink of the poet's grave, into which he was about to descend for ever. There was a pause among the mourners, as if loath to part with his remains; and when he was at last lowered, and the first shovelful of earth sounded on his coffin-lid, I looked up and saw tears on many cheeks where tears were not usual. The volunteers justified the fears of their comrade by three ragged and straggling volleys. The earth was heaped up, and the green sod laid over him, and the multitude stood gazing on the grave for some minutes, and then melted silently away. The day was a fine one, the sun was almost without a cloud, not a drop of rain fell from dawn to twilight. I notice this, not from any concurrence in the common superstition, that 'happy is the corpse which the rain rains on,' but to confute the pious fraud of a religious magazine, which made heaven express its wrath at the interment of a profane poet, in thunder, in lightning, and in rain."

During the funeral solemnity Mrs. Burns was seized with the pains of labour, and gave birth to a male infant, who quickly followed his father to the grave. Mr. Cunningham describes the appearance of the family, when they at last emerged from their house of sorrow:—"A weeping widow and four helpless sons; they came into the streets in their mournings, and public sympathy was awakened afresh. I shall never forget the looks of his boys, and the compassion which they excited. The poet's life had not been without errors, and such errors, too, as a wife is slow in forgiving; but he was honoured then, and is honoured now, by the unalienable affection of his wife; and the world repays her prudence and her love by its regard and esteem."

There was much talk at the time of a subscription for a monument; but Mrs. Burns, beginning ere long to suspect that the business was to end in talk, covered the grave at her own expense with a plain tombstone, inscribed simply with the name and age of the poet. In 1813, however, a public meeting was held at Dumfries, General Dunlop, son to Burns's friend and patroness, being in the chair; a subscription was opened, and contributions flowing in rapidly from all quarters, a costly mausoleum was at length erected on the most elevated site which the churchyard presented. Thither the remains of the poet were solemnly transferred[1] on the 5th June, 1815; and the spot continues to be visited every year by many hundreds of travellers. The structure, which is perhaps more gaudy than might have been wished, [is in the form of a Greek temple surmounted by a dome, as will be seen from the plate in the last volume of this work[2]].

Immediately after the poet's death a subscription was opened for the benefit of his family; Mr. Miller of Dalswinton, Dr. Maxwell, Mr. Syme, Mr. Cunningham, and Mr. M'Murdo becoming trustees for the application of the money. Many names from other parts of Scotland appeared in the lists, and not a few from England, especially London and Liverpool. Seven hundred pounds were in this way collected; an additional sum was forwarded from India; and the profits of Dr. Currie's Life and Edition of Burns were also considerable. The result has been, that the sons of the poet received an excellent education, and that Mrs. Burns continued to reside, enjoying a decent independence, in the house where the poet died, situated in what is now, by the authority of the Dumfries magistracy, called Burns Street.[3]

[1] The original tombstone of Burns was at first sunk under the pavement of the mausoleum, but has since been raised and fixed in the floor; and the grave which first received his remains is now occupied, according to her own dying request, by a daughter of Mrs. Dunlop.

[2] [See vol. v.—"Monuments to Burns."]

[3] [On leaving Ellisland for the town of Dumfries in December, 1791, Burns and his family took up their abode in a house of three small apartments, each with a window to the street, on the second floor of a tenement on the north side of Bank Street, then called the Wee Vennel. The small central room was used as the poet's *sanctum*, and here, during his eighteen months' tenancy, he composed some of his most pop-

"Of the (four surviving) sons of the poet," says their uncle Gilbert in 1820, "Robert, the eldest, is placed as a clerk in the stamp-office, London" (1829). "Francis Wallace, the second, died in 1803; William Nicol, the third, went to Madras in 1811; and James Glencairn, the youngest, to Bengal in 1812, both as cadets in the Honourable Company's service." These young gentlemen have all, it is believed, conducted themselves through life in a manner highly honourable to themselves, and to the name which they bear. One of them (James), as soon as his circumstances permitted, settled a liberal annuity on his estimable mother, [which she continued to enjoy till her death in April, 1834].

Gilbert, the admirable brother of the poet, survived till the 27th of April, 1827. He removed from Mossgiel, shortly after the death of Burns, to a farm in Dumfriesshire, carrying with him his aged mother, who died under his roof. At a later period he became factor to the noble family of Blantyre, on their estates in East Lothian. The pecuniary succours which the poet afforded Gilbert Burns, and still more the interest excited in his behalf by the account of his personal character contained in Currie's *Memoir*, proved of high advantage to him. He trained up a large family, six sons and five daughters, and bestowed on all his boys what is called a classical education. The untimely death of one of these, a young man of very promising talents, when on the eve of being admitted to holy orders, is supposed to have hastened the departure of the venerable parent. It should not be omitted that, on the publication of his edition of his brother's works, in 1819, Gilbert repaid, with interest, the sum which the poet advanced to him in 1788. Through life, and in death, he maintained and justified the promise of his virtuous youth, and seems in all respects to have resembled his father, of whom Murdoch, long after he was no more, wrote in language honourable to his own heart: "O for a world of men of such dispositions! I have often wished, for the good of mankind, that it were as customary to honour and perpetuate the memory of those who excel in moral rectitude, as it is to extol what are called heroic actions: then would the mausoleum of the friend of my youth overtop and surpass most of those we see in Westminster Abbey?"

It is pleasing to trace in all these details the happy influence which our poet's genius has exerted over the destinies of his connections. "In the fortunes of his family," says Mr. M'Diarmid,[1] "there are few who do not feel the liveliest interest; and were a register kept of the names, and numbers, and characters, of those who from time to time visit the humble but decent abode in which Burns breathed his

ular songs. Immediately underneath the poet's apartments a gentleman named John Syme had his office for the distribution of stamps. He became a warm friend of the poet, and after the death of the latter acted as his executor. This tenement belonged to a Captain Hamilton, a great admirer of Burns, and is now marked by a stone tablet on the front of the second floor:—"Robert Burns, the National Poet, lived in this house with his family on coming to Dumfries from Ellisland, in 1791." The poet afterwards removed to a small "self-contained" two-story house on the south side of a short, mean street striking eastward from St. Michael Street, in the northern vicinity of St. Michael's church. The street was then known as Millbrae or Millbrae-hole; but after Burns's death its name, as above stated, was changed to Burns Street. His house here consisted of a sitting-room and kitchen on the ground-floor; two bedrooms—in one of which, a small room, fifteen feet by nine, the poet died—on the floor above; and a couple of attic bedrooms in which the children slept. The house in Burns's time was one of a good order, such as was occupied by the better class of citizens. After his death it continued in the occupancy of his widow down to the time of her death in 1834, and in 1850 was purchased by Col. Wm. Nicol Burns, son of the poet. It was left by Col. Burns to the Dumfries and Maxwellton Industrial School, but still continues to be kept in, as much as possible, the same condition as when Burns inhabited it, though in 1886 it was found to require rebuilding in part. In a niche in the adjoining building a bust of the poet has been placed, along with a stone bearing this inscription:—"In the Adjoining House, to the North, Lived and Died the Poet of his Country and of Mankind, Robert Burns." In a narrow, gloomy close off the High Street is situated the Globe Tavern which Burns used to frequent, at the bar of which "Anna wi' the gowden locks" was the presiding Hebe, and on the windows of which he used to scratch verses with his diamond. The house, which is invested with somewhat of a painful interest, has undergone very little change since the days of Burns; indeed the doors, windows, floors, and panelling are almost unaltered. The King's Arms Inn was also an occasional "howff" of Burns, and a window pane on which he had scratched an epigram was for a long time a great attraction to both townsmen and strangers. The pew which Burns occupied in St Michael's Church, and on which he had cut the initials "R. B.," was sold at the repairing of the church in 1869 for £5.]

[1] Article in the *Dumfries Magazine*, August, 1825.

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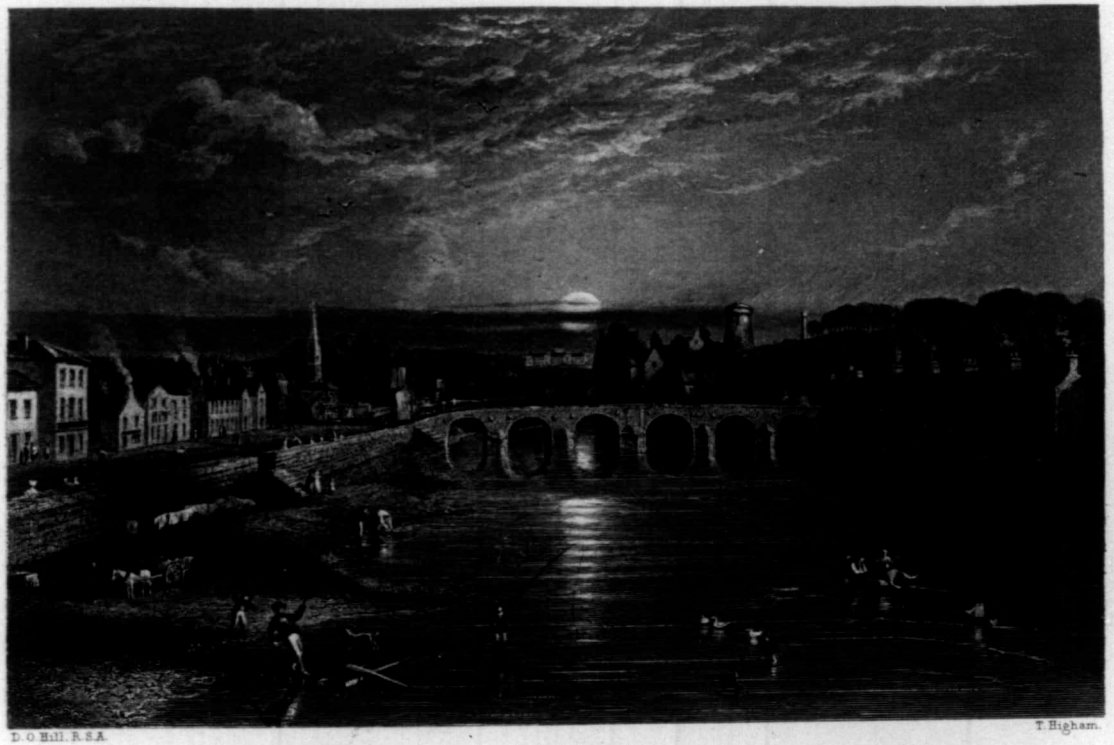

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DUMFRIES.

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last, amid the deepest despondency for the fate of those who were dearer to him than life, and in which his widow is spending tranquilly the evening of her days in the enjoyment of a competency, not derived from the public, but from the honourable exertions of her own offspring—the detail, though dry, would be pleasing to many, and would weaken, though it could not altogether efface, one of the greatest stains on the character of our country. Even as it is, his name has proved a source of patronage to those he left behind him, such as the high and the noble cannot always command. Wherever his sons wander, at home or abroad, they are regarded as the scions of a noble stock, and receive the cordial greetings of hundreds who never saw their faces before, but who account it a happiness to grasp in friendly pressure the proffered hand in which circulates the blood of Burns."[1]

Sic vos non vobis. The great poet himself, whose name is enough to ennoble his children's children, was, to the eternal disgrace of his country, suffered to live and die in penury, and as far as such a creature could be degraded by any external circumstances, in degradation. Who can open the page of Burns, and remember without a blush, that the author of such verses, the human being whose breast glowed with such feelings, was doomed to earn mere bread for his children by casting up the stock of publicans' cellars, and riding over moors and mosses in quest of smuggling stills? The subscription for his poems was, for the time, large and liberal, and perhaps absolves a certain number of the gentry of Scotland as individuals; but that some strong movement of indignation did not spread over the whole kingdom, when it was known that Robert Burns, after being caressed and flattered by the noblest and most learned of his countrymen, was about to be established as a common gauger among the wilds of Nithsdale—and that, after he was so established, no interference from a higher quarter arrested that unworthy career:—these are circumstances which must continue to bear heavily on the memory of that generation, and especially of those who then administered the public patronage of Scotland.

In defence, or at least in palliation, of this national crime, two false arguments, the one resting on facts grossly exaggerated, the other having no foundation whatever either on knowledge or on wisdom, have been rashly set up, and arrogantly as well as ignorantly maintained. To the one, namely, that public patronage would have been wrongfully bestowed on the poet, because the exciseman was a political partisan, it is hoped the details embodied in this narrative have supplied a sufficient answer: had the matter been as bad as the boldest critics have ever ventured to insinuate, Sir Walter Scott's answer would still have remained—"this partisan was BURNS." The other argument is a still more heartless, as well as absurd one; to wit, that from the moral character and habits of the man no patronage, however liberal, could have influenced and controlled his conduct, so as to work lasting and effective improvement, and lengthen his life by raising it more nearly to the elevation of his genius. This is indeed a candid and a generous method of judging. Are imprudence and intemperance, then, found to increase usually in proportion as the worldly circumstances of men are easy? Is not the very opposite of this doctrine acknowledged by almost all that have ever tried the reverses of fortune's wheel themselves—by all that have contemplated from an elevation, not too high for sympathy, the usual course of manners, when their fellow-creatures either encounter or live in constant apprehension of

The thousand ills that rise where money fails,
Debts, threats, and duns, bills, bailiffs, writs, and jails?

To such mean miseries the latter years of Burns's life were exposed, not less than his early youth, and after what natural buoyancy

[1] Mr. M'Diarmid, in the article above quoted, gives a touching account of the illness and death of one of the daughters of Mr. James Glencairn Burns, on her voyage homewards from India. "At the funeral of this poor child there was witnessed," says he, "a most affecting scene. Officers, passengers, and men were drawn up in regular order on deck; some wore crape round the right arm, others were dressed in the deepest mourning; every head was uncovered; and as the lashing of the waves on the sides of the coffin proclaimed that the melancholy ceremony had closed, every countenance seemed saddened with grief—every eye moistened with tears. Not a few of the sailors wept outright, natives of Scotland, who, even when far away, had revived their recollections of home and youth, by listening to, or repeating the poetry of Burns."

of animal spirits he ever possessed had sunk under the influence of time, which, surely bringing experience, fails seldom to bring care also and sorrow, to spirits more mercurial than his; and in what bitterness of spirit he submitted to his fate, let his own burning words once more tell us. "Take," says he, writing to one who never ceased to be his friend—"take these three guineas, and place them over against that * * * * account of yours, which has gagged my mouth these five or six months! I can as little write good things, as apologies, to the man I owe money to. O the supreme curse of making three guineas do the business of five! Poverty! thou half-sister of death, thou cousin-german of hell! Oppressed by thee, the man of sentiment, whose heart glows with independence, and melts with sensibility, inly pines under the neglect, or writhes in bitterness of soul under the contumely of arrogant, unfeeling wealth. Oppressed by thee, the son of genius, whose ill-starred ambition plants him at the tables of the fashionable and polite, must see, in suffering silence, his remark neglected, and his person despised, while shallow greatness, in his idiot attempts at wit, shall meet with countenance and applause. Nor is it only the family of worth that have reason to complain of thee; the children of folly and vice, though, in common with thee, the offspring of evil, smart equally under thy rod. The man of unfortunate disposition and neglected education is condemned as a fool for his dissipation, despised and shunned as a needy wretch, when his follies, as usual, bring him to want; and when his necessities drive him to dishonest practices, he is abhorred as a miscreant, and perishes by the justice of his country. But far otherwise is the lot of the man of family and fortune. *His* early follies and extravagance are spirit and fire; *his* consequent wants are the embarrassment of an honest fellow; and when, to remedy the matter, he has gained a legal commission to plunder distant provinces, or massacre peaceful nations, he returns, perhaps, laden with the spoils of rapine and murder; lives wicked and respected, and dies a * * * * * and a lord. Nay, worst of all, alas for helpless woman! The needy prostitute, who has shivered at the corner of the street, waiting to earn the wages of casual prostitution, is left neglected and insulted, ridden down by the chariot-wheels of the coroneted RIP, hurrying on to the guilty assignation; she who, without the same necessities to plead, riots nightly in the same guilty trade. Well! divines may say of it what they please, but execration is to the mind, what phlebotomy is to the body; the vital sluices of both are wonderfully relieved by their respective evacuations."[1]

In such evacuations of indignant spleen the proud heart of many an unfortunate genius, besides this, has found or sought relief; and to other more dangerous indulgences the affliction of such sensitive spirits had often, ere this time, condescended. The list is a long and painful one; and it includes some names that can claim but a scanty share in the apology of Burns. Addison himself, the elegant, the philosophical, the religious Addison, must be numbered with these offenders:—Jonson, Cotton, Prior, Parnell, Otway, Savage, all sinned in the same sort; and the transgressions of them all have been leniently dealt with in comparison with those of one whose genius was probably greater than any of theirs; his appetites more fervid, his temptations more abundant, his repentance more severe. The beautiful genius of Collins sunk under similar contaminations; and those who have, from dulness of head or sourness of heart, joined in the too general clamour against Burns, may learn a lesson of candour, of mercy, and of justice, from the language in which one of the best of men, and loftiest of moralists, has commented on frailties that hurried a kindred spirit to a like untimely grave.

"In a long continuance of poverty, and long habits of dissipation," says Johnson, "it cannot be expected that any character should be exactly uniform. That this man, wise and virtuous as he was, passed always unentangled through the snares of life, it would be prejudice and temerity to affirm; but it may be said that he at least preserved the source of action unpolluted, that his principles were never shaken, that his distinctions of right and wrong were never confounded, and that his faults had nothing of malignity or design, but proceeded from some unexpected pressure or casual temptation. Such was the fate of Collins,

[1] Letter to Mr. Peter Hill, bookseller, Edinburgh, 17th Jan. 1791 [as altered by Currie].

with whom I once delighted to converse, and whom I yet remember with tenderness."

Burns was an honest man: after all his struggles, he owed no man a shilling when he died. His heart was always warm and his hand open. "His charities," says Mr. Gray, "were great beyond his means;" and I have to thank Mr. Allan Cunningham for the following anecdote, for which I am sure every reader will thank him too. Mr. Maxwell of Teraughty, an old, austere, sarcastic gentleman, who cared nothing about poetry, used to say when the excise-books of the district were produced at the meetings of the justices —"Bring me Burns's journal: it always does me good to see it, for it shows that an honest officer may carry a kind heart about with him."

Of his religious principles we are bound to judge by what he has told us himself in his more serious moments. He sometimes doubted with the sorrow, what in the main and above all, in the end, he believed with the fervour of a poet. "It occasionally haunts me," says he in one of his letters—"the dark suspicion, that immortality may be only too good news to be true;" and here, as on many points besides, how much did his method of thinking (I fear I must add of acting) resemble that of a noble poet more recently lost to us! "I am no bigot to infidelity," said Lord Byron, "and did not expect that because I doubted the immortality of man I should be charged with denying the existence of a God. It was the comparative insignificance of ourselves and our world, when placed in comparison with the mighty whole of which it is an atom, that first led me to imagine that our pretentions to immortality might be overrated." I dare not pretend to quote the sequel from memory; but the effect was, that Byron, like Burns, complained of "the early discipline of Scotch Calvinism," and the natural gloom of a melancholy heart, as having between them engendered "a hypochondriacal *disease*," which occasionally visited and depressed him through life. In the opposite scale we are, in justice to Burns, to place many pages which breathe the ardour, nay the exultation of faith, and the humble sincerity of Christian hope; and as the poet himself has warned us, it well befits us "at the balance to be mute." Let us avoid, in the name of religion herself, the fatal error of those who would rashly swell the catalogue of the enemies of religion. "A sally of levity," says once more Dr. Johnson, "an indecent jest, an unreasonable objection, are sufficient, in the opinion of some men, to efface a name from the lists of Christianity, to exclude a soul from everlasting life. Such men are so watchful to censure, that they have seldom much care to look for favourable interpretations of ambiguities, or to know how soon any step of inadvertency has been expiated by sorrow and retraction, but let fly their fulminations without mercy or prudence against slight offences or casual temerities, against crimes never committed, or immediately repented. The zealot should recollect, that he is labouring, by this frequency of excommunication, against his own cause, and voluntarily adding strength to the enemies of truth. It must always be the condition of a great part of mankind to reject and embrace tenets upon the authority of those whom they think wiser than themselves, and therefore the addition of every name to infidelity in some degree invalidates that argument upon which the religion of multitudes is necessarily founded."[1] In conclusion, let me adopt the sentiment of that illustrious moral poet of our own time, whose generous defence of Burns will be remembered while the language lasts:—

> Let no mean hope your souls enslave—
> Be independent, generous, brave;
> Your *Poet* such example gave,
> And such revere;
> But be admonish'd by his grave,
> And think and fear.[2]

It is possible, perhaps for some it may be easy, to imagine a character of a much higher cast than that of Burns, developed, too, under circumstances in many respects not unlike those of his history—the character of a man of lowly birth and powerful genius, elevated by that philosophy which is alone pure and divine, far above all those annoyances of terrestrial spleen and passion, which mixed from the beginning with the workings of his inspiration, and in the end were able to eat deep into the great heart which they had long tormented. Such a being would have received,

[1] *Life of Sir Thomas Browne.*

[2] Wordsworth's "Address to the Sons of Burns," on visiting his grave in 1803.

no question, a species of devout reverence, I mean when the grave has closed on him, to which the warmest admirers of our poet can advance no pretensions for their unfortunate favourite; but could such a being have delighted his species—could he even have instructed them like Burns? Ought we not to be thankful for every new variety of form and circumstance, in and under which the ennobling energies of true and lofty genius are found addressing themselves to the common brethren of the race? Would we have none but Miltons and Cowpers in poetry—but Brownes and Southeys in prose? Alas! if it were so, to how large a portion of the species would all the gifts of all the muses remain for ever a fountain shut up and a book sealed? Were the doctrine of intellectual excommunication to be thus expounded and enforced, how small the library that would remain to kindle the fancy, to draw out and refine the feelings, to enlighten the head by expanding the heart of man? From Aristophanes to Byron, how broad the sweep, how woeful the desolation!

In the absence of that vehement sympathy with humanity as it is, its sorrows and its joys as they are, we might have had a great man, perhaps a great poet; but we could have had no Burns. It is very noble to despise the accidents of fortune; but what moral homily concerning these, could have equalled that which Burns's poetry, considered alongside of Burns's history, and the history of his fame, presents! It is very noble to be above the allurements of pleasure; but who preaches so effectually against them as he who sets forth, in immortal verse, his own intense sympathy with those that yield, and in verse and in prose, in action and in passion, in life and in death, the dangers and the miseries of yielding?

It requires a graver audacity of hypocrisy than falls to the share of most men, to declaim against Burns's sensibility to the tangible cares and toils of his earthly condition; there are more who venture on broad denunciations of his sympathy with the joys of sense and passion. To these, the great moral poet already quoted, speaks in the following noble passage —and must he speak in vain? "Permit me," says he, "to remind you that it is the privilege of poetic genius to catch, under certain restrictions, of which perhaps at the time of its being exerted it is but dimly conscious, a spirit of pleasure wherever it can be found—in the walks of nature, and in the business of men. The poet, trusting to primary instincts, luxuriates among the felicities of love and wine, and is enraptured while he describes the fairer aspects of war; nor does he shrink from the company of the passion of love though immoderate—from convivial pleasure, though intemperate—nor from the presence of war though savage, and recognized as the handmaid of desolation." Frequently and admirably has Burns given way to these impulses of nature, both with reference to himself, and in describing the condition of others. Who, but some impenetrable dunce or narrow-minded puritan in works of art, ever read without delight the picture which he has drawn of the convivial exaltation of the rustic adventurer, "Tam o' Shanter?" The poet fears not to tell the reader in the outset that his hero was a desperate and sottish drunkard, whose excesses were frequent as his opportunities. This reprobate 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 jest 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 *ills* of life victorious.

"What a lesson do these words convey of charitable indulgence for the vicious habits of the principal actor in this 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 these 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 reader into possession of this intelligent sympathy, he qualifies him for exercising a salutary influence over the minds of those who are thus deplorably deceived."[1]

That some men in every age will comfort themselves in the practice of certain vices, by reference to particular passages both in the history and in the poetry of Burns, there is all reason to fear; but surely the general influence of both is calculated, and has been found, to produce far different effects. The universal popularity which his writings have all along enjoyed among one of the most virtuous of nations, is, of itself, surely a decisive circumstance. Search Scotland over, from the Pentland to the Solway, and there is not a cottage-hut so poor and wretched as to be without its Bible; and hardly one that, on the same shelf, and next to it, does not treasure a Burns. Have the people degenerated since their adoption of this new manual? Has their attachment to the Book of Books declined? Are their hearts less firmly bound, than were their fathers', to the old faith and the old virtues? I believe he that knows the most of the country will be the readiest to answer all these questions as every lover of genius and virtue would desire to hear them answered.

On one point there can be no controversy: the poetry of Burns has had most powerful influence in reviving and strengthening the national feelings of his countrymen. Amidst penury and labour, his youth fed on the old minstrelsy and traditional glories of his nation, and his genius divined that what he felt so deeply must belong to a spirit that might lie smothered around him, but could not be extinguished. The political circumstances of Scotland were, and had been, such as to starve the flame of patriotism; the popular literature had striven, and not in vain, to make itself English; and, above all, a new and a cold system of speculative philosophy had begun to spread widely among us. A peasant appeared, and set himself to check the creeping pestilence of this indifference. Whatever genius has since then been devoted to the illustration of the national manners, and sustaining thereby of the national feelings of the people, there can be no doubt that Burns will ever be remembered as the founder, and, alas! in his own person as the martyr, of this reformation.

[1] Wordsworth's Letter to Gray.

That which is nowadays called, by solitary eminence, the *wealth* of the nation, had been on the increase ever since our incorporation with a greater and wealthier state—nay, that the laws had been improving, and, above all, the administration of the laws, it would be mere bigotry to dispute. It may also be conceded easily, that the national mind had been rapidly clearing itself of many injurious prejudices—that the people, as a people, had been gradually and surely advancing in knowledge and wisdom, as well as in wealth and security. But all this good had not been accomplished without rude work. If the improvement were valuable, it had been purchased dearly. "The spring fire," Allan Cunningham says beautifully somewhere, "which destroys the furze, makes an end also of the nests of a thousand song-birds; and he who goes a trouting with lime, leaves little of life in the stream." We were getting fast ashamed of many precious and beautiful things, only for that they were old and our own.

It has already been remarked, how even Smollett, who began with a national tragedy, and one of the noblest of national lyrics, never dared to make use of the dialect of his own country; and how Moore, another enthusiastic Scotsman, followed in this respect, as in others, the example of Smollett, and over and overagain counselled Burns to do the like. But a still more striking sign of the times is to be found in the style adopted by both of these novelists, especially the great master of the art, in the representations of the manners and characters of their own countrymen. In *Humphrey Clinker* the last and best of Smollett's tales, there are some traits of a better kind—but, taking his works as a whole, the impression it conveys is certainly a painful, a disgusting one. The Scotchmen of these authors are the Jockies and Archies of farce—

> Time out of mind the Southrons' mirthmakers—

the best of them grotesque combinations of simplicity and hypocrisy, pride and meanness. When such men, high-spirited Scottish gentle-

men, possessed of learning and talents, and one of them at least of splendid genius, felt, or fancied, the necessity of making such submissions to the prejudices of the dominant nation, and did so without exciting a murmur among their own countrymen, we may form some notion of the boldness of Burns's experiment; and on contrasting the state of things then with what is before us now, it will cost no effort to appreciate the nature and consequences of the victory in which our poet led the way, by achievements never in their kind to be surpassed.[1] "Burns," says Mr. Campbell, "has given elixir vitæ to his dialect;"[2]—he gave it to more than his dialect.

The moral influence of his genius has not been confined to his own countrymen. "The range of the *pastoral*," said Johnson, "is narrow. Poetry cannot dwell upon the minuter distinctions by which one species differs from another, without departing from that simplicity of grandeur which *fills the imagination;* nor dissect the latent qualities of things, without losing its *general power of gratifying every mind by recalling its own conceptions.* Not only the images of rural life, but the occasions on which they can be properly applied, are few and general. The state of a man confined to the employments and pleasures of the country, is so little diversified, and exposed to so few of those accidents which produce perplexities, terrors, and surprises, in more complicated transactions, that he can be shown but seldom in such circumstances as attract curiosity. His ambition is without policy, and his love without intrigue. He has no complaints to make of his rival, but that he is richer than himself; nor any disasters to lament, but a cruel mistress or a bad harvest."[3] Such were the notions of the great arbiter of taste, whose dicta formed the creed of the British world at the time when Burns made his appearance to overturn all such dogmata at a single blow; to convince the loftiest of the noble, and the daintiest of the learned, that wherever human nature is at work the eye of a poet may discover rich elements of his art—that over Christian Europe, at all events, the purity of sentiment and the fervour of passion may be found combined with sagacity of intellect, wit, shrewdness, humour, whatever elevates, and whatever delights the minds, not more easily amidst the most "complicated transactions" of the most polished societies, than

In huts where poor men lie.

Burns did not place himself only within the estimation and admiration of those whom the world called his superiors—a solitary tree emerging into light and air, and leaving the parent underwood as low and as dark as before. He, as well as any man,

Knew his own worth, and reverenced the lyre;

but he ever announced himself as a peasant, the representative of his class, the painter of their manners, inspired by the same influences which ruled their bosoms; and whosoever sympathized with the verse of Burns had his soul opened for the moment to the whole family of man. If, in too many instances, the matter has stopped there—the blame is not with the poet, but with the mad and unconquerable pride and coldness of the worldly heart—"man's inhumanity to man." If, in spite of Burns, and all his successors, the boundary-lines of society are observed with increasing strictness among us—if the various orders of men still, day by day, feel the chord of sympathy relaxing, let us lament over symptoms of a disease in the body politic, which, if it goes on, must find sooner or later a fatal ending: but let us not undervalue the antidote which has all along been checking this strong poison. Who can doubt, that at this moment thousands of "the first-born of

[1] "He was," says a writer, in whose language a brother poet will be recognized—"he was in many respects born at a happy time; happy for a man of genius like him, but fatal and hopeless to the more common mind. A whole world of life lay before Burns, whose inmost recesses, and darkest nooks, and sunniest eminences, he had familiarly trodden from his childhood. All that world he felt could be made his own. No conqueror had overrun its fertile provinces, and it was for him to be crowned supreme over all the

Lyric singers of that high-soul'd land.

The crown that he has won can never be removed from his head. Much is yet left for other poets, even among that life where his spirit delighted to work; but he has built monuments on all the high places, and they who follow can only hope to leave behind them some far humbler memorials."—*Blackwood's Magazine*, Feb. 1817.

[2] *Specimens of the British Poets*, vol. vii. p. 240.

[3] *Rambler*, No. 36.

Egypt" look upon the smoke of a cottager's chimney with feelings which would never have been developed within their being had there been no Burns?

Such, it can hardly be disputed, has been, and is the general influence of the poet's genius; and the effect has been accomplished, not in spite of, but by means of the most exact contradiction of, every one of the principles laid down by Dr. Johnson in a passage already cited, and, indeed, assumed throughout the whole body of that great author's critical disquisitions. Whatever Burns has done, he has done by his exquisite power of entering into the characters and feelings of individuals; as Heron has well expressed it, "by the effusion of particular, not general sentiments, and in the picturing out of particular imagery."

Currie says, that "if *fiction* be the soul of poetry, as some assert, Burns can have small pretensions to the name of poet." The success of Burns, the influence of his verse, would alone be enough to overturn all the systems of a thousand definers; but the doctor has obviously taken *fiction* in far too limited a sense. There are indeed but few of Burns's pieces in which he is found creating beings and circumstances, both alike alien from his own person and experience, and then, by the power of imagination, divining and expressing what forms life and passion would assume with, and under these—but there are some; there is quite enough to satisfy every reader of "Hallowe'en," the "Jolly Beggars," and "Tam o' Shanter" (to say nothing of various particular songs, such as "Bruce's Address," "Macpherson's Lament," &c.), that Burns, if he pleased, might have been as largely and as successfully an inventor in this way, as he is in another walk, perhaps not so inferior to this as many people may have accustomed themselves to believe; in the art, namely, of recombining and new-combining, varying, embellishing, and fixing and transmitting, the elements of a most picturesque experience and most vivid feelings.

Lord Byron, in his letter on Pope, treats with high and just contempt the laborious trifling which has been expended on distinguishing by air-drawn lines and technical slang-words, the elements and materials of poetical exertion; and, among other things, expresses his scorn of the attempts that have been made to class Burns among minor poets, merely because he has put forth few large pieces, and still fewer of what is called the purely imaginative character. Fight who will about words and forms, "Burns's rank," says he, "is in the first class of his art;" and I believe the world at large are nowadays well prepared to prefer a line from such a pen as Byron's on any such subject as this, to the most luculent dissertation that ever perplexed the brains of writer and of reader. *Sentio, ergo sum*, says the metaphysician; the critic may safely parody the saying, and assert that that is poetry of the highest order which exerts influence of the most powerful order on the hearts and minds of mankind.

Burns has been appreciated duly, and he has had the fortune to be praised eloquently, by almost every poet who has come after him. To accumulate all that has been said of him, even by men like himself, of the first order, would fill a volume—and a noble monument, no question, that volume would be—the noblest, except what he has left us in his own immortal verses, which—were some dross removed, and the rest arranged in a chronological order[1]—would, I believe, form, to the intelligent, a more perfect and vivid history of his life, than will ever be composed out of all the material in the world besides.

"The impression of his genius," says Campbell, "is deep and universal; and, viewing him merely as a poet, there is scarcely another regret connected with his name, than that his productions, with all their merit, fall short of the talents which he possessed. That he never attempted any great work of fiction may be partly traced to the cast of his genius, and partly to his circumstances and defective education. His poetical temperament was that of fitful transports, rather than steady inspiration. Whatever he might have written was likely to have been fraught with passion. There is always enough of *interest* in life to cherish the feelings of genius; but it requires knowledge to enlarge and enrich the imagination. Of that knowledge, which unrolls the diversities of human manners, adventures, and characters, to a poet's study, he could have no

[1] [The poems are arranged in chronological order in the present edition.]

great share; although he stamped the little treasure which he possessed in the mintage of sovereign genius."[1]

"Notwithstanding," says Sir Walter Scott, "the spirit of many of his lyrics, and the exquisite sweetness and simplicity of others, we cannot but deeply regret that so much of his time and talents was frittered away in compiling and composing for musical collections. There is sufficient evidence, that even the genius of Burns could not support him in the monotonous task of writing love verses on heaving bosoms and sparkling eyes, and twisting them into such rhythmical forms as might suit the capricious evolutions of Scotch reels and strathspeys. Besides, this constant waste of his power and fancy in small and insignificant compositions, must necessarily have had no little effect in deterring him from undertaking any grave or important task. Let no one suppose that we undervalue the songs of Burns. When his soul was intent on suiting a favourite air to words humorous or tender, as the subject demanded, no poet of our tongue ever displayed higher skill in marrying melody to immortal verse. But the writing of a series of songs for large musical collections degenerated into a slavish labour which no talents could support, led to negligence, and, above all, diverted the poet from his grand plan of dramatic composition. To produce a work of this kind, neither, perhaps, a regular tragedy nor comedy, but something partaking of the nature of both, seems to have been long the cherished wish of Burns. He had even fixed on the subject, which was an adventure in low life said to have happened to Robert Bruce while wandering in danger and disguise, after being defeated by the English.[2] The Scottish dialect would have rendered such a piece totally unfit for the stage; but those who recollect the masculine and lofty tone of martial spirit which glows in the poem of Bannockburn, will sigh to think what the character of the gallant Bruce might have proved under the hand of Burns. It would undoubtedly have wanted that tinge of chivalrous feeling which the manners of the age, no less than the disposition of the monarch, demanded; but this deficiency would have been more than supplied by a bard who could have drawn from his perceptions the unbending energy of a hero sustaining the desertion of friends, the persecution of enemies, and the utmost malice of disastrous fortune. The scene, too, being partly laid in humble life, admitted that display of broad humour and exquisite pathos with which he could, interchangeably and at pleasure, adorn his cottage views. Nor was the assemblage of familiar sentiments incompatible, in Burns, with those of the most exalted dignity. In the inimitable tale of 'Tam o' Shanter' he has left us sufficient evidence of his abilities to combine the ludicrous with the awful, and even the horrible. No poet, with the exception of Shakspere, ever possessed the power of exciting the most varied and discordant emotions with such rapid transitions. His humorous description of death in the poem on 'Dr. Hornbook,' borders on the terrific, and the witches' dance in the Kirk of Alloway is at once ludicrous and horrible. Deeply must we then regret those avocations which diverted a fancy so varied and so vigorous, joined with language and expressions suited to all its changes, from leaving a more substantial monument to his own fame, and to the honour of his country."[3]

The cantata of the "Jolly Beggars," which was not printed at all until some time after the poet's death, and has not been included in the editions of his works until within these few years, cannot be considered as it deserves, without strongly heightening our regret that Burns never lived to execute his meditated drama. That extraordinary sketch, coupled with his later lyrics in a higher vein, is enough to show that in him we had a master capable of placing the musical drama on a level with the loftiest of our classical forms. "Beggar's Bush" and "Beggar's Opera" sink into tameness in the comparison; and indeed, without profanity to the name of Shakspere, it may be said, that out of such materials, even his genius could hardly have constructed a piece in which imagination could have more splendidly predominated over the outward shows of things—in which the sympathy-awakening power of poetry could have been displayed more triumphantly under circum-

[1] *Specimens*, vol. vii. p. 241.

[2] [See Mr. Ramsay's account of a visit to Ellisland, p. 97.]

[3] *Quarterly Review*, No. I. p. 33.

stances of the greatest difficulty. That remarkable performance, by the way, was an early production of the Mauchline period;[1] I know nothing but the "Tam o' Shanter" that is calculated to convey so high an impression of what Burns might have done.

As to Burns's want of education and knowledge, Mr. Campbell may not have considered, but he must admit, that whatever Burns's opportunities had been at the time when he produced his first poems, such a man as he was not likely to be a hard reader (which he certainly was), and a constant observer of men and manners, in a much wider circle of society than almost any other great poet has ever moved in, from three-and-twenty to eight-and-thirty, without having thoroughly removed any pretext for auguring unfavourably on that score, of what he might have been expected to produce in the more elaborate departments of his art, had his life been spared to the usual limits of humanity. In another way, however, I cannot help suspecting that Burns's enlarged knowledge, both of men and books, produced an unfavourable effect, rather than otherwise, on the exertions, such as they were, of his later years. His generous spirit was open to the impression of every kind of excellence; his lively imagination, lending its own vigour to whatever it touched, made him admire even what other people try to read in vain; and after travelling, as he did, over the general surface of our literature, he appears to have been somewhat startled at the consideration of what he himself had, in comparative ignorance, adventured, and to have been more intimidated than encouraged by the retrospect. In most of the new departments in which he made some trial of his strength (such, for example, as the moral epistle in Pope's vein, the *heroic* satire, &c.), he appears to have soon lost heart, and paused. There is indeed one magnificent exception in "Tam o' Shanter"—a piece which no one can understand without believing that had Burns pursued that walk, and poured out his stores of traditionary lore, embellished with his extraordinary powers of description of all kinds, we might have had from his hand a series of national tales, uniting the quaint simplicity, sly humour, and irresistible pathos of another Chaucer, with the strong and graceful versification, and masculine wit and sense of another Dryden.

This was a sort of feeling that must have in time subsided. But let us not waste words in regretting what might have been, where so much is. Burns, short and painful as were his years, has left behind him a volume in which there is inspiration for every fancy, and music for every mood; which lives, and will live, in strength and vigour—"to soothe," as a generous lover of genius had said, "the sorrows of how many a lover, to inflame the patriotism of how many a soldier, to fan the fires of how many a genius, to disperse the gloom of solitude, appease the agonies of pain, encourage virtue, and show vice its ugliness;"[2]—a volume in which, centuries hence, as now, wherever a Scotsman may wander, he will find the dearest consolation of his exile. Already, in the language of *Childe Harold*, has

> Glory without end
> Scattered the clouds away; and on that name attend
> The tears and praises of all time.

[1] So John Richmond of Mauchline informed Chambers. See that very interesting work, the *Picture of Scotland*, article "Mauchline," for some entertaining particulars of the scene that suggested the poem.

[2] See the *Censura Literaria* of Sir Egerton Brydges, vol. ii. p. 55.

APPENDIX

TO

LOCKHART'S LIFE OF BURNS.

BURNS'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LETTER TO DR. MOORE.[1]

SIR,—For some months past I have been rambling over the country, partly on account of some little business I have to settle in various places; but of late I have been confined with some lingering complaints, originating, as I take it, in the stomach. To divert my spirits a little in this miserable fog of *ennui*, I have taken a whim to give you a history of myself.

My name has made a small noise in the country; you have done me the honour to interest yourself very warmly in my behalf; and I think a faithful account of what character of a man I am, and how I came by that character, may perhaps amuse you in an idle moment. I will give you an honest narrative, though I know it will be at the expense of frequently being laughed at; for I assure you, sir, I have, like Solomon, whose character, excepting in the trifling affair of *wisdom*, I sometimes think I resemble—I have, I say, like him, "turned my eyes to behold madness and folly," and, like him, too, frequently shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship. In the very polite letter Miss Williams[2] did me the honour to write me, she tells me you have got a complaint in your eyes. I pray God it may be removed; for, considering that lady and you are my common friends, you will probably employ her to read this letter; and then good-night to that esteem with which she was pleased to honour the Scotch Bard!

After you have perused these pages, should you think them trifling and impertinent, I only beg leave to tell you that the poor author wrote them under some very twitching qualms of conscience that, perhaps, he was doing what he ought not to do—a predicament he has more than once been in before.

I have not the most distant pretensions to what the pye-coated guardians of escutcheons call a gentleman. When at Edinburgh last winter I got acquainted at the Herald's Office, and, looking thro' the granary of honours, I there found almost every name in the kingdom; but for me,

> My ancient but ignoble blood
> Has crept through scoundrels since the flood.

Gules, purpure, argent, &c., quite disowned me.

My forefathers rented land of the famous, noble Keiths of Marshal, and had the honour to share their fate. I do not use the word "honour" with any reference to political principles; *loyal* and *disloyal* I take to be merely relative terms in that ancient and formidable court known in this country by the name of "club-law." Those who dare welcome Ruin and shake hands with Infamy, for what they believe sincerely to be the cause of their God or their king, are—as Mark Antony in Shakespear says of Brutus and Cassius—"honourable men." I mention this circumstance because it threw my father on the world at large,[3] where, after many years' wanderings and sojournings, he picked up a pretty large quantity of observation and experience, to which I am indebted for most of my pretensions to wisdom. I have met with few who understood men, their manners and their ways, equal to him; but stubborn, ungainly integrity, and headlong ungovernable irascibility, are disqualifying circumstances; consequently, I was born a very poor man's son.

For the first six or seven years of my life my father was gardener to [Mr. Ferguson of Doonholm] a worthy gentleman of small estate in the neighbourhood of Ayr. Had my father continued in that situation I must have marched off to be one of the little underlings about a farm-house; but it was his dearest wish and prayer to have it in his power to keep his children under his own eye till they could discern between good and evil; so, with the assistance of his generous master, he ventured on a small farm on that gentle-

[1] John Moore, a physician and author of some note in the last century, was born at Stirling about 1730, and died in 1802. After taking the degree of M.D. he practised for some years in Scotland; then travelled for five years on the Continent as medical attendant to the young Duke of Hamilton, and latterly settled in London, where he was resident when Burns became acquainted with him, through Mrs. Dunlop, in 1787. There are seven or eight letters to Moore in Burns's Correspondence. The two do not seem ever to have met. Among Moore's literary productions were the novel *Zeluco*, which had a considerable popularity in its day; *A View of Society and Manners in France, Switzerland, and Germany; A View of Society and Manners in Italy; Medical Sketches*, &c. See vol. iv. p. 47.

[2] Helen Maria Williams, a poetess and miscellaneous writer of some note in her day.

[3] This is erroneous. See "Paternal Ancestry of Burns" in this Appendix. "Keiths of Marshal" is a rather singular designation. The Keiths were hereditary Earls Marischal of Scotland.

man's estate. At these years I was by no means a favourite with anybody. I was a good deal noted for a retentive memory, a stubborn, sturdy something in my disposition, and an enthusiastic idiot-piety. I say *idiot*-piety because I was then but a child. Though I cost the schoolmaster some thrashings, I made an excellent English scholar; and against the years of ten or eleven I was absolutely a critic in substantives, verbs, and particles. In my infant and boyish days, too, I owed much to an old maid of my mother's remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition.[1] 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, cantraips, 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. 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.

Polemical divinity about this time was putting the country half-mad; and I, ambitious of shining on Sundays, between sermons, in conversation parties, at funerals, &c., in a few years more used to puzzle Calvinism with so much heat and indiscretion that I raised a hue and cry of heresy against me, which has not ceased to this hour.

My vicinity to Ayr was of great advantage to me. My social disposition, when not checked by some modification of spited pride, like our catechism definition of infinitude, was without bounds or limits. I formed many connections with other younkers who possessed superior advantages, the youngling actors, who were busy with the rehearsal of parts in which they were shortly to appear on that stage where, alas! I was destined to drudge behind the scenes. It is not commonly at these green years that the young noblesse and gentry have a just sense of the immense distance between them and their ragged play-fellows. It takes a few dashes into the world to give the young great man that proper, decent, unnoticing disregard for the poor, insignificant, stupid devils, the mechanics and peasantry around him, who perhaps were born in the same village. My young superiors never insulted the clouterly appearance of my ploughboy carcass, the two extremes of which were often exposed to all the inclemencies of all the seasons. They would give me stray volumes of books; among them, even then, I could pick up some observations; and one, whose heart I am sure not even the "Munny Begum" scenes have tainted, helped me to a little French. Parting with these my young friends and benefactors as they dropped off for the East or West Indies, was often to me a sore affliction; but I was soon called to more serious evils. My father's generous master died; the farm proved a ruinous bargain, and, to clench the curse, we fell into the hands of a factor, who sat for the picture I have drawn of one in my "Tale of Two Dogs." My father was advanced in life when he married; I was the eldest of seven children, and he, worn out by early hardship, was unfit for labour. My father's spirit was soon irritated, but not easily broken. There was a freedom in his lease in two years more, and, to weather these, we retrenched our expenses. We lived very poorly: I was a dexterous ploughman for my years; and the next eldest to me was a brother (Gilbert) who could drive the plough very well and help me to thrash. A novel-writer might perhaps have viewed these scenes with some satisfaction, but so did not I; my indignation yet boils at [the recollection of] the threatening, insolent epistles from the scoundrel tyrant, which used to set us all in tears.

This kind of life—the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing toil of a galley-slave, brought me to my sixteenth year; a little before which period I first committed the sin of Rhyme. You know our country custom of coupling a man and woman together as partners in the labours 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 Scottish idiom—she was a *bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass*. In short, she, altogether unwittingly to herself, initiated me into a certain delicious passion, which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and book-worm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our chiefest

[1] Betty Davidson, the widow of a cousin of the poet's mother.

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 maids, 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; which at times have been my only and, till within the last twelve months, have been my highest enjoyment.

My father struggled on till he reached the freedom in his lease, when he entered on [Lochlea in Tarbolton parish,] a larger farm, about ten miles farther in the country. The nature of the bargain was such as to throw a little ready money into his hands at the commencement of his lease, otherwise the affair would have been impracticable. For four years we lived comfortably here; but a lawsuit between him and his landlord commencing, after three years' tossing and whirling in the vortex of litigation, my father was just saved from absorption in a jail by a phthisical consumption, which, after two years' promises, kindly stepped in and snatched him away, to "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest."

It is during this climacteric that my little story is most eventful. I was, at the beginning of this period, perhaps the most ungainly, awkward being in the parish. No *solitaire* was less acquainted with the ways of the world. My knowledge of ancient story was gathered from Guthrie's and Salmon's geographical grammar; and the knowledge of modern manners, and of literature and criticism, I got from the *Spectator*. These with Pope's Works, some plays of Shakspeare, *Tull and Dickson on Agriculture*, *The Pantheon*, Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding*, Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*, Justice's *British Gardener*, *Boyle Lectures*, Allan Ramsay's Works, Taylor's *Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin*, A Select Collection of English Songs, and Hervey's *Meditations*, had been the extent of my reading. The collection of songs 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.

In my seventeenth year, to give my manners a brush, I went to a country dancing-school. My father had an unaccountable antipathy against these meetings; and my going was, what to this hour I repent, in absolute defiance of his commands. My father, as I said before, was the sport of strong passions; from that instance of rebellion he took a kind of dislike to me, which I believe was one cause of the dissipation which marked my future years. I say dissipation, comparative with the strictness and sobriety of Presbyterian country life; for though the Will o' Wisp meteors of thoughtless whim were almost the sole lights of my path, yet early ingrained piety and virtue never failed to point me out the line of innocence. The great misfortune of my life was never to have an aim. I had felt early some stirrings of ambition, but they were the blind gropings of Homer's Cyclops round the walls of his cave. I saw my father's situation entailed on me perpetual labour. The only two doors by which I could enter the fields of Fortune were the most niggardly economy or the little chicaning art of bargain-making. The first is so contracted an aperture, I never could squeeze myself into it; the last—I always hated the contamination of its threshold! Thus abandoned of view or aim in life, with a strong appetite for sociability (as well from native hilarity as from a pride of observation and remark) and a constitutional hypochondriac taint which made me fly solitude; add to all these incentives to social life, my reputation for bookish knowledge, a certain wild logical talent, and a strength of thought something like the rudiments of good sense, made me generally a welcome guest. So 'tis no great wonder that always, where two or three were met together, there was I in the midst of them. But far beyond all the other impulses of my heart was *un penchant à l'adorable moitié du genre humain*. My heart was completely tinder, and was eternally lighted up by some goddess or other; and, like every warfare in this world, I was sometimes crowned with success and sometimes mortified with defeat. At the plough, scythe, or reap-hook I feared no competitor, and set want at defiance; and as I never cared farther for any labours than while I was in actual exercise, I spent the evenings in the way after my own heart. A country lad seldom carries on an amour without an assisting confidant. I possessed a curiosity, zeal, and intrepid dexterity in these matters which recommended me as a proper second in duels of that kind; and, I dare say, I felt as much pleasure in being in the secret

of half the amours in the parish as ever did premier at knowing the intrigues of half the courts of Europe.

The very goose-feather in my hand seems to know instinctively the well-worn path of my imagination, the favourite theme of my song; and is with difficulty restrained from giving you a couple of paragraphs on the amours of my compeers, the humble inmates of the farmhouse and cottage; but the grave sons of science, ambition, or avarice baptize these things by the name of Follies. To the sons and daughters of labour and poverty, they are matters of the most serious nature; to them the ardent hope, the stolen interview, the tender farewell are the greatest and most delicious part of their enjoyments.

Another circumstance in my life which made very considerable alterations on my mind and manners, was, I spent my seventeenth summer a good distance from home, at a noted school[1] on a smuggling coast, to learn mensuration, surveying, dialling, &c., in which I made a pretty good progress. But I made a greater progress in the knowledge of mankind. The contraband trade was at this time very successful; scenes of swaggering riot and roaring dissipation were as yet new to me, and I was no enemy to social life. Here, though I learnt to look unconcernedly on a large tavern-bill, and mix without fear in a drunken squabble, yet I went on with a high hand in my geometry, till the sun entered Virgo, a month which is alway a carnival in my bosom, when a charming *fillette*, who lived next door to the school, overset my trigonometry, and set me off in a tangent from the sphere of my studies. I struggled on with my *sines* and *co-sines* for a few days more; but, stepping out to the garden one charming noon to take the sun's altitude, there I met my angel,

> . . . Like Proserpine gathering flowers,
> Herself a fairer flower . . .

It was in vain to think of doing any more good at school. The remaining week I staid, I did nothing but craze the faculties of my soul about her, or steal out to meet with her; and the two last nights of my stay in the country, had sleep been a mortal sin, I was innocent.

I returned home very considerably improved. My reading was enlarged with the very important addition of Thomson's and Shenstone's Works; I had seen mankind in a new phasis; and I engaged several of my school-fellows to keep up a literary correspondence with me.[2] I had met with a collec-

[1] At Kirkoswald, in Carrick, on the road from Portpatrick to Glasgow. Burns seems to have been sent to Kirkoswald school in consequence of his mother's connection with the place, for she was the daughter of Gilbert Brown, tenant of Craigenton, within the bounds of the parish. During his attendance at the school he lived with his maternal uncle, Samuel Brown, at Ballochneil, a little more than a mile from Kirkoswald, walking every morning to the little seminary and returning at night. See note to Lockhart's Life, p. 24, where is given an engraving of Kirkoswald. The village is represented as it appears from a point near the south-west extremity of the churchyard. On the left of the picture is the old ruined church, said to occupy the site of one built by Oswald, a Northumbrian king of the Heptarchy, in gratitude for a victory which he achieved near the spot, and which, taking its name from him, gave it in turn to the village and parish. A small chamber in the east end of the building was used as a parish school till a period briefly antecedent to Burns's residence here, when, the building becoming ruinous, a new church was erected on a neighbouring height, and the teacher, Hugh Rodger, transferred his seat of empire to an apartment in one of the houses of the village. The place of worship then built is seen at the extremity of the street on the right side of the picture. The room called at the same time into use as a school, was the floor or lower chamber of the house ranking third in the row, seen over the churchyard wall, being the main street of the village, and that along which the road passes. From behind this house, as from behind each of its neighbours in the same row, a small stripe of kail-yard (*Anglice*, kitchen-garden) extends about fifty yards along the rapidly ascending slope towards the ridge on which the new church is situated. When Burns went into the particular patch behind the school, to take the sun's altitude, he had only to look over a low inclosure to see the similar patch connected with the next house. Here, it seems, Peggy Thomson, daughter to the rustic occupant of that house, was walking at the time, though more probably engaged in the business of cutting cabbage for the family dinner than imitating the flower-gathering Proserpine, or her prototype Eve. Peggy became, by marriage, Mrs. Neilson, and was the heroine of the song beginning,

> Now westlin winds and slaughtering guns
> Bring autumn's pleasant weather.

[2] Among the friends whom Burns engaged to keep up a correspondence with him was William Niven, a Maybole friend, to whom (according to Robert Chambers) he wrote often, and in the most friendly and confidential terms. When that individual was commencing business in his native town, the poet addressed him a poetical epistle of appropriate advice, headed with the well-known lines from Blair's "Grave," beginning,

> Friendship! mysterious cement of the soul,
> Sweetener of life, and solder of society.

This correspondence continued till the period of the publication of the poems, when Burns wrote to request his friend's good offices in increasing his list of subscribers. The young man was then possessed of little influence; but what little he had he exercised with all the zeal of friendship, and with no little success. A considerable number of copies were accordingly transmitted in proper time to his care, and, soon after, the poet came to Maybole to receive the money. His friend collected a few choice spirits to meet him at the King's Arms Inn, and they spent a happy night together. Burns was on this occasion particularly elated, for Willie, in the midst of their conviviality, handed over to him above seven pounds, being the first considerable sum of money the poor bard had ever possessed. In the pride of his heart, next morning, he determined that he should not walk home, and accordingly he hired from his host a certain poor hack mare, well known along the whole road from Glasgow to Portpatrick—in all probability the first hired conveyance that Poet Burns had ever enjoyed. Willie and a few other youths who had been in his company on the preceding night, walked out of town before him, for the purpose of taking leave at a particular spot; and before he came up they had prepared a few mock-heroic verses in which to express their farewell. When Burns rode up, accordingly, they saluted him in this formal manner, a little to his surprise. He thanked them, however, and instantly added, "What need of all this fine parade of verse? It would have been quite enough if you had said—

> Here comes Burns,
> On Rosinante;
> She's damn'd poor,
> But he's damn'd canty."

The company then allowed Burns to go on his way rejoicing.

tion of letters by the wits of Queen Anne's reign, and I pored over them most devoutly. I kept copies of any of my own letters that pleased me; and a comparison between them and the composition of most of my correspondents flattered my vanity. I carried this whim so far, that, though I had not three farthings' worth of business in the world, yet every post brought me as many letters as if I had been a broad plodding son of day-book and ledger.

My life flowed on much in the same tenor till my twenty-third year. *Vive l'amour, et vive la bagatelle*, were my sole principles of action. The addition of two more authors to my library gave me great pleasure; Sterne and Mackenzie—*Tristram Shandy* and *The Man of Feeling*—were my bosom favourites. Poesy was still a darling walk for my mind; but it was only to the humour of the hour. I had usually half a dozen or more pieces on hand; I took up one or other as it suited the momentary tone of the mind, and dismissed it as it bordered on fatigue. My passions, when once they were lighted up, raged like so many devils, till they got vent in rhyme; and then conning over my verses, like a spell, soothed all into quiet! None of the rhymes of those days are in print, except "Winter, a Dirge" (the eldest of my printed pieces), the "Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie," "John Barleycorn," and songs first, second, and third.[1] Song second was the ebullition of that passion which ended the forementioned school business.

My twenty-third year was to me an important era. Partly through whim, and partly that I wished to set about doing something in life, I joined a flax-dresser in a neighbouring country town [Irvine] to learn his trade and carry on the business of manufacturing and retailing flax. This turned out a sadly unlucky affair. My partner was a scoundrel of the first water, who made money by the mystery of thieving, and to finish the whole, while we were giving a welcome carousal to the new year, our shop, by the drunken carelessness of my partner's wife, took fire, and burnt to ashes: and I was left like a true poet,—not worth sixpence.

I was obliged to give up business; the clouds of misfortune were gathering thick round my father's head; the darkest of which was—he was visibly far gone in a consumption. To crown all, a *belle fille* whom I adored, and who had pledged her soul to meet me in the fields of matrimony, jilted me, with peculiar circumstances of mortification. The finishing evil that brought up the rear of this infernal file was my hypochondriac complaint being irritated to such a degree that for three months I was in a diseased state of body and mind scarcely to be envied by the hopeless wretches who have got their mittimus—"Depart from me, ye accursed!"

From this adventure I learned something of a town life; but the principal thing which gave my mind a turn was—I formed a bosom friendship with a young fellow, the first[2] created being I had ever seen, but a hapless son of misfortune. He was the son of a plain mechanic; but a great man in the neighbourhood, taking him under his patronage, gave him a genteel education with a view of bettering his situation in life. The patron dying and leaving my friend unprovided for just as he was ready to launch forth into the world, the poor fellow, in despair, went to sea; where, after a variety of good and bad fortune, he was, a little before I was acquainted with him, set ashore by an American privateer, on the wild coast of Connaught, stripped of everything. I cannot quit this poor fellow's story without adding that he is at this moment captain of a large West-Indiaman belonging to the Thames.

This gentleman's mind was fraught with courage, independence, and magnanimity, and every noble, manly virtue. I loved him; I admired him to a degree of enthusiasm, and I strove to imitate him. I in some measure succeeded; I had the pride before, but he taught it to flow in proper channels. His knowledge of the world was vastly superior to mine, and I was all attention to learn. He was the only man I ever saw who was a greater fool than myself when woman was the presiding star; but he spoke of a certain fashionable failing with levity, which hitherto I had regarded with horror.[3] Here his friendship did me a mischief; and the consequence was that, soon after I resumed the plough, I wrote the enclosed "Welcome."[4]

My reading was only increased by two stray volumes of *Pamela* and one of *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, which gave me some idea of novels. Rhyme, except some religious pieces that are in print, I had given up; but meeting with *Ferguson's Scottish Poems*, I strung anew my wildly-sounding lyre with emulating vigour. When my father died, his all went among the rapacious hell-hounds that growl in the kennel of justice; but we made a shift to scrape a little money in the family amongst us, with which (to keep us together) my brother and I took [Mossgiel] a neighbouring farm. My brother wanted my hair-brained imagination, as well as my social and amorous madness; but, in good sense, and every sober qualification, he was far my superior.

[1] This refers to the songs printed in the Edinburgh edition of the poems. "It was upon a Lammas night," "Now westlin winds and slaught'ring guns," and "Behind yon hills where Lugar (or Stinchar) flows," are the pieces alluded to.

[2] That is *best, most excellent;* a favourite form of expression with Burns.

[3] Richard Brown, the individual here alluded to, when the contents of this letter were related to him remarked: "When I first knew Burns he had nothing to learn in that respect."

[4] The poet's "Welcome to his Illegitimate Child."

I entered on this farm with a full resolution, "Come, go to, I will be wise!" I read farming books; I calculated crops; I attended markets; and, in short, in spite of "the devil, the world, and the flesh," I believe I should have been a wise man; but the first year, from unfortunately buying bad seed, the second, from the late harvest, we lost half our crops. This overset all my wisdom, and I returned, "like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." I now began to be known in the neighbourhood as a maker of rhymes. The first of my poetic offspring that saw the light, was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists, both of them *dramatis personæ* in my "Holy Fair."[1] I had an idea myself that the piece had some merits; but, to prevent the worst, I gave a copy of it to a friend who was very fond of these things, and told him that I could not guess who was the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clever. With a certain side of both clergy and laity it met with a roar of applause. "Holy Willie's Prayer" next made its appearance, and alarmed the kirk-session so much that they held three several meetings to look over their holy artillery, if any of it was pointed against profane rhymers. Unluckily for me, my idle wanderings led me, on another side, point-blank within reach of their heaviest metal. This is the unfortunate story alluded to in my printed poem the "Lament." 'Twas a shocking affair, which I cannot yet bear to recollect, and it had very nearly given me one or two of the principal qualifications for a place among those who have lost the chart, and mistaken the reckoning of rationality. I gave up my part of the farm to my brother; as in truth it was only nominally mine (for stock I had none to embark in it), and made what little preparation was in my power for Jamaica. Before leaving my native country, however, I resolved to publish my poems. I weighed my productions as impartially as was in my power: I thought they had merit; and 'twas a delicious idea that I should be called a clever fellow, even tho' it should never reach my ears—a poor negro driver;—or perhaps gone to the world of spirits, a victim to that inhospitable clime. I can truly say, that *pauvre inconnu* as I then was, I had pretty nearly as high an idea of myself and of my works as I have at this moment. It was ever my opinion that the great unhappy mistakes and blunders, both in a rational and religious point of view, of which we see thousands daily guilty, are owing to their ignorance or mistaken notions of themselves. To know myself, had been all along my constant study. I weighed myself alone; I balanced myself with others; I watched every means of information, to see how much ground I occupied as a man and as a poet; I studied assiduously nature's design, where she seemed to have intended the various lights and shades in my character. I was pretty sure 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 would 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; besides pocketing (all expenses deducted) near twenty pounds. This last came very seasonably, as I was about to indent myself for want of money to pay my freight. As soon as I was master of nine guineas, the price of wafting me to the torrid zone, I bespoke a passage in the very first ship that was to sail, for

Hungry ruin had me in the wind.

I had for some time been skulking from covert to covert, under all the terrors of a jail; as some ill-advised ungrateful people had uncoupled the merciless legal pack at my heels. I had taken the last farewell of my few friends; my chest was on the road to Greenock; I had composed a song "The gloomy night is gathering fast," which was to be the last effort of my muse in Caledonia, when a letter from Dr. Blacklock to a friend of mine, overthrew all my schemes, by rousing my poetic ambition. The doctor belonged to a class of critics, for whose applause I had not even dared to hope. His idea that I would meet with every encouragement for a second edition, fired me so much, that away I posted for Edinburgh, without a single acquaintance in town, or a single letter of recommendation in my pocket. The baneful star which had so long presided in my zenith, for once made a revolution to the nadir; the providential care of a good God placed me under the patronage of one of his noblest creatures, the Earl of Glencairn. *Oubliez moi, Grand Dieu, si jamais je l'oublie!*

I need relate no farther. At Edinburgh I was in a new world; I mingled among many classes of men, but all of them new to me, and I was all attention "to catch the manners living as they rise."

You can now, sir, form a pretty near guess of what sort of a wight he is whom for some time you have honoured with your correspondence. That whim and fancy, keen sensibility and riotous passions, may still make him zigzag in his future path of life is very probable; but, come what will, I shall answer for him—the most determinate integrity and honour; and though his evil star should again blaze in his meridian with tenfold more direful influence, he may reluctantly tax friendship with pity, but no more.

My most respectful compliments to Miss

[1] See the "Twa Herds," p. 233.

Williams. The very elegant and friendly letter she honoured me with a few days ago I cannot answer at present, as my presence is required at Edinburgh for a week or so, and I set off tomorrow.

I inclose you "Holy Willie" for the sake of giving you a little further information of the affair than Mr. Creech could do. An Elegy I composed the other day on Sir James H. Blair, if time allow, I will transcribe. The merit is just mediocre.

If you will oblige me so highly and do me so much honour as now and then to drop me a line, please direct to me at Mauchline, Ayrshire. With the most grateful respect, I have the honour to be, sir, your very humble servant,

ROBERT BURNS.

Mauchline, 2d August, 1787.

Edinburgh, 23d September.

SIR,—The foregoing letter was unluckily forgot among other papers at Glasgow on my way to Edinburgh. Soon after I came to Edinburgh I went on a tour through the Highlands, and did not recover the letter till my return to town, which was the other day. My ideas, picked up in my pilgrimage, and some rhymes of my earlier years, I shall soon be at leisure to give you at large—so soon as I hear from you whether you are in London. I am again, sir, yours most gratefully, R. BURNS.

[Concerning this famous composition, Dr. Currie says: "There are various copies of this letter in the author's handwriting; and one of these, evidently corrected, is in the book in which he copied several of his letters." The text given above is that of the letter as it was actually sent to Dr. Moore, the letter in this its original form being first printed in Paterson's Edinburgh edition of Burns, edited by W. Scott Douglas. If, as Burns says in the above note of 23d Sept., the letter as it was written for Dr. Moore was left in Glasgow, he must have had a copy of it with him during his northern tour (Aug. 25–Sept. 16), for we find Mr. Walker writing to Burns from Athole House, Sept. 13: "The duchess would give any consideration for another sight of your letter to Dr. Moore." It seems somewhat strange that Burns should pen the above note after exhibiting the letter, or a copy of it, throughout the country.]

BURNS'S EARLY LIFE.

BY HIS BROTHER GILBERT.

Originally addressed in the form of a letter to Mrs. Dunlop.

"I have often heard my father describe the anguish of mind he felt when he parted with his elder brother, Robert, on the top of a hill, on the confines of their native place, each going off his several way in search of new adventures, and scarcely knowing whither he went. My father undertook to act as a gardener and shaped his course to Edinburgh, where he wrought hard when he could get work, passing through a variety of difficulties. Still, however, he endeavoured to spare something for the support of an aged parent, and I recollect hearing him mention his having sent a bank-note for this purpose, when money of that kind was so scarce in Kincardineshire that they hardly knew how to employ it when it arrived.

"Passing from Edinburgh to Ayrshire, he lived for two years as gardener to the Laird of Fairly in Dundonald parish, and then changed his service for that of Mr. Crawford of Doonside in the parish of Alloway. At length, being desirous to settle in life, he took a perpetual lease of some acres of land from Dr. Campbell, physician in Ayr, with a view to cultivate it as a nursery and meal-garden [being at this time, and still continuing, in the service of Mr. Ferguson of Doonholm]. With his own hands he built a house on part of this ground, and in December, 1757, married Agnes Brown, belonging to respectable connections near Maybole in Carrick. The first-fruit of the marriage was the subject of this memoir, born on 25th January, 1759. The education of my brother and myself was in common, there being only twenty months between us in respect of age. Under Mr. John Murdoch [writer of the next following article in this Appendix] we learned to read English tolerably well, and to write a little. He taught us two the English grammar. I was too young to profit much from his lessons in grammar, but Robert made some proficiency in it, a circumstance of considerable weight in the unfolding of his genius and character; as he soon became remarkable for the fluency and correctness of his expression, and read the few books that came in his way with much pleasure and improvement; for even then he was a reader when he could get a book. Murdoch, whose library at that time had no great variety in it, lent him *The Life of Hannibal*, which was the first book he read (the school-books excepted) and almost the only one he had an opportunity of reading while he was at school; for the *Life of Wallace*, which he classes with it in one of his letters, he did not see for some years afterwards, when he borrowed it from the blacksmith who shod our horses.

"At Whitsunday, 1766, we removed to Mount Oliphant, a farm of seventy acres (between eighty and ninety English statute measure), the rent of which was to be forty pounds annually for the first six years, and afterwards forty-five pounds. My father endeavoured to sell the leasehold property in Alloway, for the purpose of stocking this farm, but at that time he was unable, and

Mr. Ferguson lent him a hundred pounds for that purpose. It was, I think, not above two years after this that Murdoch, our tutor and friend, left this part of the country; and, there being no school near us, 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 eldest sisters got all the education they received. I remember a circumstance that happened at this time, which, though trifling in itself, is fresh in my memory, and may serve to illustrate the early character of my brother. Murdoch came to spend a night with us, and to take his leave when he was about to go into Carrick. He brought us, as a present and memorial of him, a small compendium of English grammar, and the tragedy of *Titus Andronicus*, and, by way of passing the evening, he began to read the play aloud. We were all attention for some time, till presently the whole party was dissolved in tears. A female in the play (I have but a confused recollection of it) had her hands chopt off, her tongue cut out, and then was insultingly desired to call for water to wash her hands. At this, in an agony of distress, we with one voice desired he would read no more. My father observed, that if we would not hear it out, it would be needless to leave the play with us. Robert replied, that if it was left he would burn it. My father was going to chide him for this ungrateful return to his tutor's kindness; but Murdoch interposed, declaring that he liked to see so much sensibility; and he left *The School for Love*, a comedy (translated, I think, from the French), in its place.

"Nothing could be more retired 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. Indeed, the greater part of the land in the vicinity was at that time possessed by shopkeepers, and people of that stamp, who had retired from business, or who kept their farm in the country, at the same time that they followed business in town. My father 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*, then lately published by James Meuros in Kilmarnock: 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. A brother of my mother, who had lived with us for some time, and had learnt some arithmetic by our winter evening's candle, went into a bookseller's shop in Ayr to purchase *The Ready Reckoner, or Tradesman's Sure Guide*, and a book to teach him to write letters. Luckily, in place of *The Complete Letter-Writer*, he got by mistake a small collection of letters by the most eminent writers, with a few sensible directions for attaining an easy epistolary style. This book was to Robert of the greatest consequence. It inspired him with a strong desire to excel in letter-writing, while it furnished him with models by some of the first writers in our language.

"My brother was about thirteen or fourteen, when my father, regretting that we wrote so ill, sent us, week about, during a summer quarter, to the parish school of Dalrymple, which, though between two and three miles distant, was the nearest to us, that we might have an opportunity of remedying this defect. About this time a bookish acquaintance of my father's procured us a reading of two volumes of Richardson's *Pamela*, which was the first novel we read, and the only part of Richardson's works my brother was acquainted with till towards the period of his commencing author. Till that time, too, he remained unacquainted with Fielding, with Smollett (two volumes of *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, and two volumes of *Peregrine Pickle* excepted), with Hume, with Robertson, and almost all our authors of eminence of the later times. I recollect, indeed, my father borrowed a volume of English history from Mr. Hamilton of Bourtreehill's gardener. It treated of the reign of James I., and his unfortunate son Charles, but I do not know who was the author; all that I remember of it is something of Charles's conversation with his children. About this time [1772] Murdoch, our former teacher, after having been in different places in the country, and having taught a school some time in Dumfries, came to be the established teacher of the English language in Ayr, a circumstance of considerable consequence to us. The remembrance of my father's former friendship, and his attachment to my brother, made him do everything in his power for our improvement. He sent us Pope's works, and some other poetry, the first that we had an opportunity of reading, excepting what is contained in *The English Collection*, and in the volume of the *Edinburgh Magazine* for 1772; excepting also those 'excellent new songs' that are hawked about the

country in baskets or exposed on stalls in the streets.

"The summer after we had been at Dalrymple school, my father sent Robert to Ayr, to revise his English grammar with his former teacher. He had been there only one week when he was obliged to return to assist at the harvest. When the harvest was over he went back to school, where he remained two weeks; and this completes the account of his school education, excepting one summer quarter, sometime afterwards, that he attended the parish school of Kirkoswald (where he lived with a brother of my mother's), to learn surveying.

"During the two last weeks that he was with Murdoch, he himself was engaged in learning French, and he communicated the instructions he received to my brother, who, when he returned, brought home with him a French dictionary and grammar, and the *Adventures of Telemachus* in the original. In a little while, by the assistance of these books, he had acquired such a knowledge of the language as to read and understand any French author in prose. This was considered as a sort of prodigy, and through the medium of Murdoch procured him the acquaintance of several lads in Ayr, who were at that time gabbling French, and the notice of some families, particularly that of Dr. Malcolm, where a knowledge of French was a recommendation.

"Observing the facility with which he had acquired the French language, Mr. Robinson, the established writing-master in Ayr, and Mr. Murdoch's particular friend, having himself acquired a considerable knowledge of the Latin language by his own industry, without ever having learnt it at school, advised Robert to make the same attempt, promising him every assistance in his power. Agreeably to this advice, he purchased *The Rudiments of the Latin Tongue*, but finding this study dry and uninteresting, it was quickly laid aside. He frequently returned to his *Rudiments* on any little chagrin or disappointment, particularly in his love affairs; but the Latin seldom predominated more than a day or two at a time, or a week at most. Observing himself the ridicule that would attach to this sort of conduct if it were known, he made two or three humorous stanzas on the subject, which I cannot now recollect, but they all ended,

So I'll to my Latin again.

"Thus you see Mr. Murdoch was a principal means of my brother's improvement. Worthy man! though foreign to my present purpose, I cannot take leave of him without tracing his future history. He continued for some years a respected and useful teacher at Ayr, till one evening that he had been overtaken in liquor, he happened to speak somewhat disrespectfully of Dr. Dalrymple, the parish minister, who had not paid him that attention to which he thought himself entitled. In Ayr he might as well have spoken blasphemy. He found it proper to give up his appointment. He went to London, where he still lives, a private teacher of French. He has been a considerable time married, and keeps a shop of stationery wares.[1]

"The father of Dr. Paterson, now physician at Ayr, was, I believe, a native of Aberdeenshire, and was one of the established teachers in Ayr when my father settled in the neighbourhood. He early recognized my father as a fellow-native of the north of Scotland, and a certain degree of intimacy subsisted between them during Mr. Paterson's life. After his death his widow, who is a very genteel woman and of great worth, delighted in doing what she thought her husband would have wished to have done, and assiduously kept up her attentions to all his acquaintance. She kept alive the intimacy with our family by frequently inviting my father and mother to her house on Sundays, when she met them at church.

"When she came to know my brother's passion for books, she kindly offered us the use of her husband's library, and from her we got the *Spectator*, Pope's translation of Homer, and several other books that were of use to us. Mount Oliphant, the farm my father possessed in the parish of Ayr, is almost the very poorest soil I know of in a state of cultivation. A stronger proof of this I cannot give than that, notwithstanding the extraordinary rise in the value of lands in Scotland, it was, after a considerable sum laid out in improving it by the proprietor, let a few years ago five pounds per annum lower than the rent paid for it by my father thirty years ago. My father, in consequence of this, soon came into difficulties, which were increased by the loss of several of his cattle by accidents and disease.—To the buffetings of misfortune, we could only oppose hard labour, and the most rigid economy. We lived very sparingly. For several years butcher's meat was a stranger in the house, while all the members of the family exerted themselves to the utmost of their strength, and rather beyond it, in the labours of the farm. My brother, at the age of thirteen, assisted in thrashing the crop of corn, and at fifteen was the principal labourer on the farm, for we had no hired servant, male or female. The anguish of mind we felt at our tender years, under these straits and difficulties, was very great. To think of our father growing old (for he was now above fifty), broken down with the long-continued fatigues of his life, with a wife and five other children, and in a declining state of circumstances—these reflections produced in my brother's mind and mine sensations of the

[1] Mr. Murdoch died in London in 1824; see note 2, p. 15 of this volume.

deepest distress. 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.

"By a stipulation in my father's lease he had a right to throw it up, if he thought proper, at the end of every sixth year. He attempted to fix himself in a better farm at the end of the first six years, but failing in that attempt, he continued where he was for six years more. He then took the farm of Lochlea, of a hundred and thirty acres, at the rent of twenty shillings an acre, in the parish of Tarbolton, of Mr. ——, then a merchant in Ayr, and now (1797) a merchant in Liverpool. He removed to this farm at Whitsunday, 1777, and possessed it only seven years. No writing had ever been made out of the conditions of the lease; a misunderstanding took place respecting them; the subjects in dispute were submitted to arbitration, and the decision involved my father's affairs in ruin. He lived to know of this decision, but not to see any execution in consequence of it. He died on the 13th of February, 1784.

"The seven years we lived in Tarbolton parish (extending from the nineteenth to the twenty-sixth of my brother's age), were not marked by much literary improvement; but during this time the foundation was laid of certain habits in my brother's character, which afterwards became but too prominent, and which malice and envy have taken delight to enlarge on. Though when young he was bashful and awkward in his intercourse with women, yet when he approached manhood his attachment to their society became very strong, and he was constantly the victim of some fair enslaver. The symptoms of his passion were often such as nearly to equal those of the celebrated Sappho. I never indeed knew that he 'fainted, sunk, and died away;' but the agitations of his mind and body exceeded anything of the kind I ever knew in real life. He had always a particular jealousy of people who were richer than himself, or who had more consequence in life. His love, therefore, rarely settled on persons of this description. When he selected any one out of the sovereignty of his good pleasure, to whom he should pay his particular attention, she was instantly invested with a sufficient stock of charms, out of the plentiful stores of his own imagination; and there was often a great disparity between his fair captivator and her attributes. One generally reigned paramount in his affections, but as Yorick's affections flowed out toward Madame de L—— at the remise door, while the eternal vows of Eliza were upon him, so Robert was frequently encountering other attractions, which formed so many under-plots in the drama of his love. As these connections were governed by the strictest rules of virtue and modesty (from which he never deviated till he reached his twenty-third year), he became anxious to be in a situation to marry. This was not likely to be soon the case while he remained a farmer, as the stocking of a farm required a sum of money he had no probability of being master of for a great while. He began, therefore, to think of trying some other line of life. He and I had for several years taken land of my father for the purpose of raising flax on our own account. In the course of selling it, Robert began to think of turning flax-dresser, both as being suitable to his grand view of settling in life, and as subservient to the flax-raising. He accordingly wrought at the business of a flax-dresser in Irvine for six months, but abandoned it at that period, as neither agreeing with his health nor inclination. In Irvine he had contracted some acquaintance of a freer manner of thinking and living than he had been used to, whose society prepared him for overleaping the bounds of rigid virtue which had hitherto restrained him. Towards the end of the period under review (in his twenty-sixth year), and soon after his father's death, he was furnished with the subject of his 'Epistle to John Rankine.' During this period also he became a freemason, which was his first introduction to the life of a boon companion. Yet, notwithstanding these circumstances, and the praise he has bestowed on Scotch drink (which seems to have misled his historians), I do not recollect, during these seven years, nor till towards the end of his commencing author (when his growing celebrity occasioned his being often in company), to have ever seen him intoxicated; nor was he at all given to drinking. A stronger proof of the general sobriety of his conduct need not be required than what I am about to give. 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 Mossgiel, consisting of a hundred and eighteen acres, at the rent of ninety pounds per annum (the farm on which I live at present), from Mr. Gavin Hamilton, 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 seven

pounds per annum each. And during the whole time this family-concern lasted, which was for four years, as well as during the preceding period at Lochlea, his expenses never in any one year exceeded his slender income.[1] 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.

"The farm of Mossgiel lies very high, and mostly on a cold wet bottom. The first two years that we were on the farm were very frosty, and the spring was very late. Our crops in consequence were very unprofitable; and, notwithstanding our utmost diligence and economy, we found ourselves obliged to give up our bargain, with the loss of a considerable part of our original stock. It was during these two years that Robert formed his connection with Jean Armour, afterwards Mrs. Burns. This connection *could no longer be concealed*, about the time we came to a final determination to quit the farm. Robert durst not engage with a family in his poor unsettled state, but was anxious to shield his partner, by every means in his power, from the consequences of their imprudence. It was agreed, therefore, between them that they should make a legal acknowledgment of an irregular and private marriage; that he should go to Jamaica to push his fortune, and that she should remain with her father till it might please Providence to put the means of supporting a family in his power.

"Mrs. Burns was a great favourite of her father's. The intimation of a marriage was the first suggestion he received of her real situation. He was in the greatest distress, and fainted away. The marriage did not appear to him to make the matter any better. A husband in Jamaica appeared to him and his wife little better than none, and an effectual bar to any other prospects of a settlement in life that their daughter might have. They therefore expressed a wish to her that the written papers which respected the marriage should be cancelled, and thus the marriage rendered void. In her melancholy state she felt the deepest remorse at having brought such heavy affliction on parents that loved her so tenderly, and submitted to their entreaties. Their wish was mentioned to Robert. He felt the deepest anguish of mind. He offered to stay at home and provide for his wife and family in the best manner that his daily labours could provide for them, that being the only means in his power. Even this offer they did not approve of; for humble as Miss Armour's station was, and great though her imprudence had been, she still, in the eyes of her partial parents, might look to a better connection than that with my friendless and unhappy brother, at that time without house or hiding-place. Robert at length consented to their wishes; but his feelings on this occasion were of the most distracting nature, and the impression of sorrow was not effaced till by a regular marriage they were indissolubly united. In the state of mind which the separation produced he wished to leave the country as soon as possible, and agreed with Dr. Douglas to go out to Jamaica as an assistant overseer, or, as I believe it is called, a book-keeper, on his estate. As he had not sufficient money to pay his passage, and the vessel in which Dr. Douglas was to procure a passage for him was not expected to sail for some time, Mr. Hamilton advised him to publish his poems in the meantime by subscription, as a likely way of getting a little money to provide him more liberally in necessaries for Jamaica. Agreeably to this advice, subscription-bills were printed immediately, and the printing was commenced at Kilmarnock, his preparations going on at the same time for his voyage. The reception, however, which his poems met with in the world, and the friends they procured him, made him change his resolution of going to Jamaica, and he was advised to go to Edinburgh to publish a second edition. On his return, in happier circumstances, he renewed his connection with Mrs. Burns, and rendered it permanent by a union for life."

[1] They entered Mossgiel in March, 1784, and Burns's connection with that farm may be said to have ceased in November, 1786, when he went to Edinburgh—a period of two years and a half.

BURNS AND HIS FATHER'S HOUSEHOLD.

BY JOHN MURDOCH.[2]

Originally communicated in a letter to Mr. Joseph Cooper Walker of Dublin.

"SIR,—I was lately favoured with a letter from our worthy friend the Rev. Wm. Adair, in which he requested me to communicate to you whatever particulars I could recollect concerning Robert Burns, the Ayrshire poet. My business being at present multifarious and harassing, my attention is consequently so much divided, and I am so little in the habit of expressing my thoughts on paper, that at this distance of time I can give but a very imperfect sketch of the early part of the life of that extraordinary genius, with which alone I am acquainted.

"William Burnes, the father of the poet, was born in the shire of Kincardine, and bred a gardener. He had been settled in Ayrshire ten or twelve years before I knew him, and had been in the service of Mr. Crawford of Doonside. He was afterwards employed as a gardener and over-

[2] See the foregoing narrative by Gilbert Burns; also Lockhart's Life in this volume, particularly note 2, p. 15.

seer by Provost Ferguson of Doonholm, in the parish of Alloway, which is now united with that of Ayr. In this parish, on the roadside, a Scotch mile and a half from the town of Ayr, and half a mile from the bridge of Doon, William Burnes took a piece of land, consisting of about seven acres, part of which he laid out in garden ground, and part of which he kept to graze a cow, &c., still continuing in the employ of Provost Ferguson. Upon this little farm was erected an humble dwelling, of which William Burnes was the architect. It was, with the exception of a little straw, literally a tabernacle of clay. In this mean cottage, of which I myself was at times an inhabitant, I really believe there dwelt a larger portion of content than in any palace in Europe. The 'Cotter's Saturday Night' will give some idea of the temper and manners that prevailed there.

"In 1765, about the middle of March, Mr. Wm. Burnes came to Ayr, and sent to the school where I was improving in writing, under my good friend Mr. Robinson, desiring that I would come and speak to him at a certain inn, and bring my writing-book with me. This was immediately complied with. Having examined my writing he was pleased with it—(you will readily allow he was not difficult)—and told me that he had received very satisfactory information of Mr. Tennant,[1] the master of the English school, concerning my improvement in English, and in his method of teaching. In the month of May following I was engaged by Mr. Burnes and four of his neighbours to teach, and accordingly began to teach the little school at Alloway, which was situated a few yards from the argillaceous fabric above mentioned. My five employers undertook to board me by turns, and to make up a certain salary at the end of the year, provided my quarterly payments from the different pupils did not amount to that sum.

"My pupil Robert Burns was then between six or seven years of age, his preceptor about eighteen. Robert, and his younger brother Gilbert, had been grounded a little in English before they were put under my care. They both made a rapid progress in reading and a tolerable progress in writing. In reading, dividing words into syllables by rule, spelling without book, parsing sentences, &c., Robert and Gilbert were generally at the upper end of the class, even when ranged with boys by far their seniors. The books most commonly used in the school were the Spelling Book, the New Testament, the Bible, Mason's Collection of Prose and Verse, and Fisher's English Grammar. They committed to memory the hymns and other poems of that collection with uncommon facility. This facility was partly owing to the method pursued by their father and me in instructing them, which was to make them thoroughly acquainted with the meaning of every word in each sentence that was to be committed to memory. By the by, this may be easier done and at an earlier period than is generally thought. As soon as they were capable of it, I taught them to turn verse into its natural prose order, sometimes to substitute synonymous expressions for poetical words, and to supply the ellipses. These, you know, are the means of knowing that the pupil understands his author. These are excellent helps to the arrangement of words in sentences, as well as to a variety of expression.

"Gilbert always appeared to me to possess a more lively imagination and to be more of the wit than Robert. I attempted to teach them a little church music; here they were left far behind by all the rest of the school. Robert's ear in particular was dull, and his voice untunable. It was long before I could get them to distinguish one tune from another. Robert's countenance was grave, and expressive of a serious, contemplative, and thoughtful mind. Gilbert's face said, 'Mirth, with thee I mean to live;' and certainly if any person who knew the boys had been asked which of them was the most likely to court the muses, he would surely never have guessed that Robert had a propensity of that kind.

"In the year 1766 Mr. Burnes quitted his mud edifice, and took possession of a farm (Mount Oliphant) of his own improving, while in the service of Provost Ferguson. This farm being at a considerable distance from the school, the boys could not attend regularly; and some changes taking place among the other supporters of the school, I left it, having continued to conduct it for nearly two years and a half.

"In the year 1772 I was appointed (being one of five candidates who were examined) to teach the English school at Ayr; and in 1773 Robert Burns came to board and lodge with me, for the purpose of revising the English grammar, &c., that he might be better qualified to instruct his brothers and sisters at home. He was now with me day and night, in school, at all meals, and in all my walks. At the end of one week I told him that, as he was now pretty much master of the parts of speech, &c., I should like to teach him something of French pronunciation; that when he should meet with the name of a French town, ship, officer, or the like, in the newspapers, he might be able to pronounce it something like a French word. Robert was glad to hear this proposal, and immediately we attacked the French with great courage. Now there was little else to be heard but the declension of nouns, the conjugation of verbs, &c. When walking together, and even at meals, I was constantly telling him the names of different objects, as they presented themselves, in French, so that he was hourly

[1] Mr. David Tennant, brother of "John Tennant in Glenconner," an early Ayrshire friend of William Burnes, and afterwards Burns's adviser in the choice of his Dumfriesshire farm.

laying in a stock of words and sometimes little phrases. In short, he took such pleasure in learning, and I in teaching, that it was difficult to say which of the two was most zealous in the business; and about the end of the second week of our study of the French, we began to read a little of the *Adventures of Telemachus*, in Fenelon's own words.

"But now the plains of Mount Oliphant began to whiten, and Robert was summoned to relinquish the pleasing scenes that surrounded the grotto of Calypso, and, armed with a sickle, to seek glory by signalizing himself in the fields of Ceres—and so he did; for although but about fifteen, I was told that he performed the work of a man.

"Thus was I deprived of my very apt pupil, and consequently agreeable companion, at the end of three weeks, one of which was spent entirely in the study of English and the other two chiefly in that of French. I did not, however, lose sight of him, but was a frequent visitant at his father's house when I had my half-holiday; and very often went accompanied with one or two persons more intelligent than myself, that good William Burnes might enjoy a mental feast. Then the labouring oar was shifted to some other hand. The father and the son sat down with us, when we enjoyed a conversation wherein solid reasoning, sensible remark, and a moderate seasoning of jocularity, were so nicely blended as to render it palatable to all parties. Robert had a hundred questions to ask me about the French, &c.; and the father, who had always rational information in view, had still some question to propose to my more learned friends, upon moral or natural philosophy, or some such interesting subject. Mrs. Burnes, too, was of the party as much as possible;

> But still the house affairs would draw her thence,
> Which ever as she could with haste dispatch,
> She'd come again, and with a greedy ear,
> Devour up their discourse,——

and particularly that of her husband. At all times and in all companies she listened to him with a more marked attention than to anybody else. While under the necessity of being about while he was speaking, she seemed to regret as a real loss that she had missed what the good man had said. This worthy woman, Agnes Brown, had the most thorough esteem for her husband of any woman I ever knew. I can by no means wonder that she highly esteemed him; for I myself have always considered William Burnes 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. I can cheerfully join with Robert in the last line of his epitaph (borrowed from Goldsmith):

> And even his failings lean'd to virtue's side.

"He was an excellent husband, if I may judge from his assiduous attention to the ease and comfort of his worthy partner, and from her affectionate behaviour to him, as well as her unwearied attention to the duties of a mother.

"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. A look of disapprobation was felt; a reproof was severely so; and a stripe with the *taws*, even on the skirt of the coat, gave heartfelt pain, produced a loud lamentation, and brought forth a flood of tears.

"He had the art of gaining the esteem and goodwill of those that were labourers under him. I think I never saw him angry but twice: the one time it was with the foreman of the band for not reaping the field as he was desired; and the other time it was with an old man for using smutty inuendoes and *double entendres*. Were every foul-mouthed old man to receive a seasonable check in this way it would be to the advantage of the rising generation. As he was at no time overbearing to inferiors, he was equally incapable of that passive, pitiful, paltry spirit that induces some people to *keep booing and booing* in the presence of a great man. He always treated superiors with a becoming respect; but he never gave the smallest encouragement to aristocratical arrogance. But I must not pretend to give you a description of all the manly qualities, the rational and Christian virtues of the venerable William Burnes. Time would fail me. 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." O for a world of men of such dispositions! We should then have no wars. I have often wished, for the good of mankind, that it were as customary to honour and perpetuate the memory of those who excel in moral rectitude, as it is to extol what are called heroic actions; then would the mausoleum of the friend of my youth overtop and surpass most of the monuments I see in Westminster Abbey.

"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. He spoke the English language with more propriety (both with respect to diction and pronunciation) than any man I ever knew with no greater advantages. This had a very good effect on the boys, who began to talk and reason like men much sooner than their neighbours. I do not recollect any of their contemporaries at my little seminary who afterwards made any great figure as literary characters, except Dr. Tennant,

who was chaplain to Colonel Fullarton's regiment, and who is now in the East Indies.[1] He is a man of genius and learning; yet affable and free from pedantry.

"Mr. Burnes in a short time found that he had overrated Mount Oliphant, and that he could not rear his numerous family upon it. After being there some years he removed to Lochlea, in the parish of Tarbolton, where, I believe, Robert wrote many of his poems.

"But here, sir, you will permit me to pause. I can tell you but little more relative to the poet. I shall, however, in my next send you a copy of one of his letters to me about the year 1783. I received one since, but it is mislaid. Please remember me, in the best manner, to my worthy friend Mr. Adair, when you see him or write to him.

"Hart Street, Bloomsbury Square,
London, Feb. 22d, 1799."

BURNS, AS SKETCHED BY PROFESSOR DUGALD STEWART.

These particulars were communicated in a letter to Dr. Currie.

"The first time I saw Robert Burns was on the 23d of October, 1786, when he dined at my house in Ayrshire, together with our common friend Mr. John Mackenzie, surgeon in Mauchline, to whom I am indebted for the pleasure of his acquaintance. I am enabled to mention the date particularly, by some verses which Burns wrote after he returned home, and in which the day of our meeting is recorded. My excellent and much lamented friend, the late Basil, Lord Daer, happened to arrive at Catrine the same day, and by the kindness and frankness of his manners left an impression on the mind of the poet which never was effaced. The verses I allude to are among the most imperfect of his pieces; but a few stanzas may perhaps be an object of curiosity to you, both on account of the character to which they relate, and of the light which they throw on the situation and feelings of the writer, before his name was known to the public.[2]

"I cannot positively say, at this distance of time, whether at the period of our first acquaintance, the Kilmarnock edition of his poems had been just published, or was yet in the press. I suspect that the latter was the case, as I have still in my possession copies in his own handwriting of some of his favourite performances; particularly of his verses 'On turning up a Mouse with his Plough,' 'On the Mountain Daisy,' and 'The Lament.' On my return to Edinburgh I showed the volume and mentioned what I knew of the author's history to several of my friends; and, among others, to Mr. Henry Mackenzie, who first recommended him to public notice in the 97th number of *The Lounger*.

"At this time Burns's prospects in life were so extremely gloomy that he had seriously formed a plan of going out to Jamaica in a very humble situation, not, however, without lamenting that his want of patronage should force him to think of a project so repugnant to his feelings, when his ambition aimed at no higher an object than the station of an exciseman or gauger in his own country.

"His manners were then, as they continued ever afterwards, simple, manly, and independent, strongly expressive of conscious genius and worth; but without anything that indicated forwardness, arrogance, or vanity. He took his share in conversation, but not more than belonged to him; and listened with apparent attention and deference on subjects where his want of education deprived him of the means of information. If there had been a little more of gentleness and accommodation in his temper, he would, I think, have been still more interesting; but he had been accustomed to give law in the circle of his ordinary acquaintance, and his dread of anything approaching to meanness or servility rendered his manner somewhat decided and hard. Nothing perhaps was more remarkable among his various attainments than the fluency, and precision, and originality of his language when he spoke in company; more particularly as he aimed at purity in his turn of expression, and avoided more successfully than most Scotchmen the peculiarities of Scottish phraseology.

"He came to Edinburgh early in the winter following, and remained there for several months. By whose advice he took this step I am unable to say. Perhaps it was suggested only by his own curiosity to see a little more of the world; but, I confess, I dreaded the consequences from the first, and always wished that his pursuits and habits should continue the same as in the former part of life; with the addition of, what I considered as then completely within his reach, a good farm on moderate terms, in a part of the country agreeable to his taste.

"The attentions he received during his stay in town, from all ranks and descriptions of persons, were such as would have turned any head but his own. I cannot say that I could perceive any unfavourable effect which they left on his mind. He retained the same simplicity of manners and appearance which had struck me so forcibly when I first saw him in the country, nor did he seem to feel any additional self-importance from the number and rank of his new acquaintance. His dress was perfectly suited to his station, plain and unpretending, with a sufficient attention to neatness. If I recollect right he always wore boots,

[1] The "preacher Willie" mentioned in Burns's poetical epistle to his half-brother James Tennant.

[2] See the poem entitled "Lines on meeting Lord Daer."

and when on more than usual ceremony, buckskin breeches.

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

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

"I do not recollect whether it appears or not from any of your letters to me, that you had ever seen Burns.[1] If you have, it is superfluous for me to add, that the idea which his conversation conveyed of the powers of his mind exceeded, if possible, that which is suggested by his writings. Among the poets whom I have happened to know I have been struck, in more than one instance, with the unaccountable disparity between their general talents and the occasional inspirations of their more favoured moments. But all the faculties of Burns's mind were, as far as I could judge, equally vigorous; and his predilection for poetry was rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper, than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition. From his conversation I should have pronounced him to be fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities.

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

"In summer, 1787, I passed some weeks in Ayrshire, and saw Burns occasionally. I think that he made a pretty long excursion that season to the Highlands, and that he also visited what Beattie calls the Arcadian ground of Scotland, upon the banks of the Teviot and the Tweed.

"I should have mentioned before that, notwithstanding various reports I heard during the preceding winter of Burns's predilection for convivial and not very select society, I should have concluded in favour of his habits of sobriety from all of him that ever fell under my own observation. He told me indeed himself that the weakness of his stomach was such as to deprive him of any merit in his temperance. I was somewhat alarmed about the effect of his now comparatively sedentary and luxurious life, when he confessed to me, the first night he spent in my house after his winter's campaign in town, that he had been much disturbed when in bed by a palpitation at his heart, which, he said, was a complaint to which he had of late become subject.[2]

"In the course of the same season I was led by curiosity to attend for an hour or two a masonic lodge in Mauchline, when Burns presided. He had occasion to make some short, unpremeditated compliments to different individuals from whom he had no reason to expect a visit, and everything he said was happily conceived and forcibly as well as fluently expressed. If I am not mistaken he told me that in that village, before going to Edinburgh, he had belonged to a small club of such of the inhabitants as had a taste for books, when they used to converse and debate on any interesting questions that occurred to them in the course of their reading. His manner of speaking in public had evidently the marks of some practice in extempore elocution.

"I must not omit to mention what I have always considered as characteristical in a high degree of true genius, the extreme facility and good-nature of his taste, in judging of the compositions of others, where there was any real ground for praise. I repeated to him many passages of English poetry with which he was unacquainted, and have more than once witnessed the tears of admiration and rapture with which he heard them. The collection of songs by Dr. Aiken, which I first put into his hands, he read with unmixed delight, notwithstanding his former efforts in that very difficult species of writing;

[1] Dr. Currie had seen and conversed with Burns, but this was all.

[2] According to Gilbert's narrative, the poet had been subject to this complaint from his earliest years.

and I have little doubt that it had some effect in polishing his subsequent compositions.

"In judging of prose I do not think his taste was equally sound. I once read to him a passage or two in Franklin's works, which I thought very happily executed upon the model of Addison; but he did not appear to relish or to perceive the beauty which they derived from their exquisite simplicity, and spoke of them with indifference when compared with the point, and antithesis, and quaintness of Junius. The influence of that taste is very perceptible in his own prose compositions, although their great and various excellences render some of them scarcely less objects of wonder than his poetical performances. The late Dr. Robertson used to say that, considering his education, the former seemed to him the more extraordinary of the two.

"His memory was uncommonly retentive, at least for poetry, of which he recited to me frequently long compositions with the most minute accuracy. They were chiefly ballads and other pieces in our Scottish dialect; great part of them, he told me, he had learned in his childhood from his mother, who delighted in such recitations, and whose poetical taste, rude as it probably was, gave, it is presumable, the first direction to her son's genius.

"Of the more polished verses which accidentally fell into his hands in his early years, he mentioned particularly the recommendatory poems, by different authors, prefixed to Hervey's *Meditations;* a book which has always had a very wide circulation among such of the country people of Scotland as affect to unite some degree of taste with their religious studies. And these poems (although they are certainly below mediocrity) he continued to read with a degree of rapture beyond expression. He took notice of this fact himself, as a proof how much the taste is liable to be influenced by accidental circumstances.

"His father appeared to me, from the account he gave of him, to have been a respectable and worthy character, possessed of a mind superior to what might have been expected from his station in life. He ascribed much of his own principles and feelings to the early impressions he had received from his instruction and example. I recollect that he once applied to *him* (and he added that the passage was a literal statement of fact) the two last lines of the following passage in the 'Minstrel;' the whole of which he repeated with great enthusiasm:—

> Shall I be left forgotten in the dust,
> When fate, relenting, lets the flower revive;
> Shall nature's voice, to man alone unjust,
> Bid him, though doom'd to perish, hope to live?
> Is it for this fair virtue oft must strive,
> With disappointment, penury, and pain?
> No! Heaven's immortal spring shall yet arrive;
> And man's majestic beauty bloom again,
> Bright thro' the eternal year of love's triumphant reign.
> *This truth sublime, his simple sire had taught*
> *In sooth, 'twas almost all the shepherd knew.*

"With respect to Burns's early education I cannot say anything with certainty. He always spoke with respect and gratitude of the schoolmaster who had taught him to read English; and who, finding in his scholar a more than ordinary ardour for knowledge, had been at pains to instruct him in the grammatical principles of the language. He began the study of Latin, but dropt it before he had finished the verbs. I have sometimes heard him quote a few Latin words, such as *omnia vincit amor*, &c., but they seemed to be such as he had caught from conversation, and which he repeated by *rote*. I think he had a project, after he came to Edinburgh, of prosecuting the study under his intimate friend the late Mr. Nicol, one of the masters of the grammar-school here; but I do not know that he ever proceeded so far as to make the attempt.

"He certainly possessed a smattering of French; and, if he had an affectation in anything, it was in introducing occasionally a word or phrase from that language. It is possible that his knowledge in this respect might be more extensive than I suppose it to be; but this you can learn from his more intimate acquaintance. It would be worth while to inquire whether he was able to read the French authors with such facility as to receive from them any improvement to his taste. For my own part I doubt it much; nor would I believe it but on very strong and pointed evidence.

"If my memory does not fail me he was well instructed in arithmetic, and knew something of practical geometry, particularly of surveying.—All his other attainments were entirely his own.

"The last time I saw him was during the winter, 1788–89, when he passed an evening with me at Drumsheugh, in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, where I was then living. My friend Mr. Alison was the only other person in company. I never saw him more agreeable or interesting. A present which Mr. Alison sent him afterwards of his *Essays on Taste* drew from Burns a letter of acknowledgment which I remember to have read with some degree of surprise at the distinct conception he appeared from it to have formed of the general principles of the doctrine of association."

BURNS'S LAST YEARS.

LETTER FROM MR. JAMES GRAY[1] TO GILBERT BURNS.

[Gilbert Burns, when preparing the 1820 edition of Currie's Burns, wrote to Mr. Gray for leave to

[1] Mr. Gray was master of the High School of Dumfries in Burns's day. He was afterwards, for many a year, a teacher in the High School, Edinburgh, and latterly became a chaplain in the Hon. East India Company's service, and died at Cutch in 1830.

bring forward his letter to Peterkin, the most important part of which is given in Lockhart's Life; that gentleman rather preferred to write his statement anew in the following letter addressed to Gilbert himself. The tone of the letter is, however, pitched too high; and the portrait that he paints of Burns at the period referred to cannot in any way be reconciled with that which we obtain from the general testimony of others and from known facts. Gray is said to have been a man who took amiable views of most people he met, and of all who had any connection with literature in particular; and it must be remembered that he is writing, after an interval of over twenty years, of a life he only knew imperfectly for a little over two. It besides throws a doubt on his sincerity to find Robert Chambers saying, "A friend of Mr. Gray has assured me that he used, in private, to speak of the irregularities of the poet in much the same terms as other surviving observers."]

"In the observations I am now to make I claim no merit but purity and sincerity of purpose in narrating events that I myself saw; and I am happy to add that, from many symptoms, there seems to be a great change of opinion on the subject and a disposition to listen to the voice of truth, however humble the individual by whom it is raised. I shall consider the poet's character as a companion, a father, a husband, a citizen, and a man of genius; that it may be seen if from his conduct in any one of these capacities, he could possibly be the degraded being he has been represented, constantly under the dominion of the lowest and the basest appetites and passions of our nature, an habitual drunkard, and a thorough vicious man, for 'therewith has he been charged withal;' and, as my remarks apply to the three[1] last years of his life, I shall not be accused of having selected, in exculpation, the purest portion of it.

"It was my good fortune to be introduced to him soon after I went to Dumfries. This was early in 1794, and I saw him often and intimately during the remainder of his life. I sometimes met him in the scene of conviviality, and there, if anywhere, I must have received conviction of that intellectual and moral degradation of which we have heard so much; but no such impression was made on my mind. He seemed to me to frequent convivial parties from the same feelings with which he wrote poetry, because nature had eminently qualified him to shine there, and he never on any occasion indulged in solitary drinking. He was always the living spirit of the company, and, by the communications of his genius, seemed to animate every one present with a portion of his own fire. He indulged in the sally of wit and humour, of striking originality, and sometimes of bitter sarcasm, but always free from the least taint of grossness. I was, from the commencement of my acquaintance with him, struck with his aversion to all kinds of indelicacy, and have seen him dazzle and delight a party for hours together by the brilliancy and rapidity of his flashes, without even an allusion that could give offence to vestal purity. I never saw him intoxicated; and, indeed, I am convinced, that though his company was courted by men of all ranks, and he was much in society of a convivial nature, that he was very seldom in a state of inebriation.

"I often met him at breakfast parties, which were then customary at Dumfries, and sometimes enjoyed a morning walk with him; and on these occasions, if he had been suffering from midnight excesses, it must have been apparent. On the contrary, his whole air was that of one who had enjoyed refreshing slumbers, and who arose happy in himself, and to diffuse happiness on all around him; his complexion was fresh and clear, his eye brilliant, his whole frame vigorous and elastic, and his imagination ever on the wing.[2] His morning conversations were marked by an impassioned eloquence that seemed to flow from immediate inspiration, and shed an atmosphere of light and beauty around everything it touched, alternately melting and elevating the souls of all who heard him. He had read much, and possessed a most powerful memory, which never exhibited any symptoms of that decay which must have been the consequence of habitual intoxication; so far from it, he gleaned all that was valuable from every book he perused, which he could either quote in the words of the original or make the ideas his own, and embody them in a more beautiful form. In our solitary walks on a summer morning the simplest floweret by the wayside, every sight of rural simplicity and happiness, every creature that seemed to drink the joy of the seasons awakened the sympathy of his heart, which flowed in spontaneous music from his lips; and every new opening of the beauty or the magnificence of the scene before him called forth the poetry of his soul.

"As a friend, no views of selfishness ever made him faithless to those whom he had once honoured with that name—ever ready to aid them by the wisdom of his counsels, when his means were inadequate to their relief; and, by a delicate sympathy, to soothe the sufferings and the sorrows he could not heal. As a citizen he never neglected a single professional duty; and even on the slender income of an excise officer, he never contracted a single debt he could not pay. He could submit to privations, but could not

[1] Mr. Gray should rather have said *two*, as being much more nearly correct.

[2] In 1794, the year in which Gray became acquainted with Burns, the latter writes to Mrs. Dunlop: "I already begin to feel the rigid fibre and stiffening joints of old age coming fast o'er my frame."

brook the dependence of owing anything to any man on earth. To the poor he was liberal beyond his limited means, and the cry of the unfortunate was never addressed to him in vain, and when he could not himself relieve their necessities, he was often known, by a pathetic recital of their misfortunes, to draw the tear and open the purse of those who were not famed either for tenderness of heart or charity; on such occasions it was impossible to resist his solicitations.

"He was a kind and an attentive father, and took great delight in spending his evenings in the cultivation of the minds of his children. Their education was the grand object of his life, and he did not, like most parents, think it sufficient to send them to public schools; he was their private instructor; and even at that early age bestowed great pains in training their minds to habits of thought and reflection, and in keeping them pure from every form of vice. This he considered a sacred duty, and never to his last illness relaxed in his diligence.

"With his eldest son, a boy of not more than nine years of age, he had read many of the favourite poets, and some of the best historians, of our language; and, what is more remarkable, gave him considerable aid in the study of Latin. This boy attended the grammar-school of Dumfries, and soon attracted my notice by the strength of his talent and the ardour of his ambition. Before he had been a year at school I thought it right to advance him a form; and he began to read Cæsar, and gave me translations of that author of such beauty as, I confess, surprised me. On inquiry I found that his father made him turn over his dictionary till he was able to translate to him the passage in such a way that he could gather the author's meaning, and that it was to him he owed that polished and forcible English with which I was so greatly struck. I have mentioned this incident merely to show what minute attention he paid to this important branch of parental duty.

"Many insinuations have been made against his character as a husband, but without the slightest proof, and I might pass from this charge with that neglect which it merits; but I am happy to say that I have in exculpation the direct evidence of Mrs. Burns herself, who, among many amiable and respectable qualities, ranks a veneration for the memory of her departed husband, whom she never names but in terms of the profoundest respect and the deepest regret, to lament his misfortunes, or to extol his kindnesses to herself, not as the momentary overflowings of the heart in a season of penitence for offences generously forgiven, but an habitual tenderness that ended only with his life. I place this evidence, which I am proud to bring forward on her own authority, against a thousand anonymous calumnies.

"To the very end of his existence all the powers of his mind were as vigorous as in the blossom of their spring; and it may be asked if the numerous songs written for Mr. Thomson's collection, which were his last compositions, and by many considered the glory of his genius, indicate any intellectual decay: yet it is strange how long prejudices will keep their ground in the face of evidence the clearest, and within the reach of every one. I saw him four days before he died, and though the hand of death was obviously upon him, he repeated to me a little poem he had composed the day before, full of energy and tenderness. Now, my dear sir, as when I consider the occupations and the studies of his early years, arguing from the general principles of our nature, I am impelled to conclude that he was an amiable and virtuous young man, though I had not direct evidence in support of the proposition; so on a review of the facts just stated, I cannot for a moment believe in the alleged degradation of his character. The truth is, your brother partook, in an eminent degree, of the virtues and the vices of the poetical temperament. He was often hurried into error by the impetuosity of his passions, but he was never their slave; he was often led astray by the meteor lights of pleasure, but he never lost sight of the right way, to which he was ever eager to return; and, amid all his wanderings and his self-conflicts, his heart was pure and his principles untainted. Though he was often well-nigh broken-hearted by the severity of his fate, yet he was never heard to complain; and had he been an unconnected individual he would have bid defiance to fortune; but his sorrows for his wife and children, for whom he suffered much, and feared more, were keen and acute, yet unmingled with selfishness. All his life he had to maintain a hard struggle with cares; and he often had to labour under those depressions to which genius is subject; yet his spirit never stooped from its lofty career, and to the very end of his warfare with himself and with fortune he continued strong in its independence. The love of posthumous fame was the master passion of his soul, which kept all others in subordination, and prevented them from running into that disorder which his great susceptibility to all those objects which pleased his fancy or interested his heart, and the vivacity of all his emotions might, without this regulating principle, have produced. Amidst the darkest overshadowings of his fate or the most alluring temptations of pleasure it was his consoling and leading star; and as it directed his eye to distant ages, it was often his only support in the one and the most powerful check against the dangerous indulgence of the other. Possessing an eloquence that might have guided the councils of nations, and which would have been eagerly courted by any party, he would have perished by famine rather than submit to the degradation of becom-

ing the tool of faction. It is a known fact that he rejected a sum equal to his whole annual income, for the support of those measures which he thought most for the interests of the country. He had a loftiness of sentiment that raised him above making his genius a hireling even in a good cause, and his laurels were never stained by a single act of venality. Yet with all the nobility of his mind and the kindness and generosity of his nature, and the supremacy of his genius, his fate has been unusually hard. Though his chosen companions were not more remarkable for talent than for the respectability of their character and the purity of their lives, and many ladies of the most delicate and cultivated minds and elegant manners were numbered among his friends, who clung to him through good and through bad report, and still cherish an affectionate and enthusiastic regard for his memory, yet has he been accused of being addicted to low company. Qualified for the noblest employments, he was condemned to drudge in the lowest occupations—often in scenes where to avoid contamination was an effort of virtue. Though he possessed a candour which led him to view all the actions of others on the brightest side, the fairest of his own have, in the estimate of his character, been passed over in silence or even blackened. His virtues have been denied, and when that could not be done, they have been extenuated. Accumulated misfortunes and the cruelty of mankind actually broke his heart and hurried him to a premature grave, which to him has been no sanctuary, for the voice of calumny has been heard even there; but prejudices will pass away, and posterity will do him justice. They will balance the various and often contradictory elements of his character, and decide with candour. They will be influenced by no personal or political enmities, but will drop a generous tear over his failings, which will appear but as a natural blemish in the light of those virtues which they will read in his works, and read aright. Now, my dear sir, that I have finished the object of my letter, which was to give you such observations as I myself had an opportunity of making relative to the habits of the three last years of your brother's life, you will permit me to say that what I have written has not been with a view of wounding the feelings of any one; my sole purpose has been defence, not attack; yet I will confess that indignation has sometimes swelled in my bosom to hear the memory of the friend whom I loved, and the man of genius whom I admired, traduced and calumniated by men who knew him not, and who had not the means of ascertaining the truth of their allegations; and I shall deem it the proudest work of my life if my feeble efforts shall be in the slightest degree instrumental in correcting erroneous opinions, which it can be the interest of none to keep alive, though, to the shame of our country, they have been too long and too widely circulated."

BURNS AS AN EXCISE OFFICIAL.

LETTER FROM MR. FINDLATER, COLLECTOR OF EXCISE, GLASGOW.[1]

"GLASGOW, 10th October, 1818.

"SIR,—I entirely agree with you in opinion on the various accounts which have been given to the world of the life of Robert Burns, and can have no hesitation in expressing publicly my sentiments on his official conduct at least, and perhaps in other respects, as far as may appear necessary for the development of truth. Amongst his biographers, Dr. Currie of course takes the lead, and the severity of his strictures, or to borrow the words of the poet, his 'iron justice,' is much to be regretted, as 'his Life' has become a kind of text-book for succeeding commentators, who have, by the aid of their own fancies, amplified, exaggerated, and filled up the outlines he has sketched, and, in truth, left in such a state as to provoke an exercise of that description.

"It is painful to trace all that has been written by Dr. Currie's successors, who seem to have considered the history of the poet as a thing like Ulysses's bow, on which each was at liberty to try his strength, and some, in order to outdo their competitors, have strained every nerve to throw all kinds of obloquy on his memory. His convivial habits, his wit and humour, his social talents, and independent spirit, have been perverted into constant and habitual drunkenness, impiety, neglect of his professional duty and of his family, and, in short, every human vice. He has been branded with cowardice, accused of attempting murder and even suicide, and all this without a shadow of proof, *proh pudor!*

"Is there nothing of tenderness due to the memory of so transcendent a genius, who has so often delighted even his libellers with the felicities of his songs and the charms of his wit and humour? And is no regard to be had to the feelings of those near and dear relatives he has left behind, or are his ashes never to 'hope repose?' My indignation has unwarily led me astray from the point to which I meant to have confined myself, and to which I will now recur, and briefly state what I have to say on the subject.

"My connection with Robert Burns commenced immediately after his admission into the excise, and continued to the hour of his death. In all that time the superintendence of his behaviour

[1] First published in Peterkin's edition of Burns. Mr. Findlater was the poet's superior officer all the time he was in the excise, and his testimony as to this period of Burns's life is therefore of the highest authority. Mr. Findlater died at Glasgow on the 4th December, 1839, aged 85.

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, so far from its being 'impossible for him to discharge the duties of his office with that regularity which is almost indispensable,' as is palpably assumed by one of his biographers, and insinuated not very obscurely even by Dr. Currie, he was exemplary in his attention as an excise-officer, and was even jealous of the least imputation on his vigilance; as a proof of which it may not be foreign to the subject to quote part of a letter from him to myself, in a case of only *seeming* inattention. "I know, sir, and regret deeply, that this business glances with a malign aspect on my character as an officer; but as I am really innocent in the affair, and as the gentleman is known to be an illicit dealer, and particularly as this is the single instance of the least shadow of carelessness or impropriety in my conduct as an officer, I shall be peculiarly unfortunate if my character shall fall a sacrifice to the dark manœuvres of a smuggler.'[1] This of itself affords more than a presumption of his attention to business, as it cannot be supposed that he would have written in such a style to me but from the impulse of a conscious rectitude in this department of his duty. Indeed, 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. About this period I advised him to relinquish business altogether, which he complied with, but it distressed him a good deal, as he was thereby liable to suffer a diminution of salary; and he wrote to Commissioner Graham, in the hope that that gentleman's influence would get his full pay continued during his illness, which I have no doubt it would have done if he had recovered. In the meantime, Mr. Graham wrote him a letter, exhibiting a solid proof of his generosity and friendship, but, alas! the poet was by this time too far gone towards that 'undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns,' and he could not acknowledge it.

"Having stated Burns's unremitting attention to business, which certainly was not compatible with perpetual intoxication; it follows of course that this latter charge must fall to the ground; and 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, as the statement that he was perpetually under its stimulus unequivocally implies.

"To attempt the refutation of the various other calumnies with which his memory has been assailed, some of which are so absurd as hardly to merit any attention, does not fall in my way, though I hope they will be suitably taken notice of; but permit me to add that 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 anything 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. Upon the whole, it is much to be lamented that there has been so much broad unqualified assertion as has been displayed in Burns's history; the virulence, indeed, with which his memory has been treated is hardly to be paralleled in the annals of literature. Wishing every success to the laudable attempt of rescuing it from the indiscriminate abuse which has been heaped upon it,

"I remain, &c., A. FINDLATER."

[1] The person here referred to was a Mr. Lorimer, father of "Chloris," the heroine of some of Burns's best songs. The letter will be found in the Correspondence, under date June, 1791, before Burns settled in Dumfries.

DR. CURRIE'S DESCRIPTION OF BURNS.

FROM HIS BIOGRAPHY OF THE POET.

"Burns was nearly five feet ten inches in height and of a form that indicated agility as well as strength. His well-raised forehead, shaded with black curling hair, indicated extensive capacity. His eyes were large, dark, full of ardour and intelligence. His face was well formed; and his countenance uncommonly interesting and expressive. His mode of dressing, which was often slovenly, and a certain fulness and bend in his shoulders, characteristic of his original profession, disguised in some degree the natural symmetry and elegance of his form. The external appearance of Burns was most strikingly indicative of the character of his mind. On a first view his physiognomy had a certain air of coarseness, mingled, however, with an expression of deep penetration, and of calm thoughtfulness approaching to melancholy. There appeared in his first manner and address perfect ease and self-possession, but a stern and almost supercilious elevation, not indeed incompatible with openness and affability, which, however, bespoke a mind conscious of superior talents. Strangers that supposed themselves approaching an Ayrshire

peasant, who could make rhymes, and to whom their notice was an honour, found themselves speedily overawed by the presence of a man who bore himself with dignity, and who possessed a singular power of correcting forwardness and of repelling intrusion. But though jealous of the respect due to himself, Burns never enforced it where he saw it was willingly paid; and, though inaccessible to the approaches of pride, he was open to every advance of kindness and of benevolence. His dark and haughty countenance easily relaxed into a look of good-will, of pity, or of tenderness; and as the various emotions succeeded each other in his mind, assumed with equal ease the expression of the broadest humour, of the most extravagant mirth, of the deepest melancholy, or of the most sublime emotion. The tones of his voice happily corresponded with the expression of his features, and with the feelings of his mind. When to these endowments are added a rapid and distinct apprehension, a most powerful understanding, and a happy command of language—of strength as well as brilliancy of expression—we shall be able to account for the extraordinary attractions of his conversation, for the sorcery which, in social parties, he seemed to exert on all around him. In the company of women this sorcery was more especially apparent. Their presence charmed the fiend of melancholy in his bosom, and awoke his happiest feelings; it excited the powers of his fancy as well as the tenderness of his heart; and, by restraining the vehemence and the exuberance of his language, at times gave to his manners the impression of taste, and even of elegance, which in the company of men they seldom possessed. This influence was doubtless reciprocal. A Scottish lady, accustomed to the best society [Jane, Duchess of Gordon], declared, with characteristic *naïveté*, that no man's conversation ever 'carried her so completely off her feet' as that of Burns; and an English lady [Mrs. Walter Riddell], familiarly acquainted with several of the most distinguished characters of the present times, assured the editor that, in the happiest of his social hours, there was a charm about Burns which she had never seen equalled. This charm arose not more from the power than the versatility of his genius. No languor could be felt in the society of a man who passed at pleasure from grave to gay, from the ludicrous to the pathetic, from the simple to the sublime; who wielded all his faculties with equal strength and ease, and never failed to impress the offspring of his fancy with the stamp of his understanding.

"This, indeed, is to represent Burns in his happiest phasis. In large and mixed parties he was often silent and dark, sometimes fierce and overbearing; he was jealous of the proud man's scorn, jealous to an extreme of the insolence of wealth, and prone to avenge, even on its innocent possessor, the partiality of fortune. By nature kind, brave, sincere, and in a singular degree compassionate, he was, on the other hand, proud, irascible, and vindictive. His virtues and his failings had their origin in the extraordinary sensibility of his mind, and equally partook of the chills and glows of sentiment. His friendships were liable to interruption from jealousy or disgust, and his enmities died away under the influence of pity or self-accusation. His understanding was equal to the other powers of his mind, and his deliberate opinions were singularly candid and just; but, like other men of great and irregular genius, the opinions which he delivered in conversation were often the offspring of temporary feelings, and widely different from the calm decisions of his judgment. This was not merely true respecting the characters of others, but in regard to some of the most important points of human speculation.

"On no subject did he give a more striking proof of the strength of his understanding than in the correct estimate he formed of himself. He knew his own failings; he predicted their consequence; the melancholy foreboding was never long absent from his mind; yet his passions carried him down the stream of error, and swept him over the precipice he saw directly in his course. The fatal defect in his character lay in the comparative weakness of his volition. . . . The occupations of a poet are not calculated to strengthen the governing powers of the mind, or to weaken that sensibility which requires perpetual control, since it gives birth to the vehemence of passion as well as to the higher powers of imagination. Unfortunately, the favourite occupations of genius are calculated to increase all its peculiarities; to nourish that lofty pride which disdains the littleness of prudence and the restrictions of order; and by indulgence to increase that sensibility, which, in the present form of our existence, is scarcely compatible with peace or happiness, even when accompanied with the choicest gifts of fortune."

ESTIMATE OF BURNS'S CHARACTER,

BY MARIA RIDDELL.

First published in the *Dumfries Journal*, 7th August, 1796.

"The attention of the public is much occupied at present with the irreparable loss it has recently sustained in the death of the Caledonian poet Robert Burns. It is not probable that this mournful event, which is likely to be felt severely in the literary world, as well as in the circle of private friendship which surrounded him, shall fail to be attended with the usual profusion of posthumous anecdotes and memoirs that commonly spring up at the death of every rare and

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celebrated personage. I shall not attempt to enlist with the numerous corps of biographers who may, without possessing a kindred genius, arrogate to themselves the privilege of criticising the character and writings of Burns. An 'inspiring mantle,' like that thrown over him by the tutelary muse who first found him 'at the plough,' has been vouchsafed to few, and may be the portion of fewer still; and if it be true that men of genius have a claim, in their literary capacities, to the legal right of a British citizen in a court of justice—that of 'being tried only by his peers' (I borrow here an expression I have frequently heard Burns himself make use of), God forbid I should assume the flattering and peculiar privilege of sitting upon his jury! But the intimacy of our acquaintance for several years past may perhaps justify my presenting to the public a few of those ideas and observations I have had the opportunity of forming, and which, to the day that closed for ever the scene of his happy qualities and of his errors, I have never had the smallest cause to deviate in or to recall.

"It will be an injustice done to Burns's reputation in the records of literature, not only as respects future generations and foreign countries but even with his native Scotland and some of his contemporaries, that he is generally talked of and considered with reference to his poetical talents only. In regarding Burns as something more than a poet it must not be supposed that I consider that title as a trivial one—no person can be more penetrated with the respect due to the wreath bestowed by the Muses than myself—and much certainly is due to the merit of a self-taught bard, deprived of the advantages of classical tuition and the intercourse of congenial minds till that period of life when his native fire had already blazed forth in all its wild graces of genuine simplicity and energetic eloquence of sentiment. But the fact is that, even when all his honours are yielded to him, Burns will perhaps be found to move in a poetical sphere less splendid, less dignified, and less attractive, even in his own pastoral style, than some other writers have done. Nevertheless I hesitate not to affirm—and in vindication of my opinion I appeal to all who had the advantage of personal acquaintance with him—that poetry was actually not his *forte*. If others have climbed more successfully the heights of Parnassus none certainly ever outshone Burns in the charms—the sorcery I would almost call it—of fascinating conversation; the spontaneous eloquence of social argument, or the unstudied poignancy of brilliant repartee. His personal endowments were perfectly correspondent with the qualifications of his mind. His form was manly, his action energy itself, devoid in a great measure, however, of those graces, of that polish acquired only in the refinement of societies where, in early life, he had not the opportunity to mix; but where—such was the irresistible power of attraction that encircled him,—though his appearance and manner were always peculiar, he never failed to delight and to *excel*. His figure certainly bore the authentic impress of his birth and original station in life; it seemed moulded by nature for the rough exercises of agriculture, rather than the gentler cultivation of *belles lettres*. His features were stamped with the hardy character of independence and the firmness of conscious though not arrogant pre-eminence. I believe no man was ever gifted with a larger portion of the *vivanda vis animi;* the animated expressions of his countenance were almost peculiar to himself. The rapid lightnings of his eye were always the harbingers of some flash of genius, whether they darted the fiery glances of insulted and indignant superiority, or beamed with the impassioned sentiment of fervent and impetuous affections. His voice alone could improve upon the magic of his eye: sonorous, replete with the finest modulations, it alternately captivated the ear with the melody of poetic numbers, the perspicuity of nervous reasoning, or the ardent sallies of enthusiastic patriotism.

"I am almost at a loss to say whether the keenness of satire was the *forte* or the foible of Burns: for though Nature had endowed him with a portion of the most pointed excellence in that 'perilous gift,' he suffered it too often to be the vehicle of personal, and sometimes unfounded animosities. It was not always that sportiveness of humour, that 'unwary pleasantry' which Sterne has described to us with touches so conciliatory; but the darts of ridicule were frequently directed as the caprice of the instant suggested, or the altercations of parties or of persons happened to kindle the restlessness of his spirit into interest or aversion. This was not, however, invariably the case; his wit (which is no unusual matter indeed) had always the start of his judgment, and would lead him to the indulgence of raillery uniformly acute, but often unaccompanied with the least desire to wound. The suppression of an arch and full-pointed *bon mot*, from dread of injuring its object, the sage of Zurich very properly classes as 'a virtue only to be sought for in the Calendar of Saints;' if so, Burns must not be dealt with unconscientiously for being rather deficient in it. He paid the forfeit of his talents as dearly as any one could do. 'Twas no extravagant arithmetic to say of him (as of Yorick), 'that for every ten jokes he got a hundred enemies;' but much allowance should be made by a candid mind for the splenetic warmth of a spirit 'which distress had often spited with the world,' and which, unbounded in its intellectual sallies and pursuits, continually experienced the curbs imposed by the waywardness of his fortune. His soul was never languid

or inactive and his genius was extinguished only with the last sparks of retreating life; but the vivacity of his wishes and temper was checked by constant disappointments which sat heavy on a heart that acknowledged the ruling passion of independence, without having ever been placed beyond the grasp of penury.

"Burns possessed none of that negative insipidity of character whose love might be regarded with indifference, or whose resentment could be considered with contempt; so his passions rendered him—according as they disclosed themselves in affection or antipathy—the object of enthusiastic attachment or of decided enmity. In this respect the temper of his companions seemed to take the tincture from his own; for *he* acknowledged in the universe but two classes of objects—those of adoration the most fervent, or of aversion the most uncontrollable. It has, indeed, been frequently asserted of him, that, unsusceptible of indifference and often hating where he ought to have despised, he alternately opened his heart and poured forth the treasures of his understanding to some who were incapable of appreciating the homage; and elevated to the privilege of adversaries those who were unqualified in all respects for the honour of a contest so distinguished.

"It is said that the celebrated Dr. Johnson professed to 'love a good hater:' a temperament that had singularly adapted him to cherish a prepossession in favour of our bard, who perhaps fell but little short even of the surly doctor in this qualification, so long as his ill-will continued; but the fervour of his passions was fortunately corrected by their versatility. He was seldom, never indeed, implacable in his resentments, and sometimes (it has been alleged) not inviolably steady in his engagements of friendship. Much indeed has been said of his inconstancy and caprice; but I am inclined to believe they originated less in a levity of sentiment, than from an extreme impetuosity of feeling which rendered him prompt to take umbrage; and his sensations of pique, where he fancied he had discovered the traces of unkindness, scorn, or neglect, took their measure of asperity from the overflowings of the opposite sentiment which preceded them, and which seldom failed to regain its ascendency in his bosom on the return of calmer reflection. He was candid and manly in the avowal of his errors, and *his avowal* was a *reparation*. His native *fierté* never forsaking him for a moment, the value of a frank acknowledgment was enhanced tenfold towards a generous mind, from its never being attended with servility. His mind, organized only for the stronger and more acute operation of the passions, was impracticable to the efforts of superciliousness that would have depressed it into humility, and equally superior to the encroachments of venal suggestions that might have led him into the mazes of hypocrisy.

"It has been observed that he was far from averse to the incense of flattery, and could receive it tempered with less delicacy than might have been expected, as he seldom transgressed extravagantly in that way himself; where he paid a compliment it might indeed claim the power of intoxication, as approbation from him was always an honest tribute from the warmth and sincerity of his heart. It has been sometimes represented by those who, it would seem, had a view to depreciate, though they could not hope wholly to obscure, that native brilliancy which this extraordinary man had invariably bestowed on everything that came from his lips or pen, that the history of the Ayrshire ploughboy was an ingenious fiction, fabricated for the purposes of obtaining the interests of the great, and enhancing the merits of what in reality required no foil. But had his compositions fallen from a hand more dignified in the ranks of society than that of a peasant, they had perhaps bestowed as unusual a grace there, as even in the humbler shade of rustic inspiration from whence they really sprung.

"That Burns had received no classical education, and was acquainted with the Greek and Roman authors only through the medium of translations, is a fact that can be indisputably proven. I have seldom seen him at a loss in conversation, unless where the dead languages and their writers were the subjects of discussion. When I have pressed him to tell me why he never took pains to acquire the Latin in particular (a language which his happy memory had so soon enabled him to be master of), he used only to reply, with a smile, that he already knew all the Latin he desired to learn, and that was *omnia vincit amor;* a phrase that, from his writings and most favourite pursuits, it should undoubtedly seem he was most thoroughly versed in; but I really believe his classical erudition extended little, if any, further.

"The penchant uniformly acknowledged by Burns for the festive pleasures of the table, and towards the fairer and softer objects of Nature's creation, has been the rallying-point where the attacks of his censors, both religious and moral, have been directed; and to these, it must be confessed, he showed himself no stoic. His poetical pieces blend, with alternate happiness of description, the frolic spirit of the joy-inspiring bowl, or melt the heart to the tender and impassioned sentiments in which beauty always taught him to pour forth his own. But who would wish to reprove the failings he has consecrated with such lively touches of nature? And where is the rugged moralist who will persuade us so far to 'chill the genial current of the soul' as to regret that Ovid ever celebrated his Corinna or that Anacreon sung beneath his vine?

"I will not, however, undertake to be the apologist of the irregularities even of a man of genius, though I believe it is as certainly understood that genius never *was* free of irregularities, as that their absolution may in great measure be justly claimed, since it is evident that the world must have continued very stationary in its intellectual acquirements had it never given birth to any but men of plain sense. Evenness of conduct and a due regard to the decorums of the world have been so rarely seen to move hand in hand with genius, that some have gone so far as to say (though there I cannot wholly acquiesce) that they are even incompatible; but, be it remembered, the frailties that cast their shade over the splendour of superior merit are more conspicuously glaring than where they are the attendants of mere mediocrity. It is only on the gem we are disturbed to see the dust; the pebble may be soiled and we do not regard it. The eccentric intuitions of genius too often yield the soul to the wild effervescence of desires, always unbounded, and sometimes equally dangerous to the repose of others as fatal to its own. No wonder then if Virtue herself be sometimes lost in the blaze of kindling animation, or that the calm admonitions of reason are not found sufficient to fetter an imagination which scorns the narrow limits and restrictions that would chain it to the level of ordinary minds. Burns, the child of nature and sensibility, unbroke to the refrigerative precepts of philosophy, makes his own artless apology in terms more forcible than all the argumentatory vindications in the world could do. This appears in one of his poems, where he delineates, with his usual simplicity, the progress of his mind, and its gradual expansion to the lessons of the tutelary Muse:—

> I saw thy pulse's madd'ning play
> Wild send thee Pleasure's devious way;
> Misled by Fancy's meteor ray,
> By passion driven;
> But yet the light that led astray
> Was light from heaven!

"I have already transgressed far beyond the bounds I had proposed to myself on first committing to paper this sketch, which comprehends what I at least have been led to deem the leading features of Burns's mind and character. A critique, either literary or moral, I cannot aim at; mine is wholly fulfilled if in these paragraphs I have been able to delineate any of those strong traits that distinguished him, of those talents which raised him from the plough—where he passed the bleak morning of his life, weaving his rude wreaths of poesy with the wild field-flowers that sprung around his cottage—to that enviable eminence of literary fame, where Scotland shall long cherish his memory with delight and gratitude. Proudly she will remember that beneath her cold sky a genius was ripened without care or culture, that would have done honour to climes more favourable to the development of those luxuriances of fancy and colouring in which he so eminently excelled.

"From several paragraphs I have noticed in the public prints, even since the idea was formed of sending this humble effort in the same direction, I find private animosities have not yet subsided, and that envy has not yet exhausted all her shafts. I still trust, however, that honest fame will be permanently affixed to Burns's character—a fame which the candid and impartial of his own countrymen, and his readers everywhere, will find he has merited. And wherever a kindred bosom is found that has been taught to glow with the fires that animated Burns, should a recollection of the imprudences that sullied his brighter qualifications interpose, let such an one remember the imperfection of all human excellence,—let him leave those inconsistencies which alternately exalted his nature into the seraph, and sunk it again into the man, to the Tribunal which alone can investigate the labyrinths of the human heart.

> No further seek his merits to disclose,
> Or draw his frailties from their dread abode;
> There they alike in trembling hope repose—
> The bosom of his Father and his God.

"M. R."

BIOGRAPHIC NOTES ON THE FAMILY OF BURNS,

AND ON HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

At the time of Burns's death his children were as follows:—Robert, born at Mauchline, 3d Sept. 1786; Francis Wallace, born at Ellisland, 18th August, 1789; William Nicol, born at Dumfries, 9th April, 1791; James Glencairn, born 12th August, 1794. Another son, Maxwell, was born on the day of the poet's funeral, 25th July, 1796.

ROBERT received a good education at the academy of Dumfries; spent three sessions at the University of Edinburgh and Glasgow; and in 1804 obtained a situation in the stamp-office, Somerset House, London, where he remained till 1833, when he retired on a small annuity, and took up his residence at Dumfries. When twenty-two years of age he married Ann Sherwood, and the only child of the marriage who came to maturity was Eliza, born in 1812, who married a surgeon in the East India Company's service in 1834. Both in London and in Dumfries Robert was in the practice of teaching the classics and mathematics; he also wrote verses of a very mediocre quality. Like his father he was the possessor of warm passions, and was deficient in "prudent, cautious self-control." He died 14th May, 1857, and was buried in the mausoleum at Dumfries.

FRANCIS WALLACE, a boy of uncommon vivacity, died 9th July, 1803, at the age of fourteen,

and was first buried in the small inclosure where the poet was originally interred, and finally laid in the mausoleum in 1815.

WILLIAM NICOL sailed at the age of fifteen to the East Indies as a midshipman, and was appointed to a cadetship in 1811. He served for thirty-three years in the 7th Madras Infantry, retiring in 1843 with the rank of lieutenant-colonel, when he took up his residence at Cheltenham. In 1822 he married Catherine A. Crone, who died in 1841, leaving no issue. Being only five years of age at the time of his father's death, his recollections of him were necessarily slight. He remembered his taking him to school, and his walking about the room with him in his arms during night to soothe him in some childish illness. In August, 1844, he was present, along with his brothers Robert and James, his aunt, the poet's sister, Mrs. Begg, and various other relatives, at the great festival on the banks of the Doon, organized with the double object of doing honour to the memory of the poet, and of welcoming his sons back to the land which their father's genius had consecrated, after their long absence in the East. In 1859 he took part in the centenary celebration at Dumfries. He died at Cheltenham, 21st February, 1872, in his eighty-second year, and was buried in the mausoleum at Dumfries.

JAMES GLENCAIRN was educated at Dumfries Academy and at Christ's Hospital, London. In 1811 he received a cadetship in the service of the East India Company, and sailed for Calcutta in June of that year, where he joined the 15th Bengal Native Infantry. In 1817, by which time he had attained the rank of lieutenant, he was appointed by the Marquis of Hastings, then Governor-general of India, to an important post in the commissariat department. His first care after his promotion and consequent prosperity was to settle an allowance on his mother, which enabled her to resign the pension generously granted to her by Maule of Panmure. He married a Miss Sarah Robinson in 1818, who died in 1821, leaving three children, one of whom, Sarah, who was brought up by the poet's widow, reached maturity and was married in 1847 to Dr. Berkeley W. Hutchinson, a native of Galway. In 1828, James, now Captain Burns, married Mary Beckett, with whom in 1831 he revisited his native country. In 1833, soon after his return to India, he was appointed by Lord Metcalfe judge and collector of Gachar. He held this post till 1839, when he retired from active service and returned to England, with the rank of major. His second wife died in 1844, leaving an only daughter, and soon after he took up his residence with his brother at Cheltenham. In 1855 he obtained the brevet rank of lieutenant-colonel. His natural abilities and amiability of character made him a great favourite in society, where his musical accomplishments were highly appreciated. He died at Cheltenham, 18th Nov. 1865, from the effects of an accidental fall down a flight of stairs, and was buried in the mausoleum beside his illustrious father.

MAXWELL, the child which was born on the day of his father's funeral, only survived till 25th April, 1799. His remains also lie in the mausoleum.

"The only dependence of Mrs. Burns after her husband's death was on an annuity of ten pounds, arising from a benefit society connected with the excise, the books and other movable property left to her, and the generosity of the public. A public subscription, which was immediately started, produced seven hundred pounds; and the works of the poet, as edited for behoof of the widow and family by Dr. Currie, soon brought nearly two thousand more. Mrs. Burns was thus enabled to support and educate her family in a manner creditable to the memory of her husband. She continued to reside in the house which had been occupied by her husband and herself, and

—never changed, nor wished to change, her place.

For many years after her sons had left her to pursue their fortunes in the world, she lived in a decent and respectable manner on an income which never amounted to more than £60 per annum, exclusive of house rent, which amounted to £8. At length, in 1817, at a festival held in Edinburgh to celebrate the birthday of the bard, Mr. Henry (afterwards Lord) Cockburn acting as president, it was proposed by Mr. Maule of Panmure (afterwards Lord Panmure) that some permanent addition should be made to the income of the poet's widow. The idea appeared to be favourably received, but the subscription did not fill rapidly. Mr. Maule then said that the burden of the provision should fall upon himself, and immediately executed a bond entitling Mrs. Burns to an annuity of £50 as long as she lived. This act, together with the generosity of the same gentleman to Nathaniel Gow in his latter and evil days, must ever endear the name of Lord Panmure to all who feel warmly on the subjects of Scottish poetry and Scottish music.

"Mr. Maule's pension had not been enjoyed by the widow more than a year and a half when her youngest son James attained the rank of a captain with a situation in the commissariat, and, as stated above, was thus enabled to relieve her from the necessity of being beholden to a stranger's hand for any share of her support. She accordingly resigned the pension. During her subsequent years Mrs. Burns is said to have enjoyed an income of about two hundred a year, great part of which, as not needed by her, she dispensed in charities. Her whole conduct in widowhood was such as to secure universal esteem in the town where she resided. She died, March 26, 1834,

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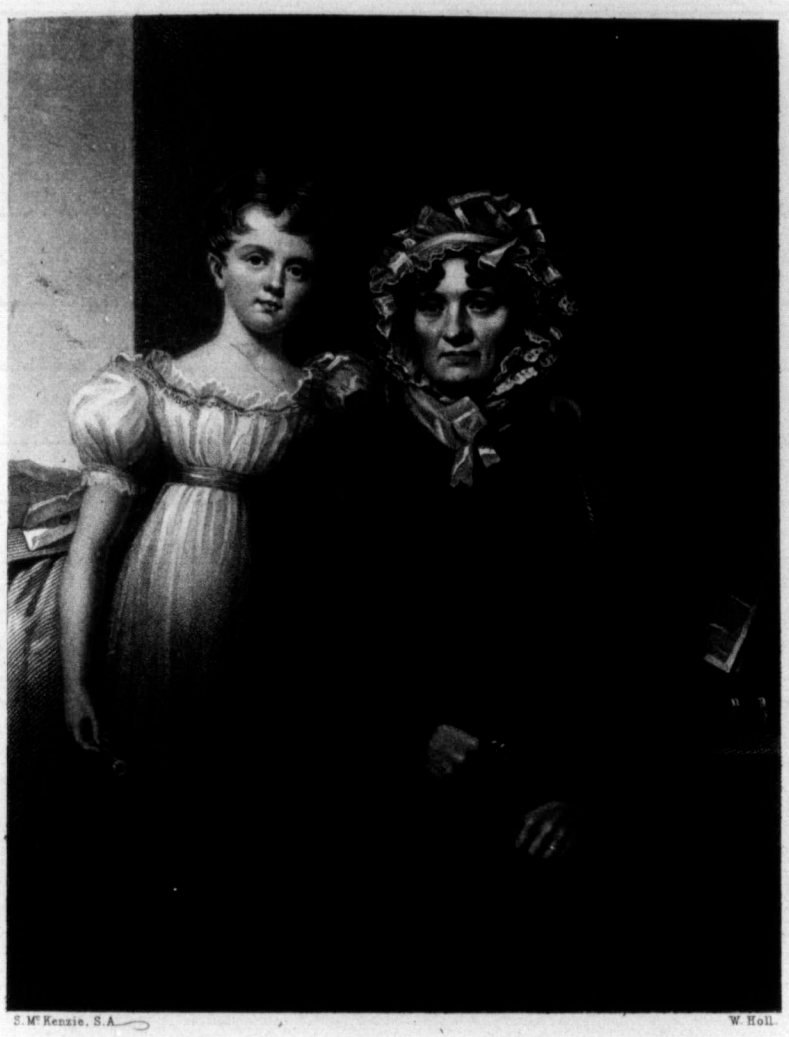

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Mrs BURNS.

(JEAN ARMOUR)

AND ONE OF HER GRANDCHILDREN

Blackie & Son. London. Glasgow & Edinburgh.

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in the sixty-eighth year of her age, and was buried beside her illustrious husband in the mausoleum at Dumfries.[1] The deceased was born at Mauchline in February, 1767. Her father was an industrious master mason in good employment, who enjoyed the esteem of the gentry and others within the district, and reared the numerous family of eleven sons and daughters. The term of Mrs. Burns's widowhood extended to thirty-eight years, in itself rather an unusual circumstance—and in July, 1796, when the bereavement occurred, she was but little beyond the age at which the majority of females marry.[2] But she had too much respect for the memory of her husband and regard for his children to think of changing her name, although she might have done so more than once with advantage; and was even careful to secure on lease and repair and embellish, as soon as she could afford it, the decent though modest mansion in which he died. And here, for more than thirty years, she was visited by thousands on thousands of strangers, from the peer down to itinerant sonneteers—a class of persons to whom she never refused an audience or dismissed unrewarded. Occasionally during the summer months she was a good deal annoyed; but she bore all in patience, and although naturally fond of quiet, seemed to consider her house as open to visitors, and its mistress, in some degree, the property of the public. Hers was one of those well-balanced minds that cling instinctively to propriety and a medium in all things; and such as knew the deceased, earliest and latest, were unconscious of any change in her demeanour and habits, excepting, perhaps, greater attention to dress and more refinement of manner, insensibly acquired by frequent intercourse with families of the first respectability. In her tastes she was frugal, simple, and pure; and delighted in music, pictures, and flowers. In spring and summer it was impossible to pass her windows without being struck with the beauty of the floral treasures they contained; and if extravagant in anything it was in the article of roots and plants of the finest sorts. Fond of the society of young people, she mingled as long as able in their innocent pleasures, and cheerfully filled for them the cup 'which cheers but not inebriates.' She was a clever woman, possessed great shrewdness, discriminated character admirably, and frequently made very pithy remarks.

"When young she must have been a handsome comely woman, if not indeed a beauty, when the poet saw her for the first time on a bleach-green at Mauchline, engaged like Peggy and Jenny at Habbie's Howe. Her limbs were cast in the finest mould; and up to middle life her jet-black eyes were clear and sparkling, her carriage easy, and her step light. She moved with great grace on the floor, and chanted her 'wood-notes wild' in a style but rarely equalled by unprofessional singers. Her voice was a brilliant treble, and in singing 'Coolen,' 'I gaed a waefu' gate yestreen,' and other songs, she rose without effort as high as B natural [equivalent to A of the present scale]. In ballad poetry her taste was good, and range of reading rather extensive. Her memory, too, was strong, and she could quote, when she chose, at considerable length, and with great aptitude. Of these powers the bard was so well aware that he read to her almost every piece he composed, and was not ashamed to own that he had profited by her judgment. In fact, none save relations, neighbours, and friends could form a proper estimate of the character of Mrs. Burns. In the presence of strangers she was shy and silent, and required to be drawn out, or, as some would say, shown off to advantage, by persons who possessed her confidence and knew her intimately."[3]

Burns left two illegitimate children, Elizabeth, daughter of Elizabeth Paton, born in 1784, and brought up at Mossgiel by Gilbert Burns and his mother; and Elizabeth, daughter of Anne Park, a niece of Mrs. Hyslop, hostess of the Globe Inn at Dumfries, born in 1791, and nursed and brought up by Mrs. Burns along with her own family.[4] For the benefit of these two girls a fund was provided, chiefly through the exertions of Mr. Alderman Shaw of London, an Ayrshire gentleman. The sum of £400 was laid aside, one moiety payable to each on marriage or on attaining the age of twenty-one; and in the event of either of

[1] The household effects of Mrs. Burns were sold by public auction on the 10th and 11th of April, and from the anxiety of the public to possess relics of this interesting household, brought uncommonly high sums. According to the *Dumfries Courier*, "the auctioneer commenced with small articles, and when he came to a broken copper coffee-pot, there were so many bidders that the price paid exceeded twenty-fold the intrinsic value. A tea-kettle of the same metal succeeded, and reached £2 sterling. Of the linens, a table-cloth, marked 1792, which, speaking commercially, may have been worth half-a-crown or five shillings, was knocked down at £5, 7*s*. Many other articles commanded handsome prices, and the older and plainer the furniture the better it sold. The rusty iron top of a shower-bath, which Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop sent to the poet when afflicted with rheumatism, was bought by a Carlisle gentleman for £1, 8*s*.; and a low wooden kitchen chair, on which the late Mrs. Burns sat when nursing her children, was run up to £3, 7*s*. The crystal and china were much coveted, and brought, in most cases, splendid prices. Even an old fender reached a figure which would go far to buy half a dozen new ones, and everything, towards the close, attracted notice, down to gray-beards, bottles, and a half-worn pair of bellows. The poet's eight-day clock, made by a Mauchline artist, attracted great attention, from the circumstance that it had frequently been wound up by his own hand. In a few seconds it was bid up to fifteen pounds or guineas, and was finally disposed of for £35."

[2] In the present work a portrait is given of Mrs. Burns in advanced life, along with that of her grandchild, a son of Colonel James Glencairn Burns.

[3] Abridged and slightly modified from an article in the *Dumfries Courier*, published immediately after her death, and no doubt written by the editor Mr. M'Diarmid.

[4] See note to song, "Yestreen I had a pint o' wine."

them dying under these periods, the moiety due to her was to go to the survivor. The daughter of Elizabeth Paton married John Bishop, manager at Polkemmet, in Linlithgowshire. She died in 1817, at the age of thirty-two, leaving several children, and was buried at Whitburn. Anne Park's daughter became the wife of John Thomson, a retired soldier, and settled down at Pollokshaws, near Glasgow, where she died 13th June, 1873, aged eighty-two years. She had a family of two sons and three daughters.

Mr. Gilbert Burns, the early companion and at all times the steadfast friend of the poet, continued to be farmer of Mossgiel till Whitsunday, 1798, when he removed to the farm of Dinning, on the estate of Mr. Menteith of Closeburn, in Nithsdale. On 21st June, 1791, he had married Miss Jean Breckenridge, by whom he had six sons and five daughters. He continued to hold the farm of Dinning till 1810, but in 1800 he took charge of Mrs. Dunlop's farm of Morham Mains, near Haddington, and on her recommendation was in 1804 appointed factor to Lord Blantyre over his East Lothian estates, his emoluments being £100, afterwards raised to £140, and a free house. He accordingly took up his residence at Grant's Braes, near Lethington or Lennoxlove, leaving Dinning in charge of his brother-in-law John Begg, and carrying with him his aged mother and his sister Annabella. His conduct in this capacity, during nearly a quarter of a century, was marked by great fidelity and prudence, and gave the most perfect satisfaction to his titled employer. His mother continued to reside with him till her death in 1820, in the eighty-eighth year of her age and the thirty-sixth of her widowhood. She lies buried in Bolton churchyard. Gilbert Burns was invited by the publishers of Currie's edition of the poet's works to superintend and improve as much as possible a new edition, which appeared in 1820, and for which he received £250. This enabled him to pay off the £180 lent him by the poet in 1788. This excellent man died at Grant's Braes, 8th Nov. 1827, aged sixty-seven years, and was buried in Bolton churchyard, where also rest, besides his mother, his sister Annabella, and five of his children who predeceased him. One of his sons succeeded him in the factorship.

Agnes Burns, the poet's eldest sister, married William Galt, a farm servant on Gilbert's farm of Dinning. He afterwards became land-steward on a gentleman's estate in the north of Ireland, where the poet's sister died in 1834, leaving no family.

Annabella Burns was never married, but continued to live with her mother in the house of her brother Gilbert. She died in March, 1832, aged sixty-eight years, and was buried in Bolton churchyard.

William Burns was born in 1767, and served his apprenticeship as a saddler. About the end of 1788 he was with Burns at Ellisland for some weeks unemployed. He then crossed the border into England, and wrought for some time in Longtown and Newcastle-on-Tyne, ultimately proceeding to London about the beginning of March, 1790. A short series of interesting letters between him and the poet belong to this period. In London he renewed his acquaintance with his old preceptor Murdoch, who at this time kept a stationery shop near Bloomsbury Square. They had had but one meeting, however, when William was seized with a malignant fever, and died on 24th July, 1790, before Murdoch was apprised of his illness. He was buried in St. Paul's churchyard, Murdoch acting as chief mourner.

John Burns, the poet's youngest brother, born in 1769, who is incidentally mentioned in Gilbert's account of the composition of the "Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie," appears to have died in 1783 and to have been buried at Kirk Alloway.

Isabella Burns, the youngest of the family, was born 27th June, 1771, and married 1793, to John Begg, who afterwards, from 1804 to 1810, had charge of Gilbert's farm of Dinning. When that farm was given up Mr. Begg became land-steward on the estate of Blackwood, in the parish of Lesmahagow, Lanarkshire. He was accidentally killed by a fall from his horse, 24th April, 1813. His widow, who had borne him nine children, managed for many years to gain a livelihood by teaching. She lived first at Ormiston and then at Tranent in East Lothian, removing in 1843 to Bridge House, near Ayr, where she died on 4th December, 1858, and was buried in her father's grave at Kirk Alloway.

EXHUMATION OF THE POET.

FROM THE DUMFRIES COURIER.

"It is generally known (says Mr. M'Diarmid) that the remains of Burns were exhumed privately on the 19th September, 1815, and deposited, with every regard to decency, in the arched vault attached to the mausoleum, then newly erected in honour of his memory. . . . Originally his ashes lay in the north corner of the churchyard; and as years elapsed before any general movement was made, his widow, with pious care, marked the spot by a modest monument, the expense of which she willingly defrayed out of her own slender means. In the first instance, attempts were made to enlarge the church-yard wall, and thus avert the necessity of a ceremony, in the highest degree revolting to the feelings of Mrs. Burns; but the spot was so narrow, and interfered so closely with the property of others, that the idea was abandoned as utterly impracticable. On the day, therefore,

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already named the committee chosen proceeded to the spot before the sun had risen, and went to work so rapidly that they had well-nigh completed their purpose previous to the assemblage of any crowd. . . . As a report had been spread that the largest coffin was made of oak, hopes were entertained that it would be possible to remove it without injury or public examination of any kind. But this hope proved fallacious; on testing the coffin it was found to be composed of ordinary materials, and liable to yield to the slightest pressure; and the lid partially removed, a spectacle was unfolded which, considering the fame of the mighty dead, has rarely been witnessed by a single human being. There lay the remains of the great poet, to all appearance entire, retaining various traces of recent vitality, or, to speak more correctly, exhibiting the features of one who had newly sunk into the sleep of death. The forehead struck every one as beautifully arched, if not so high as might have been reasonably supposed, while the scalp was rather thickly covered with hair, and the teeth perfectly firm and white. Altogether the scene was so imposing that the commonest workmen stood uncovered, as the late Dr. Gregory did at the exhumation of the remains of King Robert Bruce, and for some moments remained inactive, as if thrilling under the effects of some undefinable emotion, while gazing on all that remained of one "whose fame is as wide as the world itself." But the scene, however imposing, was brief; for the instant the workmen inserted a shell or wooden case beneath the original coffin the head separated from the trunk, and the whole body, with the exception of the bones, crumbled into dust. Notwithstanding of the solemnity the occasion required, at least a few felt constrained to lift and examine the skull—probably under the inspiration of feelings akin to those of Hamlet when he leaned and moralized over Yorick's grave, and who, if aware of the passage, might have quoted appropriately enough the language of Byron:—

> Look on its broken arch and ruined hall—
> Its chambers desolate and portals foul;
> Yes, this was once Ambition's airy hall,
> The dome of thought, the palace of the soul
> Behold through each lack-lustre eyeless hole,
> The gay recess of wisdom and of wit—
> Of passion's host that never brooked control—
> Can all saint, sage, or sophist ever writ,
> People this lonely tower—this tenement refit.

"Everything, as we have said, was conducted with the greatest propriety and care; and after the second grave-bed of the poet and his offspring had been carefully prepared, the original tombstone was placed above their ashes, and the vault closed for a period of nearly nineteen years [that is, till the death of Mrs. Burns]. . . .

"The remains of Mrs. Burns were interred on Tuesday the 1st April [1834]. On the day preceding the vault was opened by Mr. Crombie—a work of considerable difficulty and labour—and the keys of the mausoleum, which is guarded round and round with high iron-pillared doors, placed temporarily in the possession of Mr. M'Diarmid. And here it may be best to confess the whole truth, and conceal nothing. Ever since we became acquainted with what occurred on the 19th September, 1815, we have regretted that so favourable an opportunity was missed of taking a cast from the poet's skull,—and the more so when informed that a phrenologist had made an imaginary one from his works and history, and on this theory assigned to Burns all the qualities of a great statesman. In this regret we were joined by many, and not a few persons here and elsewhere, by word and by letter, prompted and urged the propriety of a measure we had previously determined to adopt, if possible. But one difficulty remained behind—soothing the repugnance and conciliating the feelings of those who alone had a right to decide—the principal male relatives of the bard and his late relict. Mr. Armour arrived from London by Monday's mail, and we confess it was six o'clock P.M. before we could find courage to introduce the subject. We did, however, name it at last, and after much anxious conversation obtained a reluctant and conditional consent. From this moment matters were put in train, and by seven a small party repaired one by one, and by different routes, to St. Michael's churchyard. But the hour was found unsuitable and the opportunity inapt, from the number of anxious eyes that were still abroad. At nine, however, the attempt was renewed with all the success which the most enthusiastic admirers of genius or science could desire. Again the party conferred privately, and proceeded stealthily, one after another, by the quietest paths, and after clambering over the churchyard walls, met by appointment in front of the mausoleum. In this, it must be confessed, there was something degrading, which reminded us of the horrid trade of body-snatching; but the most profound secrecy was indispensable, and if there be any who feel inclined to impute blame, all we can say is—our motives were good, and totally alien to those of idle curiosity. Mr. Blacklock offered his services at a favourable moment, and it was well we had a gentleman with us qualified to give a scientific account of the appearance, preservation, and peculiarities of the skull. While one of our number kept watch above, the rest of the party descended into the vault by means of a ladder and a muffled lantern; and we shall not readily forget the mingled emotions that arose in the mind,—passing away and returning with the most thrilling influence,—as we stood solemnly on the poet's grave and recalled the awful malediction of Shakspeare. The night was most serene, and the dim light of the lantern and the

loneliness of the vault contrasted strikingly with the lambent light of the host of stars that sparkled brightly in the heavens above. Mr. Crombie's knowledge of localities rendered the process of disinterment comparatively easy, and Mr. Bogie, who had seen the skull in 1815, proclaimed its identity the moment it appeared. But in the absence of such a witness, its size and character were quite sufficient to avouch the fact, and, after it had been carefully cleaned, a cast was taken from it before the parties retired to rest. . . . Just as the party were about to separate the clock chimed the hour of one; and although ten individuals were present at the last, including Provost Murray, Mr. Hamilton, writer, and Rector M'Millan, the largest hat of the whole was found too narrow to receive the skull—a sufficient proof of its extraordinary size. Early on Tuesday morning a leaden box was made and carefully lined with the softest materials, and on the same day we, as in duty bound, witnessed the re-interment of the sacred relic it contained, previous to the funeral of Mrs. Burns. At this time the original tombstone was taken from the vault and placed within the iron railing which protects the sculpture. In accomplishing this, the said railing had to be slightly enlarged; and the stone now occupies a position where it can be seen by all, without being trod upon or injured by any. The inscriptions upon it are as follow, the closing one having been chiselled within the last few days:—

"'In memory of Robert Burns, who died the 21st July, 1796, in the 37th year of his age; and Maxwell Burns, who died 25th April, 1799, aged two years and nine months. Also, of Francis Wallace Burns, who died 9th July, 1803, aged fourteen years. Also, of Jean Armour, relict of the poet, born February, 1765, died 26th March, 1834.'"

The following description of the skull is from the pen of Mr. Archibald Blacklock, surgeon, mentioned above:—

"The cranial bones were perfect in every respect, if we except a little erosion of their external table, and firmly held together by their sutures; even the delicate bones of the orbits, with the trifling exception of the *os unguis* in the left, were sound and uninjured by death and the grave. The superior maxillary bones still retained the four most posterior teeth on each side, including the *dentes sapientiæ*, and all without spot or blemish; the *incisores*, *cuspidati*, &c., had, in all probability, recently dropped from the jaw, for the *alveoli* were but little decayed. The bones of the face and palate were also sound. Some small portions of black hair, with a very few gray hairs intermixed, were observed while detaching some extraneous matter from the occiput. Indeed, nothing could exceed the high state of preservation in which we found the bones of the cranium, or offer a fairer opportunity of supplying what has so long been desiderated by phrenologists—a correct model of our immortal poet's head; and in order to accomplish this in the most accurate and satisfactory manner, every particle of sand or other foreign body was carefully washed off, and the plaster of Paris applied with all the tact and accuracy of an experienced artist. The cast is admirably taken, and cannot fail to prove highly interesting to phrenologists and others.

"Having completed our intention, the skull, securely inclosed in a leaden case, was again committed to the earth precisely where we found it.

"ARCHD. BLACKLOCK.

"Dumfries, 1st April, 1834."

An elaborate report on the cranial development of the poet and on his mental and moral characteristics, from the phrenologist's stand-point, was soon after drawn up by Mr. George Combe. This we do not think it necessary to give here, since few at the present day have much faith in the doctrines of phrenology, especially as ordinarily expounded.

THE PATERNAL ANCESTRY OF BURNS.

The name Burness, or as it has been variously spelt, Burnes, Burnace, Burnice, is of very common occurrence in Kincardineshire, where the poet's father was born and brought up. The form Burness was that originally adopted by the poet, but, prior to issuing proposals for the first edition of his poems, he finally changed the spelling to Burns, the name being usually so pronounced in Ayrshire. In the country of the poet's ancestors the name is still regularly written Burness, and is always pronounced as a dissyllable. Sir James Burnes, sometime physician-general of the Bombay army, in his *Notes on his Name and Family*, and Dr. C. Rogers in his *Genealogical Memoirs of the Scottish House of Burnes*, claim for the poet's family a considerable antiquity and position. In the present note it is deemed sufficient to trace the family to the great-great-grandfather of the poet, who occupied the farm of Bogjorgan in the parish of Glenbervie some time about the middle of the seventeenth century. This Walter Burness of Bogjorgan had four sons:—(1) William, who succeeded him in Bogjorgan, and who died in 1715: this William, a considerable time before his death, seems to have surrendered his farm to his sons William and James, who after some time separated in 1705, when William, junior, remained at Bogjorgan, and James proceeded to rent the farm of Inches in the same parish; (2) James, the great-grandfather of the poet, who became tenant of the farm of Bralinmuir, in the same parish; (3) John,

who is mentioned as "Colonel" John Burness in the act of 1690 "for rescinding the forefaulters and fynes since the year 1665;" and (4) Robert, who settled in the parish of Benholm, and whose descendants were solicitors in Stonehaven up till a comparatively recent period.

James Burness, the poet's great-grandfather, became the tenant of the farm of Bralinmuir in Glenbervie, as above stated, where he died on 23rd January, 1743, at the age of eighty-seven years. He had five sons and one daughter, and as at least four of the sons were set up in farms of their own, his circumstances must have been good. It is stated by Sir James Burnés that the brothers were of such substantial position in the Mearns "that they could show silver utensils at their tables, with other indications of wealth unusual in that county." The tombstones erected in Glenbervie churchyard to the memory of the farmer of Bralinmuir and his brother of Bogjorgan, being considerably decorated with symbolic ornaments, &c., indicate on the part of the family the possession of means rather above the average of their compeers. These stones, which lay long in a neglected condition, were carefully restored and made more accessible to inspection in the summer of 1885.

Robert Burness, the eldest son of James Burness of Bralinmuir, became the tenant first of the farm of Kinmonth in Glenbervie and afterwards of Clochnahill in the parish of Dunnottar. This would be probably about 1715, which date may be assumed for his marriage, seeing his eldest son was born in 1717. It may be as well here to do away with a difficulty which oppressed the late Mr. Scott Douglas (editor of Burns's works, 1877–79, 6 vols., and of *Lockhart's Life of Burns*, 1882), whose imperfect information made him sneer at those who connected the farmer of Clochnahill with the well-to-do tenant of Bralinmuir. He says: "They (the genealogists) have demonstrated that persons bearing the surname of Burnes did reside and rent small farms in Kincardineshire upwards of two centuries ago; but they produce no reliable documentary links connecting any of these with Robert Burnes, the humble tenant of Clochnahill in Dunnottar parish, the known parent of William Burnes who migrated to Ayrshire and became the father of Burns the poet. . . . Every record in and out of the several parishes of Kincardineshire has been overhauled with a view to show a connecting link between James Burnes of Bralinmuir and Robert of Clochnahill and Denside, but in vain." By the assiduity of Mr. John Craig Thomson, sheriff-clerk depute, Stonehaven, the connecting link has been found (in 1885) in the form of a disposition of his property by James Burness, recorded in the sheriff court books at Stonehaven, 28th January, 1743, and attested by James Strachan, notary public. This document, while of interest mainly as placing the connection beyond doubt, is otherwise of interest to the curious. It runs as follows:—

"Be it known to all men By thir presents, Me, James Burnace, In Bralinmuir, That fforasmickle as I have Thought fitt to setle my small worldly concern In my lifetime ffor preventing any disorder or confusion that may arise among my children after my death, I with the burden of my own liferent, sell and dispone from me and after death To and in ffavour of Robert Burnace, My Eldest lawfull son, in Clochnahill; William Burnace, my second son, in Bralinmuir; James Burnace, in Halkhill, my third son; George Burnace, in Elphill, my fourth son; Margaret Burnace, spous to James Gawen, in Drumlithie, my only daughter, and the said James for his interest; my haill corns and croft and other moveables parteining to me at present or that may be the time of my decess In as ffar as extends to the soum of One hundred Merks Scotts money To each of the saids Robert, William, James, and George Burnace, my sons; and ffifty merks money for so to the said Margret Burnace and James Gawen; and the like soum of ffifty merks to John Gawen, lawfull son to the said James Gawen, making in haill ffive hundred Merks Scotts money divided and apointed to them in mener above exprest, with full power to them, agreeable to thir respective shares, To midle, intromitt with, sell, use, and dispose on my said Croft and Effects for payment to them of the said soum and shares, to each of them so due as above sett doun and divided, always under the provision before of my liferent use, and what is over and above This payment as said is I sell and dispone to my Wife Margret ffalconer, To be by her liferented, and what remains after her death I recomend To be equally divided amongst my said ffive children free of any Burden, Except twenty merks to Mary Burnace, lawful daughter to the deceased Thomas Burnace my fifth son, which, at discretion of my said children, I apoint To be payed Either with themselves or at the death of the said Margaret ffalcner, my spous, which disposition, with the Burden and provision before mentioned, I Bind and oblige me to warrend, acquit, and defend good and valid To my said children as above divided, with respect to the soums particullarly above mindted at all hands and against all deadly. Dispensing with the generality hereof, and with all nullities, imperfections, and objections in law, proponeable or prejudicial hereunto In any sort, I further recommend to my sons to be careful of, and dutiful to, my said spous and their mother, and to be assisting to bring to perfection my said goods so disponed, and the value of them aplyd for payt. of the forsaid soums as above apointed, and, more particularly, I recomend peace and unity among themselves and exact observance of

what I therein above recomended; and if any shall offer to contraveen or contradict this in any pairt, Then the rest agreeing To and Abiding by the same are hereby empowered to denude him or them of the share to them appointed, and to apply the same among themselves at discretion."

This document was signed on 14th June, 1740, in presence of David Croll, in Whitbog; George Touch, in Inchbreck; John Jellie, sub-tenant in Bralinmuir; and William Taillor, son of James Tailor, in Whitbog.

Robert Burness, the poet's grandfather, continued in Clochnahill till somewhere about 1748, when, through some misfortune or other, he left that farm and retired with his daughters to a cottage at Denside, Dunnottar, his sons migrating to the south for the purpose of making their way in the world. What was the cause of this break-up in the family is as yet unknown. Dr. Charles Rogers, in his *Genealogy*, attributes their ruin to the terrible winter and spring of 1740, but there is no evidence to show that the family left Clochnahill till the sons set their faces southward, which was certainly not till 1748. At a later period the same gentleman suggested that the rebellion of 1745 was the cause, that the farmer of Clochnahill served in Captain Garioch's regiment, and that the poet's father fought for Prince Charles Edward on the field of Culloden. This is most improbable in the face of a certificate, still in existence, dated May, 1748, signed by Sir William Ogilvy, Alexander Schank, and John Stewart, three gentlemen of the district, to the effect that "the bearer, William Burness, is the son of an honest farmer in this neighbourhood, and is a very well-inclined lad himself;" and recommending him to any nobleman or gentleman as a fit servant according to his capabilities; and of another certificate, which Gilbert Burns remembered, stating that "the bearer had no hand in the late wicked rebellion." Burns himself was fain to borrow a kind of lustre from the idea that his fathers had been "out" for the Stuarts. Speaking of that name, he says:—

> My fathers that name have revered on a throne,
> My fathers have fallen to right it;
> Those fathers would spurn their degenerate son,
> That name should he scoffingly slight it.

In his autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore he makes this statement:—"My forefathers rented land of the famous, noble Keiths of Marshal,[1] and had the honour to share their fate. . . . I mention this circumstance because it threw my father on the world at large." Again, writing to Lady Winifred Maxwell Constable, a descendant of the forfeited Earl of Nithsdale, he adds to his fancy family history:—"With your Ladyship I have the honour to be connected by one of the strongest and most endearing ties in the whole world—common sufferers in a cause where even to be unfortunate is glorious—the cause of heroic loyalty! Though my fathers had not illustrious honours and vast properties to hazard in the contest, though they left their humble cottages only to add so many units more to the unnoted crowd that followed their leaders, yet what they could they did, and what they had they lost: with unshaken firmness and unconcealed political attachments, they shook hands with ruin for what they esteemed the cause of their king and their country." Now it is a fact that Burns knew very little about his family history; indeed, as will be seen by a letter to his cousin, James Burness, Montrose, dated 4th September, 1787, he knew very little of those of them who were his contemporaries, let alone his ancestors. What little he did know, however, was wrought up into a fine fiction which gratified his sentimental Jacobitism. His grandfather no doubt was latterly unfortunate, but Jacobitism could hardly have been the cause of his misfortunes, else he would never have occupied a farm on a forfeited estate from about the time of, or shortly after, the rebellion of 1715 till 1748. His great-grandfather and great uncles also appear to have been prosperous farmers living quiet uneventful lives, their descendants occupying the same farms till into the present century. Moreover, he always connects the misfortunes of his ancestors with those of the Keiths, who lost their estates from their share in the rebellion of 1715; but how could the fall of the Keiths in 1715 have thrown the poet's father "on the world at large" in 1748? That the relations of his grandmother, Isabella Keith, may have suffered from being connected with the rebellion of 1715 is quite likely, since they were akin to the Keiths of Dunnottar, and, no doubt, sympathized with the party espoused by their chief.

We can hardly, therefore, attribute any misfortunes that may have befallen Burns's grandfather's family to "the cause of heroic loyalty." Farmers are much exposed to losses and vicissitudes of various kinds, and the misfortunes that overtook the farmer of Clochnahill were no doubt the same as those that have overtaken many another, such as bad seasons, death of stock, ruined crops, money losses through dishonest debtors, &c. &c. In the document quoted above as the settlement of his worldly concerns by James Burnace there is an injunction to "peace and unity among themselves." This would seem to point out that the brothers were not always on brotherly terms, and may account for the fact of Robert having to quit Clochnahill in poverty during the lifetime of his mother and his brothers, who, no doubt, had the means, if they had not the will, to assist him.

It is interesting to note that William Burness,

[1] See note 3, p. 142 of the present volume.

the poet's father, in helping to establish a school at Alloway, merely followed the example of his own father, who, in conjunction with some of his neighbours, built a schoolhouse on the farm of Clochnahill for the accommodation of the children in the district, which was at a considerable distance from the parish school.

The other members of James Burnace's family, as mentioned in the document above quoted, were: William, the second son, who succeeded his father in Bralinmuir; James, who became the tenant of Halkhill, in Glenbervie parish; and George, who held Elfhill, in the parish of Fetteresso. A son, Thomas, died in 1734 at the age of twenty-nine, leaving a daughter, who died in 1741 aged eight years. The only daughter of this family, Margaret, was married to a James Gawen or Gavin, Drumlithie.

James Burness, the eldest son of Robert of Clochnahill, and uncle of the poet, was born in 1717, and at the break-up of the family he settled in Montrose, where he attained a respectable position in society. His son James appears at first to have been a schoolmaster; he afterwards became a writer or solicitor. He corresponded with his cousin the poet, and acted towards him the part of a kind and generous friend. A third James, the son of the above, became provost of Montrose, and was the father of Sir James Burnes, sometime physician-general of the Bombay army, and of Sir Alexander Burnes, author of *Travels in Bokhara*, who was assassinated along with his brother Lieutenant Charles Burnes at Cabul in 1841.

Robert, the second son of Clochnahill, who left home along with the poet's father, made his way into England, but ultimately settled at Stewarton, in Ayrshire, where he died, 3rd January, 1789. He left two sons and a daughter, Fanny, who married a brother of Jean Armour's.

William, the third son, was born 1721, died at Lochlee in 1784, and had seven of a family: Robert, the poet; Gilbert, born 1760, died 1827 (had eleven of a family); Agnes, born in 1762, died 1834; Annabella, born 1764, died 1832; William, born 1767, died 1790; John, born 1769, died 1783; Isabella, born 1771, married to John Begg—had nine children. Particulars regarding these have already been given in this Appendix.

The other members of the family of Robert Burness of Clochnahill were: Margaret, born 1723, married Andrew Walker, Crawton; Elspet, born 1725, married John Caird, Denside, Dunnottar; Jean, born 1727, married a cousin, John Burnes, left no family; George, born 1729, died in early life; Isabel, born 1730, married William Brand, Auchenblae; and Mary, born 1732, died unmarried.

HIGHLAND MARY.

Perhaps no part of Burns's life has excited more interest than his connection with Mary Campbell, the sometime nursemaid to Gavin Hamilton's children, and, according to popular tradition, "dairy-maid or byres-woman" at Coilsfield House. This interest is in no degree lessened but rather strengthened by the mystery which Burns himself has thrown round the story, a mystery all the deeper as it is quite out of keeping with his usual candour in such affairs. Her name was never connected with his till three years after her decease, when "Mary in Heaven" awakened a curiosity as to the heroine, which drew from him the vague particulars noted further on. Robert Chambers suggests that "he might have some sense of remorse about this simple girl—he might dread the world's knowing that, after the affair of Jean Armour, in the midst of such calamitous circumstances, and facing a long exile in the West Indies, he had been so madly imprudent as to engage a poor girl to join him in wedlock, whether to go with him or to wait for his return." When all the facts are taken into account this suggestion seems a very natural one.

It was not till 1850 that the true date of the Highland Mary episode was made known to the public, when Mr. W. Scott Douglas of Edinburgh threw a new light upon the matter. Since then it has been fully discussed by various writers. Mary was born of Highland parentage, at Ardentinny in Argyleshire, it is said, her father being a sailor in a revenue cutter, whose station, at the time Mary is heard of in the Burns drama, was at Campbeltown. She is said to have spent some of her early years in the house of the Rev. David Campbell, minister of Loch Ranza in Arran, a relation of her mother's. She has been described as "a sweet, sprightly, blue-eyed creature;" but it is well to remember Burns's foible of investing his fair captivators with a stock of charms out of the plentiful stores of his own imagination, and which were not apparent to the eyes of others. Dr. Hately Waddell remarks:—"Gentle, good, and true she no doubt was; blue-eyed, and yellow-haired, and comely, but never graceful; and . . . the probability is that she was not endowed with a tithe of the sweet indefinite attractions with which Burns alone has invested her." Mr. A. R. Adamson, in his *Rambles through the Land of Burns*, states that there is a tradition "that she was neither graceful nor feminine, but was a coarse-featured, ungainly country lass." At the instigation of a relative, who held the situation of housekeeper to a family in Ayrshire, Mary came over to that county, and we find her employed as nursemaid in Gavin Hamilton's family when his son Alexander was born, in July, 1785. To Burns the year 1785 was a year of

marvellous achievement in the way of work, yet at the same time he seems to have had abundance of time for cultivating the acquaintance of the Mauchline lasses. In letter or in song we are made acquainted with most of them, but there is no mention made of one whom he must have seen frequently at his friend Hamilton's: her charms, we may infer, had not yet attracted his notice. Very little appears to have been known about Mary in the household at Mossgiel. Mrs. Begg, the poet's sister, recollected no sort of reference being made to her more than once, when the poet remarked to John Blane, the "gaudsman," that Mary had refused to meet him in the old castle—the dismantled tower of the priory at Mauchline. There was also a reminiscence of Robert's receiving a letter one evening which evidently disturbed him, and which, as was afterwards settled in the family, could have been nothing else but the letter containing the news of Mary's death.

From about April, 1785, Jean Armour to all appearance reigned supreme in the poet's affections, whatever other underplots in the drama of his love were taking place. When his intimacy with Jean could no longer be hidden he was led to give her a written acknowledgment of marriage, though at first, according to a letter quoted by Lockhart, he was fixed as fate against "owning her conjugally." This document, as is well known, was afterwards destroyed under the impression that thereby the marriage was annulled. Yet whoever believed that a complete and valid separation had been effected by this proceeding it would seem that Burns himself doubted if the destruction of the informal declaration in any way altered the relative position of the parties; else, why his solicitude to procure "a certificate as a bachelor" from the kirk-session? Jean's conduct had a most irritating and disturbing effect on Burns, all the more, probably, because he considered himself rather magnanimous in giving up his determination not to own her conjugally. He says himself, writing some years after, "I would gladly have covered my *inamorata* from the darts of calumny with the conjugal shield—nay I had actually made up some sort of wedlock—but I was at that time deep in the guilt of being unfortunate, for which good and lawful objection the lady's friends broke all our measures and drove me *au désespoir*." In his letter to Dr. Moore also he speaks as if he had almost lost his reason over the affair. Yet in April, 1786, writing to John Arnot of Dalquhatswood, after the break between Jean and him, he treats the matter in quite a burlesque vein, and with much that is highly extravagant, says: "By degrees I have subsided into the time-settled sorrow of the sable widower, who, wiping away the decent tear, lifts up his grief-worn eye to look—for another wife."

The vacancy caused by Jean's temporary banishment from his heart had, it would thus appear, to be filled up, and Gavin Hamilton's nursemaid (there is no ground for believing she ever was a dairymaid at Coilsfield) was at hand. At this time, indeed, there seems to have been room in his heart for a second or third passion, if we are to put any faith in the ardent terms in which (looking forward to his intended voyage to Jamaica) he takes leave of a certain Eliza—"the maid that I adore!" And it is questionable if he ever allowed himself to feel any vacancy, for it is permissible to suppose that it was even *before* Jean's so-called desertion of him that he had entangled himself with Mary Campbell, and that this was partly the cause why he at first protested that he would not on any account "own" the unfortunate girl "conjugally." However that may be, we find him now off with the old love and on with the new. Mary Campbell, who, by the way, could not have been ignorant of the Armour scandal, may have had for some time a liking for the poet, but their sweethearting could not have lasted any great length of time or it must have become a matter of public notoriety. Burns on his part, who describes himself as "an old hawk at the sport," would have no difficulty in "battering himself into a passion," to use another of his own expressions, on the shortest notice.

Burns's connection with Highland Mary—which we believe was but a mere interlude between the acts of the Armour drama—culminated with the parting of the lovers on the banks of the Ayr, which must have taken place on the second Sunday of May, 1786. This romantic event was for long referred to some indefinitely early period of his life; but that it was not earlier than 1784 is shown by "Mossgiel" with his name being written by Burns on the Bible which he presented to Mary, and which is now preserved at Ayr, while that the true year was 1786 is proved by the fixing of Mary's early death to the month of October in that year. All that Burns thought fit to say in regard to this incident in his life is contained in a MS. note written by him in Riddell's copy of Johnson's *Museum* (along with other similar annotations), to the song "My Highland Lassie." "This," he says, "was a composition of mine *in very early life*, before I was known at all in the world. My Highland lassie was a warm-hearted charming young creature as ever blessed a man with generous love. After a pretty long tract of the most ardent reciprocal attachment we met, by appointment, on the second Sunday of May, in a sequestered spot, by the banks of Ayr, where we spent the day in taking farewell, before she should embark for the West Highlands, to arrange matters among her friends for our projected change of life. At the close of autumn following she crossed the sea to meet me at Greenock,

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where she had scarce landed when she was seized with a malignant fever, which hurried my dear girl to the grave in a few days, before I could even hear of her illness." In a similar strain also the poet writes to Thomson inclosing the song "Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary?" "In my *very early years*, when I was thinking of going to the West Indies, I took the following farewell of a dear girl." Now the West India project occupied his mind only in the year 1786, so that Burns was using words that were certain to mislead when he spoke of his "very early life" and "my very early years." On the other hand, what he calls the "pretty long tract of the most ardent reciprocal attachment" could only have extended to at most a few months previous to the second Sunday in May, as before that time Jean occupied the first place in his affections for a comparatively long period.

The romantic details of the parting between Burns and Mary—when the lovers stood at different sides of a brook, laved their hands in the water, and exchanged Bibles—are well known. The authority for them is Cromek, and whence he derived the particulars is unknown. He certainly could not have got them from the poet himself. However much truth may be in these details it is sufficiently clear that Burns's gust of passion for Mary did not last long, though perhaps her love for him was only terminated by death.

This attachment has been often described as the purest and most elevated ever formed by the poet. This may be so, but the admirable Highland Mary poems of later composition do not necessarily show that what inspired them was anything else than a posthumous and merely poetical passion, and one that served the poet excellently for literary purposes.[1] Within a very few weeks we find him raving of Jean as one who has still the sway over his affections, and poor Mary is, for the time, forgotten. According to Burns's account she is away in the West Highlands "arranging matters among her friends for our projected change of life;" he himself—showing, one would think, how completely any idea of a marriage with Mary was absent from his mind, if it was ever present—executes, on 22d July, a deed investing his brother Gilbert with all his "goods, gear, and movable effects," profits from poems included, to be held by him in trust for the upbringing of his illegitimate daughter known as "Sonsie, smirkin' dear-bought Bess." In particular, provision was made by the same deed for continuing his daughter's exclusive interest in the copyright after she had reached the age of fifteen years. With what then was he going to endow Mary in the way of worldly goods? The truth seems to be, that Mary is out of sight out of mind. In the touching "Farewell," written certainly before 3d September, his nearest relatives, his most intimate friends, and especially his Jean, are alluded to, but Mary, whom he had asked not long before if she would "go to the Indies," is not once mentioned, and it is for the sake of Jean that he asserts he must cross the Atlantic. The time was to come, however, when the memories of his love affair with Mary was to furnish good poetical capital. To her we owe what is generally considered the "noblest of all his ballads," "To Mary in Heaven," and others perhaps equally admired. Had she lived it is probable her name would hardly have been heard of in connection with that of Burns.

It is impossible to account for Burns's want of candour in connection with this episode, unless on the ground that he felt the truth would not look well and wished to present himself in a sentimental and interesting position. Robert Chambers says of Burns in this connection: "It is to be feared that he was not a man for whom his admirers can safely claim steadiness of affection, any more than they can arrogate for him a romantic or platonic delicacy. His was a heart whose pulses were synchronous with those of no other human being; he loved keenly, enthusiastically for a time, but not necessarily for a long time; and then there were 'underplots in the drama of his love.'"

It would appear that, after spending the summer at Campbeltown, Mary came to Greenock, on her way to accept a situation at Martinmas, in the family of a Colonel M'Ivor in Glasgow. It is probable that by this time she had become disillusionized, and it may have been her own hand that partly deleted her own name and that of Burns from the sacred memorial of their secret betrothment, leaving the inscriptions as they now appear. While in Greenock she sickened of fever, and her friends, superstitiously believing her to have been afflicted by the cast of an evil eye, seriously recommended her father to go to a spot where two burns met, select seven smooth stones from the channel, boil them in new milk, and give her the same to drink. Her illness, however, was far too serious for either charms or skill; she died after a few days' suffering, and was buried in the West Churchyard, Greenock, in a "lair" or plot of ground which belonged to a distant relative of her mother. In 1842 a fine monument designed by John Mossman was erected to her memory. It bears bas-reliefs representing the traditionary parting at Coilsfield, surmounted by a figure representing grief. It has been asserted by some of the older inhabitants of Greenock that the grave over which the monument is erected is not the spot where the body of High-

[1] Mr. Scott Douglas well remarks: "The contrast between the quality of those strains which the poet produced under the influence of his Mary 'in the days of her flesh' (who was almost unknown in Ayrshire) and those impassioned lyrics that were inspired by 'Mary, dear departed shade,' . . . is very striking."

land Mary was interred, her resting-place being alleged to be the lair on a line with the monument but nearer the kirk.

BRIEF NOTES BY BURNS OF A BORDER TOUR:

MAY 5—JUNE 1, 1787.

Left Edinburgh [May 5, 1787]—Lammermuir-hills miserably dreary, but at times very picturesque. Langton-edge, a glorious view of the Merse—Reach Berry-well[1]—old Mr. Ainslie an uncommon character;—his hobbies, agriculture, natural philosophy, and politics. In the first he is unexceptionably the clearest-headed, best-informed man I ever met with; in the other two, very intelligent:—as a man of business he has uncommon merit, and by fairly deserving it has made a very decent independence. Mrs. Ainslie, an excellent, sensible, cheerful, amiable old woman. Miss Ainslie—her person a little *embonpoint*, but handsome; her face, particularly her eyes, full of sweetness and good humour—she unites three qualities rarely to be found together; keen, solid penetration; sly, witty observation and remark; and the gentlest, most unaffected female modesty. Douglas, a clever, fine, promising young fellow. The family-meeting with their brother, my *compagnon de voyage*, very charming; particularly the sister. The whole family remarkably attached to their menials—Mrs. A. full of stories of the sagacity and sense of the little girl in the kitchen. Mr. A. high in the praises of an African, his house servant—all his people old in his service—Douglas's old nurse came to Berry-well yesterday to remind them of its being his birth-day.

A Mr. Dudgeon, a poet at times,[2] a worthy remarkable character—natural penetration, a great deal of information, some genius, and extreme modesty.

SUNDAY [6th].—Went to church at Dunse—Dr. Bowmaker, a man of strong lungs and pretty judicious remark, but ill skilled in propriety, and altogether unconscious of his want of it.[3]

MONDAY [7th].—Coldstream—went over to England—Cornhill—glorious river Tweed—clear and majestic—fine bridge. Dine at Coldstream with Mr. Ainslie and Mr. Foreman—beat Mr. F—— in a dispute about Voltaire. Tea at Lennel House with Mr. Brydone[4]—Mr. Brydone a most excellent heart, kind, joyous, and benevolent, but a good deal of the French indiscriminate complaisance—from his situation past and present, an admirer of every thing that bears a splendid title, or that possesses a large estate—Mrs. Brydone a most elegant woman in her person and manners; the tones of her voice remarkably sweet—my reception extremely flattering—sleep at Coldstream.

TUESDAY [8th].—Breakfast at Kelso—charming situation of Kelso—fine bridge over the Tweed—enchanting views and prospects on both sides of the river, particularly the Scotch side; introduced to Mr. Scott of the Royal Bank, an excellent modest fellow—fine situation of it—ruins of Roxburgh Castle—a holly-bush growing where James II. of Scotland was accidentally killed by the bursting of a cannon. A small old religious ruin and a fine old garden planted by the religious, rooted out and destroyed by an English Hottentot, a *maître d'hôtel* of the duke's, a Mr. Cole. Climate and soil of Berwickshire, and even Roxburghshire, superior to Ayrshire—bad roads. Turnip and sheep husbandry, their great improvements—Mr. M'Dowal, at Caverton Mill, a friend of Mr. Ainslie's, with whom I dined to-day, sold his sheep, ewe and lamb together, at two guineas a-piece—wash their sheep before shearing—7 or 8 lb. of washen wool in a fleece—low markets, consequently low rents—fine lands not above sixteen shillings a Scotch acre—magnificence of farmers and farmhouses—come up Teviot and up Jed to Jedburgh to lie, and so wish myself a good night.[5]

WEDNESDAY [9th].—Breakfast with Mr. —— in Jedburgh—a squabble between Mrs. ——, a crazed, talkative slattern, and a sister of hers,

[1] The poet was travelling with a young friend Mr. Robert Ainslie, and this was the residence of his father, who acted as land-steward on the estates of Lord Douglas, in Berwickshire. A number of letters to Robert Ainslie will be found in the poet's Correspondence.

[2] The author of the song, "Up amang yon cliffy rocks."

[3] See epigram presented to Miss Ainslie on this occasion.

[4] Patrick Brydone, Esq., author of the well-known tour in Sicily and Malta. His wife was a daughter of Principal Robertson.

[5] This fine old royal and parliamentary burgh is situated on Jed water, a tributary of the Teviot, at the distance of ten miles from Kelso and fifty from Edinburgh. While possessing some local importance as the county town of Roxburghshire, its population scarcely reaches 5000. The abbey, of which the ruins still tower above all the existing domestic buildings, was founded early in the twelfth century; and even at that early time the town was of some note. The only part of this structure of which any remains exist is the church, which has been in the form of a cross about 230 feet in length. The nave, north transept, and central tower, are still tolerably entire, and form a beautiful specimen of early Gothic. A Norman door in the west end is much admired for its curious mouldings, and a St. Catherine's wheel at the top of the same gable is a conspicuous feature. The environs of Jedburgh are extremely beautiful. The Jed rushes down from its native moors under steep *scaurs* and hanging woods, the remains of the ancient forest of Jedburgh, from which the English borders were erst kept in trouble. Here a nodding tower, there an old corn-mill; here a beautiful glade, there a green slope: scarcely any town in the south of Scotland can be said to have more delightful surroundings. The magistrates of Jedburgh gave Burns the freedom of their burgh, with its usual accompaniment of a treat at the inn. It was long remembered in the town that, while this treat was in the course of being discussed, the poet, ever jealous of his independence, left the room and endeavoured—need we add, in vain?—to prevail on the landlord to accept of payment of the bill.

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D. O. HILL R.S.A. W. Richardson

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an old maid, respecting a Relief minister. Miss gives Madam the lie; and Madam, by way of revenge, upbraids her that she laid snares to entangle the said minister, then a widower, in the net of matrimony. Go about two miles out of Jedburgh to a roup of parks—meet a polite soldier-like gentleman, Captain Rutherford, who had been many years through the wilds of America, a prisoner among the Indians. Charming, romantic situation of Jedburgh, with gardens, orchards, &c., intermingled among the houses—fine old ruins—a once magnificent cathedral, and strong castle. All the towns here have the appearance of old, rude grandeur, but the people extremely idle—Jed a fine romantic little river.

Dine with Captain Rutherford—the captain a polite fellow, fond of money in his farming way; showed a particular respect to my bardship—his lady exactly a proper matrimonial second part for him. Miss Rutherford a beautiful girl, but too far gone woman to expose so much of a fine swelling bosom—her face very fine.

Return to Jedburgh—walk up Jed with some ladies to be shown Love-lane and Blackburn, two fairy scenes. Introduced to Mr. Potts, writer, a very clever fellow; and Mr. Somerville, the clergyman of the place, a man, and a gentleman, but sadly addicted to punning.[1] The walking party of ladies, Mrs. —— and Miss ——, her sister before mentioned. N.B.—These two appear still more comfortably ugly and stupid, and bore me most shockingly. Two Miss —— tolerably agreeable. Miss Hope, a tolerably pretty girl, fond of laughing and fun. Miss Lindsay, a good-humoured, amiable girl; rather short *et embonpoint*, but handsome, and extremely graceful—beautiful hazel eyes, full of spirit and sparkling with delicious moisture—an engaging face—*un tout ensemble* that speaks her of the first order of female minds—her sister, a bonnie, strappin', rosy, sonsie lass. Shake myself loose, after several unsuccessful efforts, of Mrs. —— and Miss ——, and, somehow or other, get hold of Miss Lindsay's arm. My heart is thawed into melting pleasure after being so long frozen up in the Greenland bay of indifference, amid the noise and nonsense of Edinburgh. Miss seems very well pleased with my bardship's distinguishing her, and after some slight qualms, which I could easily mark, she sets the titter round at defiance, and kindly allows me to keep my hold; and when parted by the ceremony of my introduction to Mr. Somerville, she met me half, to resume my situation. Nota Bene—The poet within a point and a half of being —— in love—I am afraid my bosom is still nearly as much tinder as ever.

The old, cross-grained, whiggish, ugly, slanderous Miss ——, with all the poisonous spleen of a disappointed, ancient maid, stops me very unseasonably to ease her bursting breast, by falling abusively foul on the Miss Lindsays, particularly on my Dulcinea;—I hardly refrain from cursing her to her face for daring to mouth her calumnious slander on one of the finest pieces of the workmanship of Almighty Excellence! Sup at Mr. ——'s; vexed that the Miss Lindsays are not of the supper party, as they only are wanting. Mrs. —— and Miss —— still improve infernally on my hands.

Set out next morning [10th] for Wauchope, the seat of my correspondent, Mrs. Scott—breakfast by the way with Dr. Elliot, an agreeable, good-hearted, climate-beaten, old veteran, in the medical line, now retired to a romantic, but rather moorish place, on the banks of the Roole—he accompanies us almost to Wauchope—we traverse the country to the top of Bochester, the scene of an old encampment, and Woolee Hill.

Wauchope—Mr. Scott exactly the figure and face commonly given to Sancho Panza—very shrewd in his farming matters, and not unfrequently stumbles on what may be called a strong thing rather than a good thing. Mrs. Scott all the sense, taste, intrepidity of face, and bold, critical decision, which usually distinguish female authors. Sup with Mr. Potts—agreeable party. Breakfast next morning [11th] with Mr. Somerville—the *bruit* of Miss Lindsay and my bardship, by means of the invention and malice of Miss ——. Mr. Somerville sends to Dr. Lindsay, begging him and family to breakfast if convenient, but at all events to send Miss Lindsay; accordingly, Miss Lindsay only comes. I find Miss Lindsay would soon play the devil with me—I met with some little flattering attentions from her. Mrs. Somerville, an excellent, motherly, agreeable woman, and a fine family. Mr. Ainslie and Mrs. S——, junr., with Mr. ——, Miss Lindsay, and myself, go to see *Esther*, a very remarkable woman for reciting poetry of all kinds, and sometimes making Scotch doggerel herself—she can repeat by heart almost every thing she has ever read, particularly Pope's Homer from end to end—has studied Euclid by herself, and, in short, is a woman of very extraordinary abilities. On conversing with her I find her fully equal to the character given of her.[2] She is very much flattered that I send for her, and that she sees a

[1] Dr. Somerville was the author of two laborious works on British history, and survived to be the oldest minister of the Church of Scotland in his day, dying in 1830, at the age of ninety, and when he had officiated as minister of Jedburgh for fifty-seven years. It is said, that, after seeing Burns's reference to his habit of punning, Dr. Somerville never punned more. A son of Dr. Somerville was the husband of the well-known Mary Somerville.

[2] Esther Easton was in a very humble walk of life—the wife of a common working gardener. She latterly taught a little day-school, which not being sufficient for her subsistence, she was obliged to solicit the charity of her benevolent neighbours. She died in February, 1789.

poet who has *put out a book*, as she says. She is, among other things, a great florist, and is rather past the meridian of once celebrated beauty.

I walk in *Esther's* garden with Miss Lindsay, and after some little chit-chat of the tender kind, I presented her with a proof print of my *nob*, which she accepted with something more tender than gratitude. She told me many little stories which Miss —— had retailed concerning her and me, [illegible] prolonging pleasure—God bless her! Was [illegible]ed on by the magistrates and presented with the freedom of the burgh.

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

KELSO.—Dine with the farmers' club—all gentlemen, talking of high matters—each of them keeps a hunter from £30 to £50 value, and attends the fox-huntings in the county—go out with Mr. Ker, one of the club, and a friend of Mr. Ainslie's, to lie. [12th] Mr. Ker, a most gentlemanly, clever, handsome fellow, a widower with some fine children—his mind and manner astonishingly like my dear old friend Robert Muir in Kilmarnock—every thing in Mr. Ker's most elegant—he offers to accompany me in my English tour. Dine with Sir Alexander Don—a pretty clever fellow, but far from being a match for his divine lady.[1]

A very wet day . . . Sleep at Stodrig again, and set out [13th] for Melrose—visit Dryburgh, a fine old ruined abey—still bad weather—cross Leader, and come up Tweed to Melrose—dine there, and visit that far-famed, glorious ruin—come to Selkirk, up Ettrick—the whole country hereabout, both on Tweed and Ettrick, remarkably stony.

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

TUESDAY [15th].—Drank tea yesternight at Pirn with Mr. Horsburgh. Breakfasted to-day with Mr. Ballantyne of Holly-lee. Proposal for a four-horse team, to consist of Mr Scott of Wauchope, Fittieland; Logan of Logan, Fittiefur; Ballantyne of Holly-lee, Forewynd; Horsburgh of Horsburgh. Dine at a country inn kept by a miller in Earlston, the birthplace and residence of the celebrated Thomas the Rhymer—saw the ruins of his castle—come to Berrywell.

[1] Lady Harriet Don, sister of the Earl of Glencairn.

WEDNESDAY [16th].—Dine at Dunse with the farmers' club—company, impossible to do them justice—Rev. Mr. Smith a famous punster, and Mr. Meikle a celebrated mechanic and inventor of the thrashing-mill.

THURSDAY [17th].—Breakfast at Berrywell, and walk into Dunse to see a famous knife made by a cutler there, and to be presented to an Italian prince. A pleasant ride with my friend Mr. Robert Ainslie, and his sister, to Mr. Thomson's, a man who has newly commenced farmer, and has married a Miss Patty Grieve, formerly a flame of Mr. Robert Ainslie's. Company—Miss Jacky Grieve, an amiable sister of Mrs. Thomson's, and Mr. Hood, an honest, worthy, facetious farmer in the neighbourhood.

FRIDAY [18th].—Ride to Berwick—an idle town, rudely picturesque. Meet Lord Errol in walking round the walls—his Lordship's flattering notice of me. Dine with Mr. Clunyie, merchant—nothing particular in company or conversation. Come up a bold shore, and over a wild country, to Eyemouth—sup and sleep at Mr. Grieve's.

SATURDAY [19th].—Spend the day at Mr. Grieve's—made a royal arch mason of St. Abb's Lodge.[2] Mr. William Grieve, the eldest brother, a joyous, warm-hearted, jolly, clever fellow—takes a hearty glass, and sings a good song. Mr. Robert, his brother and partner in trade, a good fellow, but says little. Take a sail after dinner. Fishing of all kinds pays tithes at Eyemouth.

SUNDAY [20th].—A Mr. Robinson, brewer at Ednam, sets out with us to Dunbar.

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

Mr. William Grieve's attachment to the family circle; so fond, that when he is out, which by the bye is often the case, he cannot go to bed till he see if all his sisters are sleeping well. Pass the famous Abbey of Coldingham, and Pease-bridge. Call at Mr. Sheriff's, where Mr. A. and I dine. Mr. S. talkative and conceited. I talk of love to Nancy the whole evening, while her brother escorts home some companions like himself. Sir James Hall of Dunglass [father of Capt. Basil Hall] having heard of my being in the neighbourhood, comes to Mr. Sheriff's to breakfast—[21st] takes me to see his fine scenery on the

[2] The entry made on this occasion in the Lodge books is as follows:—

"EYEMOUTH, 19TH MAY, 1787.

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

stream of Dunglass—Dunglass the most romantic sweet place I ever saw—Sir James and his lady a pleasant happy couple. He points out a walk for which he has an uncommon respect, as it was made by an aunt of his to whom he owes much.

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

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

Breakfast next morning [22nd] at Skateraw, at Mr. Lee's, a farmer of great note. Mr. Lee, an excellent, hospitable, social fellow, rather oldish—warm-hearted and chatty—a most judicious, sensible farmer. Mr. Lee detains me till next morning. Company at dinner—My Rev. acquaintance Dr. Bowmaker, a reverend, rattling old fellow: two sea lieutenants; a cousin of the landlord's, a fellow whose looks are of that kind which deceived me in a gentleman at Kelso, and has often deceived me: a goodly handsome figure and face, which incline one to give them credit for parts which they have not: Mr. Clarke, a much cleverer fellow, but whose looks a little cloudy, and his appearance rather ungainly, with an every-day observer may prejudice the opinion against him: Dr. Brown, a medical young gentleman from Dunbar, a fellow whose face and manners are open and engaging. Leave Skateraw for Dunse next day [23rd] along with Collector ——, a lad of slender abilities, and bashfully diffident to an extreme.

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

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

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

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

FRIDAY [25th].—I go with Mr. Hood to see a roup of an unfortunate farmer's stock—rigid economy, and decent industry, do you preserve me from being the principal *dramatis persona* in such a scene of horror!

Meet my good old friend Mr. Ainslie, who calls on Mr. Hood in the evening to take farewell of my bardship. This day I feel myself warm with sentiments of gratitude to the Great Preserver of men, who has kindly restored me to health and strength once more.

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

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

MONDAY [28th].—Come, still through by-ways, to Warkworth, where we dine. Hermitage and old castle. Warkworth situated very picturesque, with Coquet Island, a small rocky spot, the seat of an old monastery, facing it a little in the sea, and the small but romantic river Coquet

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

running through it. Sleep at Morpeth, a pleasant enough little town, and on next day [29th] to Newcastle. Meet with a very agreeable, sensible fellow, a Mr. Chattox, who shows us a great many civilities, and who dines and sups with us.

WEDNESDAY [30th].—Left Newcastle early in the morning and rode over a fine country to Hexham to breakfast—from Hexham to Wardrue, the celebrated Spa, where we slept.

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

[*Here the manuscript abruptly terminates.*]

BRIEF NOTES BY BURNS OF A HIGHLAND TOUR:

AUG. 25—SEPT. 16, 1787.

25TH AUGUST, 1787.

I set out for the north in company with my good friend Mr. Nicol.[1] From Corstorphine, by Kirkliston and Winchburgh, fine improven, fertile country; near Linlithgow the lands worse, light and sandy. Linlithgow, the appearance of rude, decayed, idle grandeur, charmingly rural, retired situation. The old royal palace a tolerably fine, but melancholy ruin—sweetly situated on a small elevation by the brink of a loch. Shown the room where the beautiful injured Mary Queen of Scots was born. A pretty good old Gothic church—the infamous stool of repentance standing, in the old Romish way, in a lofty situation.

What a poor, pimping business is a Presbyterian place of worship; dirty, narrow, and squalid; stuck in a corner of old popish grandeur such as Linlithgow, and much more Melrose! Ceremony and show, if judiciously thrown in, absolutely necessary for the bulk of mankind, both in religious and civil matters.

West Lothian. The more elegance and luxury among the farmers, I always observe, in equal proportion, the rudeness and stupidity of the peasantry. This remark I have made all over the Lothians, Merse, Roxburgh, &c.: and for this, among other reasons, I think that a man of romantic taste, a "Man of Feeling," will be better pleased with the poverty, but intelligent minds of the peasantry in Ayrshire (peasantry they are all below the justice of peace) than the opulence of a club of Merse farmers, when at the same time he considers the vandalism of their ploughfolks, &c. I carry this idea so far, that an uninclosed half-improven country is to me actually more agreeable, and gives me more pleasure as a prospect, than a country cultivated like a garden.

Dine. Go to my friend Smith's at Avon Printfield; find nobody but Mrs. Miller, an agreeable, sensible, modest, good body, as useful but not so ornamental as Fielding's Miss Western—not rigidly polite *à la Française*, but easy, hospitable, and housewifely.

An old lady from Paisley, a Mrs. Lawson, whom I promise to call for in Paisley—like old lady W——, and still more like Mrs. C——, her conversation is pregnant with strong sense and just remark, but like them, a certain air of self-importance and a *duresse* in the eye, seem to indicate, as the Ayrshire wife observed of her cow, that "she had a mind o' her ain."[2]

Pleasant distant view of Dunfermline, and the rest of the fertile coast of Fife, as we go down to that dirty, ugly place, Borrowstoness. See a horse-race, and call on a friend of Mr. Nicol's, a Bailie Cowan, of whom I know too little to attempt his portrait. Come through the rich carse of Falkirk to Falkirk to pass the night.

[SUNDAY, 26th].—Falkirk nothing remarkable except the tomb of Sir John the Graham, over which, in the succession of time, four stones have been laid. Camelon, the ancient metropolis of the Picts, now a small village in the neighbourhood of Falkirk. Cross the grand canal to Carron. Breakfast—come past Larbert, and admire a fine monument of cast-iron erected by Mr. Bruce, the African traveller, to his wife. N.B.—He used her very ill, and I suppose he meant it as much out of gratitude to Heaven as anything else.

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

Dine at Auchenbowie—Mr. Munro an excellent

[1] This was William Nicol of the Edinburgh High School one of Burns's most intimate friends.

[2] Lady W—— and Mrs. C——: Mrs. Scott of Wauchope and Mrs. Cockburn, authoress of the "Flowers o' the Forest."

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Mrs. Scott of Wauchope and
Flowers o' the Forest."

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

MONDAY [27th].—Go to Harvieston—Mrs. Hamilton and family—Mrs. Chalmers—Mrs. Shields. Go to see Cauldron Linn, and Rumbling Brig, and Deil's Mill. Return in the evening to Stirling.

Supper—Messrs. Doig (the schoolmaster) and Bell; Captain Forrester of the castle—Doig a queerish figure, and something of a pedant—Bell a joyous, vacant fellow, who sings a good song—Forrester a merry swearing kind of man, with a dash of the sodger.

TUESDAY MORNING [28th].—Breakfast with Captain Forrester—leave Stirling—Ochil hills—Devon river—Forth and Teith—Allan river—Strathallan, a fine country, but little improven—Cross Earn to Crieff—Dine and go to Arbruchil—cold reception at Arbruchil—a most romantically pleasant ride up Earn, by Auchtertyre and Comrie—Sup at Crieff.

WEDNESDAY MORNING [29th].—Leave Crieff—Glen Almond—Almond River—Ossian's grave—Loch Frioch—Glenquaich—Landlord and landlady remarkable characters—Taymouth—described in rhyme—Meet the Hon. Charles Townshend.

THURSDAY [30th].—Come down Tay to Dunkeld—Glenlyon House—Lyon river—Druid's Temple—three circles of stones—the outermost sunk—the second has thirteen stones remaining—the innermost has eight—two large detached ones like a gate, to the south-east—say prayers in it—pass Tay Bridge—Aberfeldy—described in rhyme—Castle Menzies, beyond Grandtully—Balleighan—Logierait—Inver—Dr. Stewart—Sup.

FRIDAY [31st].—Walk with Mrs. Stewart and Beard to Birnam top—fine prospect down Tay—Craigiebarns hills—hermitage on the Bran Water with a picture of Ossian—breakfast with Dr. Stewart—Neil Gow plays—a short, stout-built Highland figure, with his greyish hair shed on his honest social brow—an interesting face, marking strong sense, kind open-heartedness, mixed with unmistrusting simplicity—visit his house—Margaret Gow. Ride up Tummel river to Blair—Fascally a beautiful romantic nest—wild grandeur of the pass of Killicrankie—visit the gallant Lord Dundee's stone. Blair—Sup with the duchess—easy and happy from the manners of the family—confirmed in my good opinion of my friend Walker.

SATURDAY [1st Sept.].—Visit the scenes round Blair—fine, but spoiled with bad taste—Tilt and Garrie rivers—Falls on the Tilt—heather seat—ride in company with Sir William Murray and Mr. Walker to Loch Tummel—meanderings of the Rannoch, which runs through quondam Struan Robertson's estate from Loch Rannoch to Loch Tummel—dine at Blair. Company—General Murray—Captain Murray, an honest tar—Sir William Murray, an honest, worthy man, but tormented with the hypochondria—Mrs. Graham, *belle et amiable*—Miss Cathcart—Mrs. Murray, a painter—Mrs. King—Duchess and fine family, the marquis, Lords James, Edward, and Robert; Ladies Charlotte, Emilia, and children—Dance—Sup—Duke—Mr. Graham of Fintray; Mr. M'Laggan; Mr. and Mrs. Stewart.

[SUNDAY, 2d].—Come up the Garrie—Falls of Bruar—Dalnacardoch—Dalwhinnie—Dine—Snow on the hills seventeen feet deep—no corn from Loch Garrie to Dalwhinnie—cross the Spey and come down the stream to Pitnim—straths rich—*les environs* picturesque—Craigow hill—Ruthven of Badenoch—barrack; wild and magnificent—Rothemurche on the other side, and Glenmore—Grant of Rothemurche's poetry—told me by the Duke of Gordon—Strathspey rich and romantic.

[MONDAY, 3d].—Breakfast at Aviemore, a wild romantic spot—Snow in patches on the hills eighteen feet deep—Enter Strathspey—come to Sir James Grant's—dine—Company: Lady Grant, a sweet, pleasant body; Mr. and Miss Bailie; Mrs. Bailie; Dr. and Mrs. Grant—clergymen—Mr. Hepburn—Come through mist and darkness to Dulsie to lie.

TUESDAY [4th].—Findhorn river—rocky banks—come on to Castle Cawdor, where Macbeth murdered king Duncan—saw the bed on which king Duncan was stabbed—dine at Kilraik [Kilravock]—Mrs. Rose, sen., a true chieftain's wife, a daughter of Clephane—Mrs. Rose, jun.—Fort George—Inverness.

WEDNESDAY [5th].—Loch Ness—Braes of Ness—General's hut—Fall of Fyers—Urquhart Castle and Strath—Dine at —— ——Sup at Mr. Inglis'—Mr. Inglis and Mrs. Inglis; three young ladies.

THURSDAY [6th].—Come over Culloden Muir—reflections on the field of battle—breakfast at Kilraik—old Mrs. Rose, sterling sense, warm heart, strong passion, honest pride, all in an uncommon degree—Mrs. Rose, jun., a little milder than the mother: this, perhaps, owing to her

being younger—Mr. Grant, minister at Calder, resembles Mr. Scott at Inverleithen—Mrs. Rose and Mr. Grant accompany us to Kildrummie—two young ladies, Miss Ross, who sang two Gaelic songs, beautiful and lovely; Miss Sophie Brodie, not very beautiful, but most agreeable and amiable—both of them the gentlest, mildest, sweetest creatures on earth, and happiness be with them!

Dine at Nairn—fall in with a pleasant enough gentleman, Dr. Stewart, who had been long abroad with his father in the forty-five; and Mr. Falconer, a spare, irascible, warm-hearted Norland, and a nonjuror—Wastes of sand—Brodie House to lie—Mr. Brodie truly polite, but not just the Highland cordiality.

FRIDAY [7th].—Cross the Findhorn to Forres—Mr. Brodie tells me that the muir where Shakspeare lays Macbeth's witch-meeting is still so haunted that the country folks won't pass it by night—Elgin to breakfast—meet with Mr. ——, Mr. Dunbar's friend, a pleasant sort of a man; can come no nearer—Venerable ruins of Elgin Abbey—a grander effect, at first glance, than Melrose, but nothing near so beautiful.

Cross Spey to Fochabers—fine palace, worthy of the generous proprietor—dine. Company: duke and duchess, Ladies Charlotte and Madeline, Col. Abercrombie and lady, Mr. Gordon, and Mr. ——, a clergyman, a venerable aged figure, and Mr. Hoy, a clergyman, I suppose, a pleasant open manner. The duke makes me happier than ever great man did—noble, princely, yet mild, condescending, and affable; gay and kind—the duchess charming, witty, and sensible—God bless them![1]

Sleep at Cullen. Hitherto the country is sadly poor and unimproven; the houses, crops, horses, cattle, &c., all in unison with their cart-wheels; and these are of low, coarse, unshod, clumsy work, with an axle-tree which had been made with other design than to be a resting shaft between the wheels.

[SATURDAY, 8th].—Breakfasted at Banff—Improvements over this part of the country—Portsoy Bay—pleasant ride along the shore—country almost wild again between Banff and Newbyth; quite wild as we come through Buchan to Old Deer; but near the village both lands and crops rich—lie.

[SUNDAY, 9th].—Set out for Peterhead. Near Peterhead come along the shore by the famous Bullars of Buchan, and Slains Castle. The soil rich; crops of wheat, turnips, &c.; but no inclosing; soil rather light. Come to Ellon and dine—Lord Aberdeen's seat; entrance denied to everybody owing to the jealousy of threescore over a kept country wench. Soil and improvements as before till we come to Aberdeen to lie.

[1] For an incident connected with this visit see Lockhart's Life, p. 78. Lockhart, we may remark, must have had a copy of Burns's diary differing somewhat from the present.

[MONDAY, 10th].—Meet with Mr. Chalmers, printer, a facetious fellow—Mr. Ross, a fine fellow, like Professor Tytler—Mr. Marshall, one of the *poetæ minores*—Mr. Sheriffs, author of "Jamie and Bess," a little decrepid body, with some abilities—Bishop Skinner, a nonjuror, son of the author of "Tullochgorum," a man whose mild, venerable manner is the most marked of any in so young a man—Professor Gordon, a good-natured, jolly-looking professor—Aberdeen, a lazy town—near Stonehive the coast a good deal romantic—meet my relations, Robert Burnes, writer in Stonehive, one of those who love fun, a gill, a punning joke, and have not a bad heart; his wife, a sweet hospitable body, without any affectation of what is called town breeding.

TUESDAY [11th].—Breakfast with Mr. Burnes—lie at Laurencekirk—Album—library—Mrs. ——, a jolly, frank, sensible, love-inspiring widow—Howe of the Mearns, a rich, cultivated, but still uninclosed country.

WEDNESDAY [12th].—Cross North Esk river and a rich country to Craigow. Go to Montrose, that finely situated handsome town.

THURSDAY [13th].—Leave Montrose—breakfast at Auchmuthie, and sail along that wild, rocky coast, and see the famous caverns, particularly the Gairiepot—land and dine at Arbroath—stately ruins of Arbroath Abbey—come to Dundee, through a fertile country—Dundee, a low-lying but pleasant town—old steeple—Tayfirth—Broughty Castle, a finely situated ruin, jutting into the Tay.

FRIDAY [14th].—Breakfast with the Miss Scotts—Mr. Mitchell, an honest clergyman—Mr. Bruce, another, but pleasant, agreeable and engaging; the first from Aberlemno, the second from Forfar. Dine with Mr. Anderson, a brother-in-law of Miss Scotts. Miss Bess Scott like Mrs. Greenfield—my bardship almost in love with her. Come through the rich harvests and fine hedgerows of the Carse of Gowrie, along the romantic margin of the Grampian hills, to Perth—Castle Huntley—Sir Stewart Thriepland.

SATURDAY [15th].—Perth—Scoon—picture of the Chevalier and his sister: Queen Mary's bed, the hangings wrought with her own hands—fine, fruitful, hilly, woody country round Perth. Taybridge. Mr. and Mrs. Hastings—Major Scott—Castle Gowrie. Leave Perth—come to Strathearn to Endermay to dine. Fine, fruitful, cultivated Strath—the scene of "Bessy Bell and Mary Gray" near Perth—fine scenery on the banks of the May—Mrs. Belches, gawcie, frank, affable, fond of rural sports, hunting, &c. Mrs. Stirling, her sister, *en verité*—Come to Kinross to lie—reflections in a fit of the colic.

SUNDAY [Sept. 16th].—Come through a cold, barren country to Queensferry—dine—cross the ferry, and come to Edinburgh.

VISIT BY BURNS TO CLACKMANNANSHIRE, &c.

LETTER TO DR. CURRIE FROM DR. JAMES M'KITTRICK ADAIR.

"Burns and I left Edinburgh together in August, 1787.[1] We rode by Linlithgow and Carron, to Stirling. We visited the iron-works at Carron, with which the poet was forcibly struck. The resemblance between that place and its inhabitants to the cave of the Cyclops, which must have occurred to every classical reader, presented itself to Burns. At Stirling the prospect from the castle strongly interested him; in a former visit to which his national feelings had been powerfully excited by the ruinous and roofless state of the hall in which the Scottish parliaments had been held. His indignation had vented itself in some imprudent, but not unpoetical lines, which had given much offence, and which he took this opportunity of erasing, by breaking the pane of the window at the inn, on which they were written.

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

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

"During a residence of about ten days at Harvieston, we made excursions to visit various parts of the surrounding scenery, inferior to none in Scotland in beauty, sublimity, and romantic interest; particularly Castle Campbell, the ancient seat of the family of Argyle; and the famous cataract of the Devon, called the Caldron Linn; and the Rumbling Bridge, a single broad arch, thrown by the Devil, if tradition is to be believed, across the river, at about the height of a hundred feet above its bed. I am surprised that none of these scenes should have called forth an exertion of Burns's muse. But I doubt if he had much taste for the picturesque. I well remember that the ladies at Harvieston, who accompanied us on this jaunt, expressed their disappointment at his not expressing in more glowing and fervid language, his impressions of the Caldron Linn scene, certainly highly sublime and somewhat horrible.

"A visit to Mrs. Bruce of Clackmannan, a lady above ninety, the lineal descendant of that race which gave the Scottish throne its brightest ornament, interested his feelings more powerfully.[2] This venerable dame, with characteristical dignity, informed me, on my observing that I believed she was descended from the family of Robert Bruce, that Robert Bruce was sprung from her family. Though almost deprived of speech by a paralytic affection, she preserved her hospitality and urbanity. She was in possession of the hero's helmet and two-handed sword, with which she conferred on Burns and myself the honour of knighthood, remarking that she had a better right to confer that title than *some people*. . . . You will, of course, conclude that the old lady's political tenets were as Jacobitical as the poet's, a conformity which contributed not a little to the cordiality of our reception and entertainment.—She gave us as

[1] Really in October—a slip of memory. See note 3, p. 73 of Lockhart's Life.

[2] Catherine Bruce was the daughter of Alexander Bruce, Esq., of the family of Newton, and in early life became the wife of Henry Bruce, Esq., of Clackmannan, the acknowledged chief of the family in Scotland. It is a pity that her superb boast as to ancestry is not supported by historical antiquaries. By these scrupulous gentlemen the descent of her father, husband, and other landed men of the name cannot be traced farther back than to a Sir Robert Bruce, who lived in the age following that of the restorer of Scottish independence, and whom King David II., in a charter bestowing on him the lands of Clackmannan and others, styles as his *cousin*. There is little reason, however, to doubt that from Sir Robert, first of Clackmannan, were descended the families of Airth, Kinnaird (of whom came the Abyssinian traveller), Kinloss (of whom are the Earls of Elgin), Kinross, Carnock (of whom were the Earls of Kincardine), and many other honourable houses. On the death of Henry Bruce, July 8, 1772, without surviving issue, his widow continued to reside in the massive old tower of the family, situated on a hill at the west end of the town of Clackmannan, where she kept the sword and helmet said to have been worn by King Robert at the battle of Bannockburn. She survived to the 4th of November, 1791, when she had reached the age of ninety-five. The sword and helmet then passed, by her will, to the Earl of Elgin. The tower where the family flourished so long, and where Burns was entertained, has, since the death of Mrs. Bruce, fallen into ruin.

her first toast after dinner, *Awa' Uncos*, or Away with the Strangers. Who these strangers were you will readily understand. Mrs. A. corrects me by saying it should be *Hooi*, or *Hookí Uncos*, a sound used by shepherds to direct their dogs to drive away the sheep.

"We returned to Edinburgh by Kinross (on the shore of Lochleven) and Queensferry. I am inclined to think Burns knew nothing of poor Michael Bruce, who was then alive at Kinross, or had died there a short while before. A meeting between the bards, or a visit to the deserted cottage and early grave of poor Bruce, would have been highly interesting.[1]

"At Dunfermline we visited the ruined abbey and the abbey church, now consecrated to Presbyterian worship. Here I mounted the *cutty stool*, or stool of repentance, assuming the character of a penitent for fornication; while Burns from the pulpit addressed to me a ludicrous reproof and exhortation, parodied from that which had been delivered to himself in Ayrshire, where he had, as he assured me, once been one of seven who mounted the *seat of shame* together.

"In the church-yard two broad flag-stones marked the grave of Robert Bruce, for whose memory Burns had more than common veneration. He knelt and kissed the stone with sacred fervour, and heartily (*suus ut mos erat*) execrated the worse than Gothic neglect of the first of Scottish heroes."[2]

SYME'S[3] NARRATIVE OF A TOUR WITH BURNS IN GALLOWAY.

"I got Burns a gray Highland shelty to ride on. We dined the first day, 27th July, 1793, at Glendonwynes of Parton; a beautiful situation on the Banks of the Dee. In the evening we walked out and ascended a gentle eminence, from which we had as fine a view of Alpine scenery as can well be imagined. A delightful soft evening showed all its wilder as well as its grander graces. Immediately opposite, and within a mile of us, we saw Airds, a charming romantic place, where dwelt Low, the author of 'Mary, weep no more for me.'[4] This was classical ground for Burns. He viewed 'the highest hill which rises o'er the source of Dee;' and would have staid till 'the passing spirit' had appeared, had we not resolved to reach Kenmure that night. We arrived as Mr. and Mrs. Gordon were sitting down to supper.[5]

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

In wood and wild, ye warbling throng,
  Your heavy loss deplore,
Now half extinct your powers of song,
  Sweet Echo is no more.

Ye jarring, screeching things around,
  Scream your discordant joys!
Now half your din of tuneless song
  With Echo silent lies.

"We left Kenmure and went to Gatehouse. I took him the moor-road, where savage and desolate regions extended wide around. The sky was sympathetic with the wretchedness of the soil; it became lowering and dark. The hollow winds sighed, the lightnings gleamed, the thunder rolled. The poet enjoyed the awful scene—he spoke not a word, but seemed 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. Oh! Oh! 'twas foul. We got utterly wet; and, to revenge ourselves, Burns insisted at Gatehouse[6] on our getting utterly drunk.

"From Gatehouse we went next to Kirkcudbright, through a fine country. But here I must tell you that Burns had got a pair of *jemmy* boots for the journey, which had been thoroughly wet, and which had been dried in such manner that it was not possible to get them on again. The brawny poet tried force, and tore them to shreds. A whiffling vexation of this sort is more trying to the temper than a serious calamity. We were going to Saint Mary's Isle, the seat of the

[1] Bruce died *twenty* years before this, namely in 1767.

[2] Bruce's grave was within the church, so that the stone which Burns kissed with sacred fervour did not cover the remains of his hero.

[3] Some account of John Syme, along with his portrait, will be found in vol. iv. of this work.

[4] A beautiful and well-known ballad beginning—

The moon had climbed the highest hill
Which rises o'er the source of Dee.

[5] John Gordon of Kenmure, afterwards, by the restoration of the forfeited title, Viscount Kenmure, a title which became dormant in 1847 on the death of his successor.

[6] Gatehouse is a borough in the stewartry of Kirkcudbright situated on the Fleet, near that river's expansion into Fleet Bay or estuary. The town sprang, about the middle of the eighteenth century, from a single cottage situated at the gate of the Avenue to Cally House—hence the name.

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APPENDIX TO LIFE OF BURNS

MRS. BRUCE

OF CLACKMANNAN.

FROM THE ORIGINAL IN POSSESSION OF R. SCOTT MONCRIEFF, ESQUIRE.

Blackie & Son, London, Glasgow & Edinburgh.

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Earl of Selkirk, and the forlorn Burns was discomfited at the thought of his ruined boots. A sick stomach and a headache lent their aid, and the man of verse was quite *accablé*. I attempted to reason with him. Mercy on us! how he did fume with rage! Nothing could reinstate him in temper. I tried various experiments, and at last hit on one that succeeded. I showed him the house of Garlieston, across the bay of Wigton. Against the Earl of Galloway, with whom he was offended, he expectorated his spleen, and regained a most agreeable temper. He was in a most epigrammatic humour indeed. He afterwards fell on humbler game. There is one Morine whom he does not love. He had a passing blow at him:—

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

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

"We reached Kirkcudbright about one o'clock. I had promised that we should dine with one of the first men in our country, John Dalzell. But Burns was in a wild and obstreperous humour, and swore he would not dine where he should be under the smallest restraint. We prevailed, therefore, on Mr. Dalzell to dine with us in the inn, and had a very agreeable party. In the evening we set out for St. Mary's Isle.[1] Robert had not absolutely regained the milkiness of good temper, and it occurred once or twice to him, as he rode along, that St. Mary's Isle was the seat of a lord; yet that lord was not an aristocrat, at least in his sense of the word. We arrived about eight o'clock, as the family were at tea and coffee. St. Mary's Isle is one of the most delightful places that can, in my opinion, be formed by the assemblage of every soft, but not tame object, which constitutes natural and cultivated beauty. But not to dwell on its external graces, let me tell you that we found all the ladies of the family (all beautiful) at home, and some strangers; and among others, who but Urbani! The Italian sung us many Scottish songs, accompanied with instrumental music. The two young ladies of Selkirk sung also. We had the song of 'Lord Gregory,' which I asked for to have an opportunity of calling on Burns to recite *his* ballad to that tune. He did recite it; and such was the effect that a dead silence ensued. It was such a silence as a mind of feeling naturally preserves when it is touched with that enthusiasm which banishes every other thought but the contemplation and indulgence of the sympathy produced. Burns's 'Lord Gregory' is, in my opinion, a most beautiful and affecting ballad. The fastidious critic may perhaps say some of the sentiments and imagery are of too elevated a kind for such a style of composition; for instance, 'Thou bolt of heaven that passest by;' and 'Ye mustering thunder,' &c.; but this is a cold-blooded objection, which will be said rather than felt.

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

"I told you that in the midst of the storm, on the wilds of Kenmure, Burns was 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 on our ride home from St. Mary's Isle, and I did not disturb him. Next day he produced me the following address of Bruce to his troops, and gave me a copy for Dalzell:

'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,' &c."[2]

[1] St. Mary's Isle, the seat of the Earl of Selkirk, is situated a short distance from Kirkcudbright. The earls belonged to the Douglas family, and, on the death of the sixth earl in 1885, the title passed to the head of the family, the Duke of Hamilton.

[2] Unfortunately, this story of Mr. Syme's regarding the composition of "Bruce's Address" receives what is tantamount to a contradiction from Burns's own pen. See note to the poem.

LIBRARY OF BURNS.

On the decease of Burns, the books in his library were numerous and well-selected. The following list was furnished by the sons of the poet; and although it comprises a portion only of their father's library, it will be accepted by his admirers as a most interesting memorial.

BELLES LETTRES AND ELEGANT LITERATURE.

Dugald Stewart's Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind. 4to.	Melmoth's Cicero.
Blair's Lectures.	Elegant Extracts in Prose and Verse. 3 Vols. 8vo.
Kaimes' Elements of Criticism.	Dr. Johnson's Lives of the Poets.
Kaimes' Sketches of Man.	Goldsmith's Works.
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Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful.	Sterne's Works.
Boileau's Works.	Letters by Pope, Gay, Swift, and other eminent Writers.

ESSAYISTS.

The Spectator.	The Freeholder.
The Rambler.	The World.
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The Adventurer.	The Mirror.
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The Guardian.	

POETRY.

Homer's Iliad. Translated by MACPHERSON.
Virgil. Translated by GAWIN DOUGLAS. With Glossary.
Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered. Translated by HOOK.
Chaucer's Works. Folio.
Chaucer's Works. 2 Copies in Folio, Black Letter. More than one-half of one of the copies in Manuscript.
Ancient Poets of Scotland. MORRISON, Perth.
Cambuscan, with the Battle, and the Twilight of the Gods.
Ossian's Poems.
Robin Hood Ballads.
Percy's Reliques of Ancient Poetry.
Allan Ramsay's Poems.
Ramsay's Gentle Shepherd. Plates by David Allan.
Milton's Works.
Butler's Hudibras.
Pope's Works.
Dryden's Works.
Thomson's Works.
Waller's Poems.
Cowley's Poems.
Prior's Poems.
Dyer's Poems.
Denham's Poems.
Collins' Odes.
Gay's Poems.
Glover's Leonidas.
Wilkie's Epigoniad.
Somerville's Chase.
Cowper's Task.
Young's Night Thoughts.
Fergusson's Poems.
Parnell's Hermit.
Beattie's Minstrel.
Voltaire's Henriade.
Poems by Anna Seward.
Songs. Many Collections.

DRAMA.

Shakspeare. Edited by JOHNSON. 8 Vols. 8vo.
Shakspeare. Edited by BELL. 20 Vols. 12mo.
Molière's Works.
Ben Jonson's Dramatic Works.
Cibber's Dramatic Works.
Otway's Plays.
Schiller's Robbers. Translation.
Southerne's Dramatic Works.
The Conscious Lovers.
The Beaux' Stratagem.

GENERAL SCIENCE.

Encyclopædia Britannica. 10 vols. 4to; 1784.
Euclid's Elements of Geometry.
Smellie's Philosophy of Natural History.
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Arithmetic. Various Treatises.
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Robertson's History of Scotland.
Stewart's History of Scotland.
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Hume's History of England.
Smollett's Continuation of Hume's History of England.
Somerville's History of the Last Years of Queen Anne.
Goldsmith's Roman History.
L'Histoire des Incas de Peru.
L'Histoire de la Revolution de Suede.
Josephus' Works.

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Sherlock's Sermons.
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Boston's Fourfold State.
Hervey's Meditations.
Hervey's Theron and Aspasia.
Elizabeth West's Meditations.
Wellwood's Glimpse of Glory.
Rutherford's Letters.
Watts' Hymns.
Solemn League and Covenant.
Confession of Faith.
The Scots Worthies.
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Moore's Travels.
Baron Trenck.
Dirom's Narrative of Wars in India.
Swift's Tale of a Tub, and Battle of the Books.
Macpherson's Highlander.
Treatise on Falconry.
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Montaigne's Essays.

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POEMS AND SONGS.

EARLIEST TO 1785.

SONG—HANDSOME NELL.[1]

TUNE—"*I am a man unmarried.*"

"The following composition," says Burns, in his first Common-place Book, referring to this lyric, "was the first of my performances, and done at an early period of my life [probably 1775], when my heart glowed with honest warm simplicity, unacquainted 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 upon 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."

O, once I lov'd a bonnie lass,
  Ay, and I love her still;
And whilst that virtue warms my breast
  I'll love my handsome Nell.

As bonnie lasses I hae seen, — have
  And mony full as braw, — well-dressed
But for a modest graceful' mien
  The like I never saw.

A bonnie lass, I will confess,
  Is pleasant to the ee, — eye
But without some better qualities
  She's no a lass for me.

But Nellie's looks are blithe and sweet,
  And what is best of a', — all
Her reputation is complete,
  And fair without a flaw.

She dresses aye sae clean and neat, — always
  Both decent and genteel;
And then there's something in her gait
  Gars ony dress look weel. — makes well

[1] Of the subject of the song, Burns speaks more at large in the autobiographical sketch of his early days which he sent to Dr. Moore, and which will be found in the Appendix to the Life. The heroine's name was Nelly Kilpatrick, the daughter of the same blacksmith to whom Burns was indebted for the loan of the *History of Sir William Wallace* (see the Life). The inspiration took place in the harvest-field at Mount Oliphant, "in my fifteenth autumn," he says in the letter to Dr. Moore, and one would understand that the little piece was composed at that time. But elsewhere the poet expressly says it was written when he was a few months more than his sixteenth year, that is in 1775.

Burns himself, says Lockhart, "characterizes it as a very puerile and silly performance, yet it

A gaudy dress and gentle air
  May slightly touch the heart,
But it's innocence and modesty
  That polishes the dart.

'Tis this in Nelly pleases me,
  'Tis this enchants my soul;
For absolutely in my breast
  She reigns without control.

SONG—TIBBIE, I HAE SEEN THE DAY.[1]

TUNE—"*Invercauld's Reel.*"

Burns, in his notes written in an interleaved copy of Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum*, presented to his friend Capt. Riddell, remarks in regard to this piece, "This song I composed about the age of seventeen." The year of its composition would therefore be probably 1776.

Oh, Tibbie, I hae seen the day,	have
Ye wad na been sae shy;	would not
For lack o' gear ye lightly me,	means slight
But, trowth, I care na by.[2]	truth, I care not
Yestreen I met you on the moor,	last night
Ye spak' na, but gaed by like stoure;	went flying dust
Ye geck at me because I'm poor,	toss the head
But fient a hair care I.	deuce
Oh, Tibbie, &c.	
When comin' hame on Sunday last,	home
Upon the road as I cam' past,	
Ye snufft an' gae your head a cast,	gave
But, trowth, I care't na by.	truth, I did not care
Oh, Tibbie, &c.	

contains here and there lines of which he need hardly have been ashamed at any period of his life."

Among the poet's memoranda, is the following somewhat elaborate criticism by himself on the same song:—"The first distich of the first stanza is quite too much in the flimsy strain of our ordinary street ballads; and, on the other hand, the second distich 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 agrecables; or what in our Scottish dialect we call a *sweet sonsy 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 expletive. The thoughts in the fifth stanza come finely up to my favourite idea—*a sweet sonsy 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, and my blood sallies at the remembrance."

[1] The heroine is said, by Mrs. Begg, the poet's sister, to have been Isabella Steven, the daughter of a small land-owner near Lochlea, which, if true, unsettles her brother's chronology, for he was nineteen when the removal to Lochlea took place.

[2] This stanza is inserted in the first Common-place Book, extending from April, 1783, to October, 1785, and which was first printed in anything like complete form in 1872.—The Scotch idiom *care na by* means literally "care not *by*, or in regard to (that)."

I doubt na, lass, but ye may think,
Because ye hae the name o' clink, — cash
That ye can please me at a wink,
Whene'er ye like to try.
Oh, Tibbie, &c.

But sorrow tak' him that's sae mean,
Altho' his pouch o' coin were clean, — pocket
Wha follows ony saucy quean
That looks sae proud and high.
Oh, Tibbie, &c.

Altho' a lad were e'er sae smart,
If that he want the yellow dirt,
Ye'll cast your head anither airt, — direction
And answer him fu' dry.
Oh, Tibbie, &c.

But if he hae the name o' gear, — means
Ye'll fasten to him like a brier,
Tho' hardly he, for sense or lear, — learning
Be better than the kye. — kine
Oh, Tibbie, &c.

But, Tibbie, lass, tak' my advice,
Your daddie's gear mak's you sae nice;
The deil a ane wad speir your price, — devil a one would ask
Were ye as poor as I.
Oh, Tibbie, &c.

There lives a lass beside yon park,
I'd rather hae her in her sark, — shift
Than you wi' a' your thousand mark;
That gars you look sae high. — makes
Oh, Tibbie, &c.

SONG—I DREAM'D I LAY.

"These two stanzas," says Burns, "I composed when I was seventeen [1776]: they are among the oldest of my printed pieces."

I dream'd I lay where flowers were springing,
Gaily in the sunny beam;
List'ning to the wild birds singing,
By a falling, crystal stream:
Straight the sky grew black and daring;
Thro' the woods the whirlwinds rave;
Trees with aged arms were warring
O'er the swelling, drumlie wave. — turbid

Such was my life's deceitful morning,
  Such the pleasures I enjoy'd;
But lang or noon, loud tempests storming
  A' my flowery bliss destroy'd.
Tho' fickle Fortune has deceiv'd me,
  (She promis'd fair, and perform'd but ill;)
Of mony a joy and hope bereav'd me,
  I bear a heart shall support me still.[1]

TRAGIC FRAGMENT.[2]

"In my early years, nothing less would serve me than courting the Tragic Muse. I was, I think, about eighteen or nineteen when I sketched the outlines of a tragedy forsooth; but the bursting of a cloud of family misfortunes, which had for some time threatened us, prevented my further progress. In those days I never wrote down anything; so, except a speech or two, the whole has escaped my memory. The following, which I most distinctly remember, was an exclamation from a great character—great in occasional instances of generosity, and daring at times in villainies. He is supposed to meet with a child of misery, and exclaims to himself, 'All villain as I am!'" &c.—R. B. —The piece was composed then in 1777 or 1778.

All villain as I am—a damnèd wretch,
A hardened, stubborn, unrepenting sinner,
Still my heart melts at human wretchedness;
And with sincere but unavailing sighs
I view the helpless children of distress!
With tears indignant I behold the oppressor
Rejoicing in the honest man's destruction,
Whose unsubmitting heart was all his crime.—
Ev'n you, ye hapless crew! I pity you;
Ye whom the seeming good think sin to pity;
Ye poor despised, abandoned vagabonds,
Whom Vice, as usual, has turn'd o'er to ruin.
Oh! but for friends and interposing Heaven,
I had been driven forth like you forlorn,
The most detested, worthless wretch among you!
O injured God! Thy goodness has endow'd me
With talents passing most of my compeers,
Which I in just proportion have abused—
As far surpassing other common villains
As thou in natural parts has given me more.

[1] "On comparing these verses with those on "Handsome Nell," the advance achieved by the young bard in the course of two short years must be regarded with admiration."—J. G. LOCKHART.

[2] This fragment was first published by Cromek in 1808, but without the concluding five lines; it was found by that industrious collector among the poet's papers, headed by Burns's note given above. The piece was copied into the Common-place Book in March, 1784. Notwithstanding the note given by Burns as to the origin of the Fragment, we find him heading one copy of it: "A Fragment in the Hour of Remorse, on Seeing a Fellow-Creature in Misery, whom I had once known in Better Days." Who can doubt that the lines beginning "With tears indignant," &c., refers to the tyrant factor whose insolent, threatening epistles used to set the family in tears; and that the "honest man" with "unsubmitting heart," was the poet's noble father.

THE TARBOLTON LASSES.

This is evidently an early production of the bard. Its exact date cannot be ascertained; its probable date may be given as 1778.

If ye gae up to yon hill-tap, — go
  Ye'll there see bonnie Peggy;
She kens her father is a laird, — land-owner.
  And she forsooth's a lady.

There Sophy tight, a lassie bright,
  Besides a handsome fortune:
Wha canna win her in a night — who cannot
  Has little art in courting.

Gae down by Faile, and taste the ale,
  And tak a look o' Mysie;
She's dour and din, a deil within, — obstinate dun (sallow)
  But aiblins she may please ye. — perhaps

If she be shy, her sister try,
  Ye'll maybe fancy Jenny,
If ye'll dispense wi' want o' sense—
  She kens hersel' she's bonnie.

As ye gae up by yon hillside
  Speer in for bonnie Bessie; — inquire
She'll gie ye a beck, and bid ye light, — give curtsy
  And handsomely address ye.

There's few sae bonnie, nane sae gude, — none so good
  In a' King George' dominion;
If ye should doubt the truth o' this—
  It's Bessy's ain opinion![1] — own

AH, WOE IS ME, MY MOTHER DEAR.

The following verses were copied from the Glenriddell MSS. in the Athenæum Library, Liverpool, and were contained in an account of these MSS., printed for private circulation in 1874. They were first published among the poems in Paterson's edition of Burns (Edin. 1877). They were probably written in 1778.

PARAPHRASE OF JEREMIAH XV. 10.

Ah, woe is me, my mother dear!
  A man of strife ye've born me:
For sair contention I maun bear; — sore must
  They hate, revile, and scorn me.

[1] The above satirical verses first appeared in Chambers's edition of the poet's works in 1851, with the editor's critical remark that they are strikingly inferior to the young bard's average efforts; "yet, as expressive of a mood of his feelings regarding his fair neighbours in these days of simplicity, they appear not unworthy of preservation." It is to be regretted that Chambers does not inform us where he got these verses, nor on what grounds he felt satisfied as to their authorship.

I ne'er could lend on bill or bond,
  That five per cent might bless me;
And borrowing, on the tither hand,
  The deil a ane wad trust me.

Yet I, a coin-denièd wight,
  By Fortune quite discarded;
Ye see how I am, day and night,
  By lad and lass blackguarded.

SONG—MONTGOMERY'S PEGGY.[1]

"The following fragment is done," writes Burns in his first Common-place Book, "something in imitation of the manner of a noble old Scotch piece called 'M'Millan's Peggy.' . . . My Montgomery'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 Vanburgh says in one of his comedies, 'My damned 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 gallantries, 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 me 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." The date of composition is probably 1779.

TUNE—"*Gala Water.*"

Altho' my bed were in yon muir,
  Amang the heather, in my plaidie,
Yet happy, happy would I be,
  Had I my dear Montgomery's Peggy.

When o'er the hill beat surly storms,
  And winter nights were dark and rainy;
I'd seek some dell, and in my arms
  I'd shelter dear Montgomery's Peggy.

Were I a baron proud and high,
  And horse and servants waiting ready,
Then a' 'twad gie o' joy to me,
  The sharin't with Montgomery's Peggy.[2]

[1] Peggy was housekeeper with Archibald Montgomery, Esq., of Coilsfield, and Burns had met her frequently at Tarbolton Mill. Besides they sat in the same church, like the Laird of Dumbiedykes and the lady whom, from this circumstance, that worthy learned to admire, and afterwards married.

[2] Not well expressed. The meaning is, "all of joy it would give to me (would be) the sharing of it," &c.

THE RONALDS OF THE BENNALS.[1]

This poem (written probably about 1780) was first published in Chambers's edition of Burns (1851); the editor does not indicate whence he derived it.

In Tarbolton ye ken, there are proper young men,
  And proper young lasses and a', man;
But ken ye the Ronalds that live in the Bennals,
  They carry the gree frae them a', man. — bear the palm from

Their father's a laird,[2] and weel he can spar't, — proprietor
  Braid money to tocher them a', man; — broad portion
To proper young men he'll clink in the hand
  Gowd guineas a hunder or twa, man. — gold

There's ane they ca' Jean, I'll warrant ye've seen — call
  As bonnie a lass or as braw, man, — well-dressed
But for sense and guid taste, she'll vie wi' the best,
  And a conduct that beautifies a', man.

The charms o' the min', the langer they shine, — mind
  The mair admiration they draw, man;
While peaches and cherries, and roses and lilies,
  They fade and they wither awa', man.

If ye be for Miss Jean, tak' this frae a frien', — from
  A hint o' a rival or twa, man;
The Laird o' Blackbyre wad gang through the fire, — would go
  If that wad entice her awa', man.

The Laird o' Braehead has been on his speed
  For mair than a towmond or twa, man, — twelvemonth
The Laird o' the Ford will straught on a board — be stretched
  If he canna get her at a,' man.

Then Anna comes in, the pride o' her kin,
  The boast o' our bachelors a', man;
She's sonsy and sweet, sae fully complete, — buxom
  She steals our affections awa', man,

If I should detail the pick and the wale — choice
  O' lasses that live here awa', man,
The fault wad be mine, if they didna shine
  The sweetest and best o' them a', man.

[1] The Bennals is a farm in the west part of Tarbolton parish, near Afton Lodge and a few miles from Lochlea (the poet's residence at this time). The farmer, Ronald, was considered to be a man of considerable means, and his two daughters were the belles of the district, being handsome and fairly well educated. Gilbert Burns wooed the elder sister Jean, but after a lengthened correspondence, he was rejected as being too poor. The poet himself seems to have had a liking for Anna, but was too proud to risk a refusal. But Fortune had humiliation in store for the wealthy and purse-proud Ronalds. In November, 1789 (some nine or ten years after the above verses were written), Burns writes to his brother William:—"The only Ayrshire news that I remember in which I think you will be interested, is that Mr. Ronald is bankrupt. You will easily guess, that from his insolent vanity in his sunshine of life, he will feel a little retaliation from those who thought themselves eclipsed by him."

[2] *Laird* is a title popularly applied in Scotland to a proprietor of lands or houses.

I lo'e her mysel', but darena weel tell, — love — dare not well
My poverty keeps me in awe, man,
For making o' rhymes, and working at times,
Does little or naething at a', man.

Yet I wadna choose to let her refuse, — would not
Nor hae't in her power to say na, man; — have it
For though I be poor, unnoticed, obscure,
My stomach's as proud as them a', man.

Though I canna ride in weel booted pride,
And flee o'er the hills like a craw, man, — fly — crow
I can haud up my head wi' the best o' the breed — hold
Though fluttering ever sae braw, man. — well-dressed

My coat and my vest, they are Scotch o' the best,
O' pairs o' guid breeks I hae twa, man, — breeches
And stockings and pumps to put on my stumps,
And ne'er a wrang steek in them a', man. — stitch

My sarks they are few, but five o' them new, — shirts
Twal' hundred[1] as white as the snaw, man,
A ten-shillings hat, a Holland cravat,
There's no mony poets sae braw, man. — well-dressed

I never had frien's weel-stockit in means,
To leave me a hundred or twa, man,
Nor weel tochered aunts, to wait on their drants, — dowered — drawling talk
And wish them in hell for it a', man.

I never was canny for hoarding o' money, — cautious
Or claughten't together at a', man; — clutching
I've little to spend, and naething to lend,
But deevil a shilling I awe, man. — owe

* * * * *

SONG—ON CESSNOCK BANKS.[2]

TUNE—"*If he be a Butcher neat and trim.*"

On Cessnock banks a lassie dwells,
Could I describe her shape and mien;
Our lasses a' she far excels,
An' she has twa sparkling roguish een!

[1] The technical name of a coarsish kind of linen, woven with 1200 warp-threads: coarser, therefore, than the "seventeen hunder" linen mentioned in "Tam o' Shanter."

[2] There are two versions of this song in existence. The one here given is that printed in Pickering's Aldine edition from the poet's own MS. The other is that published by Cromek in 1808, and stated by him to have been "recovered from the oral communication of a lady in Glasgow, whom the bard, early in life, dearly loved." This lady (said to have been the subject of the poem) was Ellison Begbie, the daughter of a small farmer in Galston parish, and was a servant with a family on the banks of the

She's sweeter than the morning dawn,
  When rising Phœbus first is seen;
And dew-drops twinkle o'er the lawn;
  An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

She's stately like yon youthful ash,
  That grows the cowslip braes between,
And drinks the stream with vigour fresh;
  An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

She's spotless like the flow'ring thorn,
  With flow'rs so white and leaves so green,
When purest in the dewy morn;
  An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

Her looks are like the vernal May,
  When ev'ning Phœbus shines serene;
While birds rejoice in every spray;
  An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

Her hair is like the curling mist
  That climbs the mountain-sides at e'en,
When flow'r-reviving rains are past;
  An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

Her forehead's like the show'ry bow,
  When gleaming sunbeams intervene,
And gild the distant mountain's brow;
  An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

Her cheeks are like yon crimson gem,
  The pride of all the flowery scene,
Just opening on its thorny stem;
  An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

Cessnock, about two miles from the Burnses' farm of Lochlea at the time this song was written, that is when the poet was twenty-one years of age. Ellison was, according to Mrs. Begg (Burns's sister), the *belle-fille* who the poet says jilted him while he was at Irvine, after having promised to marry him, and for whom he evidently had a sincere respect. She married some years after, and went to Glasgow, but nothing is known of her subsequent life. Several letters to her from Burns will be found at the beginning of his Correspondence. She could hardly be described as a beautiful woman: her charms lay in her mind, and in this respect she was so superior to the average maidens of her rank in life, that Burns, after his acquaintance with Edinburgh ladies, declared she was, of all the women he had ever seriously addressed, the one most likely to have formed an agreeable companion for life.—Cromek's version of the present piece opens thus:—

On Cessnock banks there lives a lass,
  Could I describe her shape and mien;
  The graces of her weel-faur'd face,
  And the glacin' of her sparklin' een!

The concluding line in each of the following stanzas runs:—

An' she's twa glancin' sparklin' een.

The fifth stanza reads:—

Her looks are like the sportive lamb
  When flow'ry May adorns the scene,
That wantons round its bleating dam;
  An' she's twa glancin' sparklin' een.

There are some other slight variations, but what is of more importance is that Cromek's version wants two entire stanzas—the eighth and ninth. Stanza nine of the original has "teeth," apparently by a mere slip, as the lady's teeth are duly described in stanza eleven. We here follow Mr. Scott Douglas in giving "bosom's" instead.—So far as we are aware no tune is now known by such a name as that given under the title.

Her bosom's like the nightly snow,
  When pale the morning rises keen;
While hid the murm'ring streamlets flow;
  An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

Her lips are like yon cherries ripe,
  That sunny walls from Boreas screen,—
They tempt the taste and charm the sight;
  An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

Her teeth are like a flock of sheep,
  With fleeces newly washen clean,
That slowly mount the rising steep;
  An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

Her breath is like the fragrant breeze,
  That gently stirs the blossom'd bean,
When Phœbus sinks behind the seas;
  An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

Her voice is like the ev'ning thrush,
  That sings on Cessnock banks unseen;
While his mate sits nestling in the bush;
  An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

But it's not her air, her form, her face,
  Tho' matching beauty's fabled queen,
'Tis the mind that shines in ev'ry grace,
  An' chiefly in her roguish een.

SONG—HERE'S TO THY HEALTH, MY BONNIE LASS.[1]

TUNE—"*Laggan Burn.*"

Here's to thy health, my bonnie lass;
  Guid night and joy be wi' thee;
I'll come nae mair[2] to thy bower-door,
  To tell thee that I lo'e thee. — love
O dinna think, my pretty pink, — do not
  But I can live without thee:
I vow and swear I dinna care
  How lang ye look about ye.

[1] This has been often claimed as an early production of the poet, dating about 1780; later in life he is said to have revised it, and in the fifth volume of Johnson's *Museum* it appears as "written for this work by Robert Burns." We think it advisable to note, however, that the poet's sister, Mrs. Begg, states that it is one of those familiar ditties which were frequently sung at country firesides before her brother's lyrics became known, and its character is quite in accordance with this statement. The concluding four lines seem to have little connection with what goes before, and might justify the suspicion that more than one hand has been at the making of the song.

[2] Evidently "no more" would better suit the versification; but this is the reading of the *Museum*.

Thou'rt aye sae free informing me — always
  Thou hast nae mind to marry;
I'll be as free informing thee
  Nae time hae I to tarry.
I ken thy friends try ilka means, — every
  Frae wedlock to delay thee,
Depending on some higher chance—
  But fortune may betray thee.

I ken they scorn my low estate,
  But that does never grieve me;
But I'm as free as any he;
  Sma' siller will relieve me. — little money
I count my health my greatest wealth,
  Sae long as I'll enjoy it:
I'll fear nae scant, I'll bode nae want,
  As lang's I get employment.

But far-off fowls hae feathers fair,
  And aye until ye try them:
Tho' they seem fair still have a care,
  They may prove as bad as I am.
But at twal at night, when the moon shines bright, — twelve
  My dear I'll come and see thee;
For the man that lo'es his mistress weel
  Nae travel makes him weary.

SONG—BONNIE PEGGY ALISON.[1]

TUNE—"*The Braes o' Balquidder.*"[2]

Burns had even thus early in his career (about 1780 or 1781), begun to eke out the remains of the old lyrics of his country. The chorus is all that in this instance he has deemed worthy of preservation. It belongs to an old song whose indelicacy seems to have condemned it to the uncertain keeping of the memories of men.

I'll kiss thee yet, yet,
  An' I'll kiss thee o'er again,
An' I'll kiss thee yet, yet,
  My bonnie Peggy Alison.

Ilk care and fear, when thou art near, — every
  I ever mair defy them, O;
Young kings upon their hansel throne — newly attained
  Are no sae blest as I am, O!
  I'll kiss thee yet, &c.

[1] The heroine of this song was Ellison, or Alison Begbie, in whose praise was also composed "On Cessnock banks" (see p. 196). It is also supposed that she inspired the charming "Mary Morison."
[2] This tune is now more popularly connected with "I'm o'er young to marry yet."

When in my arms, wi' a' thy charms,
  I clasp my countless treasure, O;
I seek nae mair o' heaven to share, — no more
  Than sic a moment's pleasure, O! — such
    I'll kiss thee yet, &c.

And by thy een, sae bonnie blue,
  I swear I'm thine for ever, O!
And on thy lips I seal my vow,
  And break it shall I never, O.
    I'll kiss thee yet, &c.

SONG—MARY MORISON.[1]

TUNE—"*Bide ye yet.*'

In a letter to Thomson, the poet styles this, "one of my juvenile works," and it is inferred from a note of his brother Gilbert's that the heroine was Ellison Begbie. See note to preceding song.

O Mary, at thy window be,
  It is the wish'd, the trysted hour! — appointed
Those smiles and glances let me see,
  That make the miser's treasure poor!
How blythely wad I bide the stoure, — dust
  A weary slave frae sun to sun;
Could I the rich reward secure,
  The lovely Mary Morison.

Yestreen, when, to the trembling string, — last night
  The dance gaed thro' the lighted ha', — went
To thee my fancy took its wing,
  I sat, but neither heard nor saw:
Tho' this was fair, and that was braw, — well-dressed
  And yon the toast of a' the town,
I sigh'd, and said amang them a',
  "Ye are na Mary Morison."

O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,
  Wha for thy sake wad gladly die?
Or canst thou break that heart of his,
  Whase only faut is loving thee? — whose fault
If love for love thou wilt na gie, — not give
  At least be pity to me shown;
A thought ungentle canna be
  The thought o' Mary Morison.

[1] "Of all the productions of Burns the pathetic and serious love songs, which he left behind him, in the manner of old ballads, are, perhaps, those which take the deepest and most lasting hold of the mind. Such are the lines to 'Mary Morison.'"—HAZLITT.

The tune to which Burns composed the song, as intimated above, was "Bide ye yet." In Thomson's collection it is set to an air called "The Glasgow Lasses," arranged by Beethoven. Wilson, the famous Scottish vocalist, sang it to a melody called "The Miller," and this is now a more popular setting than any of the others.

A PRAYER

UNDER THE PRESSURE OF VIOLENT ANGUISH.

"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."—BURNS'S COMMON-PLACE BOOK, March, 1784. It was probably written about the same time as the next piece.

O Thou Great Being! what Thou art
  Surpasses me to know:
Yet sure I am, that known to Thee
  Are all Thy works below.

Thy creature here before Thee stands,
  All wretched and distrest;
Yet sure those ills that wring my soul
  Obey Thy high behest.

Sure Thou, Almighty, canst not act
  From cruelty or wrath!
O, free my weary eyes from tears,
  Or close them fast in death!

But if I must afflicted be,
  To suit some wise design;
Then man my soul with firm resolves
  To bear and not repine.

WINTER—A DIRGE.[1]

"There is something," says the poet in his Common-place Book, April, 1784, "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 every thing 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 plantation, in a cloudy winter day, and hear a 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 tract of misfortunes [probably about the end of 1781], I composed the following song—tune, 'MacPherson's Farewell.'"

The wintry west extends his blast,
  And hail and rain does blaw;
Or the stormy north sends driving forth
  The blinding sleet and snaw:
While tumbling brown, the burn comes down,
  And roars frae bank to brae;
And bird and beast in covert rest
  And pass the heartless day.

[1] In 1787 the poet notes this as being the oldest of his then printed pieces.

"The sweeping blast, the sky o'ercast,"[1]
  The joyless winter-day,
Let others fear, to me more dear
  Than all the pride of May:
The tempest's howl, it soothes my soul,
  My griefs it seems to join,
The leafless trees my fancy please,
  Their fate resembles mine!

Thou Power Supreme, whose mighty scheme
  Those woes of mine fulfil,
Here, firm, I rest, they must be best,
  Because they are Thy will!
Then all I want (O, do thou grant
  This one request of mine!)
Since to enjoy thou dost deny,
  Assist me to resign.

A PRAYER

IN THE PROSPECT OF DEATH.

"This prayer was composed," says Burns, "when fainting fits, and other alarming symptoms of pleurisy, or some other dangerous disorder, first put nature on the alarm." It was, therefore, probably written during his short and unfortunate sojourn at Irvine in 1781.

O Thou unknown, Almighty Cause
  Of all my hope and fear!
In whose dread presence, ere an hour,
  Perhaps I must appear!

If I have wander'd in those paths
  Of life I ought to shun;
As something, loudly, in my breast,
  Remonstrates I have done;

Thou know'st that Thou hast formed me
  With passions wild and strong;
And list'ning to their witching voice
  Has often led me wrong.

Where human weakness has come short,
  Or frailty stept aside,
Do Thou, All-Good! for such Thou art,
  In shades of darkness hide.

Where with intention I have err'd,
  No other plea I have,
But, Thou art good; and goodness still
  Delighteth to forgive.

[1] Dr. Young.—R. B.

STANZAS

ON THE SAME OCCASION.[1]

Why am I loth to leave this earthly scene?
  Have I so found it full of pleasing charms?
Some drops of joy with draughts of ill between:
  Some gleams of sunshine 'mid renewing storms:
Is it departing pangs my soul alarms?
  Or death's unlovely, dreary, dark abode?
For guilt, for guilt, my terrors are in arms;
  I tremble to approach an angry God,
And justly smart beneath His sin-avenging rod.

Fain would I say, "Forgive my foul offence!"
  Fain promise never more to disobey;
But, should my Author health again dispense,
  Again I might desert fair virtue's way;
Again in folly's path might go astray:
  Again exalt the brute and sink the man;
Then how should I for heavenly mercy pray,
  Who act so counter heavenly mercy's plan?
Who sin so oft have mourn'd, yet to temptation ran?

O Thou, great Governor of all below!
  If I may dare a lifted eye to Thee,
Thy nod can make the tempest cease to blow,
  Or still the tumult of the raging sea:
With that controlling power assist even me,
  Those headlong furious passions to confine;
For all unfit I feel my powers to be,
  To rule their torrent in th' allowed line;
O, aid me with Thy help, Omnipotence Divine!

PARAPHRASE OF THE FIRST PSALM.

This and the poetical version of the Ninetieth Psalm following were probably written about the same period as the three preceding pieces, the winter of 1781–82.

The man, in life wherever plac'd,
  Hath happiness in store,
Who walks not in the wicked's way,
  Nor learns their guilty lore!

[1] These "Stanzas" seem to have been written about the same time as the "Prayer" preceding, and the piece was apparently a favourite with the author, who gave it some polishing before inserting it in the Edinburgh edition of 1787. In his Common-place Book it was entitled, "Misgivings in the Hour of Despondency and Prospect of Death;" in the Stair manuscript, into which he afterwards copied the poem, he altered this to "Misgivings of Despondency on the Approach of the Gloomy Monarch of the Grave."

Nor from the seat of scornful pride
  Casts forth his eyes abroad,
But with humility and awe
  Still walks before his God.

That man shall flourish like the trees
  Which by the streamlets grow;
The fruitful top is spread on high,
  And firm the root below.

But he whose blossom buds in guilt
  Shall to the ground be cast,
And like the rootless stubble, tost
  Before the sweeping blast.

For why? that God the good adore
  Hath giv'n them peace and rest,
But hath decreed that wicked men
  Shall ne'er be truly blest.

THE FIRST SIX VERSES OF THE NINETIETH PSALM PARAPHRASED.

Probably, like the above, written in winter, 1781-82.

O Thou, the first, the greatest friend
  Of all the human race!
Whose strong right hand has ever been
  Their stay and dwelling place!

Before the mountains heav'd their heads
  Beneath Thy forming hand,
Before this pond'rous globe itself
  Arose at Thy command:

That power which rais'd and still upholds
  This universal frame,
From countless, unbeginning time,
  Was ever still the same.

Those mighty periods of years
  Which seem to us so vast,
Appear no more before Thy sight
  Than yesterday that's past.

Thou giv'st the word: Thy creature, man,
  Is to existence brought:
Again Thou say'st, "Ye sons of men,
  Return ye into nought!"

Thou layest them, with all their cares,
In everlasting sleep;
As with a flood Thou tak'st them off
With overwhelming sweep.

They flourish like the morning flower,
In beauty's pride array'd;
But long ere night cut down, it lies
All wither'd and decay'd.

SONG—RAGING FORTUNE.

A FRAGMENT.

This song was composed about 1781 or 1782, under the pressure of a heavy train of those misfortunes to which the youth of Burns was subject. "'Twas at the same time," says he in the first Common-place Book, referring to the close of one of these "dreadful periods," as he calls them, "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. The tune consisted of three parts, so that the above verses just went through the whole air." See First Common-place Book in last volume of this work.

O raging Fortune's withering blast
Has laid my leaf full low, O![1]
O raging Fortune's withering blast
Has laid my leaf full low, O!

My stem was fair, my bud was green,
My blossom sweet did blow, O;
The dew fell fresh, the sun rose mild,
And made my branches grow, O.

But luckless Fortune's northern storms
Laid a' my blossoms low, O;
But luckless Fortune's northern storms
Laid a' my blossoms low, O.

SONG, IN THE CHARACTER OF A RUINED FARMER.[2]

TUNE—"*Go from my window, Love, do.*"

The sun he is sunk in the west,
All creatures retirèd to rest,
While here I sit, all sore beset,
With sorrow, grief and woe:
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

[1] The recurrence of this O at the end of each alternate line is a decided blemish. Readers had better consider it omitted.

[2] There can be little doubt that the "Ruined Farmer" was the poet's father, whose unavailing struggles against misfortune were brought to a close in February, 1784.

The prosperous man is asleep,
Nor hears how the whirlwinds sweep;
But Misery and I must watch
The surly tempest blow:
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

There lies the dear partner of my breast,
Her cares for a moment at rest:
Must I see thee, my youthful pride,
Thus brought so very low?
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

There lie my sweet babes in her arms;
No anxious fear their little hearts alarms;
But for their sake my heart does ache
With many a bitter throe:
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

I once was by Fortune caressed,
I once could relieve the distressed,
Now life's poor support hardly earned
My fate will scarce bestow:
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

No comfort, no comfort I have!
How welcome to me were the grave!
But then my wife and children dear—
O, whither would they go?
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

O whither, O whither shall I turn,
All friendless, forsaken, forlorn?
For in this world, rest and peace
I never more shall know!
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

SONG—MY FATHER WAS A FARMER.

TUNE—"*The Weaver and his Shuttle, O.*"

"The following song," says Burns, in the Common-place Book already referred to, "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." It was written probably about 1781-82.

My father was a farmer upon the Carrick border, O,
And carefully he bred me in decency and order, O:
He bade me act a manly part, though I had ne'er a farthing, O,
For without an honest manly heart, no man was worth regarding, O.

Then out into the world my course I did determine, O,
Tho' to be rich was not my wish, yet to be great was charming, O.

My talents they were not the worst; nor yet my education, O;
Resolved was I, at least to try, to mend my situation, O.

In many a way, and vain essay, I courted Fortune's favour, O;
Some cause unseen still stept between, to frustrate each endeavour, O;
Sometimes by foes I was o'erpower'd; sometimes by friends forsaken, O;
And when my hope was at the top, I still was worst mistaken, O.

Then sore harass'd, and tir'd at last, with Fortune's vain delusion, O;
I dropt my schemes, like idle dreams, and came to this conclusion, O;
The past was bad, and the future hid; its good or ill untrièd, O;
But the present hour was in my pow'r, and so I would enjoy it, O.

No help, nor hope, nor view had I; nor person to befriend me, O;
So I must toil, and sweat, and broil, and labour to sustain me, O,
To plough and sow, to reap and mow, my father bred me early, O;
For one, he said, to labour bred, was a match for Fortune fairly, O.

Thus all obscure, unknown, and poor, thro' life I'm doomed to wander, O,
Till down my weary bones I lay in everlasting slumber, O:
No view nor care, but shun whate'er might breed me pain or sorrow, O;
I live to-day, as well's I may, regardless of to-morrow, O.

But cheerful still, I am as well as a monarch in a palace, O,
Tho' Fortune's frown still hunts me down, with all her wonted malice, O;
I make indeed, my daily bread, but ne'er can make it farther, O;
But as daily bread is all I need, I do not much regard her, O.

When sometimes by my labour I earn a little money, O,
Some unforeseen misfortune comes generally upon me, O;
Mischance, mistake, or by neglect, or my good-natur'd folly, O;
But come what will, I've sworn it still, I'll ne'er be melancholy, O.

All you who follow wealth and power with unremitting ardour, O,
The more in this you look for bliss, you leave your view the farther, O;
Had you the wealth Potosi boasts, or nations to adore you, O,
A cheerful honest-hearted clown I will prefer before you, O.

EXTEMPORE VERSES—"I'LL GO AND BE A SODGER."

"Come, stubborn pride and unshrinking resolution, accompany me through this, to me, miserable world. Your friendship I think I can count on though I should date my letters from a marching regiment. I reckoned on a recruiting drum as my forlorn hope."—BURNS TO MISS CHALMERS, Jan. 22, 1788. Dr. Currie gives April, 1782, as the date of this impromptu. It is transcribed in the book of blank paper, into which it was the poet's expressed intention of entering farm memorandums when he occupied Mossgiel farm in March, 1784.

O why the deuce should I repine,
And be an ill foreboder?
I'm twenty-three, and five feet nine—
I'll go and be a sodger.

I gat some gear wi' meikle care, — got means
I held it weel thegither; — together
But now it's gane, and something mair— — more
I'll go and be a sodger.

SONG—THE CURE FOR ALL CARE.

TUNE—"*Prepare, my dear brethren, to the tavern let's fly.*"

These lines were probably written about 1782, some months after Burns had been passed and raised as a freemason. He apparently modelled the song (such as it is) on a Bacchanalian ditty in *Yair's Charmer* (1751), the concluding line of one of whose stanzas runs:

And a big-bellied bottle's a mighty good thing.

No churchman am I for to rail and to write,
No statesman nor soldier to plot or to fight,
No sly man of business contriving to snare,—
For a big-belly'd bottle's the whole of my care.

The peer I don't envy, I give him his bow;
I scorn not the peasant, tho' ever so low;
But a club of good fellows, like those that are here,
And a bottle like this, are my glory and care.

Here passes the squire on his brother—his horse;
There centum per centum, the cit, with his purse;
But see you The Crown how it waves in the air!
There, a big-belly'd bottle still eases my care.

The wife of my bosom, alas! she did die;
For sweet consolation to church I did fly;
I found that old Solomon provèd it fair,
That a big-belly'd bottle's a cure for all care.

I once was persuaded a venture to make;
A letter inform'd me that all was to wreck;—
But the pursy old landlord just waddled up stairs,
With a glorious bottle that ended my cares.

"Life's cares they are comforts,"[1] a maxim laid down
By the bard, what d'ye call him, that wore the black gown;
And, faith, I agree with th' old prig to a hair;
For a big-belly'd bottle's a heaven of care.

Added in a Mason Lodge.

Then fill up a bumper and make it o'erflow,
And honours masonic prepare for to throw;
May every true brother of the compass and square,
Have a big-belly'd bottle when harass'd with care.

[1] Young's "Night Thoughts."—R. B.

JOHN BARLEYCORN.

A BALLAD.

This ballad, probably produced in 1782, was copied into the first Common-place Book, under date of June, 1785, with the following incomplete note: "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. . . ." The old ballad is given in Jamieson's *Popular Ballads* (1806) from his own recollection as a boy.

There was three kings into the east,[1]
  Three kings both great and high,
An' they hae sworn a solemn oath
  John Barleycorn should die.

They took a plough and plough'd him down,
  Put clods upon his head,
And they hae sworn a solemn oath
  John Barleycorn was dead.

But the cheerful spring came kindly on,
  And show'rs began to fall;
John Barleycorn got up again,
  And sore surprised them all.

The sultry suns of summer came,
  And he grew thick and strong,
His head weel arm'd wi' pointed spears,
  That no one should him wrong.

The sober autumn enter'd mild,
  When he grew wan and pale;
His bending joints and drooping head
  Show'd he began to fail.

His colour sicken'd more and more,
  He faded into age;
And then his enemies began
  To show their deadly rage.

They've ta'en a weapon long and sharp,
  And cut him by the knee;
Then tied him fast upon a cart,
  Like a rogue for forgerie.

They laid him down upon his back,
  And cudgell'd him full sore;
They hung him up before the storm,
  And turn'd him o'er and o'er.

They filled up a darksome pit
  With water to the brim,

[1] Burns always gave this line with *was*. The *was* has an antique ring with it which *were* has not; but many of his editors prefer the less characteristic and less Scotch form.

They heavèd in John Barleycorn,
  There let him sink or swim.

They laid him out upon the floor,
  To work him further wo,
And still, as signs of life appear'd,
  They toss'd him to and fro.

They wasted, o'er a scorching flame,
  The marrow of his bones;
But a miller us'd him worst of all,
  For he crush'd him 'tween two stones.

And they hae ta'en his very heart's blood,
  And drank it round and round;
And still the more and more they drank,
  Their joy did more abound.

John Barleycorn was a hero bold,
  Of noble enterprise,
For if you do but taste his blood,
  'Twill make your courage rise.

'Twill make a man forget his wo;
  'Twill heighten all his joy:
'Twill make the widow's heart to sing,
  Tho' the tear were in her eye.

Then let us toast John Barleycorn,
  Each man a glass in hand;
And may his great posterity
  Ne'er fail in old Scotland![1]

THE DEATH AND DYING WORDS OF POOR MAILIE,

THE AUTHOR'S ONLY PET YOWE.

AN UNCO MOURNFU' TALE.

"He had, partly by way of frolic, bought a ewe and two lambs from a neighbour, and she was tethered in a field adjoining the house at Lochlea. He and I were going out with our teams, and our two younger brothers to drive for us at mid-day, when Hugh Wilson, a curious-looking awkward boy, clad in plaiding, came to us with much anxiety in his face, with the information that the ewe had entangled herself in the tether and was lying in the ditch. Robert was much tickled with Hughoc's appearance and postures on the occasion. Poor Mailie was set to rights, and when we returned from the plough in the evening, he repeated to me her 'Death and Dying Words,' pretty much in the way they now stand."—GILBERT BURNS.

As Mailie, an' her lambs thegither,	together
Were ae day nibbling on the tether,	one
Upon her cloot she coost a hitch,	hoof cast a loop
An' ower she warsled in the ditch:	struggled

[1] The version copied into the Common-place Book contains many unrhythmic lines; the author's improved version, published in the first Edinburgh edition of 1787, is what we have followed.

There, groaning, dying, she did lie,
When Hughoc[1] he came doytin by. — walking stupidly

Wi' glowrin' een, an' lifted han's, — staring eyes
Poor Hughoc like a statue stan's;
He saw her days were near-hand ended, — nearly
But, wae's my heart! he could na mend it! — woe is
He gapèd wide, but naething spak!
At length Poor Mailie silence brak.

"O thou, whase lamentable face
Appears to mourn my woefu' case!
My dying words attentive hear,
An' bear them to my master dear.

"Tell him, if e'er again he keep
As muckle gear as buy a sheep, — much money
O, bid him never tie them mair — more
Wi' wicked strings o' hemp or hair!
But ca' them out to park or hill, — drive field
And let them wander at their will;
So may his flock increase, an' grow
To scores o' lambs, an' packs o' woo'!

"Tell him, he was a master kin',
An' aye was guid to me and mine; — always
An' now my dying charge I gie him, — give
My helpless lambs I trust them wi' him.

"O, bid him save their harmless lives,
Frae dogs, an' tods, an' butchers' knives! — foxes
But gie them guid cow-milk their fill,
Till they be fit to fend themsel': — provide for
An' tent them duly, e'en an' morn, — tend
Wi' teats o' hay an' ripps o' corn. — tufts handfuls

"An' may they never learn the gaets — ways
Of ither vile wanrestfu' pets! — restless
To slink thro' slaps, an' reave an' steal, — gaps in fences
At stacks o' pease, or stocks o' kail. — colewort plants
So may they, like their great forbears, — forefathers
For monie a year come thro' the shears:
So wives will gie them bits o' bread,
An' bairns greet for them when they're dead. — weep

"My poor toop-lamb, my son an' heir, — tup
O, bid him breed him up wi' care!
An', if he live to be a beast,
To pit some havins in his breast! — put good manners

[1] A neibor herd-callan [neighbour herd-boy] about three-fourths as wise as other folk.—R. B. *Hughoc* is the familiar diminutive of *Hugh*.

An' warn him, what I winna name,
To stay content wi' yowes at hame; — ewes
An' no to rin an' wear his cloots, — run hoofs
Like ither menseless, graceless brutes. — unmannered

"An' niest my yowie, silly thing, — next
Gude keep thee frae a tether string!
O, may thou ne'er forgather up — keep company
Wi' ony blastit, moorland toop;
But aye keep mind to moop an' mell, — to associate
Wi' sheep o' credit like thysel![1]

"And now, my bairns, wi' my last breath,
I lea'e my blessing wi' you baith: — both
An' when you think upo' your Mither,
Mind to be kind to ane anither. — one another

"Now, honest Hughoc, dinna fail, — do not
To tell my master a' my tale;
An' bid him burn this cursed tether,
An', for thy pains, thou'se get my blether." — bladder

This said, poor Mailie turn'd her head,
An' clos'd her een amang the dead. — eyes

POOR MAILIE'S ELEGY.

Lament in rhyme, lament in prose,
Wi' saut tears trickling down your nose, — salt
Our bardie's fate is at a close,
Past a' remead! — all remedy
The last sad cape-stane of his woes; — cope-stone
Poor Mailie's dead!

It's no the loss o' warl's gear, — world's wealth
That could sae bitter draw the tear,
Or mak our bardie, dowie, wear — melancholy
The mourning weed:
He's lost a friend and neibor dear, — neighbour
In Mailie dead.

Thro' a' the town she trotted by him; — town-farm
A lang half-mile she could descry him;
Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spy him,
She ran wi' speed:

[1] "The expiring animal's admonitions touching the education of the 'poor toop-lamb her son and heir,' and the 'yowie, silly thing,' her daughter, are from the same peculiar vein of sly homely wit, imbedded upon fancy, which he afterwards dug with a bolder hand in the 'Twa Dogs,' and perhaps to its utmost depth in his 'Death and Dr. Hornbook.'"—*J. G.* LOCKHART.

A friend mair faithfu' ne'er came nigh him, more
Than Mailie dead.

I wat she was a sheep o' sense, wot
An' could behave hersel' wi' mense: decorum
I'll say't, she never brak a fence,
Thro' thievish greed.
Our bardie, lanely, keeps the spence parlour
Sin' Mailie's dead.

Or, if he wanders up the howe, hollow
Her living image in her yowe, ewe
Comes bleating to him, owre the knowe, hillock
For bits o' bread;
An' down the briny pearls rowe roll
For Mailie dead.

She was nae get o' moorland tips, offspring rams
Wi' tawted ket, an' hairy hips; matted fleece
For her forbears were brought in ships forefathers
Frae yont the Tweed: from beyond
A bonnier fleesh ne'er cross'd the clips shears
Than Mailie dead.[1]

Wae worth the man wha first did shape
That vile, wanchancie thing—a rape! unlucky rope
It maks guid fellows girn an' gape, grin
Wi' chokin' dread;
An Robin's bonnet wave wi' crape,
For Mailie dead.

O, a' ye bards on bonnie Doon!
An' wha on Ayr your chanters tune!
Come, join the melancholious croon
O' Robin's reed!
His heart will never get aboon above
His Mailie dead.[2]

[1] Original MS.

She was nae get o' runted rams, ill-bred
Wi' woo like goats and legs like trams, cart-shafts
She was the flower o' Fairlie lambs
A famous breed;
Now Robin, greetin', chows the hams chews
O' Mailie dead.

[2] "But a tenderer sportfulness dwells in him, and comes forth here and there in evanescent and beautiful touches, as in his 'Address to the Mouse,' or to the 'Farmer's Mare,' or in his 'Elegy on Poor Mailie,' which last may be reckoned his happiest effort of this kind. In these pieces there are traits of a humour as fine as that of Sterne, yet altogether different, original, and peculiar—the humour of Burns."—THOMAS CARLYLE.

SONG—THE RIGS O' BARLEY.

TUNE—"*Corn Rigs are bonnie.*"

In the copy of Johnson's *Museum* annotated for Captain Riddell of Glenriddell Burns writes: "All the old words that ever I could meet with to this air were the following, which seems to have been an old chorus:—

O corn rigs and rye rigs,
O corn rigs are bonnie;
And whene'er you meet a bonny lass,
Preen up her cockernony."[1]

It was upon a Lammas night,
When corn rigs are bonnie, ridges
Beneath the moon's unclouded light,
I held away to Annie:
The time flew by wi' tentless heed, careless
Till 'tween the late and early,
Wi' sma' persuasion, she agreed
To see me thro' the barley.

Corn rigs, an' barley rigs,
An' corn rigs are bonnie:
I'll ne'er forget that happy night,
Amang the rigs wi' Annie.[2]

The sky was blue, the wind was still,
The moon was shining clearly:
I set her down, wi' right good will,
Amang the rigs o' barley:
I ken't her heart was a' my ain: knew own
I lov'd her most sincerely;
I kiss'd her owre and owre again, over
Amang the rigs o' barley.
Corn rigs, &c.

I lock'd her in my fond embrace;
Her heart was beating rarely:
My blessings on that happy place,
Amang the rigs o' barley!
But by the moon and stars so bright,
That shone that hour so clearly!
She aye shall bless that happy night, always
Amang the rigs o' barley.
Corn rigs, &c.

[1] The following lines occur in Ramsay's "Gentle Shepherd:"—

He kiss'd and vow'd he wad be mine,
And loo'd me best of ony;
That gars me like to sing sinsyne
O corn rigs are bonnie.

The melody is very old.

[2] The "Annie" celebrated in this song has been differently identified with Annie Blair and Annie Ronald, both daughters of farmers in Tarbolton parish. But it could hardly be the latter, whom Burns worshipped at a distance, as hinted in the "Ronalds of the Bennals." Anne Rankine of Adamhill (daughter of "rough, rude, ready-witted Rankine," the poet's friend, see p. 224), boasted throughout life that she was the heroine of this more warm than delicate effusion. The song was probably written in 1783. The last stanza used to be instanced by the bard as one of the triumphs of his art.

I ha'e been blythe wi' comrades dear;
  I ha'e been merry drinkin';
I ha'e been joyfu' gatherin' gear; wealth
  I ha'e been happy thinkin':
But a' the pleasures e'er I saw,
  Tho' three times doubled fairly,
That happy night was worth them a',
  Amang the rigs o' barley.
  Corn rigs, &c.

SONG—PEGGY.[1]

TUNE—"*I had a horse, I had nae mair.*"

This poem Burns heads as "Song, composed in August." Johnson mistakenly states that it was written for his *Musical Museum;* it appeared before the publication of that work, in the Kilmarnock edition of the poems.

Now westlin winds and slaught'ring guns westerly
  Bring autumn's pleasant weather;
And the moorcock springs, on whirring wings, grouse
  Amang the blooming heather;
Now waving grain, wide o'er the plain,
  Delights the weary farmer;
And the moon shines bright, when I rove at night
  To muse upon my charmer.

The partridge loves the fruitful fells; upland fields
  The plover loves the mountains;
The woodcock haunts the lonely dells;
  The soaring 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 murd'ring cry,
  The flutt'ring, gory pinion!

[1] The Peggy of this lyric was undoubtedly Margaret Thomson of Kirkoswald, the "*fillette*" who put an end by her fascinations to the amorous young poet's trigonometrical studies. It appears to have been written, however, subsequently to the time when he was staying at Kirkoswald, and on an occasion when he had again come under the influence of the same charmer, probably in 1783. See note to next song. A draft of a portion of the song was copied into the first Common-place Book.

But Peggy dear, the evening's clear,
  Thick flies the skimming swallow;
The sky is blue, the fields in view,
  All fading-green and yellow:
Come let us stray our gladsome way,
  And view the charms of nature;
The rustling corn, the fruited thorn,
  And every happy creature.

We'll gently walk, and sweetly talk,
  Till the silent moon shine clearly;
I'll grasp thy waist, and, fondly prest,
  Swear how I love thee dearly:
Not vernal show'rs to budding flow'rs,
  Not autumn to the farmer,
So dear can be as thou to me,
  My fair, my lovely charmer!

SONG—MY NANNIE, O.[1]

TUNE—"*My Nannie, O.*"

"Shenstone observes finely that love verses writ without any 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 warm 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."—BURNS, Common-place Book, April, 1784. The song was probably written about 1783, but was subsequently revised.

Behind yon hills, where Lugar[2] flows,
  'Mang moors an' mosses many, O,
The wintry sun the day has clos'd,
  And I'll awa to Nannie, O.

The westlin wind blaws loud and shill; — western shrill
  The night's baith mirk an' rainy, O; — both dark

[1] The heroine of this song was, according to Gilbert, the poet's brother, "a farmer's daughter in Tarbolton parish, named Fleming, to whom the poet paid some of that roving attention which he was continually devoting to some one. Her charms were, indeed, mediocre, and what she had were sexual, which, indeed, was the characteristic of the greater part of his mistresses." [*Letter to George Thomson*, 3d *June*, 1819.] It should be added, however, that Mrs. Begg, the poet's sister, gives the honour of having inspired the song to Peggy Thomson, the Kirkoswald *fillette*, on whom the preceding song was composed.

[2] In all editions of Burns's works up to and including that of 1794, Stinchar (or Stinsiar) stood in the place of Lugar. The latter name was thought more euphonious, and Thomson says the author sanctioned the alteration in 1792. The Lugar is a tributary of the Ayr, which it joins a little above old Barskimming bridge. Like its principal, it pursues its way for some miles through a deep chasm in the red sandstone of the district. In the engraving given, the scene selected is in the grounds connected with the mansion of Auchinleck, the seat of a family (Boswell) whose name has become familiar in our literature. The ruin near the centre of the picture is that of the ancient castle of the Auchinlecks, and afterwards of the Boswells of Auchinleck, which Johnson describes in his *Journey to the Western Islands*. The introduction by the artist of the aged harper will be understood if the reader will refer to the poet's "Lament for James, Earl of Glencairn," and note the mention of "Lugar's winding stream" there.

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Blackie & Son, London, Glasgow & Edinburgh.

D O Hill R.S.A. J. Giles

SCENE ON THE LUGAR

NEAR AUCHINLECK HOUSE

Blackie & Son, London, Glasgow & Edinburgh.

[1] In the version
which its author c
the following cho

And O
My yo
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Subsequently his

[2] This song wa
fourth volume of

But I'll get my plaid, an' out I'll steal,
  An' owre the hills to Nannie, O. — over

My Nannie's charming, sweet, an' young:
  Nae artfu' wiles to win ye, O:
May ill befa' the flattering tongue
  That wad beguile my Nannie, O. — would

Her face is fair, her heart is true,
  She's spotless as she's bonnie, O:
The op'ning gowan, wet wi' dew, — daisy
  Nae purer is than Nannie, O.

A country lad is my degree,
  And few there be that ken me, O; — know
But what care I how few they be?
  I'm welcome aye to Nannie, O.

My riches a' 's my penny-fee, — wages
  An' I maun guide it cannie, O; — must use it carefully
But warl's gear ne'er troubles me, — world's wealth
  My thoughts are a' my Nannie, O.

Our auld guidman delights to view — old farmer
  His sheep and kye thrive bonnie, O; — kine
But I'm as blythe that hauds his pleugh, — holds
  An' has nae care but Nannie, O.

Come weel, come woe, I care na by, — do not care
  I'll tak' what Heav'n will sen' me, O;
Nae ither care in life have I, — other
  But live, an' love my Nannie, O.[1]

SONG—WHA IS THAT AT MY BOWER DOOR?[2]

TUNE—"*Lass, an' I come near thee.*"

Wha is that at my bower door?
  (O wha is it but Findlay.)
Then gae your gate, ye's nae be here! — go your way, you shall not
  (Indeed maun I, quo' Findlay.) — must

[1] In the version of this natural and touching lyric which its author copied into his Common-place Book, the following chorus appears:—

> And O my bonny Nannie O,
> My young, my handsome Nannie O,
> Tho' I had the world all at my will,
> I would give it all for Nannie O.

Subsequently his more matured taste suppressed it.

[2] This song was communicated by Burns to the fourth volume of Johnson's *Museum*. Cromek says Gilbert Burns told him that "this song was suggested to his brother by the 'Auld Man's Address to the Widow' ['The Auld Man's Best Argument'] printed in Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany*, which the poet first heard sung before he had seen that collection, by Jean Wilson, a silly old widow woman, then living at Tarbolton, remarkable for the simplicity and *naïveté* of her character, and for singing old Scots songs with a peculiar energy and earnestness of manner." We may add that the resemblance between the two songs is of the very slightest character.

What mak ye, sae like a thief?
(O come and see, quo' Findlay.)
Before the morn ye'll work mischief.
(Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.)

Gif I rise and let you in—
(Let me in, quo' Findlay.)
Ye'll keep me waukin' wi' your din. awake
(Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.)
In my bower if ye should stay—
(Let me stay, quo' Findlay.)
I fear ye'll bide till break o' day.
(Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.)

Here this night, if ye remain,—
(I'll remain, quo' Findlay.)
I dread ye'll learn the gate again. way
(Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.)
What may pass within this bower,—
(Let it pass, quo' Findlay.)
Ye maun conceal till your last hour.
(Indeed will I, quo' Findlay!)

SONG—GREEN GROW THE RASHES.[1]

TUNE—"*Green grow the rashes.*"

In the first Common-place Book after two paragraphs of not very profound moralizing, in which mankind generally are divided into two classes, the GRAVE and the MERRY, the poet winds up: "The foregoing was to have been an elaborate dissertation on the various species of men, but as I cannot please myself on the arrangement of my ideas on the subject, I must wait till further experience and nicer observations throw more light on the subject. In the meantime I shall set down the following fragment, which as it is the genuine language of my heart, will enable anybody to determine which of the classes I belong to." The date of its entry in the Common-place Book is Aug. 1784, but it was said to have been written before this, when Burns was at Lochlea. The last stanza was added at a later period.

Green grow the rashes, O! rushes
Green grow the rashes, O!
The sweetest hours that e'er I spend,
Are spent amang the lasses, O.

There's nought but care on ev'ry han',
In ev'ry hour that passes, O:
What signifies the life o' man,
An 'twere na for the lasses, O?
Green grow, &c.

[1] This light-hearted effusion was modelled on a spirited old song bearing the same title and having a similar chorus. It was a great favourite of our ancestors, and the air belonging to it is, according to Robert Chambers, "one of the oldest which have been handed down to us." The old song contains here and there a freedom of touch indicating the hand of a master:—

We're a' dry wi' drinking o't,
We're a' dry wi' drinking o't;
The parson kiss'd the fiddler's wife,
An' he could na preach for thinking o't.

The war'ly race may riches chase, worldly
An' riches still may fly them, O;
An' tho' at last they catch them fast,
Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them, O.
Green grow, &c.

But gie me a canny hour at e'en, quiet
My arms about my dearie, O;
An' war'ly cares, and war'ly men,
May a' gae tapsalteerie, O! topsy-turvy
Green grow, &c.

For you sae douce, ye sneer at this, grave
Ye're nought but senseless asses, O:
The wisest man the warl' e'er saw, world
He dearly lov'd the lasses, O.
Green grow, &c.

Auld Nature swears, the lovely dears
Her noblest work she classes, O:
Her 'prentice han' she tried on man,
An' then she made the lasses, O.[1]
Green grow, &c.

REMORSE—A FRAGMENT.[2]

"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 embitter the human bosom. Any ordinary pitch of fortitude may bear up tolerably well, under those 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 it up with manly firmness, and at the same time have a proper penitential sense of our misconduct—this is a glorious effort of self-command."—COMMON-PLACE BOOK, Sept. 1783.

Of all the numerous ills that hurt our peace—
That press the soul, or wring the mind with anguish,
Beyond comparison the worst are those
By our own folly or our guilt brought on;
In ev'ry other circumstance, the mind
Has this to say: "It was no deed of mine:"
But, when to all the evil of misfortune
This sting is added: "Blame thy foolish self!"
Or worser far, the pangs of keen Remorse,
The torturing, gnawing consciousness of guilt—

[1] The conceit contained in this verse (as pointed out by several editors) is found thus expressed in a comedy called *Cupid's Whirligig*, published in 1607:—

Since we were made before you, should we not love and admire you as the last, and, therefore, perfect work of Nature? Man was made when nature was but an apprentice, but woman when she was a skilful mistress of her art.

In all likelihood Burns never saw this drama, but an extract including those lines was introduced into a work entitled *The British Muse, a Collection of Thoughts, by Thomas Hayward*, 4 vols. Lond. 1738, which had a pretty wide circulation in his time.

[2] The present piece was copied into the poet's first Common-place Book under date September, 1783. The lines are probably a lamentation over his follies and dissipations at Irvine.

Of guilt, perhaps, where we've involved others,
The young, the innocent, who fondly lov'd us;
Nay more, that very love the cause of ruin!
O burning hell! in all thy store of torments
There's not a keener lash.
Lives there a man so firm, who while his heart
Feels all the bitter horrors of his crime
Can reason down its agonising throbs;
And, after proper purpose of amendment,
Can firmly force his jarring thoughts to peace?
O happy, happy, enviable man!
O glorious magnanimity of soul!

EPITAPH—FOR THE AUTHOR'S FATHER.

These lines are engraved on the humble headstone in Alloway Kirkyard, over the grave of William Burness, the poet's father, who died at Lochlea, 13th February, 1784. The epitaph received careful elaboration at the hand of Burns. The first line, so happily expressed, was preceded by at least two readings, found in the poet's handwriting:—

O ye who sympathize with virtue's pains—

for which the writer himself suggested the substitution of

O ye whose hearts deceased merit pains—

each of which is conspicuously inferior to the line as we have it.

O ye whose cheek the tear of pity stains,
Draw near with pious rev'rence and attend!
Here lie the loving husband's dear remains,
The tender father, and the gen'rous friend;
The pitying heart that felt for human woe;
The dauntless heart that fear'd no human pride;
The friend of man, to vice alone a foe;
"For ev'n his failings lean'd to virtue's side."[1]

EPITAPH—ON A FRIEND.

An honest man here lies at rest,
As e'er God with his image blest;
The friend of man, the friend of truth;
The friend of age, and guide of youth:

Few hearts like his with virtue warm'd,
Few heads with knowledge so inform'd;
If there's another world, he lives in bliss;
If there is none, he made the best of this.[2]

[1] Goldsmith.

[2] In Burns's original Common-place Book the above is headed thus:—"Epitaph on my own friend, and my father's friend, William Muir in Tarbolton Mill." This is the "Willie" of "Willie's Mill" in "Death and Dr. Hornbook."

EPITAPH—ON A CELEBRATED RULING ELDER.[1]

Here souter Hood in death does sleep;—
To h—ll, if he's gane thither,
Satan, gie him thy gear to keep, — money
He'll haud it weel thegither. — hold it well together

BALLAD ON THE AMERICAN WAR.

A FRAGMENT.[2]

TUNE—"*Killiecrankie.*"

When Guilford good our pilot stood,
And did our hellim thraw, man, — helm turn
Ae night, at tea, began a plea, — one quarrel
Within America, man:
Then up they gat the maskin'-pat, — got tea-pot
And in the sea did jaw, man; — dash
An' did nae less, in full congress,
Than quite refuse our law, man.

Then thro' the lakes Montgomery takes,
I wat he was nae slaw, man; — not slow
Down Lowrie's burn[3] he took a turn,
And Carleton did ca', man: — drive
But yet, what-reck, he, at Quebec, — nevertheless
Montgomery-like did fa', man, — fall
Wi' sword in hand, before his band,
Amang his en'mies a', man.

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

Burgoyne gaed up, like spur an' whip, — went
Till Fraser brave did fa', man;
Then lost his way, ae misty day,
In Saratoga shaw, man. — wood

[1] Not a Mauchline elder, and persecutor of Gavin Hamilton, as has been supposed, but a Tarbolton elder, of most penurious habits, named William Hood, by trade a "souter" or shoemaker.

[2] When Dr. Blair read this ballad he remarked that "Burns's politics smelt of the smithy." It was written probably early in 1784, but first published in the Edinburgh edition of 1787, and only after the Earl of Glencairn, and the Hon. Henry Erskine, then Dean of Faculty, had given their approval. The letter written by Burns to Erskine in this connection was first printed in the *Ayr Observer*, October, 1846. The personal and historical allusions are familiar to all who have studied the history of that interesting period, with its galaxy of great statesmen and orators, and its struggles pregnant with such mighty and unforeseen issues.

[3] The *burn*, *i.e.* river of Lawrence, the St. Lawrence.

Cornwallis fought as long 's he dought, — was able
An' did the Buckskins[1] claw, man;
But Clinton's glaive frae rust to save,
He hung it to the wa', man. — wall

Then Montague, an' Guilford too,
Began to fear a fa', man;
And Sackville doure, wha stood the stoure, — stubborn dust (of battle)
The German chief to thraw, man: — thwart
For Paddy Burke, like ony Turk,
Nae mercy had at a', man;
And Charlie Fox threw by the box,
An' lows'd his tinkler jaw,[2] man.

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

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

Behind the throne then Grenville's gone,
A secret word or twa', man;
While slee Dundas arous'd the class — sly
Be-north the Roman wa', man: — north of
An' Chatham's wraith, in heavenly graith, — ghost garb
(Inspirèd bardies saw, man)
Wi' kindling eyes cried, "Willie, rise!
Would I ha'e fear'd them a', man?"

But, word an' blow, North, Fox, and Co.,
Gowff'd Willie like a ba', man, — knocked about
Till Southrons raise, and coost their claise — cast off clothes
Behind him in a raw, man; — row
An' Caledon threw by the drone,
An' did her whittle draw, man; — knife
An' swoor fu' rude, thro' dirt an' blood — swore
To make it guid in law, man.

* * * * * * *

[1] Buckskins, a term applied to the American troops during the Revolutionary war.

[2] Unloosed his tinker tongue, *i.e.* indulged in the coarse raillery characteristic of a tinker.

SONG—THE RANTING DOG THE DADDIE O'T.

TUNE—"*East nook o' Fife.*"

We have the poet's own authority for asserting that these verses were sent to a "young girl, a particular acquaintance of his, at that time under a cloud." This is supposed to be the affair alluded to in his autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore (1787) as occurring shortly after he put his hand to the plough, on his return from Irvine. If so the song was probably written some little time before the next following piece, the "young girl" being the mother of his own child.

O wha my babie clouts will buy?
O wha will tent me when I cry? — attend to
Wha will kiss me where I lie?
The rantin' dog the daddie o't. — frolicsome

O wha will own he did the fau't?
O wha will buy my groanin'-maut? — lying-in ale
O wha will tell me how to ca't? — call it
The rantin' dog the daddie o't.

When I mount the creepie-chair, — stool of repentance in church
Wha will sit beside me there?
Gie me Rob, I'll seek nae mair,— — no more
The rantin' dog the daddie o't.

Wha will crack to me my lane? — chat when alone
Wha can mak' me fidgin' fain? — keenly fond
Wha will kiss me o'er again?
The rantin' dog the daddie o't.

THE POET'S WELCOME TO HIS ILLEGITIMATE CHILD.[1]

"The first instance that entitled him to the venerable appellation of father."—R. B.

Thou's welcome, wean! mishanter fa' me, — child misadventure befall
If ought of thee, or of thy mammy,
Shall ever danton me, or awe me, — daunt
My sweet wee lady,
Or if I blush when thou shalt ca' me — call
Tit-ta or daddy.

Wee image of my bonny Betty,
I fatherly will kiss and daut thee, — fondle
As dear and near my heart I set thee
Wi' as guid will,
As a' the priests had seen me get thee,
That's out o' h-ll.

[1] The subject of this not very decorous "Welcome" was the poet's illegitimate child Elizabeth (daughter of Elizabeth Paton), the "sonsie, smirking, dear-bought Bess" of the "Inventory," who grew to womanhood in Gilbert Burns's household, was married, and had a family. Among the obituary notices in the *Scots Magazine* for January, 1817, is the following:—"Dec. 8. Elizabeth Burns, wife of Mr. John Bishop, overseer at Polkemmet, and daughter of the celebrated Robert Burns, and the subject of some of his most beautiful lines." She was born in Nov. 1784. The most complete text of this piece is in Paterson's Edinburgh edition of Burns (edited by W. Scott Douglas), which also gives certain textual variations.

What tho' they ca' me fornicator,
And tease my name in kintra clatter: — country gossip
The mair they talk I'm kent the better, — more known
E'en let them clash; — tattle
An auld wife's tongue's a feckless matter — trifling
To gie ane fash. — give one trouble

* * * * * *

Tho' I should be the waur bestead, — worse
Thou's be as braw and bienly clad, — fine warmly
And thy young years as nicely bred
Wi' education,
As ony brat o' wedlock's bed
In a' thy station.

And if thou be what I wad hae thee, — would have
And tak' the counsel I shall gie thee,
A lovin' father I'll be to thee,
If thou be spar'd:
Thro' a' thy childish years I'll ee thee, — eye
And think't weel war'd. — spent

Gude grant that thou may aye inherit
Thy mither's person, grace, and merit,
And thy poor worthless daddy's spirit,
Without his failins,
'Twill please me mair to see thee heir it,
Than stockit mailins. — farms

EPISTLE TO JOHN RANKINE[1]

[OF ADAMHILL, NEAR TARBOLTON].

ENCLOSING SOME POEMS.

O rough, rude, ready-witted Rankine,
The wale o' cocks for fun and drinkin'! — choice
There's mony godly folks are thinkin'
Your dreams[2] an' tricks
Will send you, Korah-like, a-sinkin',
Straught to auld Nick's. — straight

[1] John Rankine, farmer at Adamhill, two miles west of Lochlea, was a prince of boon companions and an inveterate wag; consequently he was just the man to attract Burns, and the two became great friends. He was no favourite with the "saunts," and the feeling was reciprocated. He entertained a rigid professor of religion to a jorum of toddy, and as the hot-water kettle contained only boiled whisky, the more the good man took the more hopelessly drunk he got. What the poems were that Burns sent him we do not know.

[2] A certain humorous dream of his was then making a noise in the country-side.—R. B. When Rankine wished to administer a rebuke to some consequential person or persons he was wont to do so under the guise of a dream in which they figured or were in some way concerned, and several of these are still current and repeated.

Ye hae sae monie cracks and cants, — tales and tricks
And in your wicked drucken rants, — drunken frolics
Ye mak' a devil o' the saunts, — sáints
An' fill them fou; — tipsy
And then their failings, flaws, an' wants,
Are a' seen thro'.

Hypocrisy, in mercy spare it!
That holy robe, O dinna tear it! — do not
Spare't for their sakes wha aften wear it,
The lads in black!
But your curst wit, when it comes near it,
Rives't aff their back. — tears it

Think, wicked sinner, wha ye're skaithing, — harming
It's just the Blue-gown badge and claithing[1] — clothing
O' saunts; tak' that, ye lea'e them naething
To ken them by, — know
Frae ony unregenerate heathen — from
Like you or I.[2]

I've sent you here some rhyming ware,
A' that I bargain'd for an' mair; — more
Sae, when ye hae an hour to spare,
I will expect
Yon sang,[3] ye'll sen't wi' cannie care, — thoughtful
And no neglect.

Tho' faith, sma' heart hae I to sing!
My muse dow scarcely spread her wing! — can-
I've play'd mysel' a bonnie spring, — tune
An' danc'd my fill!
I'd better gane an' sair'd the king, — gone and served
At Bunker's Hill.

[1] The blue-gown belonged to a privileged order of Scottish mendicants now extinct. They derived their name from the colour of the habit which they wore, and with which they were wont to be supplied at the expense of royalty, in conformity, it is said, with an ordinance of the Catholic Church. On the annual return of the royal birth-day each bedesman received in addition to the cloak or gown of light blue coarse cloth, a badge and a leathern purse, containing as many shillings Scots (pennies sterling) as the sovereign was years old. The badge conferred on them the general privilege of wandering over Scotland, in pursuit of their calling, in despite of all laws against mendicity. Every reader will at once recall to mind, as a favourable specimen of the class, the Edie Ochiltree of Scott. In his introduction to the *Antiquary*, Sir Walter gives an interesting account of the blue-gowns as a whole, with anecdotes of one or two distinguished members of the tribe. Burns seems to have looked forward, with a gloomy and almost misanthropic feeling, to closing his own career in the character of a beggar. Thus in his "Epistle to Davie," after a reflection on the inequality with which the gifts of fortune are shared, and a boast of their power to earn by labour their daily bread, he remarks:—

> The last o't, the warst o't,
> Is only but to beg.

At a later period of his life Burns had not got altogether quit of such darkening anticipations. In his "Dedication to Gavin Hamilton," after boasting of the independence which his ability to plough confyred, and his consequent want of necessity for cringing to the great for the means of subsistence, he says,

> And when I downa yoke a naig,
> Then, Lord be thankit, I can beg!

[2] This gross solecism in grammar (Scotch or English), though necessary to the rhyme, grates sadly on the ear.

[3] A song he had promised the author.—R. B.

'Twas ae night lately in my fun,	one
I gaed a roving wi' the gun,	went
An' brought a paitrick to the grun',	partridge ground
A bonnie hen,	
And, as the twilight was begun,	
Thought nane wad ken.	
The poor wee thing was little hurt;	
I straikit it a wee for sport,	stroked
Ne'er thinkin' they wad fash me for't;	trouble
But, deil-ma-care!	
Somebody tells the poacher-court	
The hale affair.	whole
Some auld us'd hands had ta'en a note,	
That sic a hen had got a shot;	such
I was suspected for the plot;	
I scorn'd to lie;	
So gat the whissle o' my groat,	took the consequences
An' pay't the fee.	
But, by my gun, o' guns the wale,	choice
An' by my pouther an' my hail,	powder
An' by my hen, an' by her tail,	
I vow an' swear!	
The game shall pay o'er moor an' dale,	
For this, niest year.	next
As soon's the clockin-time is by,	brooding-time
An' the wee pouts begun to cry,	poults
L—d, I'se hae sportin' by an' by,	
For my gowd guinea:	gold
Tho' I should herd the Buckskin kye[1]	kine
For't in Virginia.	
Trowth, they had muckle for to blame!	in truth
'Twas neither broken wing nor limb,	
But twa-three draps about the wame	belly
Scarce thro' the feathers;	
An' baith a yellow George to claim,	both guinea
An' thole their blethers!	suffer their idle talk
It pits me aye as mad's a hare;	puts
So I can rhyme nor write nae mair;	
But pennyworths again is fair,	tit for tat
When time's expedient:	
Meanwhile I am, respected Sir,	
Your most obedient.	

[1] In the war of the American independence the native American troops were known by the name of "Buckskins." By "Buckskin kye" Burns perhaps means the slaves—contemplating the possibility of his having to betake himself to America for his misdeeds at home; or it might mean that he had thoughts of turning soldier—"sairing the king," to use his own words above. The American war was over by this time.

SONG—O LEAVE NOVELS.

TUNE—"*Mauchline Belles.*"

The first and third stanzas of this song seem to have been improvised during one of his light-hearted moods, about the date of the occupation of Mossgiel farm, March, 1784. The second and fourth stanzas were added for the sixth volume of Johnson's *Museum*.—Mauchline is a small town about a mile from the farm.

O leave novels, ye Mauchline belles,
  Ye're safer at your spinning-wheel;
Such witching books are baited hooks,
  For rakish rooks like Rob Mossgiel.

Your fine Tom Jones and Grandisons,
  They make your youthful fancies reel;
They heat your brains, and fire your veins,
  And then you're prey for Rob Mossgiel.

Beware a tongue that's smoothly hung,
  A heart that warmly seems to feel;
That feeling heart but acts a part,—
  'Tis rakish art in Rob Mossgiel.

The frank address, the soft caress,
  Are worse than poisoned darts of steel,
The frank address, and politesse,
  Are all finesse in Rob Mossgiel.

SONG—THE BELLES OF MAUCHLINE.[1]

TUNE—"*Bonnie Dundee.*"[2]

In Mauchline there dwells six proper young belles,
  The pride of the place and its neighbourhood a';
Their carriage and dress, a stranger would guess,
  In Lon'on or Paris they'd gotten it a':

[1] The matrimonial fates of the "six proper young belles" of Mauchline, were as follows:—Miss (Helen) Miller was married to Dr. Mackenzie of Mauchline, a friend of Burns's. Miss Markland was married to a Mr. Finlay, an officer of excise first at Tarbolton (where he was appointed to teach Burns the mysteries of gauging and excise book-keeping) and afterwards at Greenock. Miss Smith was married to Mr. James Candlish, an early friend of the poet's, and to whom he addresses a letter in March 1787, bearing the style "Student in Physic, Glasgow College," and opening, "My ever dear, old acquaintance." Mr. Candlish, after his union with the witty Miss Smith, received an appointment as a teacher in connection with Edinburgh University, and died in 1806, leaving behind him six of a family, the youngest of whom was Dr. Candlish, one of the founders and great leaders of the Free Church of Scotland. Miss Betty (Miller), sister of the first-mentioned belle, was married to a Mr. Templeton, and died early in life. Miss Morton bestowed her beauty (of which she is said to have had a considerable share) and her fortune (amounting to five or six hundred pounds entirely under her own control) on a Mr. Paterson, a farmer in Ochiltree parish. Jean Armour "the jewel" became the wife of the poet. Mr. Chambers notes that as late as 1850 three of the belles, Mrs. Paterson, Mrs. Finlay, and Mrs. Candlish survived.

[2] There are two popular Scotch airs known under this name: the bold stirring tune sung to Scott's song "To the Lords o' Convention 'twas Claverhouse spoke," and the more gently flowing melody sung to M'Neil's "Saw ye my wee thing?" It is to this latter air that Burns wrote the above song.

Miss Miller is fine, Miss Markland's divine,
Miss Smith she has wit, and Miss Betty is braw:
There's beauty and fortune to get with Miss Morton,
But Armour's the jewel for me o' them a'.

SONG—WHEN FIRST I CAME TO STEWART KYLE.

TUNE—"*I had a horse, I had nae mair.*"[1]

This fragment is entered in the Common-place Book under date August, 1784. The "Mauchline lady" is doubtless Jean Armour.

When first I came to Stewart Kyle,[2]
My mind it was na steady;
Where'er I gaed, where'er I rade, went rode
A mistress still I had aye:
But when I came roun' by Mauchline town,
Not dreadin' any body,
My heart was caught before I thought,
And by a Mauchline lady.

EPITAPH—ON A NOISY POLEMIC.

James Humphrey, a jobbing mason, a village oracle in matters of doctrine, was the subject of this rather weak effusion. He survived till 1844, having reached the age of 86. In his latter days he was the recipient of many an alms-gift, through stating with pride that he was Burns's "bleth'ring bitch."

Below thir stanes lie Jamie's banes: these stones
O Death, it's my opinion,
Thou ne'er took such a bleth'ring b-tch babbling
Into thy dark dominion!

EPITAPH—ON A HENPECKED COUNTRY SQUIRE

As father Adam first was fool'd,
A case that's still too common—
Here lies a man a woman rul'd,
The devil rul'd the woman.

EPIGRAM—ON THE SAID OCCASION.

O death, hadst thou but spared his life
Whom we, this day, lament!
We freely wad exchang'd the wife, would (have)
And a' been weel content.

[1] This is the title of an old song of which Burns's words are in some measure a parody.

[2] Stewart Kyle is that part of Kyle lying between the rivers Irvine and Ayr.

Ev'n as he is, cauld in his graff, — grave
The swap we yet will do't: — exchange
Tak thou the carlin's carcase off, — scolding old woman
Thou'se get the saul o' boot. — to boot

ANOTHER.

This and the two immediately preceding epigrams were aimed at Campbell of Netherplace, Mauchline, and his wife. They were published in the first edition of Burns's poems, but were withdrawn from subsequent ones. They can pain no one now, and are here given as curiosities, though their merit is not great.

One Queen Artemisia, as old stories tell,
When deprived of her husband she lovèd so well,
In respect for the love and affection he'd show'd her
She reduc'd him to dust, and she drank off the powder.

But Queen Netherplace, of a different complexion,
When call'd on to order the fun'ral direction,
Would have eat her dead lord, on a slender pretence,
Not to show her respect, but—to save the expense.

ON TAM THE CHAPMAN.[1]

As Tam the Chapman on a day
Wi' Death forgather'd by the way, — met
Weel pleas'd, he greets a wight sae famous,
And Death was nae less pleas'd wi' Thomas,
Wha cheerfully lays down the pack,
And there blaws up a hearty crack: — conversation
His social, friendly, honest heart
Sae tickled Death, they couldna part:
Sae, after viewing knives and garters,
Death takes him hame to gie him quarters.

EPIGRAMMATIC LINES TO J. RANKINE.

Ae day, as Death, that gruesome carl, — one
Was driving to the tither warl' — other world
A mixtie-maxtie motley squad, — miscellaneous
And mony a guilt-bespotted lad;
Black gowns of each denomination,
And thieves of every rank and station,

[1] These verses, singularly enough, were first given to the world by William Cobbett in his *Magazine*. Cobbett became acquainted with the subject of them when the latter was in his old days and resident in London. He was named Thomas Kennedy, an early friend of the poet's, and, at the time the epitaph was written, a traveller for a mercantile house, hence the appellation of "chapman."

From him that wears the star and garter,
To him that wintles in a halter: wriggles
Asham'd himself to see the wretches,
He mutters, glow'rin' at the bitches, staring
"By G-d, I'll not be seen behint them,
Nor 'mang the sp'ritual core present them, corps
Without at least ae honest man, one
To grace this d——d infernal clan."
By Adamhill a glance he threw,
"L—d G-d!" quoth he, "I have it now,
There's just the man I want, i' faith,"
And quickly stoppit *Rankine's* breath.

LINES TO JOHN RANKINE.[1]

WRITTEN WITH THE SUPPOSED VIEW OF BEING FORWARDED AFTER THE POET'S DEATH.

He who of Rankine sang, lies stiff and dead,
And a green grassy hillock hides his head;
Alas! alas! an awful change indeed.

MAN WAS MADE TO MOURN.[2]

A DIRGE.

There is an old poem, called "The Life and Age of Man" of which Burns, in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop, says, "I had an old grand-uncle with whom my mother lived a while in her girlish years: the good old man, for such he was, was long blind before he died, during which time his highest enjoyment was to sit down and cry, while my mother would sing the simple old song of the 'Life and Age of Man.'" This poem was evidently running in Burns's recollection when he wrote "Man was made to Mourn." It opens thus:—

Upon the sixteen hunder year
Of God and fifty-three,
Frae Christ was born, that bought us dear,
As writings testifie;
On January the sixteenth day,
As I did lie alone,
With many a sigh and sob did say,
Ah! Man is made to Mõan.

When chill November's surly blast
Made fields and forests bare,
One ev'ning, as I wander'd forth
Along the banks of Ayr,
I spied a man, whose aged step
Seem'd weary, worn with care;
His face was furrow'd o'er with years,
And hoary was his hair.

[1] In reference to the subject of these and the preceding lines see "Epistle to John Rankine," p. 224.

[2] The above dirge is entered into the poet's first Common-place Book (April 1783—Oct. 1785) under date of August, 1785. It is there called a "Song (*Tune*—Peggy Bawn)." It is almost needless to say that the poem is now never (if it ever was) sung to this or to any other tune.

"Young stranger, whither wand'rest thou?"
Began the reverend sage;
"Does thirst of wealth thy step constrain,
Or youthful pleasure's rage?
Or haply, press'd with cares and woes,
Too soon thou hast began
To wander forth, with me, to mourn
The miseries of man.

"The sun that overhangs yon moors,[1]
Out-spreading far and wide,
Where hundreds labour to support
A haughty lordling's pride:[2]
I've seen yon weary winter sun
Twice forty times return;
And ev'ry time has added proofs,
That man was made to mourn.

"O man! while in thy early years,
How prodigal of time!
Misspending all thy precious hours,
Thy glorious youthful prime!
Alternate follies take the sway;
Licentious passions burn;
Which tenfold force gives nature's law,
That man was made to mourn.

"Look not alone on youthful prime,
Or manhood's active might;
Man then is useful to his kind,
Supported is his right:
But see him on the edge of life,
With cares and sorrows worn,
Then age and want—Oh! ill-match'd pair—
Show man was made to mourn.

"A few seem favourites of fate,
In pleasure's[3] lap caress'd;
Yet, think not all the rich and great
Are likewise truly blest.
But, oh! what crowds in ev'ry land,
All wretched and forlorn;[4]
Thro' weary life this lesson learn,
That man was made to mourn.

"Many and sharp the num'rous ills[5]
Inwoven with our frame!

[1] In the poet's Common-place Book the following variations occur:—

1 "Yon sun that hangs o'er Carrick moors."
2 "The lordly Cassilis' pride."
3 "Fortune's."
4 "To wants and sorrows born."
5 "Many the ills that Nature's hand
Has woven," &c.

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[1]
The poor petition spurn,
Unmindful, tho' a weeping wife
And helpless offspring mourn.

"If I'm design'd yon lordling's slave,—
By nature's law[2] designed,—
Why was an independent wish
E'er planted in my mind?
If not, why am I subject to
His cruelty and scorn?
Or why has man the will and power
To make his fellow mourn?

"Yet, let not this too much, my son,
Disturb thy youthful breast:
This partial view of human-kind
Is surely not the last!
The poor, oppressèd, honest man,
Had never, sure, been born,
Had there not been some recompense
To comfort those that mourn!

"O death! the poor man's dearest friend,
The kindest and the best!
Welcome the hour my agèd limbs
Are laid with thee at rest!
The great, the wealthy, fear thy blow,
From pomp and pleasure torn;
But, *oh*! a blest relief to those
That weary-laden, mourn!"[3]

[1] "Several of the poems were produced for the purpose of bringing forward some favourite sentiment of the author. He used to remark to me, that he could not conceive a more mortifying picture of human life than a man seeking work. In casting about in his mind how the sentiment might be brought forward, the elegy, 'Man was made to Mourn,' was composed."—GILBERT BURNS.

[2] "Hand," for "law," is the reading given in the poet's Common-place Book.

[3] "In 'Man was made to Mourn,' whatever might be the casual idea that set the poet to work, it is but too evident that he wrote from the habitual feelings of his own bosom. The indignation with which he through life contemplated the inequality of human condition, and particularly—and who shall say with absolute injustice?—the contrast between his own worldly circumstances and intellectual rank, was never more bitterly nor more loftily expressed than in some of these stanzas."—J. G. LOCKHART.

THE TWA HERDS, OR THE HOLY TUILZIE.[1]

"The first of my poetic offspring that saw the light was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists, both of them *dramatis personæ* in my 'Holy Fair.' I had a notion myself that the piece had some merit; but to prevent the worst I gave a copy of it to a friend who was very fond of such things, and told him I could not guess who was the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clever. With a certain description of the clergy, as well as laity it met with a roar of applause."—BURNS'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LETTER TO DR. MOORE.—The title, it may be as well to remark, means "The two *shepherds*, or the holy brawl."

> Blockheads, with reason, wicked wits abhor,
> But fool with fool is barbarous civil war.—POPE.

O a' ye pious godly flocks,
Weel fed on pastures orthodox,
Wha now will keep you frae the fox, — from
Or worrying tykes, — dogs
Or wha will tent the waifs and crocks, — tend old ewes
About the dykes? — built fences

The twa best herds in a' the wast, — shepherds
That e'er gae gospel horn a blast — gave
These five and twenty simmers past,
O! dool to tell, — sorrow
Hae had a bitter black out-cast — quarrel
Atween themsel'.

O Moodie, man, and wordy Russell, — worthy
How could you raise so vile a bustle,
Ye'll see how New-Light herds will whistle,
And think it fine!
The Lord's cause ne'er gat sic a twistle, — got such a twist
Sin' I hae min'. — have recollection

[1] At the time at which the "Twa Herds" was composed—probably about the end of 1784—to use the words of Burns, "polemical divinity was putting the country half mad." The parties in the controversy then carried on regarding the comparative efficacy of faith and works, were designated by the names of Old and New Light. Burns, partly from education, and from his connection with Gavin Hamilton, who took a prominent part in the controversy, and who, from certain singularities in walk and conversation, had drawn upon himself the anathema of his parish minister Mr. Auld, one of the leaders of the Old Light party, and partly, it may be supposed, from still smarting under the "rebuke" of the same reverend divine, attached himself with all the recklessness of a partisan to the party of New Light controversialists. A personal quarrel between Mr. Moodie, minister of Riccarton, and Mr. Russell, minister of the High Church, Kilmarnock, both enjoying the benefit of the Old Light, afforded too favourable an opportunity for the exercise of his talent for satire—in which he had already discovered the secret of his power—to be allowed to escape. The biographers of Burns, however, differ in their statements of the ground of controversy which resulted in the quarrel celebrated in the "Twa Herds." Lockhart represents it as proceeding from a misunderstanding concerning parish boundaries; and as taking place in the presbytery in open court, to which the announcement of the discussion had drawn a multitude of the country people, and Burns among the rest. Allan Cunningham, on the other hand, represents the quarrel as having taken place, in consequence of a controversy on "effectual calling," in which the parties engaged on their way home from the Monday sermon of a sacrament; and minutely details the particulars of the quarrel. The matter is of no great consequence. The ninth stanza of the poem seems to incline the weight of evidence in favour of the first account. Had the parties been really guilty of coming to blows, as was even hinted, all mention of such a circumstance would scarce have been omitted from the poem—presenting, as it would have done, so much broader a mark for the shafts of the poet's satire.

It may be added to all this, that the law of church patronage also formed a fruitful subject of discussion and dissension among the Old and New Light controversialists.

O, sirs! whae'er wad hae expeckit — would have
Your duty ye wad sae negleckit, — would (have) so
Ye wha were ne'er by lairds respeckit, — proprietors
To wear the plaid,
But by the brutes themselves eleckit,
To be their guide.

What flock wi' Moodie's flock could rank,
Sae hale and hearty every shank!
Nae poison'd sour Arminian stank, — ditch
He let them taste,
Frae Calvin's well, aye clear, they drank,
O sic a feast! — such

The thummart, wil'-cat, brock and tod, — pole-cat wild-cat badger fox
Weel kenn'd his voice thro' a' the wood,
He smelt their ilka hole and road, — every
Baith out and in, — both
And weel he lik'd to shed their bluid,
And sell their skin.

What herd like Russell tell'd his tale?
His voice was heard thro' muir and dale,
He kenn'd the Lord's sheep, ilka tail, — every
O'er a' the height,
And saw gin they were sick or hale, — if
At the first sight.

He fine a mangy sheep could scrub,
Or nobly fling the gospel club,
And New-Light herds could nicely drub,
Or pay their skin, — dress
Could shake them o'er the burning dub; — pool
Or heave them in.

Sic twa—O! do I live to see't— — such two
Sic famous twa should disagreet,
An' names, like "villain, hypocrite,"
Ilk ither gi'en,
While New-Light herds wi' laughin' spite,
Say neither's liein'!

A' ye wha tent the gospel fauld, — tend fold
There's Duncan,[1] deep, and Peebles,[2] shaul, — shallow
But chiefly thou, apostle Auld,[3]
We trust in thee,
That thou wilt work them, het and cauld, — hot
Till they agree.

[1] Dr. Robert Duncan, minister of Dundonald.

[2] Rev. William Peebles, of Newton-upon-Ayr. He was given to verse-making, and figures both in the "Holy Fair" and the "Kirk's Alarm," as do other reverend gentlemen here named. See notes there.

[3] Rev. William Auld, minister of Mauchline.

Consider, sirs, how we're beset,
There's scarce a new herd that we get,
But comes frae 'mang that cursed set, — from among
I winna name: — will not
I hope frae heav'n to see them yet
In fiery flame.

Dalrymple[1] has been lang our fae, — foe
M'Gill[2] has wrought us meikle wae,
And that curs'd rascal ca'd M'Quhae,[3] — called
And baith the Shaws,[4]
That aft hae made us black and blae, — blue
Wi' vengefu' paws.

Auld Wodrow[5] lang has hatch'd mischief,
We thought aye death wad bring relief,
But he has gotten, to our grief,
Ane to succeed him,
A chiel wha'll soundly buff our beef; — fellow — thrash us
I meikle dread him.

And mony a ane that I could tell,
Wha fain would openly rebel,
Forby turn-coats amang oursel', — besides
There's Smith[6] for ane,
I doubt he's but a grey-nick quill,[7]
And that ye'll fin'.

O! a' ye flocks, o'er a' the hills,
By mosses, meadows, moors, and fells,
Come join your counsel and your skills,
To cowe the lairds, — terrify
And get the brutes the power themselves,
To choose their herds.

Then Orthodoxy yet may prance,
And Learning in a woody dance, — halter
And that fell cur ca'd Common Sense,[8]
That bites sae sair, — so sore
Be banish'd o'er the sea to France:
Let him bark there.

Then Shaw's and Dalrymple's eloquence,
M'Gill's close nervous excellence,

[1] Rev. Dr. Dalrymple, one of the ministers of Ayr, by whom the poet was baptized.

[2] Rev. William M'Gill, colleague of Dr. Dalrymple.

[3] Minister of St. Quivox.

[4] Dr. Andrew Shaw of Craigie, and Dr. David Shaw of Coylton.

[5] Dr. Peter Wodrow of Tarbolton. The successor alluded to in this verse was M'Math of the last verse.

[6] Rev. Mr. Smith of Galston, one of the tent-preachers in the "Holy Fair:" mentioned also in the "Kirk's Alarm."

[7] A bad quill, the nick or split being *grey* and uneven.

[8] A pamphlet with this signature, written by one of the New Light party, had recently appeared, and attracted some notice.

M'Quhae's pathetic manly sense,
And guid M'Math,
Wi' Smith, wha thro' the heart can glance,
May a' pack aff.

HOLY WILLIE'S PRAYER.[1]

The following argument in the poet's own handwriting is prefixed in the Glenriddell MS., now in the Athenæum Library, Liverpool:—"Holy Willie was a rather oldish bachelor elder, in the parish of Mauchline, and much and justly famed for that polemical chattering, which ends in tippling orthodoxy, and for that spiritualized bawdry which refines to liquorish devotion. In a sessional process with a gentleman in Mauchline—a Mr. Gavin Hamilton—*Holy Willie* and his priest, Father Auld, after full hearing in the Presbytery of Ayr, came off but second best; owing partly to the oratorical powers of Mr. Robert Aiken, Mr. Hamilton's counsel; but chiefly to Mr. Hamilton's being one of the most irreproachable and truly respectable characters in the county. On losing his process, the muse overheard him at his devotions as follows":—

O Thou, wha in the heavens does dwell,
Wha, as it pleases best Thysel',
Sends ane to heaven and ten to hell,
A' for Thy glory,
And no for ony guid or ill
They've done afore Thee!

I bless and praise Thy matchless might,
Whan thousands Thou hast left in night,
That I am here afore Thy sight,
For gifts and grace,
A burnin' and a shinin' light,
To a' this place.

What was I, or my generation,
That I should get sic exaltation? such
I wha deserve sic just damnation,
For broken laws,

[1] "Holy Willie's Prayer," which Sir Walter Scott characterizes as "a piece of satire, more exquisitely severe than any which Burns afterwards wrote," was composed to aid Gavin Hamilton, the poet's friend and landlord, in his controversy with the Old Light functionaries of "Daddie Auld's" session. The dispute between Mr. Hamilton and the session seems to have originated in a question about the amount of poor rates. Both parties assumed high grounds: Mr. Hamilton absented himself from church, and the session summoned him before them to account for his absence. Other charges were soon added. He was accused of setting out on a journey on Sunday—of neglecting the duty of family worship—and of writing an abusive letter to the session. When the case was brought before the synod, Mr. Aiken, a gentleman possessed of distinguished elocutionary powers, appeared for Mr. Hamilton, and that court, finding the case brought forward more for the gratification of the malicious feelings of individual members of the session than from any motive of duty, stopped the proceedings, and ordered the charges to be expunged from the session records. See further on this subject note to the poetical Epistle to Gavin Hamilton, May 3, 1786. The hero of this poem, by name William Fisher, was a leading member of the Mauchline session (which at that time, indeed, consisted of but three active members—the Rev. William Auld, John Sillars, who afterwards committed suicide, and himself), and, in spite of his sanctimonious pretensions, was rather more inquisitive in the examination of female transgressors than seemed altogether decorous to his brethren. He scrupled not, moreover, to "get fou" when the liquor did not flow at his own cost; and to crown all, it was alleged, that he made free with the money of the poor. "His end," says Allan Cunningham, to whom we are indebted for most of these particulars, "was anything but godly; he drank more than was proper; and during one of his visits to Mauchline, was found dead in a ditch on his way to his own house." For "pilfering the alms of the poor" Burns gibbets him in the "Kirk's Alarm."

Five thousand years 'fore my creation,
Thro' Adam's cause.

When frae my mither's womb I fell, from
Thou might ha'e plungèd me in hell,
To gnash my gums, to weep and wail,
In burnin' lakes,
Whare damnèd devils roar and yell,
Chain'd to their stakes.

Yet I am here, a chosen sample,
To show Thy grace is great and ample;
I'm here a pillar in Thy temple,
Strong as a rock,
A guide, a buckler, an' example
To a' Thy flock.

O L—d, thou kens what zeal I bear,
When drinkers drink, and swearers swear,
And singin' there and dancin' here,
Wi' great an' sma';
For I am keepit by Thy fear,
Free frae them a'.

But yet, O L—d! confess I must,
At times I'm fash'd wi' fleshly lust, troubled
And sometimes too, wi' warldly trust,
Vile self gets in;
But Thou remembers we are dust,
Defil'd in sin.

* * * * * * * *

Maybe Thou lets this fleshy thorn
Buffet Thy servant e'en and morn,
Lest he owre high and proud should turn,
That he's sae gifted;
If sae, Thy han' maun e'en be borne, must
Until thou lift it.

L—d, bless thy chosen in this place,
For here thou hast a chosen race;
But G-d confound their stubborn face,
And blast their name,
Wha bring Thy elders to disgrace,
And public shame.

L—d, mind Gawn Hamilton's deserts,
He drinks, and swears, and plays at cartes, cards
Yet has sae monie takin' arts,
Wi' grit and sma', great
Frae G-d's ain priests the people's hearts
He steals awa'.

And whan we chasten'd him therefor,
Thou kens how he bred sic a splore, knowest riot
As set the warld in a roar
O' laughin at us;
Curse thou his basket and his store,
Kail and potatoes.

L—d, hear my earnest cry and prayer
Against that Presbyt'ry of Ayr;
Thy strong right hand, L—d, mak it bare,
Upo' their heads,
L—d, weigh it down, and dinna spare, do not
For their misdeeds.

O L—d my G—d, that glib-tongu'd Aiken,
My very heart and saul are quakin',
To think how we stood groanin', shakin',
And swat wi' dread,
While he wi' hingin' lip and snakin', hanging sneering
Held up his head.

L—d, in the day of vengeance try him,
L—d, visit them wha did employ him,
And pass not in Thy mercy by 'em,
Nor hear their prayer;
But for Thy people's sake destroy 'em,
An' dinna spare.

But, L—d, remember me and mine
Wi' mercies temp'ral and divine,
That I for gear and grace may shine, wealth
Excell'd by nane,
And a' the glory shall be Thine.
Amen, Amen!

EPITAPH ON HOLY WILLIE.[1]

Here Holy Willie's sair worn clay sorely
Taks up its last abode;
His saul has ta'en some other way,
I fear the left-hand road.

Stop! there he is, as sure's a gun,
Poor silly body, see him;
Nae wonder he's as black's the grun,— ground
Observe wha's standing wi' him!

[1] We are inclined to think that some verses of this very mediocre composition are amissing. Its author did not copy it into the Glenriddell MS. along with the "Prayer," and no copy of it in his handwriting is known to exist. It is highly probable that his maturer taste condemned it.

Your brunstane devilship, I see, — brimstone
Has got him there before ye;
But haud your nine-tail cat a wee, — hold little
Till ance ye've heard my story.

Your pity I will not implore,
For pity ye hae nane; — none
Justice, alas! has gi'en him o'er,
And mercy's day is gane. — gone

But hear me, sir, Deil as ye are,
Look something to your credit;
A coof like him would stain your name, — fool
If it were kent ye did it. — known

EPISTLE TO DAVIE,

A BROTHER POET.[1]

January [1785].

While winds frae aff Ben Lomond blaw, — from off
And bar the doors wi' driving snaw,
And hing us owre the ingle, — hang fireplace
I set me down to pass the time,
And spin a verse or twa o' rhyme,
In hamely westlin jingle. — homely west country

[1] *Davie* was David Sillar, whose father at this time occupied a farm, called Spittleside, within a mile of the village of Tarbolton. Following the recollections of Gilbert Burns, the date of the poem is generally placed in the year 1784, but it is probable that though the poem was forwarded to Sillar in January, 1785, the closing stanzas, at any rate, were not added till well on in that year, as it is doubtful if Burns had any acquaintanceship with "Jean" as early as January, 1785. His first interview with her seems to have taken place in April of that year. Sillar himself thus records the manner of his introduction to the poet. "Robert Burns," he says, "was some time in the parish of Tarbolton prior to my acquaintance with him. His social disposition easily procured him acquaintance; but a certain satirical seasoning with which he and all other poetical geniuses are in some degree influenced, while it set the rustic circle in a roar, was not unaccompanied with suspicious fear. I recollect hearing his neighbours observe he had a great deal to say for himself, and that they suspected his principles. He wore the only tied hair in the parish; and in the church, his plaid, which was of a particular colour (I think fillemot), he wrapped in a peculiar manner round his shoulders. These surmises and his exterior *made me solicitous of his acquaintance.* I was introduced by Gilbert, not only to his brother, but to the whole of that family, where in a short time I became a frequent, and I believe not unwelcome visitant. After the commencement of my acquaintance with the bard we frequently met upon Sundays at church, when, between sermons, instead of going with our friends or lasses to the inn, we often took a walk in the fields. In these walks, I have often been struck with his facility in addressing the fair sex; and many times when I have been bashfully anxious how to express myself, he would have entered into conversation with them with the greatest ease and freedom; and it was generally a death-blow to our conversation, however agreeable, to meet a female acquaintance."

In order to free himself from country labour, for which he had no liking, Sillar opened a small school at Commonside, near Tarbolton, but this not succeeding, he commenced business as a grocer in Irvine, towards the close of 1783. In 1789, tempted probably by the extraordinary success of Burns, he published a volume of very mediocre poems at Kilmarnock, which proved unsuccessful, and Sillar became bankrupt. He afterwards opened a school in Irvine; and applied himself assiduously to his profession, insomuch that he eventually became one of the principal teachers of the place. His whole character, in short, at this period underwent a change; and from being careless and jovial in his habits, he became diligent and parsimonious. In the course of his long life, he thus realized considerable property, and held the office of magistrate in Irvine for two years. In 1811 a large legacy fell to him from a brother, and he abandoned the school. He died in May, 1830, in the seventieth year of his age.

While frosty winds blaw in the drift,
  Ben to the chimla lug, — inwards — chimney ear (corner)
I grudge a wee the great folk's gift, — little
  That live sae bien an' snug: — so comfortable
    I tent less, and want less — heed
      Their roomy fireside:
    But hanker and canker,
      To see their cursèd pride.

It's hardly in a body's power,
To keep, at times, frae being sour,
  To see how things are shar'd;
How best o' chiels are whiles in want, — fellows — sometimes
While coofs on countless thousands rant, — fools
  And ken na how to wair't: — know not — spend it
But, Davie, lad, ne'er fash your head, — trouble
  Tho' we hae little gear, — means
We're fit to win our daily bread,
  As lang's we're hale and fier: — sound
    "Mair speer na, nor fear na,"[1] — more ask not
      Auld age ne'er mind a feg, — fig
    The last o't, the warst o't,
      Is only but to beg.

To lie in kilns and barns at e'en,
When banes are craz'd and bluid is thin,
  Is, doubtless, great distress!
Yet then content could make us blest;
Ev'n then, sometimes we'd snatch a taste
  Of truest happiness.
The honest heart that's free frae a' — from all
  Intended fraud or guile,
However fortune kick the ba',
  Has aye some cause to smile: — always
    And mind still, you'll find still, — remember
      A comfort this nae sma'; — not small
    Nae mair then, we'll care then,
      Nae farther can we fa'. — fall

What tho', like commoners of air,
We wander out, we know not where,
  But either house or hal'? — without — holding
Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,
  Are free alike to all.
In days when daisies deck the ground,
  And blackbirds whistle clear,
With honest joy our hearts will bound,
  To see the coming year:

[1] Ramsay.—R. B.

On braes when we please, then, — slopes
We'll sit an' sowth a tune; — whistle softly
Syne rhyme till't, we'll time till't, — then to it
And sing't when we hae done.[1]

It's no in titles nor in rank,
It's no in wealth like Lon'on bank,
To purchase peace and rest;
It's no in makin' muckle mair: — much more
It's no in books; it's no in lear, — learning
To make us truly blest:
If happiness hae not her seat
And centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest;
Nae treasures, nor pleasures,
Could make us happy lang; — always
The heart aye's the part aye
That makes us right or wrang.

Think ye, that sic as you and I, — such
Wha drudge and drive thro' wet and dry,
Wi' never-ceasing toil;
Think ye, are we less blest than they,
Wha scarcely tent us in their way, — notice
As hardly worth their while?
Alas! how aft in haughty mood,
God's creatures they oppress!
Or else, neglecting a' that's guid,
They riot in excess!
Baith careless, and fearless — both
Of either heav'n or hell!
Esteeming, and deeming
It a' an idle tale!

Then let us cheerfu' acquiesce;
Nor make our scanty pleasures less,
By pining at our state;
And, even should misfortunes come,
I, here wha sit, hae met wi' some,
An's thankfu' for them yet. — and am
They gie the wit of age to youth;
They let us ken oursel': — know ourselves
They make us see the naked truth,
The real guid and ill.
Tho' losses, and crosses,
Be lessons right severe,

[1] The epistle "breathes a noble spirit of independence and of proud contentment dallying with the hardships of its lot, and in the power of manhood regarding the riches that are out of its reach without a particle of envy, and with a haughty scorn."—PROFESSOR WILSON.

There's wit there, ye'll get there,
Ye'll find nae other where.

But tent me, Davie, ace o' hearts! heed
(To say aught less wad wrang the cartes, would wrong cards
And flatt'ry I detest,)
This life has joys for you and I;
And joys that riches ne'er could buy;
And joys the very best.
There's a' the pleasures o' the heart,
The lover an' the frien';
Ye hae your Meg,[1] your dearest part,
And I my darling Jean!
It warms me, it charms me,
To mention but her name:
It heats me, it beets me, kindles
And sets me a' on flame!

O, all ye powers who rule above!
O Thou, whose very self art love!
Thou know'st my words sincere!
The life-blood streaming thro' my heart,
Or my more dear, immortal part,
Is not more fondly dear!
When heart-corroding care and grief
Deprive my soul of rest,
Her dear idea brings relief
And solace to my breast.
Thou Being, All-seeing,
O hear my fervent pray'r;
Still take her, and make her,
Thy most peculiar care!

All hail, ye tender feelings dear!
The smile of love, the friendly tear,
The sympathetic glow;
Long since, this world's thorny ways
Had numbered out my weary days,
Had it not been for you!
Fate still has bless'd me with a friend,
In every care and ill;
And oft a more endearing band,
A tie more tender still.
It lightens, it brightens,
The tenebrific scene,
To meet with, and greet with
My Davie or my Jean.

[1] Robert Chambers tells us that "Meg," at this time Sillar's sweetheart, was "a lass named Margaret Orr, who had the charge of the children of Mrs Stewart of Stair."

O, how that name inspires my style!
The words come skelpin, rank and file, — tripping
  Amaist before I ken! — almost
The ready measure rins as fine, — runs
As Phœbus and the famous Nine
  Were glowrin' owre my pen. — staring
My spaviet Pegasus will limp, — spavined
  Till ance he's fairly het; — once hot
And then he'll hilch, and stilt, and jimp, — halt limp jump
  An' rin an unco fit: — run at a great pace
    But lest then, the beast then,
      Should rue this hasty ride,
    I'll light now, and dight now — wipe
      His sweaty wizen'd hide.

DEATH AND DR. HORNBOOK.

A TRUE STORY.

"'Death and Dr. Hornbook,' though not published in the Kilmarnock edition, was produced early in the year 1785. [John Wilson] the schoolmaster of Tarbolton parish, to eke up the scanty subsistence allowed to that useful class of men, had set up a shop of grocery goods. Having accidentally fallen in with some medical books, and become most hobby-horsically-attached to the study of medicine, he had added the sale of a few medicines to his little trade. He had got a shop-bill printed, at the bottom of which, overlooking his own incapacity, he had advertised, that advice would be given in 'common disorders at the shop gratis.' Robert was at a mason-meeting in Tarbolton, when the dominie unfortunately made too ostentatious a display of his medical skill. As he parted in the evening from this mixture of pedantry and physic, at the place where he describes his meeting with Death, one of those floating ideas of apparition he mentions in his letter to Dr. Moore, crossed his mind: this set him to work for the rest of his way home. These circumstances he related, when he repeated the verses to me next afternoon as I was holding the plough, and he was letting the water off the field beside me."—GILBERT BURNS.

Some books are lies frae end to end, — from
And some great lies were never penn'd,
Ev'n ministers, they hae been kenn'd, — have been known
  In holy rapture,
A rousing whid at times to vend,[1] — lie
  And nail't wi' scripture.

But this that I am gaun to tell, — going
Which lately on a night befell,
Is just as true's the Deil's in h–ll
  Or Dublin city:[2]
That e'er he nearer comes oursel'
  'S a muckle pity. — great

[1] 2nd edit., "Great lies and nonsense baith to vend."

[2] This reference to the presence of "the Deil" in Dublin city is generally left without any attempt at explanation. But in Alexander Smith's edition of Burns (the "Globe"), at page 584 occurs the following note, which may be taken for what it is worth:—"Mr. Robert Wright, in his *Life of Major-General James Wolfe*, states that 'Hell' was the name given to the arched passage in Dublin which led into the area on the south side of Christ Church, and east of the law courts. A representation of the devil, carved in oak, stood above the entrance."

The clachan yill had made me canty, village ale lively
I was na fou, but just had plenty; not tipsy
I stacher'd whyles, but yet took tent aye staggered sometimes heed
To free the ditches;
An' hillocks, stanes, an' bushes, kenn'd aye
Frae ghaists an' witches. from ghosts

The rising moon began to glower stare
The distant Cumnock hills out-owre: -over
To count her horns, wi' a' my power,
I set mysel';
But whether she had three or four,
I cou'd na tell.[1]

I was come round about the hill,
And toddlin' down on Willie's mill,[2]
Setting my staff wi' a' my skill,
To keep me sicker: steady
Tho' leeward whyles, against my will,
I took a bicker. short race

I there wi' Something did forgather, meet
That put me in an eerie swither; dread
An awfu' scythe, out-owre ae shouther, over one shoulder
Clear-dangling, hang;
A three-tae'd leister on the ither fish-spear
Lay, large an' lang.

Its stature seem'd lang Scotch ells twa,
The queerest shape that e'er I saw,
For fient a wame it had ava! deuce a belly at all
And then, its shanks,
They were as thin, as sharp an' sma'
As cheeks o' branks. wooden cheek-pieces of a bridle

"Guid e'en," quo' I; "Friend! hae ye been mawin', mowing
When ither folk are busy sawin'?"[3]
It seem'd to mak a kind o' stan',
But naething spak:

[1] "His brother can set me right, if I am mistaken, when I express a belief, that, at the time when he wrote his story of 'Death and Dr. Hornbook,' he had very rarely been intoxicated, or, perhaps, even much exhilarated by liquor. Yet how happily does he lead his reader into that track of sensations! and with what lively humour does he describe the disorder of his senses and the confusion of his understanding put to test, by a deliberate attempt to count the horns of the moon—

But whether she had three or four,
He cou'd na tell.

Behold, a sudden apparition disperses this disorder, and in a moment chills him into possession of himself! Coming upon no more important mission than the grisly phantom was charged with, what mode of introduction could have been more efficient and appropriate?"—WORDSWORTH.

[2] Tarbolton Mill, on the Faile, close to Tarbolton village, and on the road to Mossgiel; called "Willie's Mill," because then occupied by William Muir, a friend of the Burns family, and a neighbour while they resided at Lochlea.

[3] This rencounter happened in seed-time, 1785.—R. B.—"The humour of Burns was original and successful. He had a strong propensity to view under a ludicrous aspect subjects which he thought zeal or superstition had invested with unnecessary or questionable sanctity. When beating for game, he delighted to push to the very confines of propriety,

At length, says I, "Friend, whare ye gaun? — where are you going
Will ye go back?"

It spak right howe,—"My name is Death, — hollow
But be na fley'd."—Quoth I, "Guid faith, — scared
Ye're maybe come to stap my breath; — stop
But tent me, billie: — heed brother
I red ye weel, tak care o' skaith, — counsel harm
See, there's a gully!" — large knife

"Gudeman," quo' he, "put up your whittle, — knife
I'm no design'd to try its mettle;
But if I did, I wad be kittle;[1] — would be dangerous
To be mislear'd, — mischievous
I wad na mind it, no that spittle
Out-owre my beard.

"Weel, weel!" says I, "a bargain be't;
Come, gie's your hand, an' sae we're gree't; — agreed
We'll ease our shanks an' tak a seat.
Come, gie's your news!
This while ye hae been mony a gate — for some time back road
At mony a house."[2]

"Ay, ay!" quo' he, an' shook his head,
"It's e'en a lang, lang time indeed
Sin' I began to nick the thread, — cut
An' choke the breath:
Folk maun do something for their bread, — must
An' sae maun Death.

"Sax thousand years are nearhand fled — nearly
Sin' I was to the butching bred, — butchering
An' mony a scheme in vain's been laid,
To stap or scaur me; — stop scare
Till ane Hornbook's[3] ta'en up the trade,
An', faith, he'll waur me. — defeat

"Ye ken Jock Hornbook i' the clachan, — know village
Deil mak' his king's-hood[4] in a spleuchan! — stomach into a tobacco-pouch

and to sport on the debatable line between sacred and profane. He was indeed scarcely excelled by Lucian himself, in that species of humour which is produced by debasing objects of the most serious and solemn magnitude, to the level of easy and indifferent familiarity. In the verses on Dr. Hornbook, where the poet relates his interview and social chat with Death, whose bony figure is drawn with equal drollery and correctness, how is the scythe of that dreaded being stript of its terror, when it only serves to suggest this homely and neighbourly address!"—PROFESSOR WALKER.

[1] We adopt Dr. Hately Waddell's punctuation here. The original editions read "kittle to be mislear'd," which is very difficult to explain, though it might perhaps mean "would be dangerous (were I) to be mischievous," or "would be apt to be mischievous."

[2] An epidemical fever was then raging in that country. —R. B.

[3] This gentlemen, Dr. Hornbook, is, professionally, a brother of the Sovereign Order of the Ferula; but, by intuition and inspiration, is at once an Apothecary, Surgeon, and Physician.—R. B.

[4] *King's-hood.* "The second of the four stomachs in ruminating animals; the *Reticulum*, honey-comb or bonnet, from its supposed resemblance to some puckered head-dress formerly worn by persons of rank." —JAMIESON.

He's grown sae weel acquaint wi' Buchan[1]
An' ither chaps,
The weans haud out their fingers laughin' — children
And pouk my hips. — pluck

"See, here's a scythe, and there's a dart,
They hae pierc'd mony a gallant heart;
But Doctor Hornbook, wi' his art,
And cursed skill,
Has made them baith no worth a ——,
Damn'd haet they'll kill. — particle

"'Twas but yestreen, nae farther gaen, — last night gone
I threw a noble throw at ane;
Wi' less, I'm sure, I've hundreds slain;
But deil-ma-care!
It just play'd dirl on the bane, — thud
But did nae mair. — no more

"Hornbook was by, wi' ready art,
And had sae fortified the part,
That when I looked to my dart,
It was sae blunt
Fient haet o't wad hae pierc'd the heart — deuce a bit
Of a kail-runt. — colewort stem

"I drew my scythe in sic a fury,
I nearhand cowpit wi' my hurry, — nearly tumbled over
But yet the bauld apothecary
Withstood the shock;
I might as weel hae tried a quarry
O' hard whin rock.

* * * * * * * *

"And then a' doctors' saws and whittles, — knives
Of a' dimensions, shapes, an' mettles,
A' kinds o' boxes, mugs, an' bottles,
He's sure to hae;
Their Latin names as fast he rattles
As A B C.

"Calces o' fossils, earths, and trees;
True sal-marinum o' the seas;
The farina of beans and pease,
He has't in plenty;
Aqua-fontis, what you please,
He can content ye.

"Forbye some new, uncommon weapons, — besides
Urinus spiritus of capons;

[1] Buchan's *Domestic Medicine*.—R. B.

Or mite-horn shavings, filings, scrapings,
Distill'd *per se;*
Sal-alkali o' midge-tail-clippings,
And mony mae." many more

"Wae's me for Johnny Ged's[1] Hole now,"
Quo' I, "if that thae news be true! those
His braw calf-ward[2] whare gowans grew, calf paddock daisies
Sae white and bonnie,
Nae doubt they'll rive it wi' the plew; plough
They'll ruin Johnny!"

The creature grain'd an eldritch laugh groaned elvish
And says, "Ye need na yoke the pleugh,
Kirkyards will soon be till'd eneugh,
Tak ye nae fear:
They'll a' be trench'd wi' mony a sheugh furrow
In twa-three year.

"Whare I kill'd ane a fair strae-death, death in bed
By loss o' blood or want o' breath,
This night I'm free to tak my aith, oath
That Hornbook's skill
Has clad a score i' their last claith, cloth
By drap and pill.

"An honest wabster to his trade, weaver
Whase wife's twa nieves were scarce weel bred, fists
Gat tippence-worth to mend her head,
When it was sair; sore
The wife slade cannie to her bed, slid quietly
But ne'er spak mair.

"A countra laird had ta'en the batts, landowner botts
Or some curmurring in his guts, rumbling
His only son for Hornbook sets,
An' pays him well.
The lad, for twa guid gimmer pets, young ewes
Was laird himsel'.

* * * * * * * * *

"That's just a swatch o' Hornbook's way; sample
Thus goes he on from day to day,
Thus does he poison, kill, an' slay,
An's weel paid for't;
Yet stops me o' my lawfu' prey,
Wi' his damn'd dirt.

[1] The grave-digger.—R. B.

[2] A small inclosure for calves; here applied to the churchyard, in which calves may have sometimes been pastured. It used to be by no means uncommon to see the minister's cattle feeding in country churchyards.

"But, hark! I'll tell you of a plot,
Tho' dinna ye be speaking o't; — do not
I'll nail the self-conceited sot,
As dead's a herrin':
Niest time we meet, I'll wad a groat, — next bet
He gets his fairin'!" — deserts

But just as he began to tell,
The auld kirk-hammer strak the bell — struck
Some wee short hour ayont the twal, — beyond twelve
Which rais'd us baith:
I took the way that pleas'd mysel',
And sae did Death.[1]

[1] This satire led to the removal of John Wilson, the prototype of Dr. Hornbook, to Glasgow, where he continued his old profession of schoolmaster. "He first taught in the High Street, having succeeded there to a school kept, we believe, by Mr. Meikleham, before that gentleman obtained the professorship of natural philosophy in the University of Glasgow. He afterwards (somewhere about the year 1807) was fortunate enough to be elected session-clerk to the Gorbals, which office he held up to the period of his death in 1839. At the time when Dr. Hornbook obtained the session-clerkship, the Gorbals formed but a small suburb of Glasgow, with a population of perhaps eight or ten thousand. It has since then—in a period of about thirty years (1846)—increased with a rapidity scarcely to be equalled even in the New World, and now forms a large and important section of the western metropolis, with a population of some seventy or eighty thousand souls. The emoluments of a Gorbals session-clerk in Wilson's time were entirely dependent on the registration of births and marriages, and great, therefore, was his good fortune in obtaining a situation where births and marriages were so marvellously on the increase. The office, in short, which in 1807 only produced a moderate income, speedily rose to be a lucrative one, and was every year, while Wilson retained it, on the increase.

"In connection with his session-clerkship, Wilson kept a school in the Gorbals, where he taught the common branches of education. The writer of this note had the—shall we say honour, or felicity, or both?—of being taught to write and cast accounts by the far-famed Dr. Hornbook. He was, as we remember him, a decent, dumpy elderly gentleman, dressed in black, with just enough of corpulency to give him 'a presence,' and a pair of stout little legs, inclined to the crooked, the attractions of which were fully developed through the medium of black tights and black silk stockings. He wore a brown wig, took snuff largely, and had a look of great complacency. He was a good teacher, and in general of easy temper, though subject to gusts of passion. He was extremely partial to the girls in the school, and often for days devoted almost exclusively his attention to them, much to the satisfaction of the boys. In arithmetic, decimals were his hobby; fractions he despised: everything should be done by decimals. In decimals he felt that his strength lay. After succeeding in solving an intricate account, he would take a large snuff, and, with a soft sigh, say, 'There!—I'm thinking that would fash twa-three on the ither side o' the water that keep up grand academies!' Self-complacency, indeed—for it scarcely amounted to self-conceit—was his most prominent failing. Everything in his school was the best, and his way of doing everything was the best. This failing was aggravated by his parsimony, of which he got the name. His scholars must all buy their paper and pens from him:—there were no copy-books at all to be compared to *his* copy-books—no quills ever to be mentioned in the same breath with *his* pinions! If a scholar ventured to bring quills of his own from his father's counting-house, with what gusto did he split them up and hew them down, muttering all the while, 'Trash! Trash!'

"The self-complacency of the Gorbals session-clerk we can very well believe to have been just a modification, brought about by years, of the self-conceit of the Tarbolton dominie which provoked the satire of Burns. Wilson has been heard to say, 'I have often wondered what set Robert Burns upon me, for we were aye on the best of terms.' But with all its severity, the satire is levelled *only* at the presumption of Wilson in affecting a knowledge of medicine, and it is quite possible that the poet might laugh at that, and yet hold the dominie in considerable esteem.

"The boys in the school knew that people called their master 'Dr. Hornbook,' although they did not very well understand the reason. On one occasion only did we hear the name used in his presence. He had come behind a boy who was trifling, and pulled his ears. The boy, a resolute and stubborn one, turned about, and said, 'What's that for, you—you—DOCTOR HORNBOOK!!' Upon which Hornbook struck him a blow on the head with a ruler, so violent that the boy fell insensible on the floor. He speedily recovered, but from that day never returned to the school."—ALEXANDER WHITELAW.

"The true story of 'Death and Dr. Hornbook' has only recently been made known on the reputed authority of Thomas Borland, a member of the Bachelor's Club, who was present on the occasion which gave it birth; it was a Mutual Improvement Society, founded by Burns—its first chairman and ruling spirit—meeting monthly for reading essays and debating thereon. The

EPISTLE TO JOHN LAPRAIK,[1]

AN OLD SCOTTISH BARD.

APRIL 1st, 1785.

"The 'Epistle to Lapraik' was produced exactly on the occasion described by the author. He says in that poem, 'On Fasten-e'en we had a rockin'.' I believe he has omitted the word *rocking* in the glossary. It is a term derived from those primitive times, when the countrywomen employed their spare hours in spinning on the rock or distaff. This simple implement is a very portable one, and well fitted to the social inclination of meeting in a neighbour's house; hence the phrase of *going a-rocking*, or *with the rock*. As the connection the phrase had with the implement was forgotten when the rock gave place to the spinning-wheel, the phrase came to be used by both sexes on social occasions, and men talked of going with their rocks as well as women. It was at one of these rockings at our house, when we had twelve or fifteen young people with their rocks, that Lapraik's song beginning 'When I upon thy bosom lean,' was sung, and we were informed who was the author. Upon this Robert wrote his first epistle to Lapraik, and his second in reply to Lapraik's answer."—GILBERT BURNS.

While briers an' woodbines budding green,
An' paitricks scraichin' loud at e'en, partridges screeching
An' morning poussie whiddin' seen, hare running quickly
Inspire my muse,
This freedom in an unknown frien',
I pray excuse.

young schoolmaster (John Wilson) was one of its members; it has been erroneously stated of him that he sold 'drugs,' which was not the case; most probably he contemplated preparing for the medical profession if circumstances proved favourable, at any rate his thoughts were turned in that direction. 'He's grown sae weel acquaint wi' Buchan, and ither chaps,' was quite true, and when his turn came to announce an essay he proposed 'Medicine,' a subject for discussion which caused much amusement, and so excited the poet's fancy on his way home, that the following morning saw the poem finished in the form we know so well. 'The clachan yill had made me canty,' was simply a poet's license, as it was a temperance meeting so far as drinking was concerned. There was no bad feeling or evil intention on the part of Burns towards Wilson, the popularity and annoyance that resulted were neither foreseen nor desired, but the poem conferred an unenviable notoriety upon its victim, and was carried beyond a joke when some neighbour in a wicked humour wrote, and posted on his door 'Advice Gratis,' a climax the schoolmaster little relished, ~~but~~ was helpless under its infliction."—From the preface to *The Burns Calendar*, a Manual of Burnsiana. Kilmarnock: James M'Kie, 1874.

[1] John Lapraik was born in 1727, at the farm of Laigh Dalfram, about three miles west of Muirkirk, in the east of Ayrshire. This property had been long in the possession of his family; and being the eldest son, he succeeded to it on the death of his father. In 1754 he married Margaret Rankine of Lochhead (sister to the "rough, rude, ready-witted Rankine"), whom, however, he had the misfortune to lose after giving birth to her fifth child. A few years afterwards, in 1766, he married the daughter of a neighbouring farmer, Janet Anderson of Lightshaw, the subject of the song which drew forth the first epistle of Burns. At the time of his second marriage, and for some years afterwards, he was still in Dalfram, but the bursting of that "villanous bubble," as Burns calls it, the Ayr Bank, involved him and many families of Ayrshire in ruin. He was obliged to let his own lands of Dalfram, and retire first to Muirsmill, a small farm in the vicinity, afterwards to Netherwood, a farm on the water of Greenock (a tributary of the Ayr), and again back to Muirsmill. Eventually he sold off his property, but the sale of his land failed to rid him of his liabilities; and the unfortunate man was thrown into prison. It is said that the song addressed to his wife, which excited so strongly the admiration of Burns, was composed while Lapraik was immured within the walls of Ayr jail. It furnishes a beautiful model of conjugal affection.

When I upon thy bosom lean,
And fondly clasp thee a' my ain,
I glory in the sacred ties,
That made us ane, wha ance were twain.
A mutual flame inspires us baith—
The tender look, the melting kiss;
Even years shall ne'er destroy our love,
But only gie us change o' bliss.

Hae I a wish? It's a' for thee:
I ken thy wish is me to please:
Our moments pass so smooth away,
That numbers on us look and gaze.
Weel pleas'd they see our happy days,
Nor envy's sel' finds aught to blame;
And aye when weary cares arise,
Thy bosom still shall be my hame.

I'll lay me there, and tak my rest;
And if that aught disturb my dear,
I'll bid her laugh her cares away,
And beg her not to drap a tear.
Hae I a joy? It's a' her ain:
United still her heart and mine;
They're like the woodbine round the tree
That's twined till death shall them dis-join.

On Fasten-e'en we had a rockin',[1] Shrove-Tuesday social gathering
To ca' the crack and weave our stockin'; chat together
And there was muckle fun an' jokin', much
Ye need na doubt;
At length we had a hearty yokin' bout
At sang about. song by turns

There was ae sang, amang the rest, one song
Aboon them a' it pleased me best, above
That some kind husband had addrest
To some sweet wife:
It thirl'd the heart-strings thro' the breast, thrilled
A' to the life.

I've scarce heard ought describe sae weel, so well
What gen'rous, manly bosoms feel;
Thought I, "Can this be Pope, or Steele,
Or Beattie's wark!"
They tauld me 'twas an odd kind chiel fellow
About Muirkirk.

It pat me fidgin'-fain to hear't, put me fidgeting
And sae about him there I spier't, inquired
Then a' that kent him round declar'd knew
He had ingine, genius
That nane excell'd it, few cam near't,
It was sae fine.

That set him to a pint of ale,
An' either douce or merry tale, grave
Or rhymes an' sangs he'd made himsel',
Or witty catches,

Unfortunately, according to Robert Chambers, "Lapraik must have stolen the ideas and nearly all the diction of his song from a poem in Ruddiman's *Weekly Magazine*, October 1773." About 1798, Lapraik, then far advanced in years, removed to Muirkirk, and opened a small public-house, which served at the same time as the village post-office. Here he lived much respected till his death, which took place on the 7th May, 1807, in the eightieth year of his age.

Burns addressed in all *three* poetical epistles to Lapraik. Two were published in his first and second editions, and the third appeared for the first time in Cromek's *Reliques of Burns*. The replies of Lapraik are all unfortunately lost, and if they were in rhyme, it is singular that none of them are given in his own volume, although that volume contains an epistle to the poet of a late date, consisting chiefly of an apology for his attempting to court the muse in his old age. One of Lapraik's sons, alive in 1841, recollected having been the bearer of several communications betwixt his father and Burns, who was then at Mossgiel. On the first occasion, he found the poet in a field sowing corn. "I'm no sure if I ken the han'," said Burns, as he took the letter; but no sooner had he glanced at its contents, than unconsciously letting go the sheet containing the grain, it was not till he had finished reading that he discovered the loss he had sustained. Burns and Lapraik met several times, to their mutual satisfaction. On one occasion, in the winter of 1785, according to a promise made in his third epistle, Burns visited Lapraik at Muirsmill, where he dined, spent a merry evening, and next morning took his departure for Mossgiel.

Lapraik's poems were published in 1788 at Kilmarnock, forming a thin 8vo volume entitled *Poems on Several Occasions*. In an address to Burns, he confesses that he never thought of troubling the world with his "dull, insipid, thowless rhyme,"

> Till your kind muse, wi' friendly blast,
> First tooted up my fame,
> And sounded loud thro' a' the wast,
> My lang forgotten name.

Lapraik's own estimate of his rhymes thus given is a tolerably just one. The address to his wife quoted above is much superior to the rest.

[1] This term is explained in introductory note to poem.

'Tween Inverness and Tiviotdale,
He had few matches.

Then up I gat, and swoor an aith, — swore
Tho' I should pawn my pleugh and graith, — harness
Or die a cadger pownie's death, — hawker pony
At some dyke-back, — behind some fence
A pint an' gill I'd gie them baith — both
To hear your crack. — chat

But, first an' foremost, I should tell,
Amaist as soon as I could spell, — almost
I to the crambo-jingle fell, — rhyming
Tho' rude an' rough,
Yet, crooning to a body's sel', — one's self
Does weel eneugh.

I am nae poet, in a sense,
But just a rhymer like by chance,
An' hae to learning nae pretence,
Yet, what the matter?
Whene'er my muse does on me glance,
I jingle at her.

Your critic-folk may cock their nose,
And say, "How can you e'er propose,
You wha ken hardly verse frae prose, — from
To mak a sang?"
But by your leave, my learned foes,
Ye're maybe wrang.

What's a' your jargon o' your schools,
Your Latin names for horns an' stools;
If honest nature made you fools,
What sairs your grammars? — avail (serves)
Ye'd better ta'en up spades and shools, — shovels
Or knappin' hammers. — stone-breaking

A set o' dull, conceited hashes, — boobies
Confuse their brains in college classes!
They gang in stirks, and come out asses, — young bullocks
Plain truth to speak;
An' syne they think to climb Parnassus — then
By dint o' Greek!

Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire, — one
That's a' the learning I desire;
Then tho' I drudge thro' dub an' mire — puddle
At pleugh or cart,
My muse, tho' hamely in attire,
May touch the heart.

O for a spunk o' Allan's[1] glee, — spark
Or Fergusson's, the bauld and slee, — sly
Or bright Lapraik's, my friend to be
If I can hit it!
That would be lear enough for me, — learning
If I could get it.

Now, sir, if ye hae friends enow, — enough
Tho' real friends, I believe, are few,
Yet, if your catalogue be fu',
I'se no insist, — I shall not
But gif ye want ae friend that's true,
I'm on your list.

I winna blaw about mysel'; — will not boast
As ill I like my fauts to tell;
But friends, and folk that wish me well,
They sometimes roose me, — praise
Tho' I maun own, as monie still — must
As far abuse me.

There's ae wee faut they whyles lay to me, — sometimes
I like the lasses—Gude forgie me!
For mony a plack[2] they wheedle frae me, — farthing
At dance or fair;
Maybe some ither thing they gie me,
They weel can spare.

But Mauchline race,[3] or Mauchline fair,
I should be proud to meet you there;
We'se gie ae night's discharge to care, — we shall give one
If we forgather, — meet
An' hae a swap o' rhymin'-ware
Wi' ane anither.

We four-gill chap, we'se gar him clatter, — pint-measure we shall make
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,
Nor hear your crack. — talk

[1] Allan Ramsay's.
[2] An old Scotch copper coin, in value one-third of a penny English.
[3] Mauchline races were celebrated on the high road near Mossgiel.

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.

But, to conclude my lang epistle,
As my auld pen's worn to the gristle;
Twa lines frae you wad gar me fissle, would make me fidget
Who am, most fervent,
While I can either sing or whistle,
Your friend and servant.

SECOND EPISTLE TO JOHN LAPRAIK.

APRIL 21st, 1785.

While new-ca'd kye rowte at the stake, newly-calved cows bellow
An' pownies reek in pleugh or braik, harrow
This hour on e'enin's edge I take,
To own I'm debtor
To honest-hearted, auld Lapraik,
For his kind letter.

Forjesket sair, wi' weary legs, sorely jaded
Rattlin' the corn out-owre the rigs, over the ridges
Or dealing thro' amang the naigs nags
Their ten-hours' bite, ten o'clock
My awkwart muse sair pleads and begs sorely
I would na write.

The tapetless ramfeezl'd hizzie, thoughtless overspent hussy
She's saft at best, and something lazy,
Quo' she, "Ye ken, we've been sae busy,
This month an' mair, more
That trouth, my head is grown right dizzie, in truth
An' something sair." sore

Her dowff excuses pat me mad; spiritless put
"Conscience," says I, "ye thowless jad! pithless
I'll write, an' that a hearty blaud, quantity
This vera night;
So dinna ye affront your trade,
But rhyme it right.

"Shall bauld Lapraik, the king o' hearts,
Tho' mankind were a pack o' cartes, cards

Roose you sae weel for your deserts, praise
In terms sae friendly,
Yet ye'll neglect to shaw your parts,
An' thank him kindly!"

Sae I gat paper in a blink, twinkling
An' down gaed stumpie in the ink; went the short quill
Quoth I, "Before I sleep a wink,
I vow I'll close it;
An' if ye winna mak it clink, rhyme
By Jove, I'll prose it!"

Sae I've begun to scrawl, but whether
In rhyme or prose, or baith thegither, both together
Or some hotch-potch that's rightly neither,
Let time mak proof;
But I shall scribble down some blether nonsense
Just clean aff-loof. off-hand

My worthy friend, ne'er grudge an' carp,
Tho' fortune use you hard an' sharp;
Come, kittle up your moorland harp tickle
Wi' gleesome touch!
Ne'er mind how fortune waft an' warp:
She's but a b-tch.

She's gi'en me monie a jirt an' fleg, jerk and kick
Sin' I could striddle owre a rig; stride over a ridge
But, by the L—d, tho' I should beg
Wi' lyart pow, grey head
I'll laugh, an' sing, an' shake my leg,
As lang's I dow! can

Now comes the sax and twentieth simmer
I've seen the bud upo' the timmer, timber
Still persecuted by the limmer jade
Frae year to year; from
But yet, despite the kittle kimmer, fickle girl
I, Rob, am here.

Do ye envý the city gent,
Behint a kist to lie and sklent, counter act crookedly
Or purse-proud, big wi' cent. per cent.
And muckle wame, big belly
In some bit brugh to represent burgh
A bailie's name?

Or is't the paughty feudal Thane, haughty
Wi' ruffl'd sark an' glancin' cane, shirt
Wha thinks himsel' nae sheep-shank bane,[1] bone
But lordly stalks,

[1] Equivalent to our "no small beer;" *i.e.* is full of conceit.

While caps and bonnets aff are ta'en,
As by he walks?

O Thou wha gies us each guid gift!
Gie me o' wit an' sense a lift,
Then turn me, if Thou please, adrift,
Thro' Scotland wide;
Wi' cits nor lairds I wadna shift, land-owners would not
In a' their pride!

Were this the charter of our state,
"On pain o' hell be rich an' great,"
Damnation then would be our fate,
Beyond remead;
But, thanks to Heav'n! that's no the gate way
We learn our creed.

For thus the royal mandate ran,
When first the human race began,
"The social, friendly, honest man,
Whate'er he be,
'Tis he fulfils great Nature's plan,
And none but he!"

O mandate glorious and divine!
The ragged followers of the Nine,
Poor, thoughtless devils! yet may shine
In glorious light,
While sordid sons of Mammon's line
Are dark as night.

Tho' here they scrape, an' squeeze, an' growl,
Their worthless nievefu' of a soul handful
May in some future carcase howl,
The forest's fright;
Or in some day-detesting owl
May shun the light.

Then may Lapraik and Burns arise,
To reach their native, kindred skies,
And sing their pleasures, hopes, an' joys
In some mild sphere,
Still closer knit in friendship's ties
Each passing year.

TO WILLIAM SIMSON,[1]

SCHOOLMASTER, OCHILTREE.

MAY, 1785.

I gat your letter, winsome Willie;
Wi' gratfu' heart I thank you brawlie; — heartily
Tho' I maun say't, I wad be silly, — must would
An' unco vain, — very
Should I believe, my coaxin' billie, — brother
Your flatterin' strain.

But I'se believe ye kindly meant it, — I shall
I sud be laith to think ye hinted — should be loath
Ironic satire, sidelin's sklented — obliquely directed
On my poor musie;
Tho' in sic phrasin' terms ye've penn'd it, — flattering
I scarce excuse ye.

My senses wad be in a creel,[2] — basket
Should I but dare a hope to speel, — climb
Wi' Allan,[3] or wi' Gilbertfield,[4]
The braes o' Fame; — hillsides
Or Fergusson, the writer-chiel, — lawyer-fellow
A deathless name.

(O Fergusson! thy glorious parts
Ill suited law's dry, musty arts!
My curse upon your whunstane hearts, — whinstone
Ye E'nbrugh gentry!
The tythe o' what ye waste at cartes, — cards
Wad stow'd his pantry!) — would have stored

Yet when a tale comes i' my head,
Or lasses gie my heart a screed, — rent
As whyles they're like to be my dead, — sometimes death
(O sad disease!)
I kittle up my rustic reed; — tickle
It gies me ease.

[1] William Simson was the schoolmaster of the parish school of Ochiltree at the time his correspondence with the poet began. In the year 1788, he became teacher of the parish school of Cumnock, which office he retained with great credit till the period of his death in 1815. Simson had a turn for poetry, and besides several translations, left a MS. volume of original pieces which are said to have been superior to those of Lapraik and Sillar. The poetical letter which called forth the epistle of Burns is unfortunately lost. The acquaintance of Burns and William Simson was not confined to epistolary intercourse. They had many personal meetings, and were on terms of close friendship. In another note, we shall have occasion to speak of Simson, in connection with the "Answer to the Epistle from a Tailor."

[2] *To have one's wits in a creel*, is explained by Burns in his own glossary—to be crazed, to be fascinated.

[3] Allan Ramsay.

[4] William Hamilton of Gilbertfield (1665–1751), author of "Willie was a Wanton Wag" and other Scotch poems.

Auld Coila[1] now may fidge fu' fain, — fidget full fain
She's gotten poets o' her ain, — own
Chiels wha their chanters winna hain, — fellows pipes will not spare
But tune their lays,
Till echoes a' resound again
Her weel-sung praise.

Nae poet thought her worth his while,
To set her name in measur'd style;
She lay like some unkenn'd-of isle
Beside New Holland,
Or whare wild-meeting oceans boil
Besouth Magellan. — south of

Ramsay an' famous Fergusson
Gied Forth an' Tay a lift aboon; — above
Yarrow an' Tweed to monie a tune,
Owre Scotland rings, — over
While Irwin, Lugar, Ayr, an' Doon,
Naebody sings.

Th' Illissus, Tiber, Thames, an' Seine,
Glide sweet in monie a tunefu' line!
But, Willie, set your fit to mine, — foot
An' cock your crest,
We'll gar our streams and burnies shine — make brooklets
Up wi' the best.

We'll sing auld Coila's plains an' fells,
Her moors red-brown wi' heather bells,
Her banks an' braes, her dens and dells, — slopes
Where glorious Wallace
Aft bure the gree, as story tells, — carried off the palm
Frae southron billies. — fellows

At Wallace' name what Scottish blood
But boils up in a spring-tide flood!
Oft have our fearless fathers strode
By Wallace' side,
Still pressing onward, red-wat-shod, — with shoes wet and red with blood
Or glorious died.[2]

O, sweet are Coila's haughs an' woods, — holms
When lintwhites chant amang the buds, — linnets
And jinkin' hares, in amorous whids, — dodging bounds
Their loves enjoy,
While thro' the braes the cushat croods — coos
With wailfu' cry!

[1] Coila, Kyle, the central district of Ayrshire, with Cunningham on the north and Carrick on the south.

[2] "The story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins, which will boil along there till the floodgates of life shut in eternal rest."—BURNS'S LETTER TO DR. MOORE.

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-furious 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, — found
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!

The warly race may drudge an' drive, — worldly
Hog-shouther,[1] jundie, stretch, an' strive— — jostle, push
Let me fair Nature's face descrive, — describe
And I, wi' pleasure,
Shall let the busy, grumbling hive
Bum owre their treasure. — hum over

Farewell, "my rhyme-composing brither!" — [other
We've been owre lang unkenn'd to ither: — too long unknown to each
Now let us lay our heads thegither, — together
In love fraternal:
May Envy wallop in a tether, — dangle in a rope
Black fiend, infernal!

While highlandmen hate tolls and taxes,
While moorlan' herds like guid fat braxies,[2]
While terra firma on her axis
Diurnal turns,
Count on a friend, in faith an' practice,
In Robert Burns.

POSTSCRIPT.

My memory's no worth a preen: — pin
I had amaist forgotten clean, — almost
Ye bade me write you what they mean
By this New-light,[3]

[1] *Hog-shouther*, that is "hog-shoulder," means to jostle or push with the shoulders like hogs (sheep).

[2] A name for a sheep that has died naturally or by accident, regarded and claimed as the shepherd's perquisite.

[3] A cant term for those religious opinions, which Dr. Taylor of Norwich has defended so strenuously. —R. B.——In regard to the New Light and Old Light controversy see note to the "Two Herds," p. 233.

'Bout which our herds sae aft hae been — shepherds so often
Maist like to fight. — almost

In days when mankind were but callans — boys
At grammar, logic, an' sic talents, — such
They took nae pains their speech to balance,
Or rules to gie,
But spak their thoughts in plain, braid lallans, — broad Lowland speech
Like you or me.

In thae auld times, they thought the moon, — those
Just like a sark or pair o' shoon, — shirt shoes
Wore by degrees, till her last roon, — shred
Gaed past their viewing, — went
An' shortly after she was done,
They gat a new one. — got

This past for certain, undisputed;
It ne'er cam' i' their heads to doubt it,
Till chiels gat up an' wad confute it, — fellows got would
An' ca'd it wrang;
An' muckle din there was about it,
Baith loud and lang. — both

Some herds, weel learn'd upo' the beuk, — book
Wad threap auld folk the thing misteuk: — would maintain mistook
For 'twas the auld moon turn'd a neuk, — corner
An' out o' sight,
An' backlins-coming, to the leuk, — backwards look
She grew more bright.

This was denied, it was affirm'd;
The herds an' hirsels were alarm'd; — shepherds and flocks
The rev'rend gray-beards rav'd and storm'd,
That beardless laddies
Should think they better were inform'd
Than their auld daddies.

Frae less to mair it gaed to sticks; — went
Frae words an' aiths to clours an' nicks; — oaths blows and cuts
An' monie a fallow gat his licks, — got a beating
Wi' hearty crunt; — bang
An' some, to learn them for their tricks,
Were hang'd an' brunt. — burnt

This game was play'd in monie lands,
An' Auld-light caddies bure sic hands, — fellows bore such
That, faith, the youngsters took the sands
Wi' nimble shanks,
Till lairds forbade, by strict commands, — land-owners
Sic bluidy pranks. — such bloody

But New-light herds gat sic a cowe, — got such a fright
Folk thought them ruin'd stick-an'-stowe, — stump and rump
Till now amaist on ev'ry knowe, — knoll
Ye'll find ane plac'd;
An' some their New-light fair avow,
Just quite barefac'd.

Nae doubt the Auld-light flocks are bleatin';
Their zealous herds are vex'd an' sweatin'; — shepherds
Mysel', I've even seen them greetin' — crying
Wi' girnin' spite, — grinning
To hear the moon sae sadly lied on
By word an' write.

But shortly they will cowe the louns! — quell the rascals
Some Auld-light herds in neebor towns — neighbour
Are mind't, in things they ca' balloons,
To take a flight,
An' stay a month amang the moons
An' see them right.

Guid observation they will gie them;
An' when the auld moon's gaun to lea'e them, — going to leave
The hindmost shaird, they'll fetch it wi' them, — shred
Just i' their pouch,
An' when the New-light billies see them, — fellows
I think they'll crouch!

Sae, ye observe that a' this clatter — idle talk
Is naething but a "moonshine matter;"
But tho' dull prose-folk Latin splatter — splutter
In logic tulzie, — contention
I hope, we bardies ken some better — know
Than mind sic brulzie. — such broil

END OF VOL. I.