

LETTER

TO

JOHN SWINTON, ESQ. FROM MAJOR BARRY OF LEDNOCK,

CONCERNING

BESSIE BELL AND MARY GRAY.*

FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE SOCIETY.

Lednock, 21st June 1781.

DEAR SIR,

ACCORDING to your desire, I have sent you the best account I can of *Bessie Bell* and *Mary Gray*.

* The popularity of the song that bears the names of these unfortunate ladies, and the interest that has still been excited by their fate, must render any authentic communication on this subject acceptable to every Scotsman. This letter gives us all the information that is now within our reach; having been written by an intelligent gentleman, formerly proprietor of the estate that was the scene of the melancholy event, which, according to unvarying tradition, was the result of the attachment referred to in the song. Both the site of the bower, and of the grave, are still visited by the curious traveller.

This delightful scenery has now acquired a double interest, as being the property of that gallant and *love-made* warrior, who, flying from the desolate *bower* of the most tender connubial affection,

When I came first to Lednock, I was shewn, in a part of my ground (called the *Dranoch-haugh*), an heap of stones almost covered with briers, thorns, and fern, which they assured me was the burial place of *Bessie Bell* and *Mary Gray*.

The tradition of the country relating to these ladies is, that *Mary Gray's* father was laird of Lednock, and *Bessie Bell's* of *Kinvaid*, a place in this neighbourhood: that they were both very handsome, and an intimate friendship subsisted between them: that while *Miss Bell* was on a visit to *Miss Gray*, the plague broke out, in the year 1666; in order to avoid which, they built themselves a bower, about three quarters of a mile west from *Lednock-house*, in a very retired and romantic place, called *Burnbraes*, on the side of *Beanchie-burn*. Here they lived for some time; but the plague raging with great fury, they caught the infection (it is said) from a young gentleman, who was in love with them both. He used to bring them their provision. They died in this bower; and were buried in the *Dranoch-haugh*,* at the foot of a brae of the same name, and near to the bank of the river *Almond*. The burial place lies about half a mile west from the present house of *Lednock*.

I have removed all the rubbish from this little spot of classic ground, inclosed it with a wall, planted it round with flowering

and from that *grave* which hid from him all that he had held dear, sought tranquillity of mind, where few would have hoped to find it, amidst the tumult of battle. He bears that honourable title, which he had so well earned, from this very property; although it has so happened, perhaps rather unfortunately, as an antiquary would view it, that the designation has been embodied in the title-deeds according to the popular pronunciation of *Lyndock*, and not in the original form of *Lednock*. EDIT.

* *Dranoch* or *Dronoch*, I am informed, in the Gaelic, means sorrowful; and that this piece of ground takes its name from these ladies being buried in it.

shrubs, made up the grave double, and fixed a stone in the wall, on which are engraved the names of Bessie Bell and Mary Gray.

I am,

SIR,

Your most humble servant,

GEO. AUG^s. BARRY.

Note.—Lednock, or Lyndock, lies about seven miles north-west from Perth. EDIT.