

E P I S T L E

T O T H E

*President, Vice-Presidents, and Members of the Scottish
Society of Antiquaries,*

On being chosen a Correspondent Member.

HOW sal the Muse o' modern days
Attemp in geud ald Scottis phraze,
To thank you for the mekil honour
Sa graciously confer't upon her ?

Wow! Sirs, how vogie wu'd she be
To dow in Scottis phraze to gi'e
Her gratefu' thanks.—But ah! fu' fair
It grieves her heart, that sud'ren lair
Has banis't a' the canty strains,
She con't upon her nati' plains
In days of yore; and, in their stead,
Wi' fremit gew-gaws pang't her head.

The pink, the pansy, and the gowan,
And uther flours of our a'in grown';
The saucy girl has lang despis't,
And nocht but rair outlandics pris't:

The filler brotch, the filken snude,
The pinner plain, the sancted hude,

K k k

The

The plaitit hair, and bodkin bonny,
 The kirtle, kurtch, and cokernonny,
 She wu'd na——na, she wu'd na wear,
 But chang't for Anglo-gallic gear :
 Gauze, laces, ribbons, straps, and strings ;
 And uther fik-like gaudy things :
 And, nou, whan these her taste ha' spil't,
 She sees her folly, owns her guilt,
 Regrets her skaith, and wu'd ha' fain
 Her ald habiliments again.

In vain : for her exploring ee
 Nor swatch nor sample nou can see.
 She goifs around——and, strange to tell,
 Finds ilka Caledonian belle
 As fairly feulish as herself.

Whare nou the nimphs, that weent to feed
 Their flocks upon the banks o' Tweed ;
 And sang sa mony a winsom air
 About the bus abeun Traquair ?
 Wa's me ! sin Ramsay disappear'd,
 Their tunefu' voice is na mair hear'd.
 Nor ha' their charms sin fyne been shown,
 Except to Ferguson alone.
 Ill-wierdet wight ! Wha wu'd prefeer
 A reaming bicker o' Bell's beer,
 To a' the nectar that distills
 Fre Phoebus' munt in fucar't rills :
 And loo'd ald Reckie's bouffom lasses,
 Mair than the maidens o' Parnassus.

Yet

Yet he had ilka art to please,
 And win the dortiest ev'n of these.
 His was the reed sa sweet and still
 That sang *the Lays of Patie's Mill* ;
 To him belang't the wiel-strung lyre
 That temper't Hammy's nati' fire ;
 And Forbes' fife, sa feat and trim,
 Was left, but ony doubt, to him.
 Bot nouthre reed, nor lyre, nor fife,
 Regarded he—bot drank thro' life,
 And leugh—until the cald o' death
 Chill't his heart-blude, and stapt his breath.
 He died ; peur saul ! and wi' him died
 The relict-muse o' Mither-Lied.

Bot wu'd o' verfe the pours divine
 Grant me, their slave, bot ae propyne ;
 And dart upon my mental night
 A leam of leel poetic light ;
 I'd catch a sparkie from its flasbes,
 And yet revive the ha'f-floct ashes.
 Foster't by you, the sacred fire
 Su'd ne'er a second time expire ;
 Bot ilka day expand and grow
 Intil a mair majestic low :
 Til time and aidant care su'd raise
 Its glim'ring dawn to noon-tide blaze.

What then were wanting, bot to find
 A virgin o' the vestal kind
 To act the priestly part, and lay
 Neu fuel on it e'er ilk day :

K k k 2

To

To trim its hearth, and in their turn,
The elder and the etnach burn?

Nor will the search be hard or long :
For tho' 'tis true, that Mither-tongue
Has had the melancholy fate,
To be neglekit by the great,
She still has fun an open door
Amang the uncorruptit poor,
Wha be na weent to treat wi' scorn
A gentlewoman bred and born ;
Bot bid her, thoch in ratters drest,
A hearty welcome to their best.

There aft on ben-maist bink she sits,
And sharps the edge of cuintry wits,
Wi' routh of gabby saws, an' says,
An' jokes, an' gibes of uther days :
That gie fi'k gust to rustic sport,
And gar the langsome night leuk short.

At uther times, in some warm-neuk
She to the cutchok ha'ds a beuk,
And reids in fi'k a magic tone,
'The deeds that our forbeirs ha' done :
That——as 'tis said of that fain't Greek
Wha gaed to hell his wife to seek,
Sa sweet he sang, Ixion's wheel
And Sisyphus's stane stood still :
Nay mair ; those greedy gleds, that iver
'Till nou had peck't Prometheus' liver,

Forgat

Forgat their prey, op't wide their throats,
And lent their lugs to Orpheus' notes.
Sa here, gif ye attention gi'e,
Sik ald warld wunders ye may see :
May see the maiden stap her wheel ;
The mistress cease to turn the reel ;
Lizzý, wi' laddle in her hand,
Til pot boil over, gapand stand :
Ev'n hungry Gib his speun depose,
And, for a mament, spare his brose !

Sal it be said, that fi'k a charmer
Can only captivate the farmer
And farmer's folks ; while Lord and Laird
Treat her like ony common caird ;
And seem to be asham't to see
Themfels in fi'k mean company ?

'Tis yours, my gen'rous, gentle brithers
T'affert the honor of your mithers ;
An' shaw they gaif as pure and gude
A language as they gaif a blude.
'Tis yours wi' diligence and care
To seek the lang-neglekit Fair :
Whither she lodge in barn or byre ;
Or whatfo'er be her attire ;
Be not afraid to own her birth ;
And bring to light her nati' worth.

An' then to trim her up fu' tight
An' mak her leuk as braw an' bright,

As were the wis of ony lafs
 That wu'd na for a strumpet pafs;
 Ye need nae foreign foppish stuff
 To set her nat'ral beuties off:
 Our a'in geud hamil claith (if but
 Accordan' to the fashon, cut)
 Will please the lassie mekil better:
 An', sure am I, fu' weil will set her.

Gin still this drefs owr little gay
 Ye deem, an' mair out owr wu'd hai'
 A garland til adorn her hair
 And poseys on her breast to wear;
 A fouth o' flours may yet be fund,
 Wi' pains, on Caledonian grund,
 Dig for their roots, 'ere they be dead,
 Fre Greta-green to Peterhead;
 And plant them quick, as soon as got,
 In ae Lexicographic plot;
 I trou they'll soon baith live and thrive
 And gi'e you flours enew belyve.
 Or, gin si'k labor seem o'wr sterk,
 There's yet anuther way to werk:
 Collect, wi' judgment, skill an' care,
 The words and phrasas rich an' rare,
 That in ald beuks, for ages by,
 Like herbs in *hortis siccis*, ly.
 Expose them to the apen air;
 And wash, and clean, and trim, and pare
 Their wufant parts—I'm fair mista'en
 If yet they dinna grow again.

"Grow,"

"Grow," did I say? Yes grow they will,
 An' propagate, an' prosper, till
 Our envious neighbours, in amaze,
 Sal on their various beuties gaze;
 An' pilfer seeds, an' slips, an' sections
 To amplify their best collections.

Let bragart England in disdain
 Ha'd ilka lingo, but her a'in:
 Her a'in, we wat, say what she can,
 Is like her true-born Englishman*,
 A vile promiscuous mungrel † seed
 Of Danish, Dutch, an' Norman breed,
 An' prostituted, since, to a'
 The jargons on this earthly ba'!
 Bedek't, 'tis true, an' made fu' smart
 Wi' mekil learning, pains an' art;
 An' taught to baik, an' benge, an' bou,
 As dogs an' dancin'-masters do:
 Wi' fardit cheeks an' pouder't hair,
 An' brazen confidential stare—
 While ours, a blate an' bashfu' maid
 Conceals her blushies wi' her plaid;
 And is unwillan' to display
 Her beuties in the face o' day.

Bot strip them baith—an' see wha's thape
 Has least the femblance of an ape?
 Wha's lim's are straughtest? Wha can sheu
 The whiter skin, an' fairer heu;

An'

* See Daniel de Foe.

† *Hybrida quidem lingua Anglicana est.* Hickes.

An' whilk, in fhort, is the mair fit
 To gender genuine manly wit?
 I'll pledge my pen, you'll judgment pass
 In favor of the Scottis lafs.

Bot, droping metaphor, an' grantan'
 That some embellishment is wantan'
 To grace our lied, an' mak it shine,
 England! with a' the glare o' thine:
 Yet hast thou little cause for crawin';
 To mere hap-hazard was it awin';
 That thy, not Scotia's, lied an' stile
 Became the standart o' this isle.
 Had Jammie never seen the Thames,
 Nor chang't the Abbey for St James',
 Edina's Court had nou been fund in
 As geud a plight, as that of Lundin:
 And nowther PIT or FOX had been
 Politer speakers than MACQUEEN.

Do bot compare each nation's phrase
 In BESS's and in MARY's days,
 Is English prose mair orthodox
 Than that of Kennedy an' Knox?
 Does Melvil's story muddier flow
 Than those of Holinshed an' Stowe?
 Are Barclay's rimes mair tight an' terse
 Than Lindfay's or Montgom'ry's verse?
 Does Spencer, deathless bard, precel
 The peerless Bishop o' Dunkel?

H

If from that period, to this day,
 Our tongue has suffer't a decay:
 An' gin we hai' nae bard to cope
 Wi' Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope:
 The cause is obvious—sin' that age,
 Our writers all haif had the rage
 Their a'in ald language to neglect,
 An' mimic sud'ren dialect.

Yet here, ev'n here, our strength appears:
 Leuk only bak for fourscore yeirs;
 An' see what English verse an' prose
 To Caledonian authors owes.

Wha' first, wi' method, did impart
 The maxims of the healin' art?
 Pitcairn.—Wha first in Britain's isle
 Rais't the Logarithmatic pile,
 On whilk great Newton built his fame?
 Need I, need I, a Napier name?
 Wha was the man o' polis't mind,
 That English humor first refin'd:
 Was he an Englishman or Scot?
 The world weil kens, 'twas Arbuthnot.
 Wha first fre Nature's store-house drew
 Her latent treasures forth to view?
 To solve the question is not hard:
 'Twas Thomson, Nature's dawtit bard.
 What English preacher yet can vie
 Wi' Farquhar, in simplicity;
 Or, in the pathos, can compare
 Wi' Carr, wi' Leechman, or wi' Blair?

L 11

What

What poultry stuff were novels, 'till
 Adorn't by Smollet's fertile quill?
 Hist'ry hou tedious, yet hou tume
 'Till trim't by philosophic Hume?
 And what were criticism's best claims
 'Till fixt by legislative Kaims?
 Or when did on the stage apeer
 To pierce the heart and dra the teir,
 A tender mournfu' tale sa fit,
 As what the uthir Hume has writ.

Had thae, and other fo'ks o' fame,
 Dead and alive, wham I cu'd name;
 Ta'en ha'f the trouble an' the pyne
 The Scottis idiom to refine;
 Their writings wu'd, I ween, appear
 As elegant, correct, an' clear,
 Haif a' the English air an' figure
 Wi' far mair stalwartness an' vigor.

For, say, will ony man wha heeds
 The properties of baith the lieds,
 Affirm that English e'er can be
 Mair full o' force or harmony?
 Wu'd the substantial stile o' Smith
 In Scottis language hai' less pith?
 Wu'd Robertson's enchantan page
 The enraptur't reader less engage,
 Wu'd Stew'rt in fainter shades exprefs
 A Queen's unparallel't distress?
 Wu'd Beatie's fire or Campbell's force
 Be less resistless in their course,

Or

Or Reid in less choice terms dispense,
 The dictates of geud common sense?
 Shaw me the man—unless his pate
 Be crackit—wha will dare to say't.

Ye then, wham Heav'n ordains to be
 The guardians of antiquity!
 Can ony thing mair fit, an' mair
 Important occupy your care,
 Than to revive, and bring in use
 The Lied o' Wallace and o' Bruce?
 A Lied, whilk, tho' sa lang neglekit,
 By you encourag't an' protekit,
 May yet become the admiration
 And honor of the Scottis nation.
 Let but Mecaenases arise
 To point the way, an' shaw the prize;
 I warrant there sal spring to view
 Baith Horaces an' Virgils too.

Ah! hou imagination plays
 On the bright scenes o' future days!
 The clouds already seem to fly,
 That hai' sa lang obscur't our sky:
 The list assumes a deeper blue,
 And earth puts on a cheerier hue;
 To welcome, to fair Scotia's plain,
 The lang-lost muses back again.

Hail! JOCKIE MAYNE*; I think I see
 Anuther Ramsay rise in thee:

L 1 1 2

And

* Author of *the Siller-gun*, *Glasgow*, and other ingenious poems.

And he—thy friend—height Eskdale TAMMY*,
 May yet become a second HAMMY.
 If, thence, the Grampian hills I cross,
 I find a SHIRREFFS† and a ROSS‡.
 The Buchan lad, sa blyth an' braw,
 Wha wrate, short-syn, *the Farmer's Ha'* §;
 Shall yet mair noble ditties write,
 An' baith the ROBS § in ane unite.

An', nou, the Muse wi' rapture turns
 To *Coila's* glory, self-taught BURNS :
 Wha mid the constant avocation
 Of a laborious occupation,
 Finds time to cull sic transient flours
 As bleum on Galovidean moors ;
 And, at the pleugh, or at the team,
 Glows with a pure poetic gleam.

Whither, in numbers smooth and easy,
 He sing the dirgie of a deasy :
 Or in a strain mair free an' frisky
 Refoun' the praise of Highland whisky :
 Or, with a Goldsmith's pencil, trace
 The virtues o' the cottage race :
 Or, wieldan' satire's heavy flail,
 The cantan' hypocrite affail :

Or

* A correspondent of the former. See the Edinburgh Weekly Magazine.

† Author of a comedy called *Jamie and Bess*.

‡ Author of *Helenore or the unfortunate Shepherdess*.

§ Forbes and Fergusson.

Or mind a patriot of his duty ;
 Or tune a faster pipe to beuty ;
 Or, in a frolic wanton teen,
 Describe the fun of Hallow-e'en :
 Tho' some few notes be harsh an' hard,
 Yet still we see the genuine Bard.

Hale be thine heart,—thou wale o' swains,
 That grace the Caledonian plains :
 May ilka sort o' blifs thee follow,
 That suits the vot'ries of Apollo.
 A merry heart, a murkless head ;
 A conscience pure, an' void o' dread ;
 A weil-thak't hut, an' ingle clear ;
 A fu' pint-stowp of reaming beer ;
 A daily fark, a Sunday coat ;
 Thy pocket ne'er without a groat ;
 An' for the solace of thy life,
 A bonny, braw, belovit wife.

Su'd Fortune, mair outowr, befriend thee ;
 An' fouth o' gowd an' gear attend thee :
 Bewar of indolence an' pride ;
 Nor cast thine aiten reed aside :
 Bot trim, an' blaw it mair an' mair ;
 An' court the Muses late and air :
 Wi' critic skill explore the grain }
 An' fan-an' fan it owr again }
 'Till ne'er a bit of caff remain }
 So sal thy name be handit down
 With uther poets o' renoun ;

An'

An' BURNS in gowden cyphers shine
 Wi' INGLIS, LINDSAY, BALLANDYNE,
 GILBRAITH, MONTGOM'RY; an' far
 Before the laif, ornate DUNBAR.

Thy rare example fal inspire
 Our rising youth with rival fire:
 Wha yet may emulate the lays
 Of loftiest bards of ancient days.
 Then may some future DOUGLAS sing
 A Christian, not a Pagan king:
 Scots hirds may Mantuan hirds defy,
 And FERGUS with ÆNEAS vy*!

You'll say—my fancy paints our high
 This pleasant piece of imag'ry.
 Perhaps it does: I'm apt to paint
 My portraits rather full, than faint.
 Yet, were our letter't men inclin'd
 To hai' the Scottis tongue refin'd,
 An' did our lang-purs't chieftains chuse
 To patronise the Scottis Muse,

An'

* Of all the unoccupied subjects for an Epic poem, I know none more proper than the restoration of Fergus II. It is sufficiently near our time to afford general facts and dates; and sufficiently remote to admit a number of circumstantial embellishments. The poem might begin with his leaving the court of Scandinavia; he might then be sent to Ireland, thence to Icolmkil, where some holy visionary might tell him the fate of himself and successors down to the Union, &c. &c. The whole action might be compleated in the course of one year. The Scottish bard who would choose this subject, might, like Homer, avail himself of all the dialects which are used in the different counties: purifying them as much as possible from vulgarism, and reducing them to one uniform system of orthography and grammatical analogy.

An' gi'e to bards (like chiefs before)
 A pittance o' that shinan' ore
 Whilk they, wi' light an' lavish hand
 Waste, yearly, in a thankless land:
 Wha kens, bot Arthur-Seat might rise
 Anuther Pindus to the skies;
 An' sweet St Anton's Well be seen
 To match Beotia's Hippocrene!

BUCHAN! what eulogies are due
 To patriotic chiefs, like you?
 Wha, wi' the love of freedom fir't,
 An' far fre venal courts retir't,
 Dare to be virtuous, to be sage
 Ev'n in this dissipatit age:
 An' like the knabs of ancient flory,
 E'er jealous of your country's glory,
 Make the great int'rests o' the nation
 Your unremitit occupation.

What thogh in vain you strove to break
 The fetters that debase the neck
 Of ev'ry Peer? Gin Peers be fain
 To wear the shameful galling chain,
 Why, let them wear it—still your claim
 To public praise is just the fame.

What tho' your Antiquarian scheme
 A project wild to some might seem?
 Your perseverant resolution
 To put that scheme in execution,

(In

(In spite of ilka rub that lay
By chance or malice in your way)
Has bravely triumph't—and at last,
The event has all our hopes surpast.

As on the names I cast mine eye
That form this New Society ;
I greet for gladness ; an' grow vain
Amon' the laif to see mine a'in.
Happy gif ye admit a novice,
Like me, to the maist menial office :
“ Water to draw, or wood to hew,”
Or ony uther thing I dow ;
That may bring nae disgrace nor odi-
um on the Venerable Body.

May you, my Lord, be lang the soul
And master-movement o' the whole.
By you inspir't, as by the heart,
Each vital limb sal act its part :
An' Caledonian blude, but stain,
Sal flow afresh in ilka vein :
An' thence a race of heroes rise
Wha's fame sal reach the beunmaist skies.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

BEFORE proceeding to the following Pieces, the Reader is requested to turn back to the Orthographical Table, p. 431. and to attend in particular to the diacritic accents over the vowels. By reading a few lines with these in his eye, he will soon be able to go on with ease.