

**SOME ACCOUNT OF THE
GLENRIDDELL MSS. OF BURNS'S
POEMS: WITH SEVERAL POEMS
NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED**

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Some account of the Glenriddell MSS. of Burns's poems: with several poems never before published by Henry A. Bright

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HENRY A. BRIGHT

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HENRY A. BRIGHT.



LIVERPOOL:
GILBERT G. WALMSLEY, 50, LORD STREET.

1874.

[REMOVED AT STATIONERS' HALL]

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P R E F A C E.

IN 1853 the widow of Mr. Wallace Currie (son of Dr. Currie, the biographer of Burns) presented to the Athenæum Library, Liverpool, two curious and interesting manuscript volumes. They are thus described in the Athenæum Catalogue:—

“Poems written by Mr. Robert Burns, and selected by him from his unprinted collection for Robert Riddell, of Glenriddell, Esq. A quarto volume of 162 pages, exclusive of portrait, title, and an introductory letter. The letter, and seventy-eight pages of the poems, are entirely in the poet's autograph. The rest of the MS. is in the handwriting of amanuenses, with occasional corrections and remarks by Burns himself.”

“Letters by Mr. Burns, which he selected for R. Riddell, Esq., of Glenriddell, F.A.S. of London and Edinr., and Member of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester. A quarto volume, containing 103 pages; exclusive of title and portrait. The first six pages are blank; the rest of the volume is in Burns's autograph.”

Until last year these volumes had been so carefully preserved under lock and key, that very few even of the proprietors of the Athenæum knew of their existence. At my suggestion, they have now been placed within a glass case in the library, and may at all times be readily inspected.



The volume of letters contains some unpublished matter, most of which was sent by me to the *Athenæum*, of Aug. 1, 1874.

The volume of poems I have carefully examined and collated with the Kilmarnock edition, and with that of Mr. Alexander Smith.

On the fly-leaf at the beginning are the arms of Mr. Riddell, and a portrait of Burns. On the title-page is the inscription, "Poems written by Mr. Robert Burns, and selected by him from his unprinted collection, for Robert Riddell, of Glenriddell, Esq.;" and then follow ten lines of verse about Burns,

"Here native genius, gay, unique, and strong,
Shines through each page, and marks the tuneful song:
Wrapt Admiration her warm tribute pays,
And Scotia proudly echoes all she says:
Bold Independence too, illumines the theme,
And claims a manly privilege to Fame.
Vainly, O Burns! would rank or riches shine,
Compar'd with inborn merit great as thine;
These chance may take, as chance has often giv'n;
But pow'rs like thine can only come from heav'n."

After this, the book, as Burns left it, begins.

There is first a preface in his own handwriting, which deprecates the publication of these poems. With or without the poet's permission, however, almost everything the book contains

has long since been given to the world, and the few things that Dr. Currie omitted, mainly on account of their political bias, may now at last be allowed to "see the light."


The preface is as follows :—

"As this Collection almost wholly consists of pieces local or unfinished, fragments the effusion of a poetical moment and bagatelles strung in rhyme simply *pour passer le temps*, the Author trusts that nobody into whose hands it may come will without his permission give, or allow to be taken, copies of anything here contained; much less to give to the world at large, what he never meant should see the light. At the Gentleman's request, whose from this time it shall be, the Collection was made; and to him, and I will add, to his amiable Lady, it is presented, as a sincere though small tribute of gratitude for the many many happy hours the Author has spent under their roof. *There*, what Poverty even though accompanied with Genius must seldom expect to meet with at the tables and in the circles of Fashionable Life, his welcome has ever been, The cordiality of Kindness and the warmth of Friendship. As from the situation in which it is now placed, this MSS. may be preserved, and this Preface read, when the hand that now writes and the heart that now dictates it may be mouldering in the dust; let these be regarded as the genuine sentiments of a man who seldom flattered any, and never those he loved.

" ROBT BURNS.

" 27TH APRIL, 1791."

Of the poems I give a complete catalogue, transcribing in full such as are unpublished. The titles, and any notes *before* the first line, are exactly as they appear in the MSS. Notes which I have added are distinguished by brackets []. No alteration of any sort has been made in Burns's spelling or punctuation.



I must leave it to others to criticise these unpublished poems, and to show that, if of unequal merit, they have still their value and their interest. My own task has been to gather up, carefully as I could, what are probably the last fragments, which are ever likely to be printed, of the great poet's verse. It remains only that I should express my obligation to Mr. Scott Douglas of Edinburgh, (who is, perhaps, the best living authority on all matters connected with Burns,) for the valuable information he has given me, and for the account of Riddell of Glenriddell, which he has kindly furnished.

HENRY A. BRIGHT.

LIVERPOOL, *October*, 1874.

