

**BONNIE JEAN, A
COLLECTION OF PAPERS
AND POEMS RELATING TO
THE WIFE OF ROBERT BURNS**

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Bonnie Jean, a collection of papers and poems relating to the wife of Robert Burns by John D. Ross & Peter Ross

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JOHN D. ROSS & PETER ROSS

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BONNIE JEAN,

A Collection of Papers and Poems relating to
the Wife of

ROBERT BURNS.

COMPILED BY

JOHN D. ROSS, LL. D.,

AUTHOR OF "SCOTTISH POETS IN AMERICA,"
EDITOR OF "HIGHLAND MARY," "ROUND BURNS' GRAVE,"
"BURNSIANA," "BURNS' CLARINDA," ETC.

WITH A PREFACE BY

PETER ROSS, LL. D.

AUTHOR OF "THE SCOT IN AMERICA," "A LIFE OF SAINT ANDREW,"
"SCOTLAND AND THE SCOTS," ETC.

"To her memory peace !
With thee she lieth in gray Dumfries ;—
Hers were thy sorrows, successes, joys ;
She cuddled thy lassies and reared thy boys ;
She dropped o'er thy grave her quick hot tears ;
And gave to thy memory her widow'd years,
REV. ARTHUR JOHN LOCKHART.

NEW YORK :

THE RAEBURN BOOK COMPANY,

1898.

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THIS VOLUME IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

TO

WALTER SCOTT, JR., Esq., OF NEW YORK,

PAST ROYAL CHIEF OF THE ORDER OF SCOTTISH CLANS:

A REPRESENTATIVE SCOTTISH-AMERICAN GENTLEMAN,

AN ENTHUSIASTIC LOVER OF AULD SCOTIA

AND A WARM ADMIRER OF ROBERT BURNS AND BONNIE JEAN.

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PRESS OF
WALTER W. REID,
NEW YORK.

PREFACE.

I have been requested to write a preface to this volume, this unique tribute to the memory of the wife of Robert Burns, and I comply with pleasure.

So far as I have seen from the proof-sheets, about every event in Jean Armour's life has been chronicled, almost every phase of her character has been considered, by the writers whose contributions make up this interesting book, and so but little remains for me to say. Still I cannot forbear using the opportunity offered to me to lay a stone or two on the cairn which the world has raised, and is still, perhaps unconsciously, raising to the memory of Jean Armour. She was not a woman of genius, she never burned the midnight oil in search of knowledge, nor did she ever wrestle with rhyme, but no one can have studied the life of her husband without acknowledging that it was after her influence over him became supreme, after she was publicly installed as his wife—acknowledged mistress of his heart and hand—that his song attained its highest flights, its most prolific abundance.

Early in what is now a study of Burns' life and works that has extended over more years than were allotted to him who

—moved in manhood as in youth,
Pride of his fellow men,

I formed the idea that the one woman who exerted a real and lasting influence on Burns was her whom in return he has immortalized as Bonnie Jean. All that I have since read has tended to confirm that idea and to make it, to me at least, pass from an idea into a theory, and from a theory into a fact. I am aware, of course, that when people speak of the loves of Burns they think on other women than her who became his wife. Some turn to the hapless Clarinda—one of the most pathetic figures, whatever way we regard her, which the whole course of Scottish literature has given to us; but he was under her influence for only a brief spell—although there is no doubt that her heart was his until the end of her career. Others, and in fact the great majority, turn their thoughts to the cherished figure of Highland Mary, surrounded as it is with romance, love, pathos and mystery. But in spite of all its poetry, its mystery, its depth of romance, and its opportunities for discussion, we turn from Highland Mary to the real heroine of Burns' life, the heroine but for