

Robt. Burns



ADAM FERGUSON. FERGUSON, JR. JOSEPH BLACK, M.D. JOHN HOME, *Author of* "DOUGLAS."

BURNS. SCOTT DUGALD STEWART. ADAM SMITH. DR. JAMES HUTTON, *Geologist.*

THE MEETING OF BURNS AND SCOTT

In SCIENNES HOUSE, EDINBURGH, the residence of Professor ADAM FERGUSON.

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THE BIRTH PLACE OF BURNS—AS IT NOW STANDS, 1896.

Photographed March 26, 1896.

THE SONGS OF BURNS.

INTRODUCTION.

GOETHE, talking one day with Eckermann on the conditions amid which a talent may be most speedily and happily developed, instanced among those conditions the necessity of a great deal of intellect and sound culture being current in a nation. Proceeding to illustrate his position by the case of Burns, he asked concerning him: "How is he great, except through the circumstance that the whole songs of his predecessors lived in the mouth of the people—that they were, so to speak, sung at his cradle; that, as a boy, he grew up amongst them, and the high excellence of these models so pervaded him that he had therein a living basis on which he could proceed further? Again, why is he great, but from this, that his own songs at once found susceptible ears amongst his compatriots; that, sung by reapers and sheaf-binders, they at once greeted him in the field; and that his boon-companions sang them to welcome him at the ale-house?"

The history of literature furnishes many illustrations of the fostering influence of great periods of national life. When noble deeds hold the stage of history and lofty ideas have captured a nation's imagination, no department of life responds sooner to their influence than that of literature. "The great tragic art of Athens," says Professor Jebb, "was completely developed in less than fifty years." But that was the age of Pericles. In our own history this achievement may be paralleled from the "spacious times of great Elizabeth." As Professor Dowden remarks, life ran high in our islands then, and "when men cared thus about human life, their imagination craved living pictures and visions of it. They liked to represent to themselves



The Birthplace of Burns—Interior.

men and women in all passionate and mirthful aspects and circumstances of life. Sculpture, which the Greeks so loved, would not have satisfied them, for it was too simple and too calm; music would not have been sufficient, for it is too purely an expression of feelings, and says too little about actions and events. The art which suited the temper of their imagination was the drama." It must not be supposed that this is an instantaneous process. The white light of genius is not stored in a handy reservoir, ready to be turned on in full blaze whenever a new demigod appears among men. The kindling influence must have time to act. Here a torch and there a torch touches itself at the source of light, and by and by comes the master-hand which gathers all these light-points within its grasp, quickens their effulgence with its own fiercer flame, and holds aloft the beacon of an age. It is only in one aspect that the dictum of Goethe can be applied to Burns. His was not an age of heroes. "One feels painfully in his poems," notes Charles Kingsley, "the want of great characters; and still more painfully that he has not drawn them, simply because they were not there to draw." But although deprived of that source of inspiration, Burns undoubtedly worked from that "living basis" to which Goethe refers.



The Birthplace of Burns.
From the Original Sketch by T. Stothard, R.A., 1812.

Scotland has long held the reputation of being a nation of singers. It has been stated, according to Sir George Douglas, that the nation has given birth to no fewer than two hundred thousand poets! One feature of Scottish poetry is probably unique in the history of literature, *i.e.*, the enormous bulk of anonymous verse. For many generations the songs of these nameless singers lived almost solely in the memory of the people; they had no fixed literary form such as a song printed direct from its author's manuscript possesses; and as they passed from mind to mind among a poetic people their flaws were one by one removed, until the final perfected result justified the anonymity of the authorship, inasmuch as the nation and not one man was responsible for the product. This process was fatal to mediocrity. No songs but the fittest would survive under such conditions. This is one reason why the songs prior to Burns are of far greater merit than those written after him: the former had to stand the test of oral transmission, the latter were printed irrespective of merit. When Allan Ramsay set about compiling his *Tea-Table Miscellany* of "choice songs" (published in 1724), the work of selection was comparatively easy; time had pruned the legacy of Scottish song with a more ruthless hand than that of the most fastidious editor. To Ramsay succeeded David Herd in 1769 with his *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs*, and a study of these two collections is necessary if one would grasp the extent of Burns's indebtedness to the old singers. Principal Shairp is well within the facts of the case when he remarks: "Instead of saying that Burns created Scottish song, it would be more true to say that Scottish

song created Burns, and that in him it culminated." Carlyle appears to have been profoundly ignorant of the song-heritage into which Burns entered, or he would not have done those old and nameless singers of his country the injustice of shutting his eyes to the worth and importance of their work. Not all the praise belongs to the perfected rose-blossom; to soil, darkly-hidden root, spinal-cord stem, and many-mouthed leaves some share in its glory is due.



DALRYMPLE.
Where the Poet went to School.

Burns himself, in various ways, makes ample confession of his indebtedness to his predecessors. In that memorable autobiographic letter to Dr. Moore, he instanced some of the literary factors which had influenced him most, electing for special mention among the books of his little library a *Select Collection of Songs*. Of this book he wrote: "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 true, tender, or sublime, from affectation and fustian. I am convinced I owe to this practice much of my critic-craft, such as it is." Such a study by such a mind as that of Burns could not fail of lasting effect. What he owed to it in his command of different forms of metre and knowledge of the craft of poesy it is difficult to over-estimate With regard to the special subject of Scots song it may be doubted whether any other man of his generation had a wider knowledge of that branch of literature. Take a few of his *obiter dicta* in proof thereof:—

"There is a great irregularity in the old Scotch songs, a redundancy of syllables with respect to that exactness of accent and measure that the English poetry requires, but which glides in, most melodiously, with the respective tunes to which they are set. . . . There is a degree of wild irregularity in many of the compositions and fragments which are daily sung to them by my compeers, the common people—a certain happy arrangement of old Scotch syllables, and yet, very frequently, nothing, not even like rhyme, or sameness of jingle, at the ends of the lines. This has made me sometimes imagine that perhaps it might be possible for a Scotch poet, with a nice judicious ear, to set compositions to many of our most favourite airs, particularly that class of them above mentioned, independent of rhyme altogether."



AULD BRIG O' DOON.

"There is a noble sublimity, a heart-melting tenderness, in some of our ancient ballads, which show them to be the work of a masterly hand: and it has often given me many a heart-ache to reflect that such glorious old bards—bards who very probably owed all their talents to native genius, yet have described the exploits of heroes, the pangs of disappointment, and the meltings of love, with such fine strokes of nature—that their very names (oh how mortifying to a bard's vanity!) are now 'buried among the wreck of things that were.'"



"In the sentiment and style of our Scottish airs there is a pastoral simplicity, a something that one may call the Doric style and dialect of vocal music, to which a dash of our native tongue and manners is particularly, nay peculiarly, apposite."

These fragments of opinion show the author of them to have penetrated deeply below a mere surface-knowledge of the topic in hand. Burns had excellent reasons for claiming to be an "enthusiast in old Scotch Songs." A writer of a good song needed no better or more effective introduction to him. One of his fondest wishes was to enter into a bond of friendship with every fellow song-writer. "I have often wished, and will certainly endeavour, to form a kind of common acquaintance among all the genuine sons of Caledonian song. The world, busy in low prosaic pursuits, may overlook most of us; but 'reverence thyself.' The world is not our *peers*, so we challenge the jury. We can lash the world, and find ourselves a very great source of amusement and happiness independent of that world." Such were his feelings towards the singers of his own day, nor did he regard less affectionately those who had passed to the silence of the grave. "I am such an enthusiast, 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 Scots muse." Apart, however, from these indications of a far-reaching knowledge of Scots song, and of enthusiastic adoration of Scots singers, Burns expressly owns his obligations to his forerunners.



Ayr.
From a Drawing by D. O. Hill.

"When I meet with an old Scots air that has any facetious idea in its name, I have a peculiar pleasure in following out that idea for a verse or two." But Burns needs no apologist for his obligations to the singers of the past. The use he made of the "facetious ideas" that caught his fancy, and of such exquisite fragments as that beginning "O gin my love were yon red rose," was more than justified in the result. The Belvidere Torso was aptly named "Michael Angelo's School." That maimed statue, without head, arms, or legs, was of such perfect workmanship that the great sculptor declared he had learnt his whole art from it. But what a justifying use he made of his model! No one but a second genius could have found such a fragmentary object-lesson so prolific of instruction. It was so with Burns. The songs of his

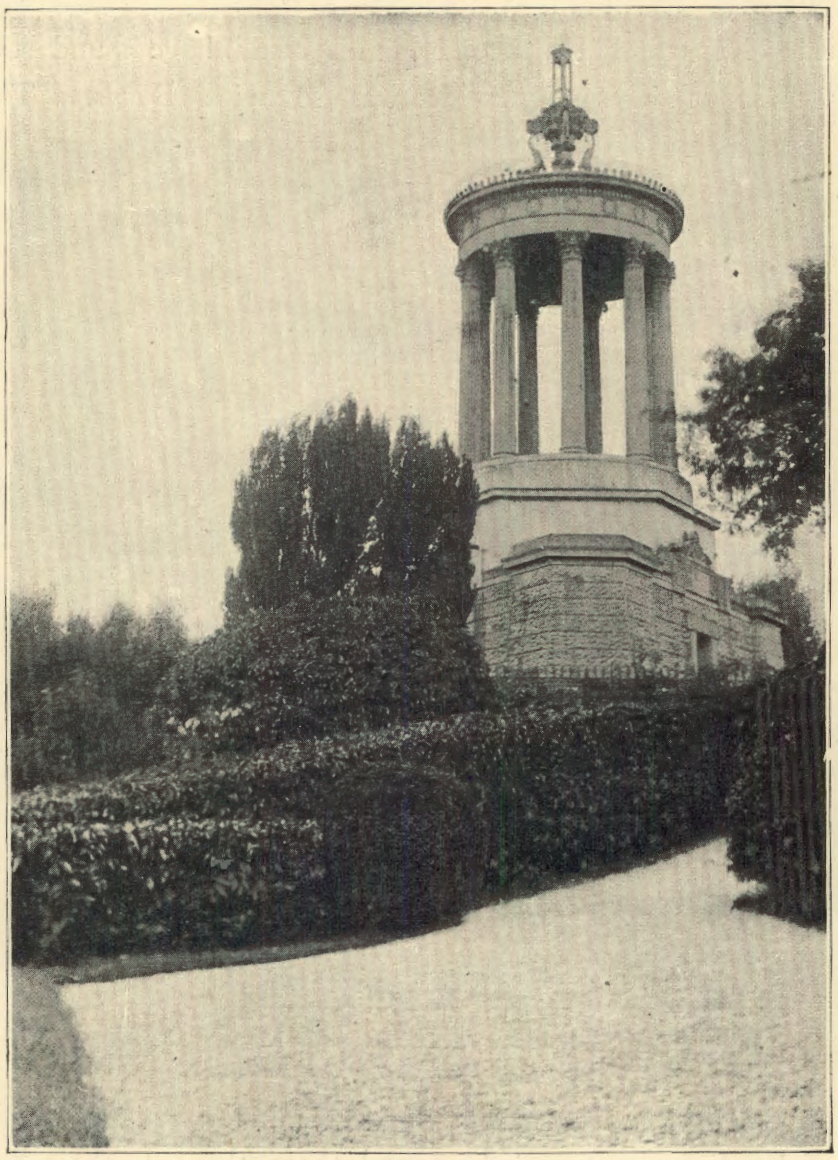


THE FOG HOUSE, BALLOCHMYLE.
Where Burns first saw the Lass o' Ballochmyle.

predecessors were his Belvidere Torso, but he carried forward to perfected beauty the half-veiled hints of loveliness scattered here and there through their work.

Burns was indebted not only to the songs but also to the music of his native land. Mr. W. H. Prescott truthfully remarks that "the existence of a national music is essential to the entire success of lyrical poetry. It may be said, indeed, to give wings to song, which, in spite of its imperfections, is thus borne along from one extremity of the nation to the other, with a rapidity denied to many a nobler composition." The same critic states that "no one is more indebted to the national music than Burns: embalmed in the sacred melody, his songs are familiar to us from childhood, and, as we read them, the silver sounds with which they have been united seem to linger in our memory, heightening and prolonging the emotions which the sentiments have

excited." This point is emphasised by Mr. John Hullah, no mean authority on national music. He asserts that the conditions of a song's existence are only thoroughly fulfilled where "music and sweet poesy *agree*," and that in the songs of no people is this agreement more perfect than, or so frequent as, in the Scottish. Burns was keenly sensitive to the necessity of this agreement. "These old Scotch airs," he wrote, "are so nobly sentimental, that when one would compose to them, to 'south the tune,' as our Scotch phrase is, over and over, is the readiest way to catch the inspiration, and raise the bard



THE BURNS MONUMENT, AYR.

into that glorious enthusiasm so strongly characteristic of our old Scotch poetry." One of the sweetest of Burns's lyrics illustrates his obligations to the old airs of Scotland. Not long before his death, the poet called on Jessie Lewars and asked her if she had any favourite tune for which she wished new words. Seating herself at the piano, Jessie played over several times the air of an old song beginning with the words,

"The robin cam' to the wren's nest,
And keekit in, and keekit in."

As soon as he had, in his own phrase, "southed the tune," Burns fitted it with the



"Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes."



STATUE OF HIGHLAND MARY.

This Statue is being erected at Dunoon and will be unveiled on the Centenary of the Poet's Death, 21st July, 1896. It is inserted here by kind permission of the artist D. W. Stevenson, Esq., R.S.A., and Colin Rae Brown, Esq., London.

matchless words of *Oh, wert thou in the Cauld Blast.* He often did that. Once an air took possession of his singing soul, he had no rest until he had wedded it to words of his own. And in this connection it should be set down again to the honour of Burns that the new songs he composed for old tunes had the effect, in innumerable cases, of effacing from the national memory indelicate words which coarser times had written there.

Passionate emotions, whether of grief or joy, have often been the inspiration of great verse. Poetry, Wordsworth said, is emotion remembered in tranquility. In the case of Burns the remembrance in tranquility was not an essential factor; "I can no more desist rhyming on the impulse than an Æolian harp can refuse its tones to the streaming air." He had, in fact, as a general rule, to enjoy his emotions fresh and



Mrs. Burns (Jean Armour) and Grandchild.

turn them into song while the first flush was still upon him. It was the greatest of all passions, enjoyed in all its virgin freshness, that first made Burns a singer—the dominant passion of Love. According to the poet's own confession, he reached his fifteenth autumn without having been guilty of rhyme or conscious of love. Notwithstanding its compensations—such as the possession of a wise father, the influence of a mother steeped in Scottish song and ballad, and the guidance of Murdoch—Burns's life had not been an enviable one. He had to labour in the fields to an extent far beyond his strength; to subsist on food of the poorest description; and companionships of the kind dear to the boyish heart were almost unknown. This kind of life, "the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing moil of a galley slave," continued to his fifteenth autumn; and then the dual change came. It was harvest-time. In his work amid

the golden grain it was the fortune of Burns to have for partner a "bewitching creature" a year younger than himself; a "bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass." The hour had come which was to awaken the singing soul of Burns, and unseal that fount of lyric love in which all after-time was to rejoice. Burns must tell his own story as he told it first to Dr. Moore: "In short, she, altogether unwittingly to herself, initiated me in that 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 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, etc.; 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 heartstrings 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 the 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 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.*"



MOUNT OLIPHANT.



ON THE WATER OF AYR.

Near the place where Burns wrote "Man was Made to Mourn."

Cupid and the Muse should never be separated in our thoughts of Burns. He was not tempted from truth, in recounting the genesis of his poetic art, by the

thrilling recollections of Nelly Kilpatrick. Apart from his statement to Dr. Moore, he assures us that he never had the least thought or inclination of turning poet till he once got heartily in love, and then rhyme and song became the spontaneous language of his heart. Most of Burns's love-songs are the record of passionate personal emotion; they will yield up to the student of his history the "legend of his heart." So strongly had he, through personal experience, become impressed with the connection between love and song, that he will allow no man to be a proper critic of love-compositions unless he has been a warm votary of that passion; "the whining cant of love, except in real passion, and by a masterly hand, is to me as insufferable as the preaching cant



FAILFORD.
The supposed scene of the parting of Burns and Highland Mary.

of old Father Smeaton, Whig-minister at Kilmaurs." To the end of his singing days, Burns found no passion so productive of lyric fruit as that which came to him in the harvest fields of his fifteenth autumn. This was the secret he confided to Thomson. "Whenever I want to be more than ordinary in song, to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs, do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation? *Tout au contraire!* I have a glorious recipe; the very one that for his own use was invented by the divinity of healing and poetry, when erst he piped to the flocks of Admetus. I put myself on a regimen of admiring a fine woman; and in proportion to the adorability of her charms, in proportion you are delighted with my verses. The lightning of her eye is the godhead of Parnassus, and the witchery of her smile the divinity of Helicon!"

It is clear, then, that Love was the prime factor in making Burns a poet. But that was not the only string of the harp of life from which he drew music. Had he

limited himself to the voicing of that emotion, though his kingdom would have been wide, he never would have won that universal homage which is now his heritage. Love is much, but love is not all. There are other emotions which claim embodiment in song, and the skill Burns won in the service of love was devoted to these in their turn. The themes of his songs may be set out, roughly, in table-fashion as follows:—



Scene of the Holy Fair and Gavin Hamilton's House, Mauchline.

I. SONGS OF COURTSHIP.

1. *Sung by Men.*—Ae Fond Kiss—Afton Water—Auld Rob Morris—Behold the Hour, the Boat Arrives—Blythe, Blythe and Merry was she—Bonnie Wee Thing—Ca' the Yowes to the Knowes—Corn Rigs are Bonnie—Craigieburn Wood—From thee, Eliza—Go fetch to me a Pint o' Wine—Green grow the Rashes—Here's a Health to Ane I Lo'e Dear—Highland Mary—I gaed a Waefu' Gate—It is na, Jean, thy Bonnie Face—Lassie wi' the Lintwhite Locks—Lovely Polly Stewart—Mary Morison—My Love she's but a Lassie yet—My Nannie's Awa'—My Nannie, O—O Bonnie was yon Rosy Brier—Of a' the Airts—Oh! Open the Door—O Lay thy Loof in mine—O Let me in this Ae Night—O Luve will Venture in—O my Love is like a Red, Red Rose—On Cessnock Banks—O Poortith Cauld—O this is no my Ain Lassie—O were I on Parnassus' Hill—O were my Love yon Lilac Fair—O wert thou in the Cauld Blast—O wha is she that Loe's me—Phillis the Fair—Powers Celestial—She's Fair and Fause—Sleep'st Thou or Wak'st Thou—Stay, my Charmer—The Banks of the Devon—The Birks o' Aberfeldy—The Highland Lassie—The Lass o' Ballochmyle—The Lea Rig—The Sodger's Return—Thine am I, my Faithful Fair—To Mary in Heaven—Turn again, thou Fair Eliza—Where are the Joys?—Wilt thou be my Dearie?



Family Burial Place of Davidson in Kirkoswald.
(The Original of Soutar Johnnie.)

2. *Sung by Women.*—A Highland Lad my Love was Born—Ay Waukin', O—Dainty

Davie—Gala Water—I'm owre young to Marry yet—In Simmer when the Hay was Mawn—Jockey's ta'en the Parting Kiss—Last May a Braw Wooer—Lord Gregory—Musing on the Roaring Ocean—My Heart is Sair for Somebody — My Tocher's the Jewel—O for Ane and Twenty, Tam—O Whistle, and I'll come to you — Tam Glen — The Blude-red Rose at Yule may Blaw—The Gallant Weaver—Thou hast left me ever, Jamie—Wandering Willie —Ye Banks and Braes.



Lochlea.

3. *Impersonal.* — Comin' thro' the Rye—Duncan Gray—O, Saw ye Bonnie Lesley?—There was a Lass and she was Fair.

II. SONGS OF WEDDED LIFE.

1. *Sung by Men.*—My Wife's a Winsome Wee Thing—The Weary Pund o' Tow —Whistle o'er the Lave o't.

2. *Sung by Women.*—How Lang and Dreary is the Night—John Anderson, my Jo—Logan Braes.

3. *Sung by Both.*—My Spouse, Nancy.



The House in Mauchline where Burns resided after his Private Marriage with Jean Armour.

III. PATRIOTIC SONGS.

Awa', Whigs, awa'—Kenmure's on and awa'—My Heart's in the Highlands — Scots Wha Ha'e — There'll never be Peace till Jamie comes Hame.

IV. AUTOBIOGRAPHIC SONGS.

The Gloomy Night is Gath'ring Fast—There was a Lad was Born in Kyle.

V. CONVIVIAL SONGS.

O Willie Brew'd a Peck o' Maut, Etc.

VI. OUTLOOK-ON-LIFE SONGS.

Auld Lang Syne—Contented wi' Little—Farewell, thou Fair Day—For a' that and a' that—Hey ca' thro'—I dream'd I lay —I ha'e a Wife o' my ain—The De'il's awa' wi' the Exciseman—Up in the Mornin' Early.

With this classification as a guide, it will be seen at once that the bulk of Burns's songs must be grouped under the first and second divisions, more especially under the first. But within the limits of the love-song, how wide a range he takes! Among the songs he puts into the mouth of singers of his own sex we have expressed, in *The Lass o' Ballochmyle*, the hopelessness of a lowly lover's adoration of a maiden whose rank in life is above his own, and a kindred spirit finds its embodiment in *Auld Rob Morris*, though the social status of the lovers does not yawn with so wide a gulf. There is no such disparity in *My Ain Kind Dearie, O;* lad and lass are both of "country degree," and while the one hails the return of the oxen "sae dowf and



Alloway Kirk.

wearie" as the signal that the hour of courting draws nigh, the other is probably deriving similar comfort from some other sign that the day's labour on the farm is reaching its close. A sadder note sounds through *O Poortith Cauld* and *Open the Door to me, O!* The one is the anathema of a lover whose dearest desires are thwarted by poverty; the other is the tragedy of an unrequited passion. How different, again, is the pastoral spirit of *Ca' the Yowes to the Knowes*, with its rippling music of the rowing burn, its bloom of heather, its mellow evening mavis' song, its gliding waters that hold a mirror to the moon, all gently urged as the invitations of nature to spirits attuned to love. But in *My Nannie's awa'* all the shows and music of nature are frail and vain "to weep a loss that turns their light to shade." The warbling birds, the sweetly-blowing violet and snowdrop, the green mantle of the earth bring the solitary lover no comfort:

"To me it's delightless—my Nannie's awa'."

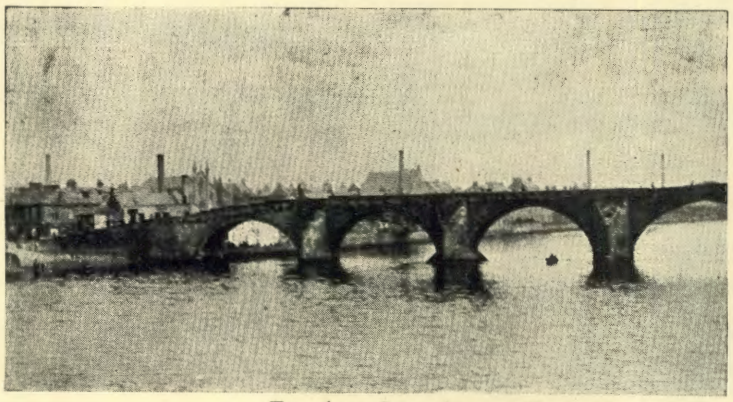


"Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig."



Silhouette of Clarinda.

No "partial fancy" ever idealized an absent mistress so unreservedly as the singer of *This is no my ain Lassie*, *Here's a Health to Ane I lo'e dear*, and *Of a' the Airts.* Confronted with one worthy a place among the fairest, the love-blinded wooer asserts the far superior charms of his own idol; her "witching grace," the "kind love that's in her e'e." Even though the hope to possess her is denied,



THE AULD BRIG, AYR.

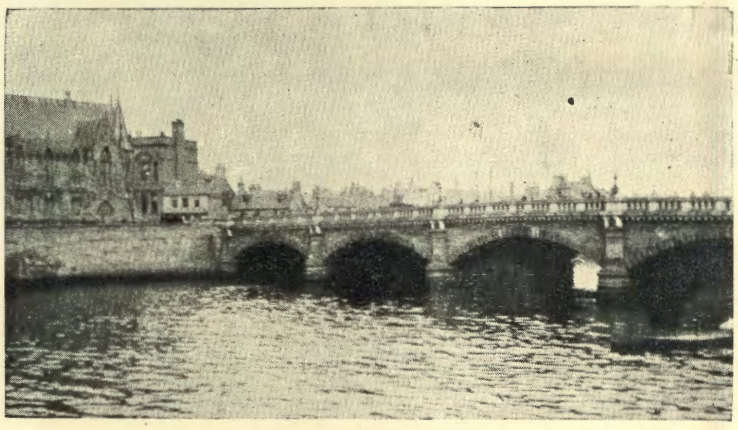
"'Tis sweeter for thee despairing
Than aught in the world beside."

Tributes to the overmastering power of beauty are not far to seek among these songs, such as that to the "lovely een o' bonnie blue" of *I gaed a Waefu' Gate Yestreen*, which were more fatal than the "lips like roses wat wi' dew" or the "heaving bosom lily-white;" but the sentiment of *It is na, Jean, thy Bonnie Face* repeats the offering which Burns paid to "amiable goodness" in his final letter to Ellison Begbie. He was not wholly blind to the transitoriness of mere physical charms. Other moods of love common to man's heart find a vehicle in almost exhaustless variety. There is the plaintive adoration of *Afton Water;* the assertive protestation of faithfulness of *O, my Love's like a Red, Red Rose;* the whole-hearted surrender of *O, wert Thou in the Cauld Blast;* the chivalrous eulogy of *Green Grow the Rashes, O;* the "still, rapt enthusiasm of sadness" of *To Mary in Heaven;* and the *Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch' entrate* of *Ae Fond Kiss.*



WILLIE'S MILL, NEAR TARBOLTON.

Fewer in number, and more refined and restrained in feeling, are the love-songs of women. In some, it is true, as *Gala Water* and *Tam Glen* will witness, there is a true womanly abandon of delight at the thought of having enslaved the best among men, and sometimes, as in *Last May a Braw Wooer*, that delight is tinctured with the wholly feminine joy of conquest. Again, there is a certain spirit of arch



THE NEW BRIG, AYR.

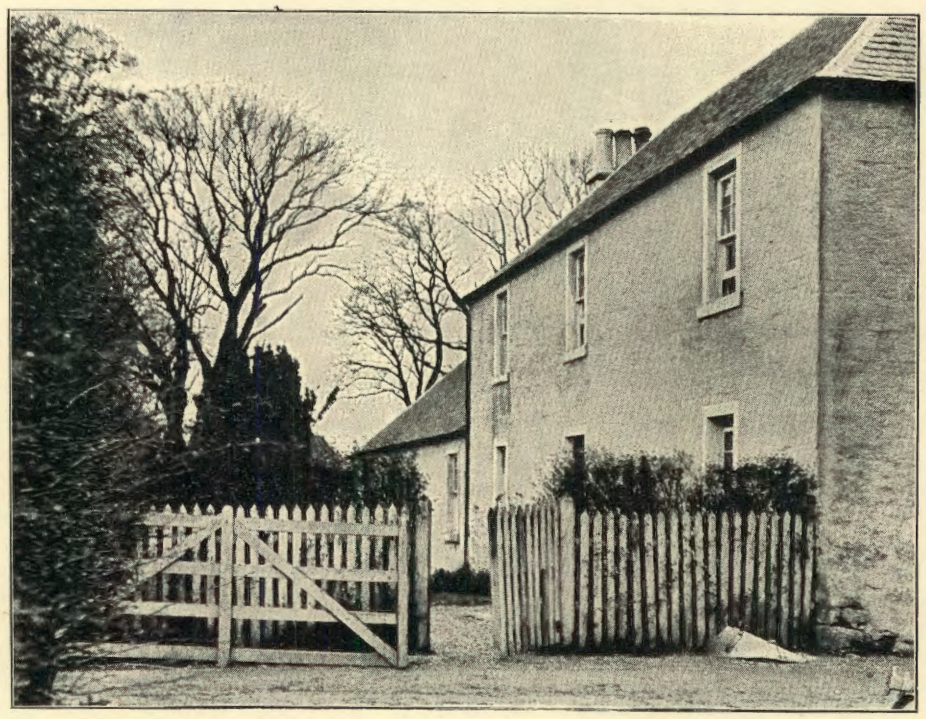
forwardness manifested in such songs as *Whistle, and I'll come to you, my Lad*, and *O, For Ane and Twenty, Tam*, while *My Tocher's the Jewel* reveals an unusually penetrating consciousness of the attractions of a fortune :



KIRTON JEAN'S.

"My laddie's sae meikle in luve wi' the siller,
He canna ha'e luve to spare for me."

But in the main these songs are suffused with a softer and sadder spirit, begotten of a heart betrayed or a love ill-requited. And how true they are to a woman's faithfulness! There is no vindictiveness in *Lord Gregory;* the "waefu' wanderer" bares her bosom to the lightning's flash while she intercedes for the man who has caused her keener pain than the dart of heaven can give. The same forgiving tenderness mingles with the pathos of *Wandering Willie* and *Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon.* There is a haven for Willie, if he desires it; if not, she only wishes to die believing in his faithfulness. Nor is the disconsolate wanderer by the Doon any more severe; she reproaches the birds for singing and the flowers for blooming, but not the "fause lover" who has thrown her out of harmony with nature.



MOSSGIEL.

Among the impersonal songs of courtship, *Duncan Gray* is the most characteristic. It stands for that mirth-provoking interest in a love affair which is common to all men and women when they are not personally concerned in the transaction. Love-letters read in court as evidence for a breach of promise action are legitimate causes for laughter in men and women who have been guilty of penning just as ardent epistles. The song spares neither sex. It is

Duncan's turn first, but Maggie finds, in the end, that she cannot do without him :

"Something in her bosom wrings,
For relief a sigh she brings ;
And O, her een, they spak sic things !"

The songs of wedded life take a much narrower range than those consecrated to the joys of pre-marital days, and Burns explained, in a letter to Thomson, why this must be so. "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



COTTAGE AT BRIDGE HOUSE, AYR (now demolished).

This was the residence of Mrs. Begg, the Poet's youngest sister. The figure at the door is that of his niece, Isabella Begg.

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." Save for *My Wife's a Winsome Wee Thing*, which is a somewhat thin expression of a man's contentment with his choice of a life-partner, Burns does not allow his own sex to figure to advantage in the songs of wedded life ; he finds a voice for the hen-pecked rather than the happy husband. The subtle humour of *Whistle o'er the lave o't* is its redeeming feature ; it saves the song from becoming a mere marriage-a-failure tragedy ; after all, a man who can keep up his spirits with such conceits is not to be over-pitied. And as for the victim of *The Weary Pund o' Tow*, Burns renders our sympathy superfluous by relieving the unhappy man of his drunken and lazy wife. Not humour, but the pathos of faithfulness, is the dominant note of those songs of wedded life which Burns

puts in the mouth of women. *Logan Braes* has the nature-background of *My Nannie's Awa'*, and it is introduced for the same purpose; a change has come over the fair face of the earth because "Willie's far frae Logan Braes." In *John Anderson, my Jo*, we reach the apotheosis of wedded love; "there is a tenderness of retrospect which is positively sacred, and probably unequalled in lyrical poetry."

Of the other songs of Burns the most distinctive are those of the last division. His outlook on life was entirely healthy and helpful. A fearless, often merry, independent spirit sings itself out in *Naebody*, *Contented wi' Little*, and *For a' that and a' that.* That



MRS. DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

[*While suffering from the depression consequent upon a long and painful sickness, Mrs. Dunlop happened to meet with the "Cottar's Saturday Night," and was so stirred and delighted with it, that she at once despatched a messenger to Mossgiel, some fifteen miles off, with a letter expressing her admiration, and an order for half a dozen copies of the Kilmarnock edition of Burns's Poems.*]

last song alone would have made the poet immortal. Scotsmen he loved, but he loved men more. And it was men *as men* he loved; no one saw with a clearer eye that the value of a man was to be estimated by what he was in himself, and not by the position in life which he happened to occupy:

"Then let us pray, that come it may,
As come it will for a' that;
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree and a' that.



The Old Lodge at Tarbolton where Burns was made a Freemason.

For a' that, and a' that,
It's comin' yet, for a' that,
That man to man, the warld o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that."

It was given to Burns to realise his first-formed and dearest desire. Relating in verse, to Mrs. Scott, of Wauchope House, the thoughts of his earliest days, he said:

"Ev'n then a wish (I mind its power),
A wish that to my latest hour
Shall strongly heave my breast;
That I for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some usefu' plan or beuk could make,
Or sing a sang at least."

He had his wish. No part of the legacy he left is more assured of immortality than his songs. And for these he received no recompense in gold. Thomson's project to publish a select collection of Scottish songs evoked his enthusiastic support; and "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, etc., would be downright prostitution of soul!" If Burns could have foreseen the future he would have been confirmed in his resolution; for no material recompense could compare with the heritage of unmeasured affection into which he has entered. That affection is the grateful offering of those who have been helped in their greatest need. More than half the joy of an emotion is in being able to find it a voice. What were the passion of love, the tenderness of wedded fealty, the sorrow of loss, the happiness of friendship—what were all these without a voice? For such emotions Burns found the fitting expression, and as, every new day, the strains of his songs rise and die away and rise again in ceaseless harmony we realise how surely he is enthroned for all time in the hearts of men.



Old Church at Kirkoswald.
In the Vestry of which Burns attended School.



Coila finding Burns at the Plough.

From the Mural Sculpture by Turnerelli in St. Michael's Churchyard, Dumfries.

SCOTTISH MUSIC.

AMONG the countries remarkable for the extent and beauty of their Folk-music, Scotland occupies a worthy place. Indeed it would be hard to name any which possesses a richer or more varied Anthology of Song, or one reflecting more faithfully the genius of the country in all its changes and vicissitudes, political and social. Every aspect of nature, every social custom, and every stirring deed of arms of which the history of the North Countrie is so full, have been embalmed in imperishable words and allied to music which, whatever its origin, we feel to be instinct with the living fire of inspiration.

Nor is this natural expression of feeling confined to any particular area distinguished it may be more than others by the greater ardour of its life. Each province is marked by its own peculiar note, and the sanguinary feuds of the Border are not more real to us through *The Dowie Dens of Yarrow* and *Hughie Graham*, than are the dark tragedies of the North in *The Bonnie House o' Airlie*, or the plaintive notes of *Wae's me for Prince Charlie*.

There is hardly a stream in broad Scotland which has not been made classic in our Song; not a great scene in our history from that day of Bannockburn which sealed a nation's liberty, till the last hopes of an expiring cause found a grave at Culloden, but have been fixed for ever in tones of exultant victory or notes of deepest despair.

Along with this fire of patriotism there has also burned the lamp of quiet joy. The rural pastimes, the pastoral avocations, and the humours of rustic life have each found native expression, and in all the elements of truth, naturalness and simplicity, it were hard to find a truer or fuller picture of a brave, strenuous and simple people than is mirrored in the Ballads and Songs of Scotland.



TULLOCHGORUM.

From an Original Etching by D. Allan, prefixed to Vol. VI. of George Thomson's Select Melodies.

The beauty and charm of Scottish Folk-Music have excited universal admiration,

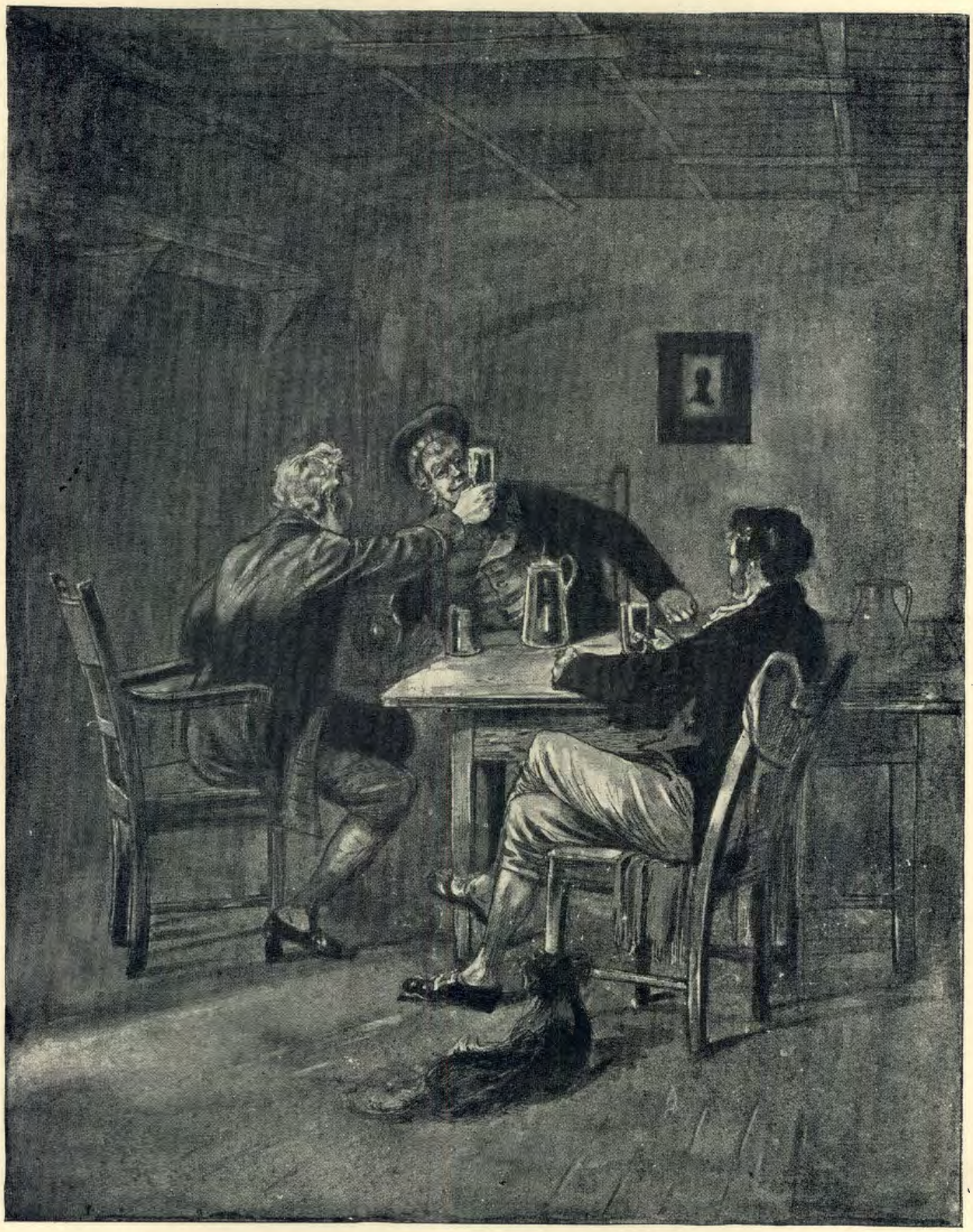
Prior to Burns's time the only considerable Collections of Scottish Tunes which had appeared were Allan Ramsay's "Tea-Table Miscellany," and, almost contemporaneously, William Thomson's "Orpheus Caledonius," a work published in London in 1725, and dedicated to the Princess of Wales. A great part of the latter work was a mere appropriation from the "Tea-Table Miscellany," a fact which did not escape the notice of Ramsay who, in the preface to the 12th edition of his work, adverts in characteristic fashion to it. Although enjoying a very wide popularity both in Scotland and England in fashionable circles, it cannot be supposed that many of the common people possessed either of these works. We may conclude, therefore, that when Burns appeared upon the scene the great treasury and storehouse of Scottish melody was in the memory and traditions of the people.



Rev. John Skinner, author of Tullochgorum.

We are apt in the glory of Burns's achievements as a lyrical poet to forget the great service he rendered his country in rescuing from oblivion many tunes which from unworthy association might have altogether disappeared. These airs, no less on account of their intrinsic merit than of the noble verse he has wedded to them, have been assured of immortality; and it is a tribute at once to the taste and patriotism of Burns that he set himself with so much ardour to the task of re-juvenating these genuine inspirations of the past.

That this task, though truly a labour of love, was arduous we learn from many of the poet's letters. Thus, in writing to Mr. George Thomson, 8th November, 1792, he says: "There is a peculiar rhythmus in many of our airs, and a necessity of adapting syllables to the emphasis, or what I would call the feature notes, of the tune that cramp the poet, and lay him under almost insuperable difficulties." Again, in a later letter, he gives us a close view of his own methods: "Until I am complete master of a tune in my own singing (such as it is), I never can compose for it. My way is: I consider the poetic sentiment correspondent to my idea of the musical expression; then choose my theme; begin one stanza; when that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part of the business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for objects in nature around 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 on. Seriously, this at home is almost invariably my way."



"O Willie brew'd a peck o' maut,
And Rab and Allan cam' to pree,
Three blyther hearts that lee-lang night,
Ye wadna find in Christendie."

can be no doubt that what in time became merely a fashion originally sprang from a sincere admiration for the beauties freshly discovered for us by Ramsay and Burns, and the numerous Collectors who followed them.

In the later history of Scottish Song there are a few names that stand out prominently, and just as the great stream of Scottish poetry has since Burns's time been enriched by many a noble tributary, so the stem of Scottish music has budded freshly in the productions of men not very remote from our own day. The names of R. A. Smith (a true though undeveloped genius), Peter M'Leod, Alex. Hume, and many others, naturally occur to us in this connection, and attest the continued vitality of the Scottish lyre, and in the great musical awakening that has in recent years come over Scotland, we may expect, in the fulness of time, our folk-music to become the basis and substructure of a true National School, which shall be individual and characteristic, because it is founded upon the idiosyncracies of our people, and is the outcome of our national experience. That there is inspiration enough in our history, our scenery, and in our character few will deny; and we but await the master-spirit, who, drinking deep at this fount of inspiration, shall, in symphony or tone-poem reanimate the glorious page of history; wake in more subtle tones the weird and mystic Ossianic legend, and realise for us the murmurous voices of shore and sea, or mountain, lake and forest.



George Thomson, Esq.

In concluding this brief notice we may advert for a moment to the style of accompaniment used in the present volume. It has always been accepted—in theory at least—that accompaniments to Scottish songs should be simple. And this theory is founded on good common sense, because in most cases these simple melodies are the artless outpourings of untutored minds. Anything, therefore, in the nature of elaboration is felt to be an impertinence, and as injuring rather than enhancing the expressive power of the melody. In too many instances, however, this simplicity has been sought for in wrong directions, and has resulted in baldness, monotony, and lack of interest. A frequent error has been made in duplicating the voice part, and treating it simply as a harmonized melody. The effect of this is to greatly interfere with the freedom of the

singer, and to mar the beauty of many passages where the voice is much better to be left alone. There is so much character and individuality inherent in most of our melodies that the skilful and sympathetic arranger need never be in any difficulty as to the form of accompaniment most appropriate, and that will generally be best which, while it leaves the movement of the melody entirely free, provides a background of harmony in itself interesting, and in its movement and character emphasising the prevailing spirit of the melody. An endeavour has been made in the present volume to embody these principles, and the only caution that need be urged is that singer and player should be thoroughly in accord in their phrasing. This, however, is a primary requirement in all artistic collaboration; and, as many of these songs rank as highly in beauty and expressive power as any Schubert *lied*, it is not too much to expect that as much care will be used in their preparation and presentation as is usually bestowed upon the latter.

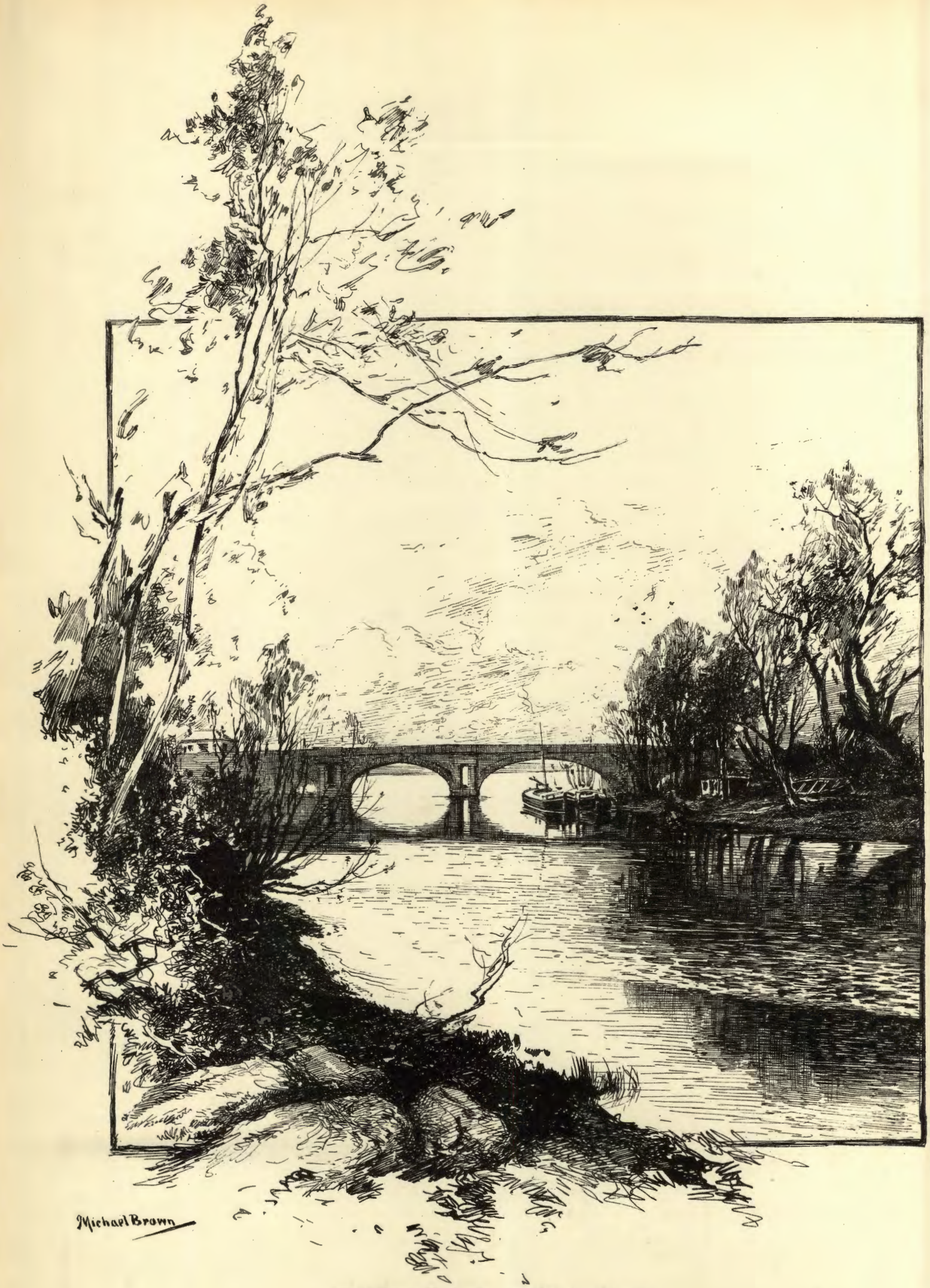
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Statue of Burns at Paisley.
By W. F. Pomeroy, Esq.



It was upon a Lammas night,
When corn rigs are bonnie,
Beneath the moon's unclouded light
I held awa' to Annie.
The time flew by wi' tentless heed
Till 'tween the late and early,
Wi' sma' persuasion she agreed
To see me thro' the barley.



"Where Cart rins rowin' to the sea,
By mony a flow'r and spreading tree."



Down by the burn, where scented birks
Wi' dew are hanging clear, my jo,
I'll meet thee on the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie, O.



" Yet, rich in kindest, truest love,
We'll tent our flocks by Gala Water."



" We twa ha'e paidl't i' the burn,
From mornin' sun till dine,"



"But soon may peace bring happy days,
And Willie hame to Logan Braes!"



" Ye banks and braes o' Bonnie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?"



" Behind yon hills where Lugar flows,
'Mang moors and mosses mony, O."



From a Drawing by Richard Westall, R.A.

O mirk, mirk is this midnight hour,
And loud the tempest's roar;
A waefu' wanderer seeks thy tower,
Lord Gregory, ope thy door.



"Now's the day an' now's the hour;
See the front of battle lour—
See approach proud Edward's power,
Chains and slaverie!"



How pleasant the banks of the clear-winding Devon,
With green-spreading bushes, and flowers blooming fair!



"Thou ling'ring star with lessening ray
That lov'st to greet the early morn."



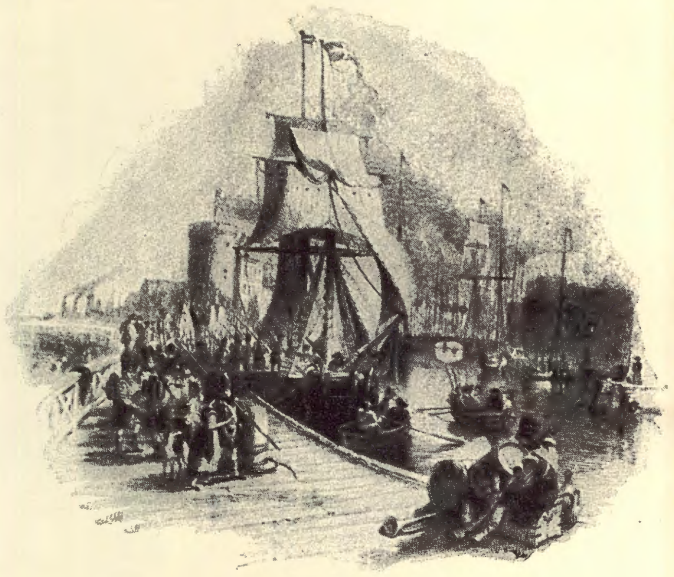
EUPHEMIA MURRAY.

"By Auchtertyre grows the aik,
On Yarrow banks thé birken shaw;
But Phemie was a bonnier lass
Than braes o' Yarrow ever saw."

NOTES TO THE SONGS.

There was a Lad was Born in Kyle.—This song may be named the national anthem of Burns's many millions of devoted admirers. It is the one which springs most naturally to their lips when they meet to celebrate his birth. With reference to the third verse, Chambers notes: "It has been said, but upon no good authority that I am aware of, that there was some foundation in fact for this tale of a gossip—a wayfaring woman, who chanced to be present at the poet's birth, having actually announced some such prophecies respecting the infant placed in her arms."

Go Fetch to me a Pint o' Wine (My Bonnie Mary).—Writing to Mrs. Dunlop in December, 1788, Burns transcribed this along with another lyric *(Auld Lang Syne)*, and in each case he gave his correspondent to understand that they were old songs. Of *My Bonnie Mary* he said: "Now I am on my hobby-horse, I cannot help inserting two other old stanzas, which please me mightily." Nevertheless the song is undoubtedly by Burns, for Mr. W. Scott Douglas remarks that the reader must be cautious in believing that Peter Buchan's verses, given by Motherwell as the original ballad of *The Siller Tassie*, are anything more than an invention.



THE PIER OF LEITH.
From a Drawing by D. O. Hill, R.S.A.

Of a' the Airts.—It was while Burns was busy at Ellisland preparing the house there for the reception of Jean Armour—now his lawful wife—that *Of a' the Airts* was composed. While those preparations were going on, Mrs. Burns resided with the poet's mother at Mossgiel, and hence the expression "I dearly like the west"—that being the direction of Mossgiel from Ellisland. The third and fourth stanzas of the song were written by Mr. John Hamilton, an Edinburgh music-seller.

Lassie wi' the Lint-White Locks.—"This piece," wrote Burns in sending the song to Thomson, "has at least the merit of being a regular pastoral: the vernal morn, the summer noon, the autumnal evening, and the winter night, are regularly rounded." The "Lassie" in question was the Chloris of other songs, and the Jean Lorimer of real life. Dr. Adams states that "Lassie wi' the lint-white locks" was the sobriquet most dear to Chloris.



TARBOLTON.

It is na, Jean, thy Bonnie Face.—Placed by Chambers among the "old songs improved by Burns," the poet himself remarks of the stanzas: "These were originally English verses: I gave them their Scots dress." The song first appeared in Johnson's *Museum*, where Burns is given as the author.

Craigieburn Wood.—Burns explains that this song "was composed on a passion which a Mr. Gillespie, a particular friend of mine, had for a Miss Lorimer, afterwards a Mrs. Whelpdale. The young lady was born at Craigieburn Wood. The chorus is part of an old foolish ballad." In another letter, Burns declares the song to be a great favourite of his own, and adds, "The lady on whom it was made is one of the finest women in Scotland; and, in fact *(entre nous)*, is in a manner to me what Sterne's Eliza was to him—a mistress, or friend, or what you will, in the guileless simplicity of Platonic love. * * I assure you, that to my lovely friend you are indebted for many of your best songs of mine."



CRAIGIEBURN WOOD.
From a Drawing by D. O. Hill, R.S.A.

I Gaed a Waefu' Gate Yestreen.—During his journeys as an exciseman, Burns was on several occasions the guest of the Rev. Andrew Jeffrey, of Lochmaben. He refers to that minister as a "worthy old veteran in religion and good fellowship," and speaks of his "amiable family." One member of that family was a blue-eyed, seventeen-year old daughter, Jean, who seems to have presided at the tea-table during Burns's first visit to the manse. At breakfast time the following morning the poet presented her with this song.

Whistle o'er the Lave o't.—In David Herd's collection there is a brief song with the refrain of *Whistle o'er the lave o't*, but it is too coarse for



The Jolly Beggars.
From a Drawing by J. M. Wright.

quotation. Mr. W. Scott Douglas truly remarks of Burns's version: "This is one of the poet's cleverest songs—hit off to supply the place of some indelicate verses to which the air had been hitherto sung. In *The Jolly Beggars* there is also a good song by Burns to the same tune."

Tam Glen.—Mrs. Begg asserted that *Tam Glen* was an old song which her brother touched up, but none of Burns's editors dispute his claim to the production. Mr. W. Scott Douglas remarks: "This is an immortal production, and would be recognised as Burns's work although no name nor external mark were attached to it."



AFTON WATER.
From a Drawing by Richard Westall, R.A.

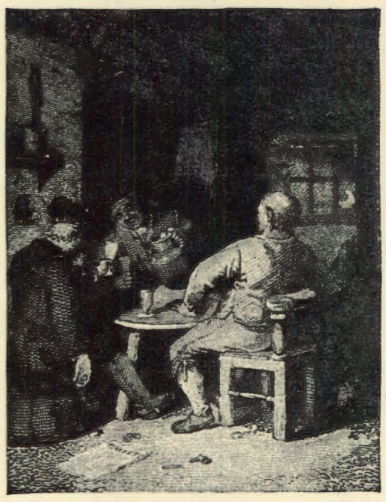
Afton Water.—Gilbert Burns and Dr. Currie disagreed as to the heroine of *Afton Water;* the former declaring in favour of Highland Mary, the latter espousing the claims of Mrs. Stewart, of Stair. The evidence in support of Highland Mary, as set forth by Mr. W. Scott Douglas, is so strong as to be virtually conclusive. Although Dr. Currie says the song was presented to Mrs. Stewart by the poet in return for her notice, the grandson of that lady states that *Afton Water* is apparently not among the poems sent to her by Burns. Mr. Douglas concludes: "There cannot now be a reasonable doubt that Mary was the subject of *Afton Water*, and that it was composed while she was yet alive."

My Love she's but a Lassie yet.—The mixed ideas of this song are akin to the jumble of notions characteristic of the old ditty from which Burns appropriated the following verse:

We're a' dry wi' drinking o't,
The parson kist the fidler's wife,
And he cou'dna preach for thinking o't.

According to Stenhouse, the title of the song is also old.

O! Willie Brew'd a Peck o' Maut.—Burns has left an explicit account of the origin of *Willie Brew'd a Peck o' Maut* in the following words: "The air is Masterton's, the song mine. The occasion of it was this: Mr. William Nicol, of the High School, Edinburgh, during the autumn vacation [of 1789] being at Moffat, honest Allan—who was at that time on a visit to Dalswinton—and I went to pay Nicol a visit. We had such a joyous meeting, that Mr. Masterton and I agreed, each in our own way, that we should celebrate the business." Principal Shairp's note is to the point: "While no one can withhold admiration from the genius and inimitable humour of the song, still we read it with very mingled feelings, when we think that perhaps it may have helped some topers since Burns's day a little faster on the road to ruin."



O! WILLIE BREW'D.
From a Drawing by J. Burnett.

Corn Rigs are Bonnie.—Of the last verse of this song Burns declared: "The best stanza that ever I wrote, at least the one that pleases me best, and comes nearest my *beau ideal* of poetical perfection, is this—



LAMMAS NIGHT.
From an Engraving by Thos. Bewick.

"I hae been blythe wi' comrades dear;
I hae been merry drinking;
I hae been joyfu' gath'rin' gear;
I hae been happy thinking:
But a' the pleasures e'er I saw,
Tho' three times doubl'd fairly,
That happy night was worth them a',
Amang the rigs o' barley."

Chambers states that Mrs. Anne Mirry regarded herself as the "Annie" of the song, and that she, on meeting the poet after the publication of the song, told him she little expected to be celebrated in print. To which Burns replied, "O ay, I was just wanting to give you a cast among the lave."

The Weary Pund o' Tow.—Placed by Chambers among the "old songs improved by Burns," it must be admitted that in composing *The Weary Pund o' Tow* the poet had plenty of models to work from. Two are to be found in Herd's collection, from which a typical verse or two may be quoted. The opening verse of one is as follows:

There was an auld wife had a wee pickle tow,
And she wad gae try the spinning o't,
But louten her down, her rock took a low,
And that was an ill beginning o't;
She lap an' she grat, she flet and she flang,
She trow and she drew, she ringled, she rang,
She choaked, she bocked, and cried, Let me hang,
That ever I tried the spinning o't.

Of the other song these are the third and last verses:

But if your wife and my wife were in a boat thegither,
And yon honest man's wife were in to steer the rither;
And if the boat were bottomless, and seven mile to row,
I think my wife wou'd ne'er come back to spin her pund of tow.

But if e'er I be a widower, as I hope soon to be,
I shall never hae anither wife till I ken what she can doe.
O she maun card, and she maun spin, and milk baith cow and ewe,
And skutch and clove and heckle lint, and spin a pund of tow.



COWGATE, MAUCHLINE.

My Nannie's Awa'.—There can be no doubt that Clarinda (Mrs. M'Lehose) was the subject of *My Nannie's Awa'*. She had left Edinburgh for the West Indies, there to make a last and unsuccessful experiment of living with her besotted and licentious husband. Moreover, she had adjured the poet to let the scenes of nature remind him of Clarinda, and he had replied, "There is one passage in your charming letter—Thomson nor Shenstone never exceeded it, nor often came up to it—'tis where you bid the scenes of nature remind me of Clarinda. I shall certainly steal it, and set it in some future poetic production, and get immortal fame by it!" He carried out his flattering threat in *My Nannie's Awa'*.



TAM O' SHANTER AND SOUTER JOHNNY.

Ae Fond Kiss.—*Ae Fond Kiss* commemorates for all time the final meeting of Burns and Clarinda—a mad flicker of that flame of artificial love which had illuminated his last visit to Edinburgh with such a ghoulish light. Clarinda was about to sail for the West Indies, and Burns must needs hurry post haste to Edinburgh to see her ere she left. No record of the interview remains save this exquisite lyric, and the note written by Clarinda in her journal on December 6th, 1831: "This day I never can forget. Parted with Burns in the year 1791, never more to meet in this world. Oh, may we meet in Heaven!" The song was sent to the lady by Burns on December 27th, on his return to Dumfries. Of the fourth stanza Sir Walter Scott said it was "worth a thousand romances," while Mrs. Jamieson declared that those lines are "the *alpha* and *omega* of feeling, and contain the essence of an existence of pain and pleasure distilled into one burning drop."



"My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;
My heart's in the Highlands, a-chasing the deer."



Lucy Johnston
(Mrs. Oswald of Auchincruive).

This lady was the daughter of Wynne Johnston, Esq., of Hilton, and was married 23rd April, 1793, to Mr. Richard Alexander Oswald of Auchincruive, in Ayrshire. United to great charms of person she possessed many accomplishments and graces of mind, but she was destined to an early grave. Burns made her the subject of his charming song "O wat ye wha's in yon town," and, writing to his friend Syme, dwelt in glowing terms upon the felicity of Oswald in the possession of such a treasure. But, alas! for human hopes, Mrs. Oswald shortly afterwards fell into a decline and died at Lisbon in January, 1798.

Duncan Gray.—There was a song entitled *Duncan Gray* in existence long before Burns's time, but so gross in sentiment that its supplanting by this version is a matter for congratulation. Burns owes little more than the title of his song to its predecessor. The poet aptly remarked to Thomson that "*Duncan Gray* is that kind of horse-gallop of an air which precludes sentiment. The ludicrous is its ruling feature." When the song was first made public, the Hon. Andrew Erskine wrote its author: "*Duncan Gray* possesses native, genuine humour—'Spak' o' lowpin' ower a linn,' is a line of itself that should make you immortal."



Drawn by T. Stothard, R.A.

"Shall I, like a fool, quoth he,
For a haughty hizzie die?
She may gae to — France for me!
Ha, ha, the wooing o't."

Jockey's Ta'en the Parting Kiss.—Mr. W. Scott Douglas points out that, though this song was written for Johnson's *Museum*, it was not published in that work till after its appearance in Dr. Currie's edition of Burns. He adds: "The poet scarcely ever surpassed the excellence which this lyric displays."

Wilt Thou be my Dearie?—In a letter to Mr. Alexander Cunningham, the chief, perhaps, of all his Edinburgh friends, Burns gave the following history of this song: "Do you know the much admired old Highland air called *The Sutor's Dochter?* It is a first-rate favourite of mine, and I have written what I reckon one of my best songs to it. I will send it to you as it was sung, with great applause in some fashionable circles by Major Robertson, of Lude, who was here with his corps." Allan Cunningham states, but not to the satisfaction of Mr. W. Scott Douglas, that the song was composed in honour of Miss Janet Miller, of Dalswinton.



DUMFRIES.

A Highland Lad my Love was Born.—Although *The Jolly Beggars* —in which this song appears—is perhaps of all Burns's works the one most clearly stamped with the hall-mark of genius, it was not given to the world until several years after his death. It would seem that his brother persuaded him not to publish it—another proof of Gilbert's lack of critical insight. The cantata appears to have been composed at Mossgiel in 1785, and to have been based—so far as it had any foundation in fact—upon scenes witnessed by the poet in the humble inn of "Poosie Nancy" at Mauchline.



STATUE OF BURNS AT AYR.

The Gallant Weaver.—According to one of his most zealous editors, "Burns appears to have a peculiar object in writing this song: it is quite clear he framed it, and had it set to music, specially for the pleasure of hearing 'bonnie Jean' sing it to him. It will be recollected that in the early spring of 1786, when Jean's parents broke off the private marriage between the poet and her, she was packed off to Paisley: and, in the course of a month or two, news reached Mauchline that she had been dancing the 'Weaver's March' with a certain *Robie Wilson*, a 'wabster gude,' to whom she was soon to be married. This rumour nearly drove the poet distracted; and now, when all had been mollified in the lapse of years, he had his quiet revenge in putting this song into Jean's mouth."

John Anderson, my Jo.—There are several old songs bearing the title of *John Anderson, my Jo*, but even when they are not licentious they cannot compare with the work of Burns. For the purpose of contrast it may be well to give the opening verse of one which finds a place in David Herd's collection:

'Tis not your beauty nor your wit,
That can my heart obtain;
For they could never conquer yet
Either my breast or brain;
For if you'll not prove kind to me,
And true as heretofore,
Henceforth your slave I'll scorn to be,
Nor doat upon you more.



"JOHN ANDERSON, MY JO."
From a Drawing by David Allan.



"The hoary cliffs are crown'd wi' flowers,
While o'er the linn the burnie pours."

(The Birks o' Aberfeldy.)

I Hae a Wife o' my Ain.—The history of *I hae a Wife o' my ain* is the song's best interpretation. Burns had passed through some of the most painful experiences of his life; he had challenged the verdict of the world on his poetic powers with almost unexpected success; he had reaped a substantial golden harvest from his Edinburgh edition; he had married his "Bonnie Jean," and taken her home to the picturesque farm at Ellisland; and now his outlook on life is so radiant with hope that he must needs sing his gladness out in these blithe strains.



THE BANKS OF AYR.

Sleep'st Thou or Wak'st Thou?—In sending this song to Thomson, Burns explained, "I have been out in the country taking dinner with a friend, where I met with the lady whom I mentioned in the second page in this odds and ends of a letter. As usual, I got into song; and returning home, I composed the following." The lady referred to was Chloris, and it is probable that the dinner was taken in the house of her father, a well-to-do farmer on the banks of the Nith.

The Lea Rig (My Ain Kind Dearie).—Thomson had sent Burns eleven old songs for which he wished to substitute others of his writing in the collection he had projected, at the same time remarking on the coarseness and vulgarity which the writers of those songs had confounded with simplicity. Burns replied: "Let me tell you that you are too fastidious in your ideas of songs and ballads. I own that your criticisms are just: the songs you specify in your list have, all but one, the faults you remark in them; but who shall mend the matter? Who shall rise up and say, 'Go to! I will make a better?' For instance, on reading over *The Lea-Rig*, I immediately set about trying my hand on it, and, after all, I could make nothing more of it than the following, which, Heaven knows, is poor enough." Thomson was well pleased with *My Ain Kind Dearie;* he only found fault with it for being short; a defect Burns remedied by adding another verse.



ELLISLAND.

Here's a Health to ane I Lo'e Dear.—In the last sad days of his life, when the hand of death was upon him, Burns had no more gentle attendant than Jessie Lewars, the sister of a brother exciseman. She was the Jessie of *Here's a Health to ane I Lo'e Dear*. Burns sent the song to Thomson in May 1796, with this note: "I once mentioned to you an air which I have long admired—*Here's a health to them that's awa, hiney*, but I forget if you took any notice of it. I have just been trying to suit it with verses, and I beg leave to recommend the air to your attention once more."



MRS. THOMSON (Jessie Lewars).

Ay Waukin', O.—It is generally agreed among the editors of Burns that this is an old song upon which he made only a few alterations. In the fifth volume of Johnson's *Museum* only two verses and the chorus of the song were given. Stenhouse says the first verse was composed by Burns.

My Heart is Sair.—The opening stanza of Allan Ramsay's song of the same title will show the extent of Burns's indebtedness to his brother poet, and also the different turn he gave to the chief idea of the song:

For the sake of somebody,
For the sake of somebody;
I cou'd wake a winter-night
For the sake of somebody.

I am gaun to seek a wife,
I am gaun to buy a plaidy;
I have three stane of woo;
Carling, is thy daughter ready?

To Mary in Heaven.—As the harvest time of 1789 was drawing to a close, and the leaves began to grow sere and yellow, the memory of Highland Mary's death came back to Burns with incredible vividness. He had spent the day in harvest work, 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 barnyard, to which his wife, in her anxiety for his health, followed him, entreating him in vain to observe that the 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 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 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 of *To Mary in Heaven.*"



Lochlea Farm (Front View).

O Were my Love yon Lilac Fair.—Burns gave Thomson an explicit account of the origin of these verses. "Do you know," he wrote, "the following beautiful little fragment in Wotherspoon's [*i.e.*, Herd's] collection of Scots songs?

O gin my love were yon red rose,
That grows upon the castle wa',
And I mysel' a drap o' dew
Into her bonnie breast to fa'!

Oh, there beyond expression blest,
I'd feast on beauty a' the night;
Seal'd on her silk saft faulds to rest,
Till fley'd awa' by Phœbus' light.

This thought is inexpressibly beautiful; and quite, so far as I know, original. It is too short for a song, else I would forswear you altogether, unless you gave it a place. I have often tried to eke a stanza to it, but in vain. After balancing myself for a musing five minutes, on the hind legs of my elbow-chair, I produced the following. The verses are far inferior to the foregoing, I frankly confess; but if worthy of insertion at all, they might be first in place; as every poet, who knows anything of his trade, will husband his best thoughts for a concluding stroke."



"She gaz'd—she redden'd like a rose—
Syne pale like onie lily;
She sank within my arms, and cried,
Art thou my ain dear Willie?"



ROBERT AINSLIE, Esq.

Mr. Ainslie was a young lawyer in Edinburgh whose acquaintance Burns made in 1787, when the poet visited the capital. A warm friendship sprang up between them, which culminated in Ainslie becoming Burns's companion in his excursion to Berwickshire and Teviotdale. The account of this tour and the correspondence between Burns and his friend are well known to all students of the poet's life.

Mr. Ainslie died in 1838, in the seventy-second year of his age, after having spent a worthy and honoured life, marked by benevolence and humanity.

Phillis the Fair.—Thomson seems to have asked the poet for new words to the tune of *Robin Adair*, and he rejoined by sending him *Phillis the Fair*, remarking in so doing: "I have tried my hand on *Robin Adair*, and you will probably think, with little success; but it is such a cursed, cramp, out-of-the-way measure that I despair of doing anything better of it." The heroine of the song was Miss Phillis Macmurdo, beloved of Mr. Clarke, the musician who was associated with Burns in much of his work. She became Mrs. Norman Lockhart, of Carnwath.

Oh! Whistle, and I'll come to you, my Lad.—It was only on a second attempt that Burns was able to produce a song on this theme with which he was satisfied. And even then, at a later date, he wished Thomson to alter the last line of the chorus. He declared that the iteration of that line was tiresome to his ear, and in suggesting as an improvement, "Thy Jeannie will venture wi' ye, my lad," he wrote: "In fact, a fair dame, at whose shrine I, the Priest of the Nine, offer up the incense of Parnassus—a dame whom the Graces have attired in witchcraft, and whom the Loves have armed with lightning—a fair one, herself the heroine of the song, insists on the amendment, and dispute her commands if you dare!" The lady referred to by the poet was Jean Lorimer, and Dr. Currie records having heard her sing the song "in the very spirit of arch simplicity which it requires."



BURNS'S MONUMENT AT KILMARNOCK.

O my Love is like a Red, Red Rose.—It has been asserted that Burns wrote this song as an improved version of one composed by a Lieutenant Hinches, as a farewell to his sweetheart, on which Mr. W. Scott Douglas offers this indignant note: "This sweet song, truly in the ancient style, and as truly Burns's own, every line, has produced a rush of 'traditioners' who pretend to treat us with what they call 'the old words'; but really, 'Rhymin' Watty,' *with his coat of many colours*, who will be remembered by some of our older Edinburgh readers, could have improvised for a whole hour by St. Giles' clock, better verses to the same text than these lovers of tradition have been at the pains to invent or transcribe, and editors to print."

Comin' Thro' the Rye.—Chambers also includes *Comin' Thro' the Rye* in the category quoted above, and in so doing is well within the facts of the case. It does not appear to what extent the song is indebted to Burns, for even his re-touching has had to be retouched to bring the verses to the standard required of songs that are to be rendered in our concert-rooms. Mr. W. Scott Douglas remarks that the following additional verse is said to have been written by Burns on a window in the Globe Tavern, Dumfries:

Gin a body kiss a body
Comin' through the grain,
Need a body grudge a body
What's a body's ain?



IRVINE.

Wandering Willie.—Burns was again working upon an old model when he composed *Wandering Willie*, and happily it is possible this time to quote the ancient version from David Herd's collection:

Here awa', there awa', here awa', Willie,
Here awa', there awa', here awa' hame;
Lang have I sought thee, dear have I bought thee,
Now I have gotten my Willie again.

Thro' the lang muir I have follow'd my Willie,
Thro' the lang muir I have follow'd him hame,
Whatever betide us, nocht shall divide us;
Love now rewards all my sorrow and pain.

Here awa', there awa', here awa', Willie,
Here awa', there awa', here awa' hame,
Come, Love, believe me, nothing can grieve me,
Ilka thing pleases while Willie's at hame.

As to the heroine of the song, it is childish to suppose, as Allan Cunningham does, that it was Mrs. Maria Riddel. There is, however, something to be said for the suggestion that Clarinda was in the poet's thoughts when he penned the verses.

The Birks of Aberfeldy.—During his Highland tour in the autumn of 1787, Burns visited the picturesque falls of Moness, near Aberfeldy, Perthshire, which he notes in his journal as having "described in rhyme." The chorus of *The Birks of Aberfeldy* is an exact copy, save for several letters, of the opening lines of an old song:

Bonnie lassie, will ye go,
Will ye go, will ye go,
Bonnie lassie, will ye go,
To the birks o' Abergeldie?



THE CROSS, KILMARNOCK.

Auld Rob Morris.—For the first two lines of this song, Burns was indebted to an old ditty of the same name, as the following quotation will show:

Auld Rob Morris that wins in yon glen,
He's the king of good fellows, and wale of auld men,
Has fourscore of black sheep, and fourscore too;
Auld Rob Morris is the man ye maun lue.

The old song is a dialogue between a mother and a daughter, the former taking upon herself to plead the matrimonial claims of Auld Rob on the score of his possessions. The daughter, however, is obstinate; "Auld Rob Morris I never will hae." Thus it will be seen that Burns, while adopting the first two lines, afterwards pursues an idea of his own. Chambers asserts that the second stanza was intended as a description of Charlotte Hamilton.

My Tocher's the Jewel.—Mrs. Begg was wont to affirm that *My Tocher's the Jewel* was in reality only an improvement by her brother upon an old song, but Mr. W. Scott Douglas says: "The poet's name is attached to this favourite production. He seemed to have a forecast of its popularity, for he instructed Johnson not to state the name of its tune *(Lord Elcho's Favourite)*, but to give the music as if the song really belonged to it."

Gala Water.—In re-modelling the old song of *Gala Water*, Burns followed his usual practice of transposing the leading idea of the verses. The old song may be quoted from Herd's collection:

Braw, braw lads of
Galla-water,
O braw lads of
Galla-water,
I'll kilt my coats above
my knee,
And follow my love
through the water,
Sae fair her hair, sae
brent her brow,
Sae bonny blue her
een, my dearie,
Sae white her teeth, sae
sweet her mou',
I often kiss her till
I'm wearie.



THE BRAES O' BALLOCHMYLE.

O'er yon bank, and o'er
yon brae,
O'er yon moss amang
the hether,
I'll kilt my coats aboon
my knee,
And follow my love
through the water.
Down amang the broom,
the broom,
Down amang the
broom, my dearie;
The lassie lost her silken
snood,
That gard her greet
till she was wearie.

Haydn declared that *Gala Water* was his "favourite song."

My Heart's in the Highlands.—The following note is from Chambers: In this song Burns caught up the single streak of poetry which existed in a well-known old stall song, entitled *The Strong Walls of Derry*, and which commences thus:

The first day I landed 'twas on Irish ground,
The tidings came to me from fair Derry town,
That my love was married, and to my sad wo,
And I lost my first love by courting too slow.

After many stanzas of similar doggerel, the author breaks out, as under an inspiration, with the one fine verse, which Burns afterwards seized as a basis for his own beautiful ditty:

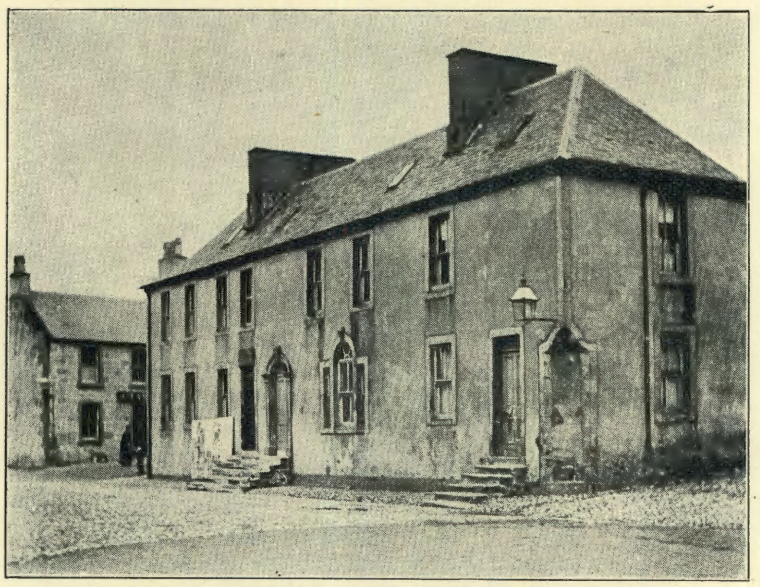
My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;
My heart's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer;
A-chasing the deer, and following the roe—
My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go.

Dainty Davie.—There is an echo of an old song in the chorus of this lyric. The version given in Herd's collection—which is only a fragment—runs thus:

O leeze me on your curly pow,
Dainty Davie, dainty Davie;
Leeze me on your curly pow,
My ain dainty Davie.

For once Burns agrees with the old singer in putting his song into the mouth of a lassie. Burns really wrote two versions of this song, but that given in the text has survived in popular regard by reason of the undoubted improvements it contains.

Mary Morison.—Burns is not always a safe guide in judging the merits of his own songs. Of *Mary Morison*—a song which perfectly satisfied so rigorous



THE HOME OF MARY MORISON.

a critic as Hazlitt—he wrote that it was one of his "juvenile works," and that he did not think it "very remarkable, either for its merits or demerits." The various editors of the poet have puzzled their brains to fit a heroine to the song, and Mr. W. Scott Douglas decides that "Mary Morison" is none other than the Ellison Begbie to whom Burns addressed his earliest love letters. To this it may be replied that there is a grave in Mauchline churchyard which claims to be the resting-place of the poet's bonnie "Mary Morison," and that the home of her family is still to be seen in that famous Ayrshire town.

O Poortith Cauld.—On the manuscript of *O Poortith Cauld* Thomson wrote: "These verses, I humbly think, have too much of uneasy and cold reflection for the air, which is pleasing and rather gay than otherwise." To which Burns rejoined: "The objections are just, but I cannot make it better. The *stuff* won't bear mending; yet for private reasons I should like to see it in print." The "private reasons" consisted, undoubtedly, in his infatuation for Jean Lorimer, in whose honour the song was composed. Mr. W. Scott Douglas suggests, however, that the song was a piece of vicarious wooing on the part of Burns in the interests of his friend Gillespie, a fellow-officer in the excise.

Oh, Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast.—That Jessie Lewars who was in the poet's thoughts when he wrote *Here's a Health to ane I Lo'e Dear* was also the occasion of this exquisite song. Being in her company when his last illness was upon him, Burns told her that if she would play him any of her favourite tunes for which she desired new verses, he would try to write them. Jessie sat down at the piano, and played over several times the air of an old song beginning,

The robin cam' to the wren's nest,
And keekit in, and keekit in.

Burns was not long in grasping the melody, and in a few moments he had composed his swan-song of love. The old air has long given place to Mendelssohn's unrivalled melody.



"THE SOUTER TAULD HIS QUEEREST STORIES."
From the Original by John Faed, Esq., R.S.A. (By kind permission.)

A Rose-Bud by My Early Walk.—Burns owed many of his pleasantest hours in Edinburgh in 1787 to Janet Cruikshank, the youthful but accomplished daughter of Mr. William Cruikshank, with whom the poet lodged for a time. Dr. Walker draws this attractive picture of the poet and his young friend: "About the end of October, I called for him at the house of a friend [Mr. Cruikshank], whose daughter, though not more than twelve, was a considerable proficient in music. I found him seated by the harpsichord of this young lady, listening with the keenest interest to his own verses, which she sung and accompanied, and adjusting them to the music by repeated trials of the effect. In this occupation he was so totally absorbed that it was difficult to draw his attention from it for a moment." The youthful Miss Cruikshank was the subject of *A Rose-Bud by My Early Walk*, as well as of some other verses inscribed by the poet on the blank leaf of a book with which he presented her.



"Perfection whispered, passing by,
Behold the lass o' Ballochmyle!'



Mrs. Lewis Hay
(Margaret Chalmers).

"My Peggy's face, my Peggy's form,
The frost of hermit age might warm;
My Peggy's worth, my Peggy's mind,
Might charm the first of human kind."

O Bonnie was yon Rosy Brier.—Of this song the author writes that it was "written on the blank leaf of a copy of the last edition of my poems, presented to the lady whom, in so many fictitious reveries of passion, but with the most ardent sentiments of real friendship, I have so often sung under the name of Chloris." Composed, apparently, in August, 1795, it is one of the best of the lyrics inspired by the charms of Jean Lorimer. Burns himself was greatly pleased with it, and suggested that it might be set to the air of *I wish my Love was in a mire.*

The Sodger's Return.—Burns had a kindly regard for the life of a soldier; "early in life, and all my life, I reckoned a recruiting drum as my forlorn hope." Many of the localities of *The Sodger's Return* have been identified in the Ayrshire countryside, and a real incident akin to that on which the ballad is based is associated with the district near the "Mill o' Ness." A correspondent wrote Thomson: "Burns, I have been informed, was one summer evening at the inn at Brownhill with a couple of friends, when a poor wayworn soldier passed the window: of a sudden, it struck the poet to call him in, and get the story of his adventures; after listening to which, he all at once fell into one of those fits of abstraction not unusual with him." And the result was, the correspondent states, the now popular song of *The Sodger's Return.*



"I pass'd the mill, and trystin' thorn,
Where Nancy aft I courted."

From the original by John Faed, Esq., R.S.A. (By kind permission.)

Highland Mary.—Burns sent the song of *Highland Mary* to Thomson in November, 1792, with this note: "The foregoing song pleases myself; I think it is in my happiest manner: you will see at first glance that it suits the air [*i.e.*, *Katherine Ogie*]. The subject of the song is one of the most interesting passages of my youthful days, and I own that I should be much flattered to see the verses set to an air which would ensure celebrity. Perhaps, after all, 'tis the still glowing prejudice of my heart that throws a borrowed lustre over the merits of the composition." This song is thought to have been composed on the sixth anniversary of Mary Campbell's death, thus forming a companion to the immortal lyric *(To Mary in Heaven)* with which her lover celebrated the third anniversary of that sorrowful event.

O This is no My Ain Lassie.—There can be no question that Jean Lorimer, the "Chloris" of the poet, was the "Jean" of this song. In his interesting little volume on "Burns's 'Chloris,'" Dr. Adams points out that *O, This is no My Ain Lassie* was sent to Thomson in August, 1795, and that for six months thereafter, with the exception of a note to the father of Chloris, there does not seem to exist a scrap in prose or verse of the poet's writing.

The Lass o' Ballochmyle.—Burns himself has left us a full record of the circumstances clustering round the composition of this song. "I had roved out as chance directed, in the favourite haunts of my muse, on the banks of the Ayr, to view nature in all the gaiety of the vernal year. The evening sun was flaming over the distant western hills; not a breath stirred the crimson opening blossoms or the verdant spreading leaf. It was a golden moment for a poetic heart. Such was the scene, and such the hour, when, in a corner of my prospect, I spied one of the fairest pieces of nature's workmanship that ever crowned a poetic landscape, or met a poet's eye; those visionary bards excepted who hold commune with aërial beings!" The lady who thus arrested the poet's thoughts was Miss Wilhelmina Alexander, the sister of the laird of Ballochmyle. On his homeward walk the verses to her honour were composed, and Miss Alexander's descendants were so sensible of the immortality thereby conferred by Burns upon their kinswoman that they erected a rustic bower at the spot where the meeting took place.



BURNS'S MONUMENT, EDINBURGH.

The Highland Lassie.—Although published in Johnson's *Museum* without any name, Burns, in the notes on that work which he wrote for Captain Riddel, distinctly claims *The Highland Lassie* as one of his own songs, remarking, "It was a composition of mine in very early life, before I was at all known in the world. My Highland Lassie was a warm-hearted, charming young creature as ever blessed a man with generous love." The internal evidence of the song connects it, without doubt, with Highland Mary, and that at the time when Burns was preparing to leave his native land.

Oh, Open the Door.—This is another of the songs which Burns touched up at the request of Thomson, though he remarked of his labours, "I do not know whether this song be really mended." The original is described as a "well-known Irish ballad."

Last May a Braw Wooer.—Mr. W. Scott Douglas pens an interesting note on *The Braw Wooer:* "This song, written for Thomson, in July, 1795, must, for genuine Scottish humour, without a trace of vulgarity, rank with *Tam Glen*, *Duncan Gray*, *O For Ane and Twenty*, *Tam*, and some others of that class. Immediately on being published, *The Braw Wooer* became very popular, insomuch that Johnson, the publisher of the *Museum*, could not resist the temptation to commit a pious



"But o'er my left shouther I gae him a blink,
Lest neebors micht say I was saucy."
From the original by Erskine Nicol, Esq., A.R.A. (By kind permission.)

fraud, in order to grace his own publication with such a gem. In his sixth volume, which appeared in June, 1803, he introduced the same song with a few verbal alterations of slight import, and pretended that Burns had supplied him with it several years before it was sent to Thomson."

Powers Celestial.—Under the title of *A Prayer for Mary*, this song was found among the manuscripts of Burns after his death. It was supposed to have been addressed by the poet to Highland Mary at the time of his courtship; but in 1871 it was discovered that Burns had copied the verses from the *Edinburgh Magazine* of 1784, where they were stated to be a translation from the Greek of Euripides. In any case, they present a most appropriate embodiment of the feelings which were uppermost in Burns's heart when under the spell of Mary's charms.

Where are the Joys?—Burns declared that the air for which he wrote this song—*Saw ye my Father?*—was one of his greatest favourites, and in forwarding the new verses to Thomson, he wrote; "I have finished my song to *Saw ye my Father?* and in English, as you will see. That there is a syllable too much for the expression of the air is true; but, allow me to say, that the mere dividing of a dotted crotchet into a crotchet and a quaver, is not a great matter: however, in that I have no pretensions to cope in judgment with you. Of the poetry I speak with confidence; but the music is a business where I hint my ideas with the utmost diffidence. The old verses have merit, though unequal, and are popular. My advice is to set the air to the old words, and let mine follow as English verses."

Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon.—There are two versions of this matchless song, the second having been written by Burns for the haunting air which was composed by Mr. James Miller, of Edinburgh. Its heroine was a niece of Mrs. Gavin Hamilton, who had loved "not wisely, but too well." Burns wished to include the song in his Edinburgh edition, but the following note explains why that was not done: "My two songs on Miss Alexander and Miss Peggy Kennedy were tried yesterday by a jury of literati, and found defamatory libels against the fastidious powers of Poesy and Taste, and the author forbidden to print them under pain of forfeiture of character. I cannot help shedding a tear to the memory of two songs that had cost me some pains, and that I valued a good deal; but I must submit. D—— the pedant, frigid soul of criticism for ever and ever."



ON THE CLUDEN.

O Lay thy Loof in Mine, Lass.—Contributed to the sixth volume of Johnson's *Museum*, which was not, however, published until 1803—seven years after the poet's death—this song illustrates the successful manner in which Burns availed himself of the old airs that were common in his day. It was composed for the tune of *The Shoemaker's March*, which used to be much in request at the hilarious festivities of St. Crispin's Day.

On Cessnock Banks.—The heroine of this "song of similes" was Ellison Begbie, whom Burns vainly endeavoured to win for his wife. The song, Mr. Chambers notes, appeared for the first time in Cromek's "Reliques," the editor stating that he had recovered it "from the oral communication of a lady residing in Glasgow, whom the bard in early life affectionately admired." Mr. Chambers says it seems not unlikely that Ellison herself had grown into this lady.

There was a Lass and she was Fair.—In transmitting *Bonnie Jean* to Thomson, Burns said: "I have just finished the following ballad, and, as I do think it in my best style, I send it you. Mr. Clarke, who wrote down the air from Mrs. Burns's wood-note wild, is very fond of it, and has given it a celebrity by teaching it to some young ladies of the first fashion here. * * * The heroine of the foregoing is Miss Macmurdo, daughter to Mr. Macmurdo of Drumlanrig, one of your subscribers. I have not painted her in the rank which she holds in life, but in the dress and character of a cottager."

Ca' the Yowes to the Knowes.—In forwarding this song to Thomson in September, 1794, Burns said: "I am flattered at your adopting *Ca' the Yowes to the Knowes*, as it was owing to me that it ever saw the light. About seven years ago I was acquainted with a worthy little fellow of a clergyman, a Mr. Clunie, who sang it charmingly; and, at my request, Mr. Clarke took it down from his singing. When I gave it to Johnson, I added some stanzas to the song and mended others, but still it will not do for you. In a solitary stroll which I took to-day, I tried my hand on a few pastoral lines, following up the idea of the chorus, which I would preserve. Here it is, with all its crudities and imperfections on its head."



LINCLUDEN COLLEGE.

Blythe, Blythe and Merry Was She.—During his Highland tour of 1787, Burns was entertained at Ochtertyre House at Strathearn, where he met Miss Euphemia Murray, of Lintrose, a young cousin of his host, a lovely girl of some eighteen summers, who was already known as the "Flower of Strathmore." Miss Murray was the heroine of *Blythe was She*. The chorus of the song enshrines two lines from the old ditty of *Andro and His Cutty Gun*.

Thou Hast Left me ever, Jamie.—Written for the tune of *Fee him, Father*, Burns says of the song: "I do not give these verses for any merit they have. I composed them at the time in which 'Patie Allan's mither died —that was, about the back o' midnight,' and by the lee-side of a bowl of punch, which had overset every mortal in company except the hautbois and the Muse." Thomson foolishly adopted another tune and ruined the song's chances of popularity for many years.

Green Grow the Rashes.—As with *Duncan Gray*, *Green Grow the Rashes* owes its title and refrain to an old fragment, which is, however, so indelicate that it is not desirable to quote even one of its three verses. Burns first committed his version to the pages of his Common-place Book in August, 1784, *a propos* of some reflections entered there on the two grand classes—the grave and the merry—into which he thought all young men might be divided. "In the meantime," he added, "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."

O For Ane-and-Twenty, Tam.—The following particulars were supplied by Stenhouse: "The subject of this song had a real origin: a young girl having



"NURSING HER WRATH TO KEEP IT WARM."
From the Original by John Faed, Esq., R.S.A. (By kind permission.)

been left some property by a near relation, and at her own disposal on her attaining majority, was pressed by her relations to marry an old rich booby. Her affections, however, had previously been engaged by a young man, to whom she had pledged her troth when she should become of age, and she of course obstinately rejected the solicitations of her friends to any other match. Burns represents the lady addressing her youthful lover in the language of constancy and affection."

Musing on the Roaring Ocean.—During his tour in the North Highlands, Burns became acquainted with several airs which inspired him to the creation of new songs. *Musing on the Roaring Ocean* was one of the songs owing their origin to that circumstance, the tune being *Druimion Dubh.* As to the heroine of the song, the author notes, "I composed these verses out of compliment to a Mrs. Maclachlan, whose husband is an officer in the East Indies."



" Yonder Cluden's silent towers,
Where at moonshine midnight hours,
O'er the dewy-bending flowers,
Fairies dance sae cheery.

Ca' the yowes to the knowes." etc.



James Cunningham, Earl of Glencairn.

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

[*Lament for James, Earl of Glencairn.*]

My Nannie, O.—In the Scrap Book which Burns communicated to Mr. Robert Riddel—a book in which it was his intention to write himself out—the poet has a reference to *My Nannie, O*, which was one of his earliest efforts. After referring to his own skill in distinguishing between foppery and conceit and real passion and nature in love songs, he adds: "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, genuine from the heart." It seems probable that the subject of the song was a farmer's daughter named Agnes Fleming, who is said to have stated that Burns once told her he had written a song about her.

The Deil's awa' wi' the Exciseman.—There are two versions of the origin of this song, but they are not inconsistent with each other. The most commonly accepted is that based upon the narrative in Lockhart's Life of the poet. In 1792 Burns was one of a party of excisemen who addressed themselves to the capture of a smuggler's vessel in Solway Firth. While messengers were sent to Dumfries and Ecclefechan for reinforcements, Burns was left in charge of the party, with orders to watch the brig and prevent landing or escape. The messengers were a long time absent; it was a cheerless February day; the place of waiting was a wet salt-marsh; and the poet began to vent his wrath on the dilatoriness of the men who had gone for the reinforcements. He was not alone in so doing. One of his companions ejaculated that he wished the devil had one of the messengers for his pains, and suggested that Burns should pillory him in a song. Burns did not reply, but after striding the shore by himself for a time, returned to his companions and recited the now famous song. The other version describes the poet as first producing the verses in reply to a request for a toast at an Exciseman's dinner. To those who were at that dinner the song may have been new, but that fact does not militate against its composition on the shores of Solway Firth.



DRUMLANRIG.

Contented wi' Little.—Burns wrote *Contented wi' Little* to suit an old air *(Lumps o' Pudding)*, which had taken his fancy. The song evidently satisfied himself, for writing to Thomson with reference to a miniature he had had taken, he says: "I have some thoughts of suggesting to you to prefix a vignette taken from it to my song, *Contented wi' Little, and Canty wi' Mair*, in order the portrait of my face and the picture of my mind may go down the stream of time together."

Up in the Morning Early.—Burns says of this song that the chorus is old, but that the two stanzas are his own work. The air, Mr. Scott Douglas states, is one of Scotland's oldest and best, and was utilised by Purcell in a tune he composed for a Royal birth-day song in 1692.

Logan Braes.—"Have you ever," wrote the poet to Thomson, "felt your bosom ready to burst with indignation, on reading of those mighty villains who divide kingdom against kingdom, desolate provinces, and lay nations waste, out of the wantonness of ambition, or often from still more ignoble passions? In a mood of this kind to-day I recollected the air of *Logan Water*, and it occurred to me that its querulous melody probably had its origin from the plaintive indignation of some swelling, suffering

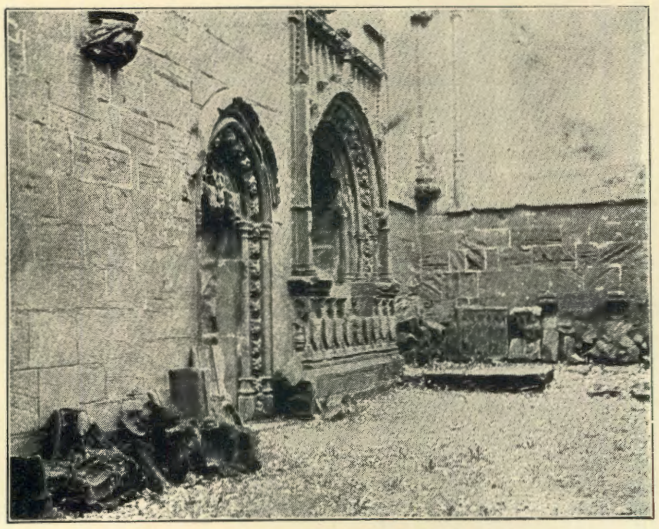


LOGAN BRAES.
From a Painting by John Faed, Esq., R.S.A. (By kind permission.)

heart, fired at the tyrannic strides of some public destroyer, and overwhelmed with private distress, the consequence of a country's ruin. If I have done anything at all like justice to my feelings, the following song, composed in three-quarters of an hour's meditation in my elbow-chair, ought to have some merit."

O Luve Will Venture In.—This lyric, according to Mr. W. Scott Douglas, was suggested by a doggerel ballad which the poet's wife used to sing to him, beginning—*There was a pretty May, and a-milkin' she went.* Burns was particularly struck with the beauty of the tune, which he got taken down from Jean's singing, and forwarded to Johnson for his *Museum* with these verses. Professor Wilson has pointed out that in these verses Burns has taken a very ample poetic license by making the primrose, the pink, the rose, etc., contemporaries of each other!

Awa', Whigs, awa'.—Only two of the verses of this song, the second and the fourth, are by Burns; the other two are from an old Jacobite song which may be found in Dr. Charles Mackay's collection. He remarks concerning it that "none of the Jacobite songs have been more popular than this, chiefly on account of the beauty of its air. The piper to Clavers' own troop of horse is reported to have played it with so much vigour and fury while standing on a bank of the Clyde, at the battle of Bothwell Bridge, that he attracted particular notice, and a Whig bullet accordingly sent him reeling into the flood below, where he was drowned."



TOMB OF MARGARET, DAUGHTER OF ROBERT III., LINCLUDEN COLLEGE.

From thee, Eliza.—It seems very probable that this lyric was written during those gloomy days when the poet anticipated a life-long exile from Scotland. Many heroines have been named in connection with the song, including one of the six belles of Mauchline, Eliza Barbour, and Elizabeth Black. The song appeared in the first edition of Burns's poems, and was afterwards commended by the author to Thomson as very suitable for the air, *Gilderoy*, but in this work it will be found set to the tune *Donald*, which is more appropriate.

A Man's a Man for a' that.—Although this was destined to become nearly the most world-wide-adopted song of Burns—the empire of its popularity being disputed, perhaps, by *Auld Lang Syne*—it was in a somewhat despondent mood that, in the opening month of 1795, the poet forwarded it to Thomson. "I fear for my songs," he wrote; "however, a few may please, yet originality is a coy feature in composition, and in a multiplicity of efforts in the same style, disappears altogether. A great critic (Aikin) on songs says, that love and wine are the exclusive themes for song-writing. The following is on neither subject, and consequently is no song, but will be allowed, I think, to be two or three pretty good prose thoughts inverted into rhyme." Chambers points out that Wycherley, in his *Plain Dealer*, has a thought akin to that of the first verse: "I weigh the man, not his title; 'tis not the king's stamp can make the metal better or heavier."



FRIAR'S CARSE.

Hey, Ca' Thro'.—Chambers says *Hey, Ca' Thro'* was written upon the basis of an old song, and Mr. Scott Douglas declares that it was "picked up or invented by Burns: if the former, it must have been during some Saturday afternoon excursion from Edinburgh, along the Fife coast, in 1787; if the latter, then simply from the text suggested to him in some old collection of music where he would read the name of the tune, *Carls o' Dysart*."

The Gloomy Night is Gath'ring Fast.—Professor Walker has left a valuable report of Burns's own narration of the feelings which prompted him to compose what he fully anticipated was his farewell to his native land. Meeting the poet soon after his arrival in Edinburgh in 1786, Professor Walker "requested him to communicate some of his unpublished poems, and he recited his farewell song to the Banks of Ayr, introducing it with a description of the circumstances in which it had been composed, more striking than the poem itself. He had left Dr. Lawrie's family, after a visit which he expected to be the last, and on his way home had to cross a wide stretch of solitary moor. His mind was strongly affected by parting for ever with a scene where he had tasted so much elegant and social pleasure; and, depressed by the contrasted gloom of his prospects, the aspect of nature harmonized with his feelings. It was a lowering and heavy evening in the end of autumn: the wind was up, and whistled through the rushes and long spear-grass, which bent before it: the clouds were driving across the sky; and cold, pelting showers at intervals added discomfort of body to cheerlessness of mind. Under these circumstances, and in this frame of mind, Burns composed his poem."



GREENAN CASTLE, NEAR AYR.

Lord Gregory.—Apparently at the request of the publisher, "Peter Pindar" (Dr. Wolcot) contributed a song entitled, *Lord Gregory*, to Thomson's Collection. This—which in its turn was founded on an old ballad—was sent to Burns, who addressed himself to a Scottish version, afterwards forwarded to Thomson with this note: "I have tried to give you a set of stanzas in Scots, on the same subject, which are at your service. Not that I intend to enter the lists with Peter; that would be presumption indeed. My song, though much inferior in poetic merit, has, I think, more of the ballad simplicity in it." Notwithstanding this modest verdict, it is interesting to learn that on several occasions when Burns was asked to recite one of his own poems he complied by giving *Lord Gregory*.

Let me in this Ae Night and *Her Answer.*—It was an old model Burns had before him in composing this double song, but so indelicate that it was useless for Thomson's purpose. With reference to his re-dressing of the old stanzas, Burns wrote: "Do you think that we ought to retain the old chorus? I think we must retain both the old chorus and the first stanza of the old song. I do not altogether like the third line of the first stanza, but cannot alter it to please myself. Would you have the *dénouement* to be successful or otherwise?—should she 'let him in' or not?" Burns did keep to the old chorus and the first stanza, and apparently failed to hit upon a satisfactory new third line for the latter. In acknowledging the song, Thomson wrote: "You have displayed great address in the above song. Her answer is excellent, and at the same time takes away the indelicacy that otherwise would have attached to his entreaties. I like the song, as it now stands, very much."



KIRKOSWALD.

Scots Wha Ha'e.—Burns wrote this song to an old air which had captured his fancy. The tradition that it was to the tune of *Hey, tuttie, taitie* Bruce marched to Bannockburn warmed him, he writes, "to a pitch of enthusiasm on the theme of liberty and independence, which I threw into a kind of Scottish Ode, fitted to the air that one might suppose to be the gallant royal Scot's address to his heroic followers on that eventful morning." Burns and Mr. Thomson disagreed over the merits of the song; the author was well pleased with it, but the publisher offered alterations. That difference of opinion was to be perpetuated by Carlyle and Principal Shairp. The former wrote: "So long as there is warm blood in the heart of Scotchman or man, it will move in fierce thrills under this war ode; the best, we believe, that was ever written by any pen." The latter refers, and with evident approval, to a conversation between Wordsworth and Mrs. Hemans, in which they both agreed that the famous ode was not much more than a commonplace piece of school-boy rhodomontade about liberty.



TURNBERRY.

Lovely Polly Stewart.—The heroine of this brief song was the daughter of a neighbour of the poet at Ellisland, who was also celebrated in verse by Burns. She was twice married, but eventually became the mistress of a French prisoner of war with whom she went to the Continent, and is said to have died at Florence in 1847. The verses in honour of her father were scratched by Burns on a crystal tumbler, which was afterwards owned by Sir Walter Scott, and is still to be seen at Abbotsford.

The Banks of the Devon.—The heroine of *The Banks of the Devon* was Miss Charlotte Hamilton, whom Burns met in August, 1787, at Harvieston on the Devon, in Clackmannan, at the outset of his Highland tour. Writing to her brother the day after the meeting, Burns said: "Of Charlotte I cannot speak in common terms of admiration; she is not only beautiful, but lovely." In another letter addressed to Miss Chambers, the poet wrote: "Talking of Charlotte, I must tell her that I have, to the best of my power, paid her a poetic compliment now completed. The air is admirable — true old Highland. It was the tune of a Gaelic song which an Inverness lady sang me when I was there; I was so charmed with it, that I begged her to write me a set of it from her singing, for it had never been set before. I am fixed that it shall go in Johnson's next number; so Charlotte and you need not spend your precious time in contradicting me." It is thought that Burns hoped to make Charlotte his wife, but as she is said to have burnt the letters he sent her, there is little probability of any valuable evidence on that point being forthcoming. It seems certain, however, that the affection was not returned on her side.

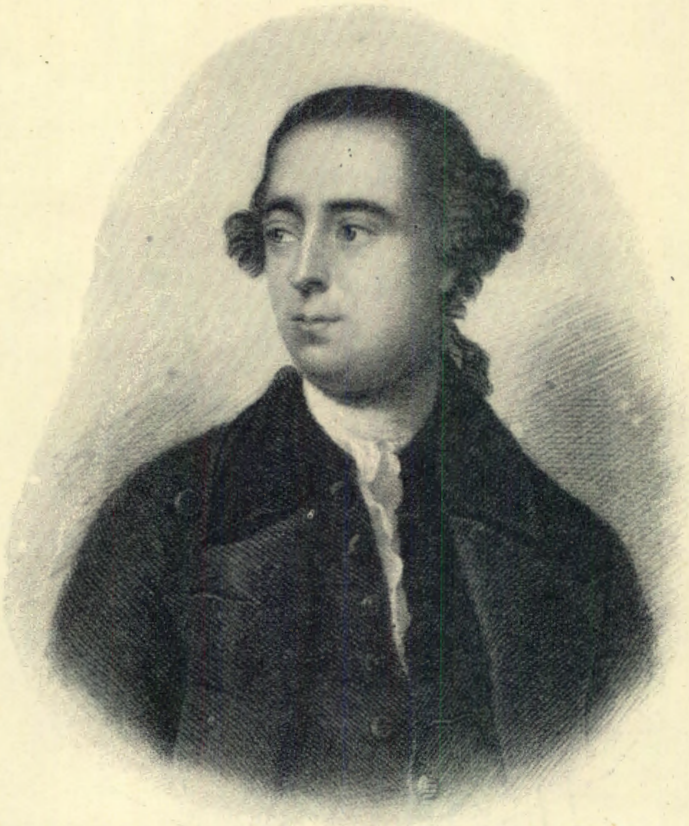


ON THE NITH.

O, Were I on Parnassus' Hill.—While Burns was at Ellisland superintending the erection of a house there in which to set up a home of his own, his thoughts, naturally, often reverted to his "Bonnie Jean." Two memorials of those days survive in *Of a' the airts* and *O, were I on Parnassus' Hill.* "We have to suppose the poet," says Mr. Chambers, "in his solitary life at Ellisland, gazing towards the hill of Corsincon at the head of Nithsdale, beyond which, though at many miles' distance, was the valley in which his heart's idol lived. He ideally beholds his 'blithesome, dancing, sweet young queen, of guileless heart,' in her most characteristic situation, and he bursts out with these glowing verses."



"Musing on the roaring ocean,
Which divides my love and me;
Wearying Heaven in warm devotion,
For his weal, where'er he be."



JOHN MOORE, M.D.

The student of Burns's life is familiar with the autobiographical sketch which appears in Dr. Currie's memoir. This sketch was written by Burns in 1787, and was addressed to Dr. Moore, who had expressed the highest admiration for the poet's genius. Dr. Moore, from his connection with the family of the Duke of Hamilton, enjoyed exceptional opportunities of studying men and manners in all parts of the world, and he enriched literature by many works of learning and observation, notable among which is his novel "Zeluco." Dr. Moore is further endeared to his countrymen as the father of Sir John Moore, the hero of Corunna.

The Blude-Red Rose.—Although this song exists in the hand-writing of Burns there are no data available from which to deduce the circumstances, etc., of its composition. In the classification of the poet's work, the song may be regarded as a companion to *What can a Young Lassie do wi' an auld Man?* That song is the unavailing lament of a girl who has wedded a man many years her senior, prompted thereto by her mother, with whom "warld's gear" has been the persuading motive. The same temptation has befallen the fair singer of the song under consideration, but she declares:



ON THE FAIL.

The blude-red rose at Yule may blaw,
The simmer lilies bloom in snaw,
The frost may freeze the deepest sea;
But an auld man shall never daunton me.

Stay, my Charmer, Can you Leave Me?—These verses, says Mr. W. Scott Douglas, were written as a vehicle for preserving a plaintive Gaelic air, which attracted Burns in the course of his northern tour, in the autumn of 1787. It is called *An Gilleaah aubh;* or, *The Black-haired Lad.*

My Wife's a Winsome Wee Thing.—One of the old songs for which Thomson desired a new version was that beginning:

My wife's a wanton wee thing,
My wife's a wanton wee thing,
My wife's a wanton wee thing;
She'll never be guided by me.



COILSFIELD, THE CASTLE OF MONTGOMERY.
Drawn by D O. Hill, Esq., R.S.A.

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

Fair Eliza.—The first line of this song was originally written, "Turn again, thou fair Robina," and Burns wrote of it then: "So much for your Robina—how do you like the verses? I assure you I have tasked my muse to the top of her performing. However, the song will not sing to your tune; but there is a Perthshire tune in Macdonald's collection which is much admired in this country: I intended the verses to be sung to that air." The song is thought to enshrine the love-passion of a friend of the poet.

There'll never be Peace till Jamie comes Hame.—The poet's note on this song, in a letter to Alex. Cunningham, runs thus: "I shall fill up my page by giving you a song of my late composition, which will appear perhaps in Johnson's work. You must know a beautiful Jacobite air—*There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame.* When political combustion ceases to be the object of princes and patriots, it then, you know, becomes the lawful prey of historians and poets. If you like the air, and if the stanzas hit your fancy, you cannot imagine, my dear friend, how much you will oblige me if, by the charms of your delightful voice, you will give my honest effusion to 'the memory of joys that are past' to the few friends whom you indulge in that pleasure."



AYR.

From the Original by John Faed, Esq., R.S.A. (By kind permission.)

Behold the Hour.—Although *Behold the Hour* was not sent to Thomson until September, 1793, there is good reason for believing that the song had reference to Clarinda's departure for the West Indies early in the preceding year, as the grandson of that lady affirms that the poet sent his relative a draft of the verses. Burns's note on the song was as follows: "The following song I have composed for *Oran Gaoil*, the Highland air that you tell me in your last you have resolved to give a place to in your book. I have this moment finished the song, so you have it glowing from the mint." The last expression may seem inconsistent with the above-mentioned details, but the poet doubtless meant he had only just put the final touches to the song.

Farewell, thou Fair Day.—Writing from Ellisland in December, 1791, to Mrs. Dunlop, Burns said: "I have just finished the following song, which, to a lady, the descendant of Wallace, and many heroes of his illustrious line—and herself the mother of several soldiers—needs neither preface nor apology." Having explained that the scene is supposed to be that of a battlefield at night, and that the wounded and dying of the victorious army are imagined to be joining in singing the verses, Burns adds: "The circumstance that gave rise to the foregoing verses was, looking over with a musical friend M'Donald's collection of Highland airs, I was struck with one, an Isle of Skye tune, entitled *Oran an Aoig;* or, *The Song of Death*, to the measure of which I have adapted my stanzas."



DUMFRIES.

O wha is She that Loe's me?—The old Highland air of *Morag* was a great favourite with Burns, and it was for that tune he composed *O wha is She that Loe's me?* It was evidently sent to Thomson for his collection, as it was first printed by that publisher, but there is no evidence to show when it was written.

O Kenmure's on and Awa', Willie.—This song is placed by Chambers among those improved by Burns. Its hero, William Gordon, sixth Viscount of Kenmure, took a leading part in the Jacobite rising of 1715, and held the chief command of the rebels in the south of Scotland. He was captured at Preston, and after his execution a letter was found in his pocket addressed to the Pretender under the title of King James, declaring that he died for his faithful services to his Majesty, and hoping that the cause would flourish after his death. Burns was once entertained by a descendant of this Jacobite leader at his romantic seat of Kenmure Castle.

I'm O'er Young to Marry Yet.—Although Chambers puts this ditty among "old songs improved by Burns," the poet himself said of it: "The chorus of this song is old; the rest of it, such as it is, is mine." The version now sung —which is that given in the text—has been modified to suit the manners of our modern drawing-rooms.

How Lang and Dreary is the Night.—Burns wrote two versions of *How Lang and Dreary is the Night*, the first in 1787 to sing to a Gaelic melody he had heard in his Highland tour. Seven years later he changed the song slightly, added a chorus, and sent it to Thomson with this note: "*How Lang and*



"THE HOUR APPROACHES TAM MAUN RIDE."

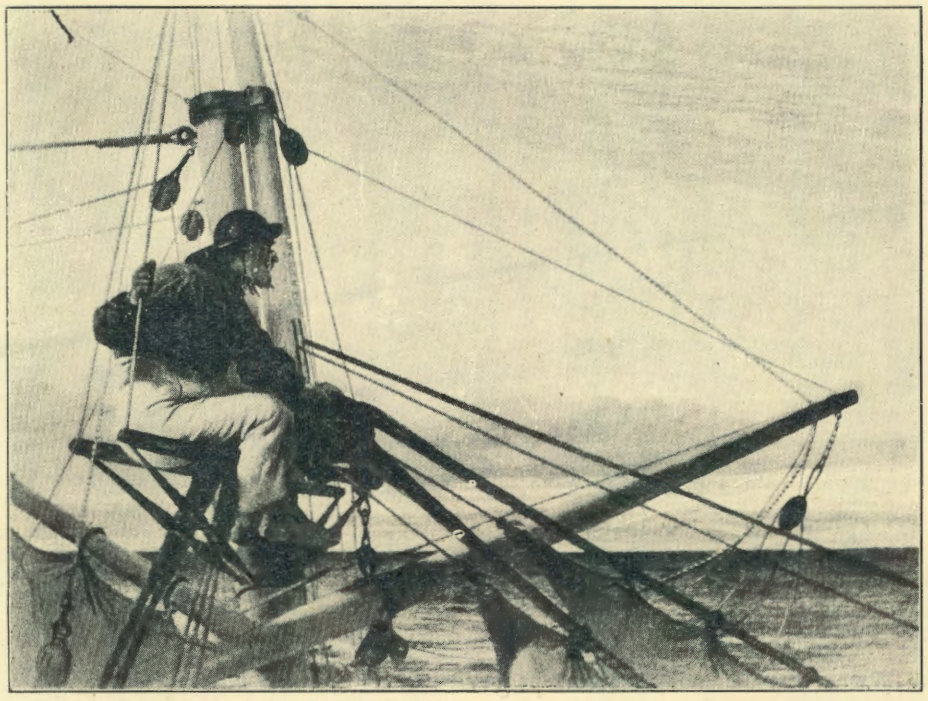
Dreary is the Night!—I met with some such words in a collection of songs somewhere, which I altered and enlarged; and to please you, and to suit your favourite air [*i.e.*, *Cauld Kail in Aberdeen*], I have taken a stride or two across my room, and have arranged it anew, as you will find on the other page."

My Spouse Nancy.—In forwarding these humorous stanzas to Thomson, Burns asked, "How do you like the following verses to the tune of *My Jo Janet?*" The song soon became popular, and Mr. W. Scott Douglas notes that the biographer of William Hutton, of Birmingham, relates that in 1811, at a watering-place in the North Riding of Yorkshire, that good-natured philosopher amused and delighted a large and fashionable company, when he was 88 years old, by singing the husband's part of this song, while his daughter rendered the wife's part.

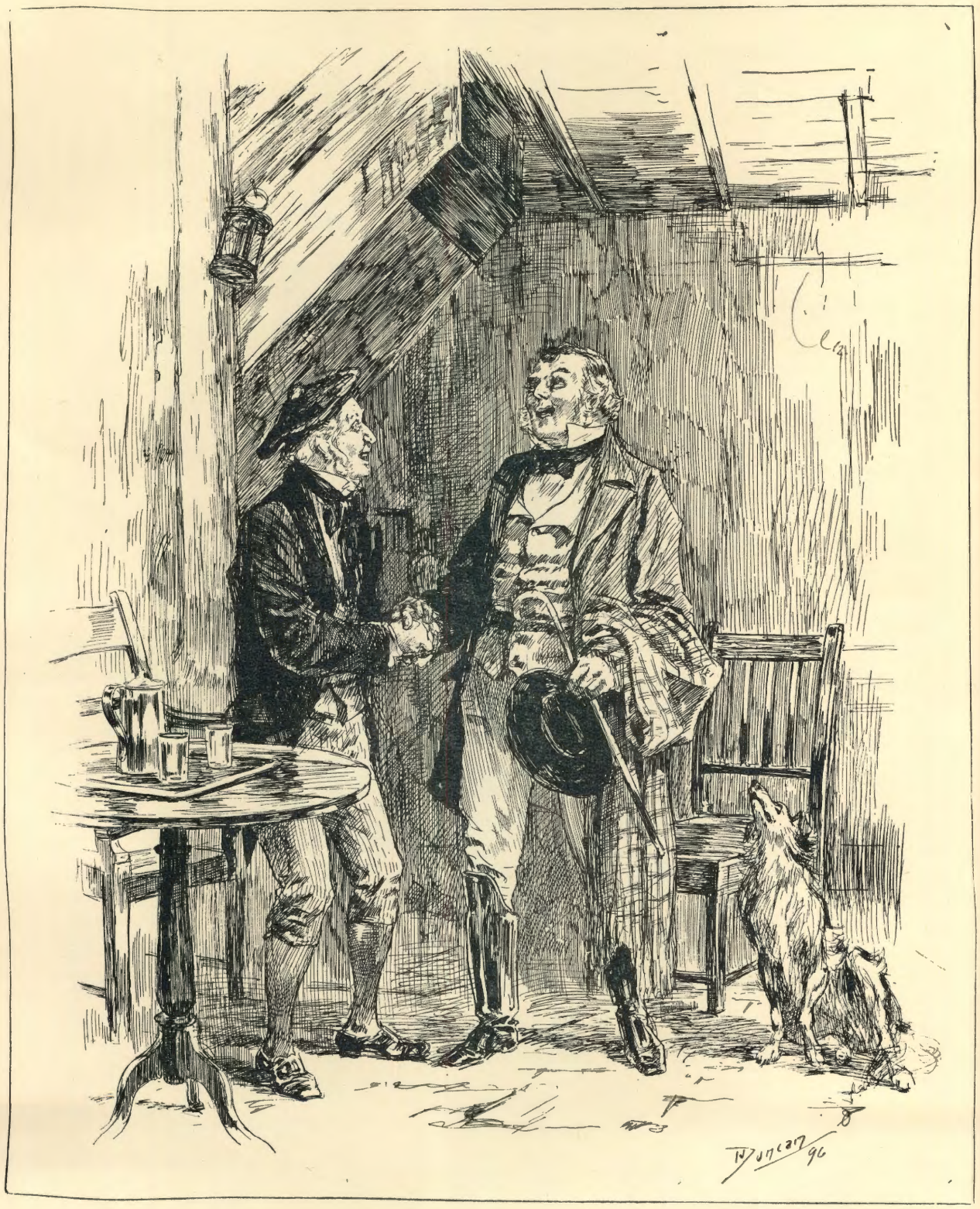
Auld Lang Syne.—*Did* Burns write *Auld Lang Syne?* It is true he owned to Johnson that the third and fourth verses—the most exquisite of them all—were from his pen, but in sending the entire song to Mrs. Dunlop, he wrote: "Light be the turf on the breast of the Heaven-inspired poet who composed this glorious fragment! There is more of the fire of native genius in it than in half-a-dozen of modern English Bacchanalians!" Again, in a subsequent letter to Thomson he said of the same song: "The air is but mediocre; but the following song, the old song of the olden times, and which has never been in print, nor even in manuscript, until I took it down from an old man's singing, is enough to recommend any air." Chambers has an amusing note on the song, to the effect that at a Burns festival in the United States an Irish gentleman said he felt much inclined to claim the poet as an Irishman; but the attempt would be vain: one of the best known of the poet's lyrics would detect him at once—

"And surely you'll be your pint-stoup,
And surely I'll be mine."

There was Burns in the characteristic spirit of national thrift, settling the reckoning, and upon condition, too, that you were to pay for the first pint-stoup. An Irishman would never have thought of that.



"BUT SEAS BETWEEN US BRAID HAE ROAR'D."



"And here's a hand, my trusty fiere,
And gie's a hand o' thine."



ELIZABETH BURNET.

"Fair Burnet strikes th' adoring eye,
Heaven's beauties on my fancy shine;
I see the Sire of Love on high
And own his work indeed divine!"