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Notes.

THE BURNS GLENRIDDELL MSS.

The *Athenæum* has lately published some letters and poems of the Scottish poet Burns. It appears that two MS. volumes were presented to the Athenæum Library, Liverpool, by the widow of Mr. Wallace Currie, son of Dr. Currie, the biographer of Burns. The volumes have hitherto been kept locked up, sacred from all popular inspection. But at the suggestion of Mr. Henry A. Bright, a member of the Athenæum, they have been placed within a glass case in the library, and may at all times be readily inspected. Mr. Bright has, moreover, printed, in a handsome small quarto volume, a complete catalogue of the poetical portion of the MSS., transcribing in full such pieces as were unpublished. For this liberality the admirers of Burns and the lovers of literature owe Mr. Bright a debt of gratitude. So long as the MSS. existed there would have been curiosity and conjecture as to their nature and contents; and this feeling could only have been gratified by a visit to Liverpool, a most inconvenient process to the greater number of the readers and students of Burns, including, above all others, our American friends, the most enthusiastic worshippers of the poet. Copies will now be found in the British Museum and other public libraries. Burns ap-

pears to have been strongly attached to Mr. Riddell, of Glenriddell, a Scottish laird and antiquary, "skilled in old coins," and to Mr. Riddell's wife, a "sweet, lovely dame" of sense, wit, and taste. At their fireside he said he had enjoyed more pleasant evenings than at all the houses of fashionable people in the south of Scotland put together. As some acknowledgment, the poet copied for them into the two volumes referred to "bagatelles strung in rhyme," pieces local or unfinished, and copies of a number of his letters, those which he "sketched in a rough draught, and afterwards wrote out fair." Great confidence in his friends, as well as a deep sense of their hospitality and kindness, were evinced by this literary present, and the intimacy subsisted for about five years. In addition to the MSS. now printed by Mr. Bright, I have seen a copy of the 1793 edition of Burns's *Poems*, with the following autograph inscription of the poet:—

"To Robert Riddell, Esq., of Glenriddell. When you and I, my dear sir, have passed that bourne whence no traveller returns, should these volumes survive us, I wish the future reader of this page to be informed that they were the pledge of a friendship, ardent and grateful on my part, as it was kind and generous on yours. That Enjoyment may mark your days, and Pleasure number your years, is the earnest prayer of, my dear sir, your much indebted Friend, —THE AUTHOR."

Unfortunately a disagreement took place between the friends so strongly attached; some imputed impropriety on the part of Burns towards a lady, arising out of convivial excess—and the friendship was broken up. Mr. Riddell died within a twelvemonth after the above affectionate inscription, and died unreconciled to the poet. The unpublished portion of the Glenriddell volumes is not calculated to increase or even sustain the high reputation of Burns. The poetry is poor, and the letters inflated and incorrect. Their chief interest arises from the light they incidentally throw on the poet's history and feelings. And the first impression that strikes one is the warmth of gratitude expressed by Burns on all occasions to persons of rank who had shown him any kindness or attention. To the higher officials of the excise this was natural, for the poet considered his excise commission his "sheet anchor in life," compared with which his farm was of little or no account. His great ambition was to be a supervisor of excise; and that he did not obtain this appointment must for ever be held as a reproach to the gentry of that day. This was the only way they could have benefitted him without degradation to either party. "It might have been a luxury," as Carlyle says, "and it was a duty for our nobility to have done." The Duke of Athole had received Burns with kindness, and the poet writes in his Glenriddell volume: "God, who knows all things, knows how my heart aches with the throes of gratitude whenever I recollect



my reception at the noble house of Athole." At Oughtertyre House he had also been well received, and he writes :—

"I lived there Sir William's guest for two or three weeks, and was much flattered by my hospitable reception. What a pity that the mere emotions of gratitude are so impotent in this world! 'Tis lucky that, as we are told, they will be of some avail in the world to come."

Of Sir James Hunter Blair :—

"A man he was! How few of the two-legged breed that pass for such deserve the designation! He pressed my hand, and asked me, with the most friendly warmth, if it was in his power to serve me; and if so, that I would oblige him by telling him how. I had nothing to ask of him; but if ever a child of his should be so unfortunate as to be under the necessity of asking anything of so poor a man as I am, it may not be in my power to grant it, but, by G—, I shall try!!!"

There are some tender lines on an early heroine :

"Once fondly lov'd, and still remembered dear," &c.

The lines are in all the editions of the poems, but this note on them in the Glenriddell MSS. is interesting :—

"'Twas the girl I mention in my letter to Dr. Moore, where I speak of taking the sun's altitude. Poor Peggy! Her husband is my old acquaintance, and a most worthy fellow. When I was taking leave of my Carrick relations, intending to go to the West Indies, when I took farewell of her, neither she nor I could speak a syllable. Her husband escorted me three miles on my road, and we both parted with tears."

In the copies of his letters written out for his friend, Burns does not select his best. He gives, however, his autobiography addressed to Dr. Moore, copied by an amanuensis, to which the poet appends this note :—

"Know all whom it may concern, that I, the author, am not answerable for the false spelling and injudicious punctuation in the foregoing transcript of my letter to Dr. Moore. I have something generous in my temper that cannot bear to see or hear the absent wronged, and I am very much hurt to observe that in several instances the transcriber has injured and mangled the proper name and principal title of a personage of the very first distinction in all that is valuable among men, antiquity, abilities and power (virtue, everybody knows, is an obsolete business); I mean the devil. Considering that the transcriber was one of the clergy, an order that owe the very bread they eat to the said personage's exertions, the affair was absolutely unpardonable.—R. B."

Rather a ponderous joke! A letter to Clarinda concludes in this "high falutin'" style :—

"No cold language—no prudential documents. I despise advice and scorn control. If you are not to write such language, such sentiments as you know I shall wish, shall delight to receive, I conjure you by wounded pride! by ruined peace! by frantic disappointed passion! by all the many ills that constitute that sum of human woes, a broken heart!!! to me be silent for ever. If you insult me with the unfeeling apophthegms of cold-blooded caution, may all the—but hold! a fiend could not breathe a malevolent wish on the head of my angel! Mind my request. If you send me a page baptized in the font of sanctimonious prudence, by heaven, earth, and hell, I will tear it into atoms! Adieu; may all good things attend you.—R. B."

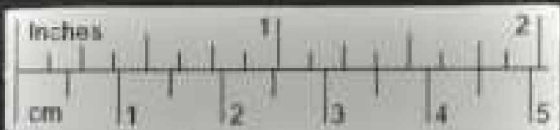
Burns adds :—

"I need scarcely remark that the foregoing was the fustian rant of enthusiastic youth."

But in reality the "rant" was written in the autumn of 1792, rather less than four years before the death of the poet. It is curious to find him somewhat ashamed of the extravagant epistle, yet sending it to his fair correspondent, and transcribing it for his friend, the laird of Glenriddell. The Burns MSS. show that Dr. Currie took considerable liberties with the poet's letters, making desirable omissions, and generally softening and sobering vehement expressions. One or two brief examples will suffice. In his autobiography, addressed to Dr. Moore, the poet mentions his going to a dancing school. "My father," he adds, "had an unaccountable antipathy against these meetings, and my going was what to this hour I repent, in absolute defiance of his commands. My father, as I said before, was the sport of strong passions; from that instance of rebellion he took a kind of dislike to me, which, I believe, was one cause of that dissipation which marked my future years." Gilbert Burns entirely dissented from his brother on this point, and Currie softened the passage. "My going was what to this moment I repent, in *opposition to his wishes*. My father, as I said before, was *subject* to strong passions; from that instance of *disobedience* in me, he took a sort of dislike," &c. Afterwards Burns said, "Early ingrained piety and virtue never failed to point me out the line of innocence." Currie gave him the moral benefit of a stronger statement: "Early ingrained piety and virtue *kept me for several years afterwards within* the line of innocence." In his love affairs the poet says: "Like every warfare in this world, I was sometimes crowned with success, and sometimes mortified with defeat." Currie rounds off this declaration: "As in every other warfare in this world, *my fortune was various*; sometimes I was *received with favour*, and sometimes I was mortified *with a repulse*." At Irvine, whither he had gone to learn flax-dressing, Burns says, "I learnt to look unconcernedly on a large tavern bill." Currie evidently thought this too grandiloquent, so he changed it to "I learnt to *roll my glass*." The original letter (now in the British Museum) shows many other variations. But enough for the present. C.

#### ON CERTAIN VERSES WRONGLY ASCRIBED TO ROGERS.

In the *Quarterly Review* of Oct., 1873, there is an article on Holland House, which contains the following passage, p. 434, referring to the trees in the adjacent park: "There is in the grounds another venerable tree (not mentioned in this book) which Rogers thus addressed in verse (now published for the first time)." Then follow eighteen



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lines, of which it is only necessary that I should quote the beginning and the end :—

“Majestic tree, whose wrinkled form bath stood  
Age after age the patriarch of the wood ;  
Thou who hast seen a thousand springs unfold  
Their ravell'd buds and dip their flowers in gold,  
\* \* \* \* \*

Yet shalt thou fall, thy leafy tresses fade,  
And those bare scattered antlers strew the glade ;  
Arm after arm shall leave the mouldering dust,  
And thy firm fibres crumble into dust ;  
The Muse alone shall consecrate thy name,  
And by her powerful art prolong thy fame ;  
Green shall thy leaves expand, thy branches play,  
And bloom for ever in the immortal day.”

I beg to point out that these verses are not by Rogers,—their style ought to have warned the reviewer against making an unqualified statement,—neither do they refer to any tree in the grounds of Holland House ; but it appears that they are extracted, with certain omissions, to which I shall have to draw attention, and with the alteration of not half-a-dozen words, from a poem of Dr. Erasmus Darwin, the once widely-known author of *The Botanic Garden*, written upon Swilcar Oak, in Needwood Forest, Derbyshire. The verses will be found in a large quarto prose work of his, called *Phytologia ; or, the Philosophy of Agriculture and Gardening*, published in 1802, at p. 528, prefaced by these words : “The following address to Swilcar Oak, in Needwood Forest, a very tall tree, which measures” (I here omit a few lines), “was written at the end of Mr. Mundy’s poem on leaving that forest, and may amuse the weary reader and conclude this section.” Then come the verses in question. It appears from p. 526 that Mr. Mundy’s poem was at that time unpublished.

The verses in the *Quarterly Review* are identical with those in the *Phytologia*, except that “majestic tree” has been substituted for “gigantic oak,” and “leaves” for “gems.” Also, a stanza of eight lines is omitted, which has direct reference to Mundy, and in which he is named. Again, in the fourth line from the bottom, “The muse alone” is substituted for “But Mundy’s verse.” In short, the person who stole the poem wished to dedicate it to some tree in a different place, and that tree not an oak.

It struck me that there was a shade of ambiguity in the language used by Dr. Erasmus Darwin in speaking of his authorship of the verses which had better be cleared up. I therefore sought for, and have before me now, as I write, a copy of Mr. Mundy’s poem ; another one belongs to the present representative of the family, who resides at Markenton Hall, Derby. The poem is printed, but I do not know whether it was ever published. The copy before me is “from the author, 1808,” and has many pencillings and also some notes in ink, made, as I am assured, by a contemporary pen. It is a quarto pamphlet, on the title-page of which

is “Needwood forest, written in the year 1776 ; Litchfield : printed by John Jackson.” Bound up with it is another pamphlet by Mr. Mundy, of the same size, also “from the author,” called “The Fall of Needwood. Derby : printed at the Office of J. Drewry, 1808.” It is the former of these that alone concerns us ; I have mentioned the latter merely to avoid future confusion of two separate works. Mr. Mundy’s poem occupies forty-four pages, and is followed by four other small poems, signed respectively with different initials. The first is “Address to Swilcar Oak described in Mr. Mundy’s poem on Needwood forest,” and is the earlier and somewhat crude form of the verses afterwards published in the *Phytologia*. It is signed E. D., underneath which is written “Dr. Darwin.” The next poem, signed A. S., is similarly stated to be by Miss Seward. She is the lady who, as tradition states, wanted to marry the Doctor ; but, as he did not respond, she turned spiteful, and showed it in her biography of him. The next, B. B., is by Sir Brooke Boothby, the beautiful monuments to whose family are so great an ornament to Ashbourne Church ; and the last is by E. D., Junr., or Erasmus Darwin, a son of the Doctor, much given to versifying, and who died young. It would appear that Mr. Mundy’s poem remained long in MS., that his literary friends sent him contributions and complimentary verses, and that he finally had them printed, all together.

As the verses of the Doctor in their earliest form have never, to my knowledge, been published, and as they contain the lines in a crude shape, which have been improved in the *Phytologia* version, and wholly omitted in that published by the *Quarterly Reviewer*, they may be acceptable to the reader. They will bring the motive of the omissions in the verses ascribed to Rogers into strong relief. They are as follows :—

“Hail stately oak, whose wrinkled trunk bath stood  
Age after age, the sov’reign of this wood ;  
You, who have seen a thousand springs unfold  
Their ravell’d buds, and dip their flowers in gold ;  
Ten thousand times you moon relight her horn,  
And that bright eye of evening gild the morn.

Say, when of old the snow-hair’d druids pray’d  
With mad-ey’d rapture in your hallow’d shade,  
While to their altars bards and heroes throng,  
And crowding nations join the ecstastic song,  
Did e’er such dulcet notes arrest your gales  
As MUNDY pours along the listening vales ?

Yes, stately oak, thy leaf-wrapped head sublime  
Ere long must perish in the wrecks of time ;  
Should o’er thy brow the thunders harmless break,  
And thy firm roots in vain the whirlwind shake,  
Yet must thou fall.—Thy withering glories sunk,  
Arm after arm shall leave the mould’ring trunk.

But MUNDY’S verse shall consecrate thy name,  
And rising forests envy SWILCAR’S fame :  
Green shall thy gems expand, thy branches play,  
And bloom for ever in the immortal lay.

E. D.”



It is scarcely possible to believe that Rogers purloined the verses from the *Phytologia* and passed them off for his own, though that sort of literary appropriation does, unhappily, exist, as was shown by a statesman in his speech in the House of Commons some twenty years ago, on the death of a great English general, coolly purloining for the occasion the oration of a Frenchman over a recently deceased French marshal. It is to be hoped that the *Quarterly Reviewer* will be able to show that the information upon which he made his assertion is less trustworthy than he imagined.

To conclude, it further appears, from the *Quarterly Review*, that Lord Wensleydale wrote an impromptu couplet on these verses, to the effect that he would bet a thousand pounds that the stout tree would survive them. Time shows that he is wrong. Swilcar oak has, as I am informed, disappeared, and the verses remain. No doubt the residuary legatees of his lordship will be eager to pay the forfeited money to the Doctor's next of kin, in which case I shall be most happy, as one of his grandchildren, to receive my share of it.

FRANCIS GALTON.

42, Rutland Gate.

#### ST. VALENTINE IN THE CAVALIER DAYS.

The *Westminster Drolleries* is a book an original edition of which is not to be had for love or money. The two parts (1671 and 1672) have been printed in perfect fac-simile by Mr. Roberts of Boston, Lincolnshire, who has obligingly forwarded to us a copy. It contains the songs and poems current in the above years at the theatres and at Court. The work is edited by J. Woodfall Ebsworth, M.A., Cantab., who has written an Introduction on the Literature of the Drolleries, and added a copious Appendix of notes, illustrations, &c.

The songs and poems are, of course, very much like the men and the times, and, it may be added, the women also, whose ways and manners they illustrate. There is an impalpable but unmistakable airiness of principle about most of them. Love is mere passion. The words flutter like the ribbons which were in fashion with both nymphs and swains. The oaths bind to nothing; the vows are broken as soon as made; and if the rogues and hussies are amusing, they are not edifying. The book is, in short, one of those which apologizes for its appearance by the statement that it is intended for the student rather than for the general reader. There is, in short, a very *haut goût* in some of its recesses, but "students" of cavalier literature have strong stomachs.

There are some exceptions to this; and, happily, these exist in two examples which serve our purpose well, seeing that to-morrow is Valentine's Day. The first example runs thus merrily:—

#### "THE DRAWING OF VALENTINE.

The Tune, Madam's Jig.

There was and there was,  
And aye Mary was there.

A Crew on St. Valentine's Eve did meet together,  
And every Lad had his particular Lass there,  
And drawing of Valentines caused their  
Coming thither.

Then Mr. John drew Mrs. Joan first, Sir,  
And Mrs. Joan would fain have drawn John an' she  
durat, Sir.

So Mr. William drew Mrs. Gillian the next, Sir;  
And Mrs. Gillian not drawing of William. was vext, Sir.

They then did jumble all in the hat together,  
And each did promise them to draw 'em fair, Sir;

But Mrs. Hester vowed that she had rather  
Draw Mr. Kester than any that was there, Sir.

And Mrs. Hester drew Mr. Kester again, Sir,  
And Mr. Harry drew Mrs. Mary featly,

And Mrs. Mary did draw Mr. Harry as neatly.  
They altogether then resolv'd to draw, Sir,

And ev'ry one desir'd to draw their friend, Sir;  
But Mr. Richard did keep 'em so in awe, Sir,

And told 'em then they ne'er should make an end, Sir.  
So Mr. Richard drew Mrs. Bridget squarely.

And Mrs. Bridget drew Mr. Richard as fairly,  
But Mr. Hugh drew Mrs. Sue but sllily

And Mrs. Sue did draw Mr. Hugh as wily.  
Then have you heard of the twelve who lately drew, Sir?

How ev'ry one would fain their friend have drawn, Sir;  
And now there 's left to draw but four of the Crew, Sir;

And each did promise his Lass an ell of lawn, Sir.  
So My Waty drew Mrs. Katy but slightly,

And Mrs. Katy did draw Mr. Waty as lightly;  
But Mr. Thomas in drawing of Annis too fast, Sir,

Made Mrs. Annis to draw Mr. Thomas at last, Sir.  
And there is an end, and an end, and an end of my song,

Sir,  
Of Joan and Johnny, and William and Gillian too, Sir.

To Kester and Hester and Harry and Mary belong, Sir,  
Both Richard and Bridget, and Hugh and honest Sue, Sir,

But Waty and Katy, and Thomas and Annis here, Sir,  
Are the only four that do now bring up the rear, Sir.

Then ev'ry one 'l the Tavern cry amain, Sir,  
And staid till drawing fill'd their brain, Sir."

In the above rough lines we find some of the  
ceremonies of the Eve of St. Valentine. The  
second example shows us how, in the same bygone  
times, St. Valentine's Day was observed when the  
swains and their mistresses contrived to encounter  
each other:—

#### "THE VALENTINE.

As youthful day put on his best  
Attire to usher morn,  
And she, to greet her glorious guest,  
Did her fair self adorn,  
Up did I rise, and hid mine eyes  
As I went through the street,  
Lest I should one that I despise  
Before a fairer meet.

And why

Was I,

Think you, so nice and fine?

Well did I wot

Who wots it not?

It was St. Valentine.

In fields, by Phœbus, great with young

Of flowers and hopeful buds.

Resembling thoughts that freshly sprung

In lovers' lively bloods.