

THE
COMPLETE WORKS
OF
R O B E R T
B U R N S :

CONTAINING HIS
POEMS, SONGS, AND
CORRESPONDENCE.

WITH
A NEW LIFE OF THE POET,
AND
NOTICES, CRITICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL,

BY ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

ELEGANTLY ILLUSTRATED.

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1855

TO

ARCHIBALD HASTIE, ESQ.,

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR PAISLEY

THIS

EDITION

OF

**THE WORKS AND MEMOIRS OF A GREAT
POET,**

**IN WHOSE SENTIMENTS OF FREEDOM HE
SHARES,
AND WHOSE PICTURES OF SOCIAL AND
DOMESTIC LIFE HE LOVES,
IS RESPECTFULLY AND GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED**

BY

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

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DEDICATION.

**TO THE
NOBLEMEN AND GENTLEMEN
OF THE
CALEDONIAN HUNT.**

[On the title-page of the second or Edinburgh edition, were these words: "Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect, by Robert Burns, printed for the Author, and sold by William Creech, 1787." The motto of the Kilmarnock edition was omitted; a very numerous list of subscribers followed: the volume was printed by the celebrated Smellie.]

My Lords and Gentlemen:

A Scottish Bard, proud of the name, and whose highest ambition is to sing in his country's service, where shall he so properly look for patronage as to the illustrious names of his native land: those who bear the honours and inherit the virtues of their ancestors? The poetic genius of my country found me, as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha—at the plough, and threw her inspiring mantle over me. She bade me sing the loves, the joys, the rural scenes and rural pleasures of my native soil, in my native tongue; I tuned my wild, artless notes as she inspired. She whispered me to come to this ancient metropolis of Caledonia, and lay my songs under your honoured protection: I now obey her dictates.

Though much indebted to your goodness, I do not approach you, my Lords and Gentlemen, in the usual style of dedication, to thank you for past favours: that path is so hackneyed by prostituted learning that honest rusticity is ashamed of it. Nor do I present this address with the venal soul of a servile author, looking for a continuation of those favours: I was bred to the plough, and am independent. I come to claim the common Scottish name with you, my illustrious countrymen; and to tell the world that I glory in the title. I come to congratulate my country that the blood of her ancient heroes still runs uncontaminated, and that from your courage, knowledge, and public

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spirit, she may expect protection, wealth, and liberty. In the last place, I come to proffer my warmest wishes to the great fountain of honour, the Monarch of the universe, for your welfare and happiness.

When you go forth to waken the echoes, in the ancient and favourite amusement of your forefathers, may Pleasure ever be of your party: and may social joy await your return! When harassed in courts or camps with the jostlings of bad men and bad measures, may the

honest consciousness of injured worth attend your return to your native seats; and may domestic happiness, with a smiling welcome, meet you at your gates! May corruption shrink at your kindling indignant glance; and may tyranny in the ruler, and licentiousness in the people, equally find you an inexorable foe!

I have the honour to be,

With the sincerest gratitude and highest respect,

My Lords and Gentlemen,

Your most devoted humble servant,

ROBERT BURNS.

Edinburgh, *April 4, 1787.*

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PREFACE.

I cannot give to my country this edition of one of its favourite poets, without stating that I have deliberately omitted several pieces of verse ascribed to Burns by other editors, who too hastily, and I think on insufficient testimony, admitted them among his works. If I am unable to share in the hesitation expressed by one of them on the authorship of the stanzas on "Pastoral Poetry," I can as little share in the feelings with which they have intruded into the charmed circle of his poetry such compositions as "Lines on the Ruins of Lincluden College," "Verses on the Destruction of the Woods of Drumlanrig," "Verses written on a Marble Slab in the Woods of Aberfeldy," and those entitled "The Tree of Liberty." These productions, with the exception of the last, were never seen by any one even in the handwriting of Burns, and are one and all wanting in that original vigour of language and manliness of sentiment which distinguish his poetry. With respect to "The Tree of Liberty" in particular, a subject dear to the heart of the Bard, can any one conversant with his genius imagine that he welcomed its growth or celebrated its fruit with such "capon craws" as these?

“Upo’ this tree there grows sic fruit,
Its virtues a’ can tell, man;
It raises man aboon the brute,
It mak’s him ken himsel’, man.
Gif ance the peasant taste a bit,
He’s greater than a lord, man,
An’ wi’ a beggar shares a mite
O’ a’ he can afford, man.”

There are eleven stanzas, of which the best, compared with the “A man’s a man for a’ that” of Burns, sounds like a cracked pipkin against the “heroic clang” of a Damascus blade. That it is extant in the handwriting of the poet cannot be taken as a proof that it is his own composition, against the internal testimony of utter want of all the marks by which we know him—the Burns-stamp, so to speak, which is visible on all that ever came from his pen. Misled by his handwriting, I inserted in my former edition of his works an epitaph, beginning

“Here lies a rose, a budding rose,”

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the composition of Shenstone, and which is to be found in the church-yard of Hales-Owen: as it is not included in every edition of that poet’s acknowledged works, Burns, who was an admirer of his genius, had, it seems, copied it with his own hand, and hence my error. If I hesitated about the exclusion of “The Tree of Liberty,” and its three false brethren, I could have no scruples regarding the fine song of “Evan Banks,” claimed and justly for Miss Williams by Sir Walter Scott, or the humorous song called “Shelah O’Neal,” composed by the late Sir Alexander Boswell. When I have stated that I have arranged the Poems, the Songs, and the Letters of Burns, as nearly as possible in the order in which they were written; that I have omitted no piece of either verse or prose which bore the impress of his hand, nor included any by which his high reputation would likely be impaired, I have said all that seems necessary to be said, save that the following letter came too late for insertion in its proper place: it is characteristic and worth a place anywhere.

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

TO DR. ARCHIBALD LAURIE.

Mossgiel, 13th Nov. 1786.

Dear Sir,

I have along with this sent the two volumes of Ossian, with the remaining volume of the Songs. Ossian I am not in such a hurry about; but I wish the Songs, with the volume of the Scotch Poets, returned as soon as they can conveniently be dispatched. If they are left at Mr. Wilson, the bookseller's shop, Kilmarnock, they will easily reach me.

My most respectful compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Laurie; and a Poet's warmest wishes for their happiness to the young ladies; particularly the fair musician, whom I think much better qualified than ever David was, or could be, to charm an evil spirit out of a Saul.

Indeed, it needs not the Feelings of a poet to be interested in the welfare of one of the sweetest scenes of domestic peace and kindred love that ever I saw; as I think the peaceful unity of St. Margaret's Hill can only be excelled by the harmonious concord of the Apocalyptic Zion.

I am, dear Sir, yours sincerely,

Robert Burns.

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