MRS. COCKBURN.

1712—1794.

IN the heart of the Southern Highlands, having the swelling hills of Ettrick,—a portion of what is by courtesy styled the Forest, where bracken is almost the only "bield" on the hill-side, and where there is a continual "rowing" of water and bleating of sheep,—every hope, cleugh, and water has its ballad story. More old castles, peel towers, and turreted country-houses, are to be seen in their ruins, near what was once the Marches, than in any other district of the same extent in Scotland.

Within the mansion-house of Robert Ruther furd, of Fairnalee, almost within sound of both "Gala water" and "Tweed's sillar stream," Alison Rutherfurd was born in the autumn of

1712, two years after Jean Adam was born in the sea captain's house at Crawfurdsdyke.

A great though gradual change had already come over the wild debateable land between Scotland and England, with its bold clans, lawless but for border law. Reiving and harrying had at last come to an end, and if men still "lifted" horse or sheep, or clout of household plenishing, the deed got its right name, and the thief his desert, even though he were an Englishman in Scotland or a Scotchman in England, and were not caught red-handed. Sheep-farming and "planting" had taken the place of more exciting enterprises. Gentlemen, indeed, still rode with pistols at their saddle-bows, and walked with swords at their sides. But they did not fire their pistols unless set upon by footpads during a journey, nor did they draw their swords save on extreme provocation, while their brains were muddled in a brawl, or in a set and formal duel arranged by mutual friends, and attended with all the ceremonies and courtesies of polite warfare.

As great a change had come over the women.

They no longer needed to place a supper dish of spurs before their men, and to accompany the expressive hint with a delicate reminder that the nights were moonless. Nor did they now spend their time looking over the battlements in order to be the first to give warning when a rival chief or laird, with his moss-troopers, threatened a descent on flocks and herds. The women had ceased to be shut up for months of sieges, with the making of lint and the dressing of wounds for their principal occupation and entertainment. Their ordinary avocations no longer consisted in spinning yarn and carding wool, in baking and brewing, and in cooking savoury messes on a grand rough scale. Their knowledge was got from other and considerably more extensive sources than comfortable monks of Jedburgh and Dryburgh, and battered harpers. It was not even derived in any large measure from the monks' successors, though Boston was then minister of Ettrick, and was rearing a race stern and devout, long to linger in the lonely farm-houses and the shepherds' huts, from one of which James Hogg sprang.

In the same way the Border women's diversions had come to be of a different kind from showing their mantles and fluttering streamers at football matches and weapon-shaws—notwithstanding that the last were only dying out. The daughters of the Scotts, Kers, Elliots, Rutherfurds, and Pringles saw the battlements on their towers or the squares of their out-houses crumbling in decay, and walked safely in terraced gardens, or drove in coaches and did their shopping at Hawick or Melrose. They intermitted their spinning for tambouring and knotting, they concocted their cosmetics, as they cooked, by deputy, and from elaborate recipes written in feebly flowing Italian hands, with great defiance of spelling rules. They went to neighbours' dinners and gave dinners and even drums to neighbours in return, and they braved the danger and discomfort of bridle roads and country inns (where friends' houses did not chance to stand conveniently in the way), in order that the young people of the family might have the benefit of seeing and being

seen at Edinburgh assemblies.* The daughters of the country-houses were educated by their fathers' chaplains and their brothers' tutors, when they had brothers, as well as by their mothers' waiting-women; and when the family happened to be of more than ordinary intelligence, or to be of a decidedly studious turn, the daughters were fairly well-read and well-informed women. Not only were Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Prior, and Addison on many bookshelves in lairds' and ladies' closets, but, though the women of the nobility and gentry had not a classical education, they frequently learnt French and Italian, and were very conversant with the former. This was not so much because of the obsolete national alliances which have scattered French words broadcast over the field of the Scotch language, as because of the influence of the *vieille cour* of the great Louis on manners, and the effects of its *beaux esprits* on literature, which were felt as far as

* In the letter of a Frenchman who visited Edinburgh at this period we find a list of young beauties, and in the list is the name of "Alice Rutherford."

Scotland. The number of soldiers of fortune belonging to the upper classes who served campaigns abroad and came home with foreign polish increased the influence. Corneille, Racine, and Molière, La Fontaine and La Bruyère, were as much the fashion in the Scotch rank that pretended to fashion when Alison Rutherfurd was young, as they were in English high society when Lady Mary Wortley Montague and Mrs. Delany grew up.

Alison Rutherfurd, of Fairnalee, was not a Burd Ailie of the old ballads, neither was she a yeoman squire's daughter. The Border lairds were as tenacious of their gentle blood and their kinship to the heads of their clans as ever were the duihnewassels of the Northern Highlands. The lairds were distinctly of the quality, and when their sons, and still more their daughters, condescended to appear at horse-races, wrestling-matches, markets, and elections, it was as kings and queens stooping from their dais and their chairs of state.

No detailed record has come to light of Alison Rutherfurd's youth. She herself writes

to her dear friend, the Rev. Dr. Douglas, of Galashiels, "I can this minute figure myself running as fast as a greyhound, in a hot summer day, to have the pleasure of plunging into Tweed to cool me. I see myself made up like a ball, with my feet wrapt in my petticoat, on the declivity of the hill at Fairnalee, letting myself roll down to the bottom, with infinite delight. As for the chase of the silver spoon at the end of the rainbow, nothing could exceed my ardour, except my faith, which created it. I can see myself the first favourite at Lamotte's dancing, and remember turning pale and red with the ambition of applause."

"I can remember, when I was seven or eight years old, there was a very ancient gardener at Fairnalee, almost blind; he employed me to clip his white beard, every Saturday, which office I performed with the greatest pride and pleasure."

"I am not sure if ever I was so vain of any lover or admirer as I was of the heavenly affection of your predecessor, whom, by his own assignation, I rode over from Fairnalee at six in the morning to meet. He had his fine, white,

bushy hair under a fine Holland nightcap, sheets, shirt as white as snow, a large Bible open on a table, by his bed, with his watch. He embraced me with fervour, and said I would not repent losing some hours sleep to see for the last time an old man, who was going home. He naturally fell into a description of his malady, checked himself, and said it was a shame to complain of a bad road to a happy home; 'and there,' says he, 'is my passport,' pointing to his Bible; 'let me beg, my young friend, you will study it: you are not yet a Christian' (it was true), 'but you have an inquiring mind, and cannot fail to be one.' Then he prayed fervently for me, and said he was hasted; blessed some particular friends, and bade me farewell. I never was so happy in a morning as when I was riding home."

But these are hints, more than aught else; and we must guess at the bud from the fruit, and draw inferences from what is known of the world in which she moved. It is clear that her judgment was early strengthened, and her wit sharpened, by cultivation. Her

character, her talents and accomplishments fitted her to be a leader in the most philosophic and brilliant circles of her day. Alison Rutherfurd might sleep in an attic room at Fairnalee, and sit on a hard, straight-backed chair, but she was not an ignorant rustic girl any more than a heroine of mediæval romance. Quiet times had somewhat thinned the country-houses in the Forest—the roads were execrable, and the fords dangerous—but when the country gentry did reach each other their hospitality was of the most cordial and generous description. Stray guests sat at their hosts' tables for weeks and months, and poor relations lived for years with their more prosperous kindred. It is impossible to read Alison Cockburn's letters without being struck with the close and kindly intimacies maintained from youth to age between the Forest families. To these frank, familiar friendships begun betimes, and so admirable in their constancy, might be owing much of the geniality which rendered her one of the warmest-hearted, while at the same time one of the wittiest women of her generation.

Within the circle of Fairnalee were Yair, Torwoodlee, Haining, Crichton, Elibank. Minto was not very far away; but only as woman and child could the two gentlewomen who wrote the sister sets of "The Flowers of the Forest" have met in youth, for Alison Rutherfurd was fifteen years older than Jean Elliot.

Alison Rutherfurd's claims to beauty must have been remarkable, judging from the beauty recorded of Alison Cockburn in her venerable age. She had auburn hair, the gold of which was unsilvered at eighty, and which she wore always rolled up over a toupee. Her complexion was probably the pure red and white which most frequently accompanies such hair, and which distinguished Grisell Baillie. Her features were aquiline, with a likeness to those of Queen Elizabeth—a resemblance which she increased in after-life by her fancy of wearing the sleeves of her dress puffed out at the shoulders in the fashion of Queen Bess's era. Mrs. Cockburn's portrait, painted by Anne Forbes,—who belonged to a branch of the Culloden Forbeses, and was connected both with the painter Aikman and

the Chalmerses, Mrs. Cockburn's familiar friends, —certainly does not flatter the sitter. It was painted when she was upwards of fifty, that epoch of middle life most trying to the portrait-painter as well as to the sitter. She is represented in what is now an extinct garment,—a striped silk sacque, fitting tight to the waist in front, but hanging loose from the neck behind, and terminating at the elbows in three wide frills. Over the sacque, across the shoulders and the prominent bust, she wears a black lace shawl or tippet. Her hair is turned back, and covered by a flat cap or hood, the ends of which meet beneath her chin. The upper part of the face is fine, though the eyebrows slant downwards instead of arching. The lower part, however, is spoilt, so far as beauty is concerned, by the artist having taken the face in profile, thus exposing the straight line of the short upper lip with the projection of the under one, a peculiarity which gives character to the face, but detracts from its beauty. A still greater defect is at the same time rendered patent—that of the retreating and

slightly double chin. The whole portrait gives the idea of a well-bred, frank, somewhat saucy woman.

A dignified and charming young beauty of the Borders was this that bloomed within the walls of Fairnalee. With her bell-hoop, her gauze "tail" gathered up over her left arm, and her knots at shoulder, breast, and elbow, she was a person of no small distinction; and to secure one of those riband knots on back and breast by begging, borrowing, stealing, fleeching or fighting, might well be a brag with the young Border "swankies" of her generation. Her own account is, "I was a prude when young, and remarkably grave; it was owing to a consciousness that I could not pass unobserved, and a fear of giving offence or incurring censure. I loved dancing exceedingly, because I danced well."

Few particulars are to be found of her brothers and sisters. The small family scraps may be shortly noted here. It was on the occasion of an unsuccessful love-suit of her brother—the future laird—that Mrs. Cockburn is said to have

written her clever parody of "Nancy's to the greenwood gane." A similar suit of his must have prospered in a different quarter. He not only succeeded to the lairdship of Fairnalee, where his gay Edinburgh sister was in the habit of visiting him, but to his (childless?) widow—"the jolly lady of Fairnalee*"—Mrs. Cockburn left a bequest of twenty pounds for mourning, with the charge of her favourite cat. There are also traces of another brother, whose daughter, Anne Rutherfurd, married Mark Pringle of Crichton. The latter seems to have been a son of the Mark Pringle who fought a duel with Sir Walter Scott's great-grand-uncle, Scott of Raeburn, in a field near Hawick. Having killed his man, the elder Mark went abroad, and was, for a time, as some said, a slave in Barbary. Afterwards he made a fortune in Spain, and returned to buy Crichton, and marry and settle in the Forest. So far as can be made out, this Mark was the father of the

* This lady is said to have been of Dutch extraction, and by her eccentricities of speech and writing, to have caused much amusement to her friends, with whom she was veiy popular

Scotch judge, Andrew Pringle of Haining, Lord Alemoor, who was a privileged and intimate friend of Mrs. Cockburn's. Anne Rutherfurd or Pringle, was the mother of a third Mark and of Anne Pringle, the grand nephew and niece of Mrs. Cockburn, so often mentioned in her letters. Mrs. Cockburn had possibly another sister—the same whose death in Edinburgh is briefly noticed in one of the letters, and who may have been the mother of the "nephew Peter Inglis," and the married nieces "Simpson and Clerk," repeatedly mentioned. It is hardly necessary to state that, through Sir Walter Scott's mother, a Rutherfurd, as well as through her kindred, the Swintons, Sir Walter and Mrs. Cockburn counted cousinship.

Something more definite has been gathered concerning an early lover of Alison Rutherfurd's; and on the story there hangs a speculation with regard to the immediate origin of her set of "The Flowers of the Forest." In a lively letter to her old friend David Hume, written when she was upwards

of fifty years old—ten years after she became a widow—she draws a bright picture of one of the heroes of her fancy, Rousseau, and implores David to bring Rousseau with him to Scotland, and then, as if from a sudden pathetic impulse, she writes, "I am sure he is like my John Aikman." The reference is to an old story of one who died about the time of Alison Rutherfurd's marriage, thirty years before. She seems to imply that the story had been well known in the Forest, and that David Hume, from his former connection with the neighbourhood, must have heard the details, and would remember them. But there is another interesting letter—not addressed to David Hume, but to Aikman's own relative, and Mrs. Cockburn's great friend and "Browny," kind-hearted Bobby Chalmers. This letter was written ten years later, forty years after the death of Aikman, when Mrs. Cockburn was sixty-four years of age, and found her health beginning to fail. In characteristic terms, with mingled jest and earnest, she thus remembers a promise, and disposes of one side of a corre-

spondence which she desired should not pass into less sympathetic hands:—

"For Mr. Chalmers, with a parcel.

"As I had a warning bell in the shape, or rather sound, of a cough lately, a day in bed put me in remembrance of all I ought to do beneath the sun before I went above it; amongst the rest I remembered my promise to you, and in doing so, remembered with some satisfaction that I never broke a promise in all my long life. No doubt you would think yourself greatly obliged to me if, in my last will, I bequeathed you some hundreds of the king's image in gold or paper—how much more are you obliged to me for sending you the soul of a man superior to all kings for real worth and native humour! If I were not certain that you will truly value the gift, you should not have it: no, indeed for I much value them; and so you may see by the way I dispose of them. While my friends flourished round me I was a conceited creature. I set a value on myself because they did, and I thought them perfect judges. Now I find it was mere partiality. My value is sunk as they

disappeared. John Aikman's affection, tenderness, and sympathy for me surpassed the love of women! The pleasing big tear to his memory only allows me to bid you adieu. Continue to be as benevolent as he was. Adieu."

This John Aikman was the son of Aikman the painter, the friend of Allan Ramsay, Thomson, Pope, and Somerville, and the grandson of Aikman of Cairney, in Forfarshire, an advocate of some eminence at the Scottish bar. John Aikman is said to have been a young man of great promise. He died in his twenty-second year in London, where his father had established himself in the practice of his profession. The son died only a few days before the father, and only a month or two after the marriage of Alison Rutherfurd to Patrick Cockburn in 1731. The bodies of father and son were brought down to Scotland, and interred together in the Greyfriars churchyard, where an epitaph, penned by Mallet, was inscribed on their tombstone:—

> "Dear to the good and wise, despised by none,
> Heie sleep in peace the father and the son;

Of virtue, as by nature, close allied,
The painter's genius, but without the pride;
With unambitious wit afraid to shine,
Honour's dear light, and friendship's warmth divine.
The son, fair rising, knew too short a date,
But oh! much more severe the father's fate;
He saw him torn untimely from his side,
Felt all a father's anguish, wept and died."

The correspondence between John Aikman and Alison Rutherfurd must have taken place when he was in the dawn of manhood, and she was in her girlhood. From the manner in which she mentions his name to David Hume, it is clear that the attachment was well known to their friends. Whether it was the prospect of Aikman's premature death, or some other obstacle, which prevented the natural conclusion to the correspondence, cannot be ascertained. But with regard to the date when Alison Rutherfurd wrote her "Flowers of the Forest," it has always been believed in her family that the song was written before her marriage; the very turret-chamber in the old house of Fairnalee being still pointed out by her descendants as the scene of its composition. If this tradition is founded on fact, the song must have

been written close upon the time of the writer's parting from John Aikman. A further tradition mixes up a nameless man with the origin of the song. A gentleman, passing down one of the remoter glens round Fairnalee, heard a solitary shepherd, on the lea, play on the flute a plaintive air, which struck the stranger's fancy. He asked the name of the air, and found that it was "The Flowers of the Forest." There was such an old ballad—a wailing lament which had perished before the collection of the minstrelsy of the Border, saving the two lines that are said to be the key-note of Jean Elliot's song, and two other lines which were recovered by Sir Walter Scott;—

(Now) "I ride single in my saddle,
For the Flowers of the Forest are a' wede awa'."

Having sufficient skill to catch the air by hearing it several times played, the gentleman repeated it to Alison Rutherfurd, and begged her to write a copy of verses to suit it. She recognised the air, and recalled a few lines of the old ballad; and, in compliance with the gentleman's entreaty, produced her "Flowers

of the Forest." Could this gentleman, with the fine musical ear, the love of verse, and possessing influence with Alison Rutherfurd, have been John Aikman, on his last visit to the Forest? And is it possible that the song owes its special pathos to the personal sorrow of the writer? If such a gentleman ever existed, and if he were not John Aikman, he could hardly have been Patrick Cockburn, for *he* would not have remained a nameless man.

Against this speculation there must be set the narrative of Mr. Chambers. In an account of Mrs. Cockburn, which embodied the recollections of Sir Walter Scott, Mr. Chambers states that the occasion of Alison Rutherfurd's writing her "Flowers of the Forest" was a commercial disaster, by which seven lairds of ancient family in the district were rendered insolvent in one year.

There is also the silence of Mrs. Cockburn and her relations as to any personal ground for the famous lines.

These arguments are open to objections, and even point to an opposite conclusion. Under a

striking figure the ancient tragedy indicated the untimely death of men, cut off in their prime by the cruel ravages of war, on Flodden, or some equally fatal field. It is not at all probable that a girl of seventeen or eighteen, even supposing her sensible and alive to every shade of feeling, would wrest the figure into an expression of regret for a worldly loss, from which she could not have been an individual sufferer. If Alison Rutherfurd's "Flowers of the Forest" took its rise from no calamity more primitive and sentimental than a wide-spread local bankruptcy (the present writers do not attempt to account for this rumour of the song's origin*), then it is most natural to con-

* Unless an explanation is found in a sentence of an undated letter which refers to Mrs Cockburn's acquaintances as "all either fools or knaves, *as most are bankrupts.*" In another paragraph of the same letter she writes, in allusion to a lady, "give her the song then, and as she has a taste for soft sadness, you may get the favour of Lady Fair to show you my Farewell to Fairnalee, dated 1st November, 1778" Against the probabilities of either of these songs being "The Flowers of the Forest," it must be remembered that Mrs Cockburn, writing in that year of bankruptcy, mentions 1778 as a past date; and also that "The Flowers of the Forest" had been published about thirteen years earlier than 1778, in or near 1765. Under its proper title it was almost certainly already well

clude that the song was not written in Alison Rutherfurd's maiden days, as the first half of the tradition declares, but that it was the work of some of the visits paid by Mrs. Cockburn, in mature years, to her old home of Fairnalee. However, if the first half of the tradition fall to the ground, by what rule will the last stand?

As to the silence of Mrs. Cockburn and her relatives on the subject, one circumstance must be borne in mind. The marriage of Alison Rutherfurd to another suitor soon afterwards was calculated to shut her friends' mouths, upon grounds of common prudence and delicacy, with regard to all matters concerning her former unfortunate attachment. Her own mouth was not shut; but she only opened it after a long interval of years, and even then her words were not without reserve. Like many people who are outwardly frank, Mrs. Cockburn always shows reserve in discussing her deeper personal feelings. She pathetically sums-up John

known to Dr Douglas, and very possibly known also to the lady for whose poetic taste he was catering.

Aikman's regard for her, but she is scrupulously silent as to the measure of her regard for the dead man. We may note another paradox in her character. Although she was pleased with herself and all around her, she was yet essentially a humble-minded woman. Her letters are singularly free from the embarrassment of self-consciousness, and in this lies one great source of their charm. Her authorship of one of the sets of "The Flowers of the Forest," published in her lifetime, seems to have been at once known; but, with one exception, there is not a word in her letters about her "Flowers of the Forest," nor a tittle of evidence that she considered it of such value that a full and particular confession of the circumstances under which it was written, and of the feelings which it was designed to express, should be put on record.

Alison Rutherfurd was not left to bloom long at Fairnalee. Whether her heart were light or heavy, she was married in March, 1731,* to Mr.

* There is a difficulty about the date of her marriage The marriage register gives it as 1731,—she herself uniformly gives the date two years earlier.

Patrick Cockburn, who had been called to the Scotch bar a few years before. He was a son of the Lord Justice Clerk and a cadet of the house of Ormiston.* Her name is thenceforth linked with Edinburgh, where she was not only a lady of quality and a *bel esprit*, but a large-hearted, blithe-tempered woman. According to Sir Walter Scott, she helped to mould and direct the social life of the old, aristocratic parlours of Edinburgh, as the De Rambouillets and the Dudevants had prevailed and ruled with a rod of bright steel in the *salons* of Paris.

It was the old Edinburgh of the '15 and the '45—walled Edinburgh,—the High Street and the Canongate being still in the sunset of their glory. High heads yet looked down out of the crumbling piles, when the sweet scent of roses and hay in the Queensberry Gardens

* Mrs Cockburn makes the following commentary on her marriage:—"I was married, properly speaking, to a man of seventy-five—my father-in-law. I lived with him four years, and as the ambition had seized me to make him fond of me, knowing also nothing could please his son so much, I bestowed all my time and study to gain his approbation. He disapproved of plays and assemblies; I never went to one."

was mingling with the foul smell of the city gutters.

The Cockburns of Ormiston were of strong Whig and Presbyterian principles, as well as of high repute at the Scotch bar. Mr. Patrick was commissioner to the Duke of Hamilton (who married Elizabeth Gunning). He was himself a Hamilton on the mother's side, the Lord Justice having married Lady Susan Hamilton, daughter of the Earl of Haddington. Patrick Cockburn is said to have kept the Duke back from the intrigues before the '45, after which his grace had hankered. A persuasive man and a safe adviser, therefore, was Mr. Patrick, but little more than this is known of him.*

Out at Ormiston the young wife was in the midst of the Murray Keiths, the Dicks, and the Dalrymples, to whom she formed a strong and lasting attachment. Very likely she ran with the rest of the world to stare at the Wilderness Garden, which Lord Grange was amusing himself in laying out; little thinking that he

* "I was twenty years united to a lover and a friend," thirty-three years after his death his widow recalls affectionately.

was yet to abduct his own wife, however desperate a virago, and banish her, without sentence of court, to a wilder wilderness.

Mrs. Cockburn seems to have been quite free from the Jacobite inclinations liberally attributed to the women of gifts and graces in these days. Perhaps too little has been said of the "canny" Tory ladies who clearly foresaw the end from the beginning, and did their best to win their rashly loyal or thick-headed husbands from their dangerous political bent. Too little has also been said of the more suitably-mated "cadgie" Whig ladies who entered warmly into the strife for Protestant and constitutional freedom. These fair Whigs on a pinch lent their husbands the invaluable aid of their lively tongues and pens in the production of those Whig squibs and lampoons which are now forgotten. The Jacobite songs in the end weighed down the balance by the irresistible pathos of "the troubles" of the cause which was royal and was lost.

Few men in Edinburgh could have had a clearer head than Alison Cockburn to detect

the halting arguments and deride the absurdities of her enemies. With what mingled feelings she must have regarded that march down the Canongate, with the red lion banners and the white rose badges, of Macdonalds and Camerons, Murrays, Drummonds, Mars and Wemysses, as they carried their blue-eyed Corydon, Prince Charlie, to a week's lodging in the Holyrood of his ancestors. Though many eyes have wept and many hearts have bled for it, the procession had glaring flaws and mortifying *contretemps* standing out in the eyes of the hostile and scornful Whigs who watched it from the background. No woman in the gude town, with its hosts of lawyers pleading constitutional right and justice in its ears, was more likely than Alison Cockburn to enjoy a little mischievous mockery at the solemn gala and its deficiencies and failures. None was in greater danger of abusing the immunity secured by her sex and station than the petted beauty of Fairnalee and the spoilt dame of Edinburgh.

Mistress Cockburn had chosen to get quit of a little of the restlessness and excitement of

the citizens during the siege of their castle, by riding out and making a call at Ravelston, where her kindred, the Keiths, were known to be on the opposite side in politics from her and her husband. But then as now, blood was thicker than water, and the half-declared fervour of the Keiths for Prince Charlie afforded a delightful opportunity for their clever cousin to twit them with his imperfections and those of his cause. Having accomplished her purpose, Mistress Cockburn was riding home again in the Ravelston coach, when it was stopped at the Port by the Highland guard, waving in tartans and bristling with claymores.

Judge of Mistress Cockburn's consternation when she heard the grim officer on guard propose to search the lady for Whig letters! She was hysterical—half with smothered laughter, half with angry tears of real distress for herself and her friends. She knew very well all the time that she had imprudently stowed in her pocket a parody on Prince Charlie's Proclamation, which she had written with great conceit to the tune of "Clout the Caldron," and which it

is possible she had just been flourishing in the eyes and the ears of the indignant Keiths.

A parody, still in existence, has been almost identified as this unlucky effusion of Alison Cockburn's :—

"Have you any laws to mend,
Or have you any grievance?
I'm a hero to my trade,
And truly a most leal prince
Would you have war, would you have peace?
Would you be free from taxes?
Come chapping to my father's door,
You need not doubt of access.

"Religion, law, and liberty,
Ye ken are bonnie words, sirs;
They shall be all made sure to you
If ye'll fight wi' your swords, sirs.
The nation's debt we soon shall pay,
If you'll support our right, boys;
No sooner we are brought in play,
Than all things shall be tight, boys.

"Ye ken that by a Union law,
Your ancient kingdom's undone;
That all your ladies, lords, and lairds,
Gang up and live in London.
Nae longer that we will allow,
For crack—it goes asunder,
What took sic time and pains to do,
And let the world wonder

* * * *

"And for your mair encouragement,
  Ye shall be pardoned byganes:
Nor mair fight on the Continent,
  And leave behind your dry banes.
Then come away, and dinna stay,—
  What gars ye look sae loundert?
I'd have ye run, and not delay,
  To join my father's standard"

It was a mild and ladylike squib in comparison with many others, but it was not likely to be swallowed by the hot-headed victors. Mr. Patrick, who had kept his Grace of Hamilton out of the broil, might not approve of being dragged into the thick of it by the rashness of his wife, although she was on the right side.

After Mrs. Cockburn had trembled in her mittens and *calèche*, the Ravelston arms on the coach saved her from the indignity of being personally searched. One may well believe that when she next wrote a parody on the Pretender to the tune of "Clout the Caldron," or any other, she would not ride abroad with it in her pocket—at any rate not till the rebels were well on their march to Derby.

Some years after the last Jacobite had suffered, Mr. Patrick Cockburn fell ill. After a long

illness, he died at Musselburgh in 1753, leaving Mrs. Cockburn a widow at forty-one years of age, with one child—Adam, a lad of twenty-one, and an officer in a dragoon regiment.

Twelve years after her husband's death, and ten years after Miss Jean Elliot of Minto is supposed to have written her "Flowers of the Forest," Mrs. Cockburn suffered her set, which is generally believed to have been written twelve or thirteen years earlier than Miss Jean Elliot's song, to get into print. She acknowledged, or at least did not repudiate, the authorship of it. She was probably already acquainted with that new "old ballad" of her Forest, which, while anonymous, had at once become very popular; but the circumstance would only form an inducement for the publication of her own entirely different set.

Sir Walter Scott wrote long ago with regard to Mrs. Cockburn that "she maintained an extensive correspondence, which, if it continue to exist, must contain many things highly curious and interesting." A portion of her unpublished letters, extending over a space of thirty years,

and until within two years of her death, we are glad to say has been recovered.

The present writers, having, through the kindness of friends, got access to these letters, cannot help thinking that they must be acceptable to the reading public. It has, however, been found impossible to give the whole letters here, owing to the ill-proportioned material which would thus be added to the volumes. As the next best thing, room has been made for extracts that surely need no apology. Mrs. Cockburn tells the story of her later life infinitely better than any other could do it for her. The woman lives again in her letters; and this not merely in her solid judgment, her quick intelligence and playful fancy, but in her broad Christian humanity, her merry heart, and her magnanimity, patience, and sweetness in old age and bereavement. Sir Walter Scott remarked that to his mind her great talent in conversation was unlike anything English, and came very near to that of a polished Frenchwoman. Certainly Mrs. Cockburn's letters, written very much as she

spoke, and without the most distant view to publication, bear an affinity to the best French letters. Their happy turns, their gallant graciousness (there is no other word for the quality than this word gallant), their acuteness of observation and of feeling, tempered with rarely-failing charity, together with their arch humour, justify a comparison with the best French letters; but withal, Alison Cockburn's letters show an amount of strong sense and pawkiness which is peculiarly Scotch.

The letters—many of them not longer than notes—are principally addressed to Mr. Chalmers, a solicitor who lived in Adam's Buildings. There are some recollections of Bobby Chalmers afloat to this day. He was of humbler origin than the good society in which he moved, but he was exceedingly popular in it, because his vanity furnished him with abundant capacity to serve as a butt, while his obliging disposition, in which indeed his vanity might be an element, made him an inexhaustible granter of favours. The following anecdote is told of him. Having paid a visit to London and gone to a masquerade

(both visit and masquerade, by the way, are mentioned in one of Mrs. Cockburn's letters), some wag of a countryman who happened to be present wrote in chalk letters on the back of the owner's coat, "Little Bobby Chalmers, from Edinburgh." Many of the masquerading Englishmen carried out the joke by going up to the stranger, shaking his hand, and saying, "Glad to see you, Mr. Chalmers. How are all friends in Auld Reekie?" Bobby, unaware that he carried his visiting-card on his back, was flattered by the general recognition of him, which he attributed to his extraordinary merits, and to the fame that had travelled before him so far as London.

It were idle to ask whether Mrs. Cockburn allowed herself to be tickled by the weaknesses of her friends. In the teeth of possible ridicule, her biographers are fain to hold that she was too loyal and generous to pick out the holes in her friends' armour, and show up their infirmities and absurdities.

Another supposition must remain unsettled —whether or not Mr. Chalmers's kinsmanship

to John Aikman, and the fact that he had been in the confidence of the couple who were early severed, did not lie at the root of the pleasant intimacy. One conclusion is unmistakable. Mrs. Cockburn cherished for Mr. Chalmers a sincere and lasting regard, which he returned in kind. The entire tenor of the correspondence establishes this, no less than the letter which she wrote to him on the death of his young relative, and that other letter in which she intrusted John Aikman's letters to his keeping. Had the hopes of the younger generation been fulfilled, Mrs. Cockburn and Mr. Chalmers would have been connected by the marriages of their children. Anne Pringle was the pledged wife of her cousin, Adam Cockburn, who, however, did not live to redeem his pledge. Anne Pringle's brother, Mark Pringle, married Mr Chalmers's daughter, Anne Chalmers.

Mr. Chalmers either inherited or acquired some amount of fortune, and settled at Rose-hall, near Musselburgh. To this place Mrs. Cockburn's later letters were sent—frequently,

as their superscription purports, by the fish-wives who were employed by both families. The letters which are not written to Mr. Chalmers or to his daughter Anne are addressed to Miss Henrietta Cumming, governess for many years in the household of the Earl of Balcarres. Miss Cumming had two brothers—one in the Heralds' Office, London; the other assistant to Dr. Roebuck, at Kinniel by Borrowstoness.

Mrs. Cockburn was a particular ally of the Lindsays of Balcarres. She was the bosom friend of Countess Anne of Balcarres, born a Dalrymple (who was, however, ten years Mrs. Cockburn's junior). There might have been a Scotch cousinship between the two ladies through the Keiths and the Swintons. On the husbands' sides, again, we find Lord Lindsay announcing that "the Laird of Ormiston was chief of a family allied to the Lindsays since the fourteenth century." Lady Anne Barnard, in the account which she gives of her youth in the Lindsay Papers, mentions Mrs. Cockburn as being frequently domesticated at Balcarres along with the earl and the countess; Lady Dalrymple,

the grandmother; the eleven children of the Lindsays; three maiden cousins; another old friend; a tutor and a governess. Lady Anne describes Mrs. Cockburn as having had "goodness, genius, utopianism, and a decided partiality for making matches; for which reason she was the *confidante* of all love-sick hearts." The match-making propensity peeps out decidedly in Mrs. Cockburn's letters. The interest in love-stories and weddings seems to have survived in her kind heart to the last. One or two published letters, written on the occasion of the death of Earl James of Balcarres, and given by Lord Lindsay among the Lindsay Papers, show the terms on which Mrs. Cockburn stood with the family, and illustrate signally her shrewdness, tenderness, and complacency, as well as indicate some of her religious views:—

"I am greatly relieved, for I am not so sanguine as other people to imagine a recovery in old age, after all symptoms of death; and I was pleased with Mary Baird's idea. I told her there was some hope last week; she thought a little, then said, 'Well, I'm sorry for it; for

it will be all to do over again—all the grief to them and pain to him; and how long can it last?' I thank you for taking me into the room and letting me see the venerable scene. Your letter found me in bed this morning, and I shed tears—a dew Heaven has denied me for real heart-aches, but they come from approbation—it was indeed gratitude to Heaven for taking away my patriarch without a pang. I have kissed his cold cheek—I see him! He liked me, and I truly respected and admired him. I am happy at his tranquil death; he was a man that, 'take him all in all, we shall not see his like again;' yet Colin is wonderfully like him! They (Colin and Robert) drank tea with me yesterday. Do ye know, they are better companions to me than your Sir This or Mr. That! I carried in your letter to Lady Dumfries; she showed me hers from Lady Margaret. Jeanie read out your letter, and, when you imputed the easy passage to temperance, Lady Dumfries' eyes ran over, and she found a lump in her throat. How hard it is to be yoked to one whom you hope to part from eternally! She

feels it. The news has thinned the play-house to-night; the Dalziel family were going and did not. Every proper respect is paid to the remains of our patriarch; and brutified as Dumfries is, there was a ball he and his family were asked to—'Na, na!' says he, 'Mrs. Janet; we will see what comes of our uncle Balcarres first. If we do not respect the dead, we will never be respected by the living.' Jennie Duff told me this, and said he ought never to have spoke again.

* * * * * * * *

"Much have you to see, much to observe, for you are born with a mind—which is not so common as we vulgarly imagine—and, alas! much have you to feel. Look on it early as a nursery where you are to be whipped into good order and a perfect acquiescence with the Divine will. The Almighty Maker of souls has various methods of restoring them to the Divine image; it is impossible His power can fail; it is impossible for His image to be eternally obliterated; it is impossible that misery, sin, and discord can be eternal! Look, then, on the erring sons of men as on wretched prisoners, bound in

fetters for a time; but recollect that they are and must be eternal as well as you, and that in the endless ages of eternity they will be restored to order.

* * * * * * * *

"See that you give your mother some castor in wine when she goes to bed; it saved my brain once after long fatigue—half a tea-spoonful mixed with her little finger in white wine will compose her beyond what ye can imagine—see it done. Yes! I will come over. I am not now the most cheerful companion, but assure your mother I am a friend. She is directly a widow at the same year of her life I was left one."

Miss Cumming figures largely in Lady Anne's easy sketches, while it is sufficiently plain that there had been no love lost between the governess and Lady Anne, her eldest pupil. But it is to the credit of Miss Cumming that, if she did not leave a favourable impression on Lady Anne's mind, she could inspire so fair a judge as Mrs. Cockburn with an excellent opinion of Henrietta Cumming's intellect, and a cordial faith in her heart.

Among the old papers which have been recovered, there is a hurried letter written by Henrietta Cumming to her brother James, from Mrs. Cockburn's house. James was established with Dr. Roebuck at Kinniel, and the letter is in reference to an enemy's report of him, which he and his friends feared might have been conveyed to Dr. Roebuck. The letter is full of sisterly affection, anxiety for the brother's honour, and gratitude to Mrs. Cockburn, who had espoused James Cumming's cause to the extent of adding a portion to the letter in order to condole with and reassure him. Mrs. Cockburn proposed to interest a friend of Dr. Roebuck's on the aspersed man's behalf, and offered to accompany his sister to Kinniel in order to see James and his wife in the painful circumstances. The back of the letter is endorsed, evidently in the receiver's hand, with the words, "From Henny and Mrs. Cockburn," as if he had valued and preserved what had been a comfort to him in trouble.

Lord Lindsay, in his Lives of the Lindsays, quotes another letter of Henrietta Cumming's, written to her brother Alexander, in the Heralds'

Office, begging him to contrive a kinship between her and him and some great North-country Cummings. She had asserted to visitors of the Balcarres family that there was such a relationship, and it would be awkward for her if she could not establish her assertion. Might not this letter be the carrying out of an unwarrantable joke, on which Lord Lindsay comments with due severity, or, at the worst, the momentary impulse of escape from a false position incurred by foolish vanity, rather than an act of deliberate imposition?

Miss Cumming married a Dr. Fordyce, a Presbyterian clergyman in London.*

In excusing herself from fulfilling an engagement which was no longer desirable, Mrs. Cockburn presents us with an old confident version of a woman's estimate of her sex:—

"Mrs. Cockburn is just informed that Mr.

* Since this book was in the press, another portion of Mrs Cockburn's letters has, by the kindness of Miss Douglas, Cumin Place, Grange, Edinburgh, been put into the hands of the writers It is proposed that these fine letters, together with the whole of the letters already received and partly used here, should be published along with the biographical sketch, in a separate volume.

Chalmers is speechless, and as her taste lies more in her ear than her mouth, she hopes the supper is delayed till his articulation is restored, though she owns he has a helpmeet who may make up for all his deficiencies—but what's a woman to a woman? Mrs. Chalmers knows that. Seriously, send me word if the hen hold or no."

Mrs. Cockburn was fond of pet names. Mr. Chalmers was her "Browny," Miss Cumming her "Sylph," and Anne Chalmers, later in life, her "Sweet Anne Page." The following letter has the first allusion to Henrietta Cumming by the pet name which Mrs. Cockburn bestowed upon her friend:—

"My dear Browny,—This is a day of trouble to me. I have parted with my Sylph with tears. I went with very red eyes to a supper, and met there the friend of Mrs. Chalmers, Mrs. Russel, who informed me she was very ill,—had been blooded! I believe no good body will either *stay* or *live*."

The Mistake, an exploded comedy, is neatly criticised:—

"Mrs. Cockburn returns *The Mistake*, and thanks. It's said comedy ought to be the picture of common life; in that sense this is certainly a good one, as it's very like the present world—very busy about doing nothing."

An exploded trick is denounced:—

"Such a trick upon widows! To put in feathers to make the tea weigh, great was our suspicion (a natural failing of the sex). If you had seen us on our knees about the division!"

A letter to Miss Cumming contains Mrs. Cockburn's account of her own gay doings, with her friend's supposed comments:—

"I never, I think, passed a busier time than I have done since we parted. Good weather and universal acquaintance is a most fatiguing affair; but I have little to complain of, since both body and spirit is able for it all. On Saturday we had a most tight hopp at Colonel Harris's, where your friend Mrs. Cockburn danced like a miss. 'It's a wonder to me that woman holds out. She has more levity than any girl of fifteen,—would fain be thought

young, I suppose! and no doubt setting out for a second venture.'

"You are mistaken, madam. I know that woman perfectly well; it's her humour to dance, and it's yours to talk. She will do as she pleases, and allow you the same freedom. And for a husband,—she has too great a regard for the male sex to appropriate any one of them, and too great a regard to truth to pretend to youth. But, for the same reason, she will not affect the infirmities of age; and if her vigour continue, will dance as frankly with her grandson as with any man whatever.

"Never was any creature in such spirit and drollery as Suff Johnston that night, to the great admiration and amusement of an American lady, who rather looked with the eyes of wonder than of approbation."

Suff Johnston was Lord Cockburn's friend, the well-known daughter of the Laird of Hilton. Brought up by her father purposely in a state of nature, she taught herself to read, and was, at her own request, taught by the family butler to write. She proved herself to be a very rough

diamond. If, as Lord Lindsay imagines, she was sister to Sir David Baird's mother, then she was a cousin of Mrs. Cockburn's. According to Lady Anne Lindsay, there was a standing feud at Balcarres between Suff Johnston and Henrietta Cumming, than whom no two human beings could have been more unlike. Mrs. Cockburn, indulgent to both, was either ignorant of the feud or ignored it.

In the same letter as that we have just quoted from, Mrs. Cockburn records her interest in the curious *cause célèbre* of the day :—

"Four times five hours, Mrs. Harriet, did I spend in the Session-house upon the Douglas cause, and heard them speak

'about it and about it,
And prove a thing till all men doubt it.'

There's nothing else spoke of in town, and though I was keen at first, I am grown tired of it."

The letter winds up with an appeal for the young woman's confidence, and a reference to her work, which recall the pretty performances of Mary Delany :—

"I think, Henn, I am entitled to all your adventures, and an account of all the works you have made under the sun, of the candle-sticks that you have built and the birds you have drawn, of the hearts you have won and of those you have broke, and whether Auntie Cowan was right when she said Hendi Long was to declare himself your slave, with an honourable intention of becoming your master. All these, and much more, with your dreams of the night and your flights of the day, I desire may be faithfully transmitted. These are the works suited to my taste. But whenever you are idler than a summer fly, draw me a bold stroke for a pair of ruffles, only the edge thereof with much show and little work, and I care not though it be fruits or birds instead of flowers,—for why confine to imitate only one of the works?"

Miss Cumming, it should be mentioned, was famous for designing and drawing patterns of ruffles. She also painted on satin, and seems to have ambitiously proposed to paint a gown, and get it presented to Queen Charlotte—if,

indeed, she did not carry out the idea. (Was this in expectation of a pension which Lord Balcarres procured for her, or in return for it?) In one of Miss Cumming's own letters, she commissions her sister-in-law, "Minnie," to procure the material :—

"Pray let the satin be a white free of blue, if painting on satin looks better than on lute-string. Her Majesty's gown will just cost ten pound sterling. It just takes twenty yards for a gown and petticoat. I am willing, for the honour of the thing, and the views it will give me, to spend my means in that way for a year or two, that it may afford me much more after. Colonel Keith takes it in hand to present it properly, and to get me the shape of her Majesty's hoop from her mantua-maker. The shoes shall determine for or against it. Oh, such things as I am doing for my lord, of the bird kind, and of the flower also!"

Miss Cumming supplies another glimpse into these mysteries of the old work-tables :—

"Lady Bal begs you would tell her what kind

of bones is fit to make the everlasting white for painting gauze, as she is determined that her young ladies shall wear no other lappets but of their own painting with the painted suit. She proposes to have the bones gathered for you here, that you may have the less trouble in making it."

Henrietta Cumming had a love of legitimate art. She spurs on her brother and sister-in-law to improve their acquaintance with Runciman ("Runchiman" she spells it):—

"Runchiman's letter is worth the while. Pray you write to him, and lose not an opportunity of getting an account of all the curious original paintings abroad. An account from one whose skill is so much to be depended on is much worth. I return you the letter, Jamie, which is more than you ever do to me."

In a summer and an autumn of 176—, Mrs. Cockburn announces to her friends, Mr. and Mrs. Chalmers, an expedition to the Highlands, and a visit to "the faded Forest." On this, and on the impressions which she derived from the

changes of scene, she enlarges to Henrietta Cumming, who had just enjoyed a similar experience :—

"Your Highland expedition entertained me as much as St. Pierre's visit to the mountains of Switzerland. I'm not sure whether you or Rousseau writes best. Were I to return adventure for adventure, I'm not sure but I would equal you (not in description of places, though some have been noble, but modern); but the variety of people and characters I have seen and lived among for six months past afforded me agreeable observations. The works of God have all some affinity, and sure taste is, and always must be, the same, for Truth is one. I join with you in adoring nature. There are some noble minds, like your mountains, that the heat cannot melt, nor the rains dissolve—fixt they stand in all weathers, and though rough perhaps to appearance, are indeed friends most permanent and unshaken; others, smooth and even like fine verdant meads that tempt the traveller to try, prove nought but faithless bogs, and slump you go every step. I have

seen characters of all climates and all weathers, and admire the diversity."

The next pictures are from Fairnalee :—

"The moon was eclipsed three or four hours ago. As if she rejoiced at getting out again, she shines with redoubled splendour; she shows the embosomed mountains that surround this spot, and the blue stream that runs circular around it. The half-naked oak is seen again in the small pond on whose brink he grows, and the tall shadows look like giants on the smooth-shaven green. Nature is all silent as the grave. Happy the mind that resembles this night—clear, light, and serene—who can behold this midnight scene without feeling what I cannot describe! Good night."

"The storm has desolated the trees. The ground is strewed with their fallen honours. I don't talk of the weather because I have nothing to say, but because I sit in a closet that is just in the garden, and shows me the scene. I feel myself greatly resemble those stripped trees—year after year has robbed me of my shelter and my foliage—but this is melancholy."

To serve as an antidote to melancholy, Mrs. Cockburn notes down in this letter a little country gossip which had diverted her, and called forth an effusion not unworthy of her "Nancy's to the Assembly gane:"—

"Here comes a secret I wrote to a young farmer, a lad very like one in 'The Gentle Shepherd.' He has been severely in love with a country coquette for some years, and she keeps him on till he is become the subject of much vulgar mirth—for few can pity that passion.

"A RECEIPT FOR WOOING.

"If your lass is coquettish and frisky,
Make up to her easy and briskly;
If she frown on ye, turn on your heel,
Make love to another, your heart to recover;
You'll quickly discover she would keep you her lover,
Tho' her heart be as hard as the steel.

"She will try all her tricks to entice ye,
Sometimes sweet, sometimes sour, sometimes spicy;
Affect all these humours yourself,
See that ye vex her, be sure to perplex her,
Provoke her and coax her, roast her and toast her,
She's as sure in your pouch as your pelf.

"If your lassie is modest and shy,
Watch every cast of her eye;

If she blushes, she's halflings your own ;
Approach by degrees, her hand ye may seize,
And give it a squeeze, then down on your knees,
And prefer her to kings, or their crown.

"If she answer you no way but flying,
Depend on't she will be complying,
So follow as fast as you can.
But if coolly she stay, I'm afraid she'll say nay,
With such nymphs it's the way ; then fast as ye may
Pray pack up your heart and be gone,
For ye may leave her to some other man"

Whether the "receipt" was tried and found effectual by a couple whose grandchildren would now be old men and women who shall say?

Miss Cumming was a useful as well as an agreeable friend. When she was on a visit to her mother, "first entry above Adam's Buildings, Cowgate," Mrs. Cockburn was out of town. On that occasion Henrietta "arled" a servant in prospect for Mrs. Cockburn, with whom the latter promised to be pleased, "as I generally am with everything within my gates;" visited Jenny Shaw, Mrs. Cockburn's servant in possession, and saw the cat, the predecessor of that which Mrs. Cockburn left in charge to Lady Fairnalee; besides executing commissions liberally

for the ladies of the Forest. "I have not seen Nell Pringle since she got her hood," Mrs. Cockburn remembers to tell Henrietta. "Violy was here, and says she's very well pleased with it and the borders. I would wish for a hood also, and about six yards of narrow borders to go round my double napkin; as it's very large, it need be only an inch broad, but it must be silk." Occasionally Henrietta herself was the modiste, and gave immense satisfaction. "Beautyfull and delectable," Mrs. Cockburn addresses her correspondent, enchanted by an effort of genius. "I came from my chamber, and found Tib Hall gazing with the eye of an artist upon my lovely cloak. 'I wager,' says she, 'Henny Cumming contrived that cloak.' See how artists know others' hands at first sight! Nothing ever was more admired. I visited them yesterday on purpose to show them my cloak."

Mrs. Cockburn took a lively interest in David Hume's quarrel with Rousseau, who suffered, in her opinion, in consequence of his accusation against his friend David. She had an old kindness for the cynic, and she

could not change it into ill-will because of her religion. She chaffed him not very reverently (for it was not a reverent generation) on his opinions, but her chaffing had at least the merit of honesty and good-nature, and was probably as effectual as more solemn and more bitter remonstrances. With her usual quickness, she makes use of nature on her side of the argument in a published letter to him :—

"I am just returned from a Highland expedition, and was much delighted with the magnificence of nature in her awful simplicity. These mountains, and torrents, and rocks would almost convince one that it was some Being of infinite power that had created them. Plain corn countries look as if men had made them; but I defy all mankind put together to make anything like the Pass of Killiecranky. Were you ever in the Highlands?"

The friendship did not last so long without being tested; witness the fire, and yet the gentleness, with which Mrs. Cockburn refers to a misunderstanding on a very delicate subject—

that of her son's interest—which had arisen between her and David Hume :—

"In the meantime, I am as jealous as he (Rousseau) that anybody should pay for my bills. At the same time, sir, I never paid any man a higher compliment than I did you by being truly angry at you. Infidel as you are (and little, indeed, do I expect from any such), I marked you down as a man whom God had chosen to show his power upon, and that He had compelled you to act as a Christian in spite of your contradiction. To set an opportunity of serving me I own astonished me; and I had all the anger a friend ought to have. I have not been at courts. My heart is yet simple, though I have lived amongst men. I said to myself, Had David's son been in my power—I felt what I would have done. I had no indolence, no prudence, and I am apt to suppose my friends of the same make with myself; that is an error, however, I daily mend of, and by-and-by I shall be as much wrapped up in my own shell as I see all the reptiles around me are. Your answer, however, satisfies me; and I still

believe (because it pleases me to believe) that you would have served me had it been in your power. I have sent my son your letter."

Mrs. Cockburn takes David Hume's part against Rousseau, while, however, she is tender to the Frenchman. "Rousseau has a pen that can wound to the bottom of the heart," she tells Henrietta Cumming. "His common character is that cursed, suspicious, querulous temper. David Hume was warned of it, but his affection ran away with him, and I am sorry for his disappointment. In his (Rousseau's) long letter, he accused David Hume of the meanest things, which he is incapable of, such as opening his (Rousseau's) letters. It's my firm opinion the poor man is mad; suspicion is a never-failing attendant on that disorder. Great genius, with strong feelings, is too apt to crack the machine, and I sincerely pity him. I would not have David answer him in public, and yet I fear he will be obliged to do it. I am truly glad to get David home again; he's a very old friend, and I've long had a habit of liking him and being diverted with him."

On another occasion Mrs. Cockburn writes:—

"I have begged Mr. Hume to put in the Edinburgh *Courant* a very humorous paper he got in the London *Daily Advertiser*, upon him and Rousseau. It's the best thing yet published; mind to look for it."

Eight or nine years afterwards, David Hume's visit to Edinburgh and to Mrs. Cockburn, and the temper he was in then, are thus laughingly chronicled in a letter to Mr. Chalmers:—

"David Hume has been here, and is neither pleased with my voice, my manners, nor my diction; so what shall be done? However, Mrs. Mure shall carry me, such as I am, on Saturday to ———; and I am morally certain I will be vastly agreeable, because I am positively certain I love my company." Here follows a most off-hand invitation:—"Do ye always go out at night? If not, I am at home to-night. Hot chickens and Willie Swinton."

We have a description of a ball at Mrs. Cockburn's own house in her blithest strain:—

"On Wednesday I gave a ball. How do ye

think I contrived to stretch out this house to hold twenty-two people, and had nine couple always dancing? Yet this is true; it is also true that we had a table covered with divers eatables all the time, and that everybody eat when they were hungry and drank when they were dry, but nobody ever sat down. I think my house, like my purse, is just the widow's cruse. I must tell you my party of dancers: Captain Bob Dalrymple was king of the ball, as it was his bespeaking (tell Lady Bal that, as a nephew, she will take delight in him; he is my first favourite). Well, for men, there was Bob and Hew, young men both; Peter Inglis; a Mr. Bruce, a lawyer; then Jock Swinton and Jock Turnbull. Then, for women, there were Tibbie Hall, my two nieces, (Miss Rutherfords—Nanny and Peggie,) Agnes Keith, Christy Pringle, Babie Carnegie, Christy Anderson, Jeannie Rutherford. Mrs. Mure and Violy Pringle came and danced a reel, and went off. Now for our dance. Our fiddler sat where the cupboard is, and they danced in both rooms; the table was stuffed into the window, and we

had plenty of room. It made the bairns all vastly happy."

An assembly is the sequel :—

"Next day I went to the assembly with all these misses. Never was so handsome an assembly. There were seven sets—one all quality ladies, and all handsome; one called the maiden set, for they admitted no married women; one called the heartsome set, which was led off by Lady Christian Erskine, in which danced Mrs. Horn, Suff Johnston, Anne Keith; Bess St. Clair and Lady Dunmore humbly begged to be admitted to stand at the foot, which was granted. Suff was my bedfellow all night, and is just gone."

At another ball the musical Earl of Kelly appears under a characteristic cloud :—

"Kelly was at our Monday's ball, quite melancholy with the death of 'Bouch,' the celebrated musician."

The following incidental indications of the motherly, affectionate heart of the leader of society are only specimens taken at random from her letters :—

"Since Wednesday I have been in no small anxiety, and anxiety now does not agree with my health—it always makes my heart and lungs too big for my breast. Our dear little missie (her grand-niece Anne) has been in a fever. There's an ugly slow fever going about the country, and she has had it; but I hope it is abating. She sleeps in the room next me, and sleeps well; her pulse is calmer to-day, and I would fain hope the worst is over."

"To imagine myself anyhow conducive to the happiness of a worthy pair of young people gives my heart such a rebound as convinces me I have not entirely lost my Maker's image, but retain the appetite of diffusing blessings and being blest by doing so."

"Mrs. Cockburn's best compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Chalmers. She is much obliged to them for the offer of a party so agreeable to her taste, but finds her neighbours so distrest that she cannot think of going abroad to-night. She hopes the danger is heightened by a mother's fears; but there is real danger too."

"Will you write me how she (Mrs. Chalmers)

is? For, to say truth, I lŏve the wife, and can ill spare a cheerful companion. I think there's very few left that can be merry, and though I'm not merry, I like to see it."

"You saw me just out of a sick bed. I am now just come from a wedding that has neither tochers, jointures, nor wheeled carriages, yet made six people very happy; viz., the couple themselves, their two fathers, and their two mothers, not forgetting some sisters and brothers, who love *love* better than riches—a very uncommon case."

"Dear Sir,—The accounts of your family somewhat transcends a polite card. I have heard by my good neighbour below-stairs that sweet little Kate is recovered—thank God. I this day heard Mrs. Chalmers has been ill of a rash fever, but better—thank God again. I will tell you once for all, if any of you are so impertinent as to die, it will vex, anger, and disoblige your old friend,—A. COCKBURN.

"Write to me, as ye shall not see my face in my house till I have a rope ready for you."

Here is an object of benevolence, with her claims judiciously set forth by Mrs. Cockburn:—

"There's a woman I must beg your interest for, and, as times go, she is entitled to your warmest friendship, being your *creditor*, a relation that in the mode of the present season not only begets compassion, but the warmest friendship and generosity. Now, setting the title aside, I do think Mrs. Chalmers's late grocer, in the Candlemaker Row, well entitled to £5 out of the exchequer. She has brought up by her own industry thirteen children, and educated them all to business; and she has not a shilling in the world. She feels it very sore to depend for bread on the labours of her daughters, whom she was used to feed; and I believe we would all feel it as well as her, though she says they are very dutiful. They are mantua-makers, and she gave them a London education. I have employed her these three years, and always found her an honest, clever, discreet woman."

Will the present day afford so hearty a recommendation as this?—

"Henry Duff, of the Chesterfield, is my friend Mr. Duff's son, brother to Lady Dumfries—the finest fellow ever was born."

Or a more valuable testimony to a friend?—

"Oh, Hena! a true friend is a rare thing—if ever there was one Lady Bal is, for absence never puts one out of her pow; and, besides, she can be constant, even though conscious of many faults—that is an admirable quality."

An old county election was making much stir in Mrs. Cockburn's world. Henrietta Cumming, in the country, sends her version of the affair to her brother and his wife; and Mrs. Cockburn, at the ear of the Court of Session, records the price paid by the unfortunate candidate.

Henrietta Cumming writes:—

"Alas! alas! I have no hopes of their (the family of Mr. Alexander, the loser) affairs on this side of the water—nothing goes right with them. The devil is in Lady Anstruther I believe." [Jenny Faa, beautiful and witty, was of gypsy descent, being one of the great

merchant Faas of Dunbar, as well as wife of the winner, Sir John Anstruther of Elie, who had his wife's extraction cast in his teeth on the hustings.] "She has so prejudiced the Sheriff of Fife in her favour that there is actually the most evident partiality used that ever was known in any court: everything is given against them and for her. Mr. William Alexander brought a party of Highlanders here, which he said was in his own defence. I fear it was more rash than prudent. They bragged they would soon set them off. Accordingly, the court sat upon these men, and it was proved that arms was seen on them, which was against the laws of elections, and they were all turned off save six—I know not for what they remain. I often take my ride to Pittenweem, and sometimes call on Mrs. Alexander."

Mrs. Cockburn writes :—

"Our friend Alexander, my Sylph, is really unlucky in everything. His brother's bribery has been so open it was impossible to pass it—not but everybody is conscious there is as

much on the other side; but the law is express, and he pays costs, &c., which I truly grudge—all the judges did the same, and even Durham thinks the Bench swayed mightily to the landed interest. It's said both parties are cast, and it will be a poll election—more expense and trouble. The very papers and proofs in this case printing costs £500. How many poor would that have fed! Lord Alemoor has never been out of his house into the air yet; he cannot walk a step, but in good health and spirits otherwise. The Bench were unanimous, all except Balfour and Auchinleck."

Here is a single sentence which ought to be written on brass, and studied by all critics who prefer to exercise their trade in depreciation rather than approbation :—

"A genuine painter ever abhors false lights and caricature figures; a musical ear sickens at discordant sounds; a moral ear abhors depreciating."

Highly-valued volumes of Swift, Goldsmith, and Burke are referred to at various times, but

there are others whose titles sound strange to modern readers, as those in the following sentences:—

"Thanks for 'The Pious Fool.'

"Indeed, my Benevolent, I never said I had sent 'John Bunckle;' it was 'Lucy Granville' I returned . . . . although here comes John! Peace to the souls that read him! He surpasses my patience; but Suff Johnstone wishes there were twenty volumes of him. How our sex love you marrying sort of men!"

"I endeavoured to get 'Donna Maria' for you, but she is not to be had."

Mrs. Cockburn was a voracious reader, with a frankly-avowed preference for fiction.

There are two rhapsodies written in a New Year's week, the one addressed to the Browny, the other to the Sylph, followed by more prosaic, but equally cordial greetings:—

"Peace be with him (whoever he be) that causeth the widow's hand to work with ease, who maketh her paper and wax to abound! His fame shall be as wide as words made of ink

can make it; it shall not depend upon words made of air, that may be frozen or zephyred away as Boreas or Zephurnia pleases. Lasting as paper, black as ink, immortal as poets can render it, be the fame of the Giver of the gifts of kings.

"Hereby underwritten we return our commands for the benefit of our benefactor. 'Sir, I command your Majesty to give our beloved ——— whatever place he chooses to fill, well knowing he will ask none but what he will fill with honour, and for your honour and service. This written with our hand the seventh day of January, one thousand seven hundred and sixty-seventh year of our Lord.

"(Signed) "DIGNIARI."

"Sun that ariseth on a New Year, granted once more to the mortal race of man, arise propitious! Let thy rays cheer the heart and fortify the nerves of my little Sylph! Warm and benign like thine are the emanations of her soul. Luminous and true as thy light are the images of her fancy. Deep as thy shadows at

eve and dark is her memory of times that are past—but thy mid-day beam drives the phantoms afar off, and she shines in the lustre of true benevolence. She shall live, O sun! when thy influence is no more. When the firmament in which thou presided shall be as a parchment roll—when the elements shall cease, and all inanimate matter shall return to its original nothing, she shall live and rejoice in her course, every moment arising nearer to Infinite perfection, perfectly restored to the likeness of that Original of whom and for whom she was.

"Come, rosy health, and deck the cheek;
Come, gentle Peace, of spirit meek;
Come, every fancy, new shapes taking,
Make gay the scene, asleep or waking.
Come, Melody, on soft air fleeting,
Attend my Sylph with gentle greeting;
And far be household care and strife,
And hopeless love, the bane of life;
All jealous fears, all heartfelt sorrow,
All anxious cares about to-morrow.

"Little Sylph, that walks unseen
On the ice-besprinkled green,
Of mind elate, of stature small,
Though small yet great, though short yet tall,

Send to heaven thy matin song,
Softly sweet the notes prolong;
And beg thy friend from toils may cease,
And close this year her eyes in peace.

"There, then, Miss Melpomene has thought fit to go to bed for an afternoon nap, and she will not give me another line, so you must even take prose for the rest. . . . . Make for me the compliments of the season to all, especially the patriarch. May he live a thousand years, and more! Blessing to all the bairns and mothers; long may they dance together! I hope Lady Dalrymple will dance at Lady Anne's wedding. . . . . Our Anne is boarded at Mrs. Hamilton's, and begun the music—she has an excellent ear. Have you got the songs of Selma yet? If not, let me know, and I will send it, to your New Year's Gift. Adieu, my dear Henefie.

"Fourth day of the year '60."

Then there is a sample of first-footing:—

"Thanks to the best of all Brownys. Is any mortal as favoured as me, blest with a Sylph and a Browny? To have these best of all beings restored to the world and to the faith is

a blessing given me alone; not to only that, but serenades are restored. At three this morning a very pretty gentleman was at my bedside, whilst the rest of the starved lovers sang and played at the window

'She rose and let me in'

I will wait on you to-morrow. I intended a chair visit to Mrs. Chalmers to-night, but I think I'll no fash her and myself; besides, she would tempt me to bestow tenpennyworth of time upon her. Adieu, *ma chère* Browni."

Accident has thus preserved a love affair of Ambassador Keith's, with the very conflicting feelings which it excited in his friends :—

"Now for news. It is believed by everybody but Mrs. Baird that Ambassador Keith is to be married immediately to Mally Cheape; he is certainly with her every forenoon, dressed like a goddess, his equipage waiting, and a perfect bareface about it. I think Anne is staggered, and believes, as the devils do; it will disturb a fine society, and I am really vexed about it. I fear it is true."

Mrs. Cockburn did not allow her Browny's amiable facility in conferring favours to rust for want of being called forth. She could the more freely and fully credit him with the quality because she herself possessed it in no stinted measure. Without a moment's hesitation she employed him like a true friend whenever he could be of use to her—from procuring lint to be spun and woven "for Adam's sarks," to sending up herrings from Musselburgh. In the matter of replenishing her cellar, where the benefit of a gentleman's experience was a special boon to a lady, what he did not do at his own hand she required of him without fail. She drew long bills on his good-nature for her friends, whether the demand were brandy, "which is Fairnalee's sole beverage," or Geneva, which Mrs. Cockburn, in her character of a doctor, had prescribed for a sick lady. In the perfect simplicity and firmness of their old-world friendship, she "bids" his guests and bespeaks his escort with a certain manly *bon-homie* —

"Mrs. Cockburn's best compliments to her

Browny, begs he will forgive her for substituting her Fairy instead of Miss Baird, who has so many objections, maternal, virginal, and prudential, which a fairy cannot have, being not made of dust and clay, and knows not man from woman, nor water from wine, yet is a perfect elve, and will warble at a moment's warning, and make the air mellifluous. As she's like to grow immortal before I think fit, I wish to hold her up, and have taken upon me to ask her in my own name as your guest. Will you forgive this intrusion of the genii, and pardon the possessor of the Browny?"

"*Ma chère* Browni,—I wish you would add to your list my gallant nabob Swinton and my comrade Bess St. Clair—if ye do I will forgive your negligence last autumn about the lint spinning. Monsieur Morpheus, or Somnus, took full possession of my person this morning. Of all my foes he is the favourite; you are next to him."

"Our Browny,—Will you meet your comrade Wallace and me at the door of the concert?

She cannot get a ticket, so must go in without one, and you must take care of her, and come home with me at night. Speak to us, and we shall see all about it. If ye can send a ticket, do. She is here. I have fine trout for night."

In nothing is Mrs. Cockburn racier than in her invitations and refusals of invitations.

"It is desired that Sir Alexander (Dick?) and Adam fix Friday for a taste of my cruse, with Mrs. Chalmers and you, at dinner or supper, as you will, or both. I like both best, but will have one, and I am very positive in my temper."

"Hope long delayed is sickness to the soul. If Solomon did not say this he ought to have said it. What Mrs. Cockburn says to Mr. Chalmers is that to-morrow night he shall be happy with his charmer Sophia. If he pleases he shall have a still greater happiness, for he will add much by coming to that of his friend and servant,—A. COCKBURN."

"Wednesday night,—If I could lye I would

date this Thursday; but as I really lye very long, it is Thursday night I want you."

"Mrs. Cockburn's compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Chalmers—would wait on them with a great deal of pleasure, but finds herself at a loss, as Mrs. Chalmers sets her an example of never coming from home, and as there is nobody she admires more, she wishes to imitate her in everything. . . .

"Can you tell me any reason for my not being to see Mrs. Chalmers when I have been these three or four days mistress of myself? None, except that *reason* has nothing to do with man or woman (!) but to reproach; yet I feel a certain inclination to impute this to a better cause, viz., self-denial, which we all know is a Christian virtue. I really am as well entertained with Mrs. Chalmers as with the novels I eternally read—but they come to me."

The following letter refers to the miniature of Mrs. Cockburn painted by Anne Forbes, who had been able to go to Rome to study there

under the guidance of her kinsman and brother artist, the elder Aikman:—

"Mrs. Cockburn's compliments to Mr. Chalmers—as she coughed all night she found herself so ill-faured she could not appear before the artists. She would always choose to be in the best light before Mr. Chalmers, especially when kept for posterity; however, as there is one person who really would be fond of the effigy after the original is returned to dust, she wishes to be seen by the lovely painters. The journey to North Berwick is put off till Thursday. Can Mr. Chalmers contrive a meeting? Would to-morrow at six o'clock do?"

In 1767 Mr. Chalmers lost a near relation by an early death. Mrs. Cockburn, who was then at Fairnalee, in a letter of a very different tenor from the notes "light as air" which she was in the habit of writing to her Browny, hastened to express her fellow-feeling with her friends:—

"This moment, dear sir, I am informed of the heavy stroke you and Mrs. Chalmers have met with. I am not informed how, but that is no

matter. I thank God I can shed tears for the sorrows of others, though I cannot for my own. I should not say so, for to me it is a real grief to lose a youth of such promising hopes, uncommonly blest by nature and by fortune. I have wept for him. I do feel for Mrs. Chalmers—from my heart I feel. Was he too good, do you think, to be left to corrupt in this dissipated world? Is it a favour of Heaven to him, and a chastisement to us? I hope so; I believe so. He is gone uncontaminated to the God who made him: he had beauty, parts, and fortune enough to have made him fearfully corrupted. How happy is it for him that he is called home early, before his spirit was sullied by the contagion of the world! I write you my quickest apprehensions of comfort; there is, indeed, no other consolation. I heartily pity his sisters! Alas! how can trash compensate for the loss of a friend and a brother? While I write to you in the fulness of my heart the tear blinds me—one cannot see youth in its highest glory laid in the dust without a tear; but it is a tear of approbation, for he was a

youth of most promising hopes. My best respects to his grandmother and aunt. I do not wish them not to feel, but I hope Heaven will support them under so heavy a stroke. I am, dear Mr. Chalmers, your sincere friend and servant,—A. COCKBURN."

Mrs. Cockburn volunteers a very honest and decided opinion on the Wilkes tumults :—

"God pity the King and mend the people! which nothing will do but a plague, a famine, or a foreign war—and well licket; no fears but they get it; well do they deserve it. There will be no civil war because there is no real grievance, and, besides, there is neither a head nor a heart to begin it. There is not a spunk of enthusiasm of any kind left, and without that, mankind are mere eating and drinking machines, and can do neither good nor ill. See whether Prophet David or I prophesy truest.

"I'm of Junius's opinion about Wilkes: they have made a mountain out of a midge."

There is testimony borne to a more soothing

strain, which might have had old associations :—

"Of all the sounds I ever heard—and my soul has soared to heaven before now—of all the sounds I ever heard, Colonel Reed's flute—well, it is amazing the powers of it; it thrills to your very heart. He plays in any taste you please, and composes what he plays. You know my taste is the penseroso, and so it is his. He played me five acts of a tragedy that went to my heart, and I spoke in to myself all the words of it. I would not let him speak the epilogue. You must hear him, Sylph. O how I regretted your absence to-night! but here is a letter will bring harmony enough to you. My niece Clerk was so good as entertain me with Colonel Reed to-night. He is a gentle, melancholy, tall, well-bred, lean man; and for his flute, it speaks all languages; but those sounds that come from the heart to the heart—I never could have conceived it; it had a dying fall—I was afraid I could not bear it when I heard it perfectly. I can think of nothing but that flute, so good night, good Sylph.

"Love to the good man of the law and his good woman."

A matron's troubles, whether for her own troop of maidens, or (more disinterestedly) for the troops of her neighbours, seem to have been the same in all generations. It is probable that Valeria and Cornelia were mortally perplexed how to get their "young people" properly marshalled for the gladiators' shows.

"I think, my Browny, that I was bereft of all understanding to-day, and that all my senses descended to my heels, for I had a mind to have spoke to Mrs. Mure, that she and I should ask Mr. Keith as a guest on Tuesday, in the place of Lady Balcarres, to matronise and patronise his damsels and nieces. It will cost you but a walk to Hermytage with the proper dispatch, and you go as ambassador from us all to ask the honour of his company. I'm sure you will approve of this thought, and execute it properly. Tell Mrs. Chalmers if I were not a dissipated fellow like her gudeman I would have seen her. Adieu, Browni.

"Saturday, twelve at night.

"Is it not possible to get Tib Hall as a matron? See about that."

"Dear Browny,—I find Adam so ill colded he actually cannot venture out to-morrow, otherwise we would lose him on Tuesday. I foresee a famine of men, so get a supply. I also fear friend George is laid aside. Pray why is not Captain Mure with us? He's a hearty cock. There should be some lads for the misses, too. There's young Innergelly and Bangour, ready for all manner of sports. Anne Wauchope is to go with me and Culdares. Peter Murray is our gallant. Get men, my Browny—with all your getting, get men."

Mrs. Cockburn could pay pretty compliments, especially when her heart was softened by the prospect of absence. "The seas" which she was to cross, however, were, so far as her biographers can learn, no greater than that frith which rolled between the Loudons and Fife, between Castle Hill and Balcarres.

"Mrs. Cockburn presents her grateful acknow-

ledgments to Mr. Chalmers for all his favours. She has made it her boast that he is of all her lovers the best and greatest. No proof of love so agreeable as an attention to the taste and fancies of a female, even in trifles. It is no diminution to her vanity that she is only a sharer of universal good-will. She feels the warmth of the sun, tho' he shines on thousands. And now, sir, having wrote a very pretty card, will ye give my service to the gudewife, and blessing to miss? I shall soon cross the seas, and must take this way of bidding you a hearty farewell."

Here is a coquettish enigma :—

"Mrs. Cockburn hears that Mr. Chalmers is ill, and is sorry because—let him find out the because. She is not well neither, and that's a pity too—tho' she never is very sorry for herself—and yet she has great cause. She salutes the cheerful—find out who that is!—and she kisses the innocents."

"It was like Mrs. Cockburn not to know

that she was ill," one is inclined to say, in anticipation of the next of these letters.

"Alas! your spouse and me never met. The very day after your Miss Anne did me the pleasure to drink tea with me, Halbert Duff, who wanted to carry me west with him, found out I was in a fever. I had not the sense to find it out for myself, as I had been ill above a month, and much deprest in spirit. I took it to be the state of age approaching, and was setting my mind to receive its cold approaches. However, a fever commenced, with all the applications of bleeding and blistering; and I suppose it was worse than I apprehended, because Doctor Rutherfurd came always thrice a day. It confined me three weeks, and left me a very skeleton. I am still weak, and eat far too little, but am come out to fresh air, old friendship, perfect ease, regular hours, and good milk, in my friend's house, Ravelston. I came here on Tuesday, and began to recruit on the road. I exchanged a bow with your spouse, who was in a chaise."

As a convincing proof that she was recruit-

ing, she forthwith indulges in a vigorous diatribe against women remaining single, and smartly suggests a cure; while she philosophises on the folly of the evil in a spirit that ought to delight the heart of *Punch*, or of a true Saturday Reviewer:—

"I must find fault with all my countrywomen, who pay so bad a compliment to my favourite sex that none of them chooses the sacred hymeneal tie that can live independent of it. It's really very strange. I'm clear for burning Sir Charles Grandison by the hands of the hangman. The girls are all set agog seeking an ideal man, and will have none of God's corrupted creatures. I wonder why they wish for perfection; for my share I would none on't—it would ruin all my virtues and all my love. Where would be the pleasure of mutual forbearance, of mutual forgiveness? Even as a good housewife, I would choose my lord and master should have many faults, because there's so much glory in mending them. One is prouder of darning an old table-cloth than of sewing a new one."

Having sympathised with the gaieties and with the parliamentary news of Mr. Chalmers, who was in London; asked if he had heard of Lady Balcarres' adventures at the masquerade, as Mrs. Cockburn feared that "our Haining" (Alemoor?) would pay for his gambols; questioned the particulars of Colonel Stewart's India Bill; and forwarded a message to Mrs. Strange (the great engraver's wife), with much more, no wonder that Mrs. Cockburn should conclude thus:—

"I must go walk. I have disobeyed orders by writing so long a letter. They say I waste myself with writing, but I deny it, for I think less when I write than any other time."

Mrs. Cockburn did *not* waste herself with writing, so far as posterity can see. The succeeding letter has the same untranslatable mixture of high spirit and unselfish light-heartedness:—

"Heaven's best guardians attend my dear Browny. I am not very well, not very ill. If you can cure two-score and seventeen you may

do so, but I am indifferent; and sincerely rejoice that the wife of my Browny's bosom is preserved to him, and to me, and to all who love and value—I won't say what. You ask my commands. I order you bid Peggy Crawfurd court Adam Cockburn. I am far from certain that she would succeed, but it will be very honourable, and he will refuse her genteelly, or take her kindly and truly, sans jointures and all the et-cæteras of the present times. If you find time, a letter will really be a regale to

"Your friend, A. C.

"I am going to live."

"1772
1713
Substract,"

at the end of one of the letters, is supposed to point to her age.

Here is one of her quips, the play on the mere letter of scriptural words being so comically pat, that the liberty may be forgiven, even by those who object most strongly to "clerical jokes:"—

"Mrs. Cockburn presents her best respects

to Mrs. Chalmers, and demands an account of her spouse; hopes he is not killed by the multitude that he feeds—his hospitality will be his death; but then he cannot live without it, so it's all one. If the black silk glove hath appeared, let it be sent; and let me know how my open-hearted friend in the scarf does.

"It's the right hand; and the left never knows what it does."

As a well-bred, thrifty dame, Mrs. Cockburn enjoins economy, and makes no bones in giving the advice:—

"That fellow Kennedy, if he cast up to-morrow, he will save you a groat, and I hope we will all learn to save groats. I hate all expense, and hope to see people set their faces to saving, as I do. I wish you would begin to set the example."

The next letter contains one of the first hints—pathetic in its simple brevity—of the deep trouble which for eight years and more must have haunted and hung over this merry soul that bravely bore its own burden, and strove that the shadow should not darken other lives.

"It makes you happy to make others so. Here is the comedy which has been a blessing for amusement to me and mine on this cold, anxious night. I would fly from anxiety if I could, but it pursues me, and has done for twenty years. If Adam would give over coughing, I think I would be happy; but something else would come. Let us take what we get patiently: fretting is to no purpose. I think it is an excellent comedy. * * *

"Your woman, A. COCKBURN."

We have a good explanation of a good present:—

"Say what you please, no storm nor frost can cool your heart. You send a good heart-heater to me, troth, and never a word about it. I fancy it's so good you could not sleep in the house with it. If the snow pause, I am to ——— to-morrow. Send me one herring. Love to the wife; she's worth ten Mallys and Nancys, and so am I.

"As witness my hand, A. COCKBURN.

"I will have two herring, now I think on't."

She attends the Peers Assembly.

"I saw none but the sick and afflicted, till I at once broke out like a star in the Peers Assembly, when I walked in by myself at nine o'clock, and was so surrounded by men that I saw no women till near ten, and then was as much rejoiced over by the women. I could not tell to what sex I belonged that night, for till ten o'clock I had more men following me than women; and the women for that reason followed me too, though some I do think for my own sake, particularly Tibb Hall and Mary Pringle.

"'A vast exhibition of vanity,' say you, 'in this old lady.' Very true, reverend sir; and I shall be vain while I live of the attention and good-will of all my compatriots—ay, and try to keep it up as long as I live; for there is nothing so pleasant and wholesome to the human heart as to love and be loved."

Perhaps no letter in the whole packet afforded such perfect pleasure as that which is scrolled over with copies of the address, "Miss Anne

Chalmers," in pencilled characters half an inch in length, and with a quaint tree, carrying quainter birds—the abiding handiwork of warm, rosy little fingers, that in their turn grew stiff and feeble, and for half a century have been mouldering into dust.

"Mrs. Cockburn's affectionate compliments to Miss Anne Chalmers. She sends her, as she desired, a pock of stuff for her babie ; which, with her neatness and industry, she will find contains every kind of garment-stuff for a quilted coat, stockings, lace for caps, and fur for a cloak. Sorry she has nothing finer for Doll's sake, but prefers neatness in dress to finery, both in babies and ladies. She desires Miss Anne will present her kind service to her mother and Miss Katie."

The judge, Lord Alemoor (Andrew Pringle of Haining), uncle of her grand-nephew and niece, Mark and Anne Pringle of Crichton, was an old connection of Mrs. Cockburn's, and a friend for whom she had great respect and regard. An expedition in the old style, with Mr. and Mrs.

Chalmers, to Lord Alemoor's house of Hawkhill is thus recorded :—

"Dear Mr. Chalmers,—Can you take me down to Hawkhill between you to-day? If you can, send the chaise for me any hour you please, because I am not keen of walking the street.

"Yet yours, A. COCKBURN."

Lord Alemoor died in the succeeding year, 1776, at Hawkhill. How truly Mrs. Cockburn lamented him may be seen from these letters :—

"My dear Sir,—Violy (Lord Alemoor's sister) thanks you for your kind inquiry. She has never been out of bed since the fatal Sunday. She is, however, more composed than she was, though she can get no sleep. Anne Pringle and Mark are here. My hand cannot write right. We have lost all the joy of life—one with whom every thought was connected, either in joy or grief. Adieu, my dear sir. We salute Mrs. Chalmers."

"Sunday Evening, 6 o'clock, fourteen days and three hours since the death of Lord Alemoor.

"I thank you, dear sir, for your consolatory paper. It is well written. If it were worse, or

even indifferent, still I should be grateful for your friendly attention. I sent it to Miss Pringle, and will surely send it with this to Fairnlee.

"I am, sir, a veteran in sorrow. No human heart was ever more fortunate than mine in its warmest connections. The accidental friends of my youth (which can have no judgment for a proper election) have been what my most mature judgment would have gloried in acquiring, had the acquisition been to make. When you are told I survived my lover—my husband and guide of my youth—and after him the brother of my heart nearest in age to myself, you will think it a wonder I need consolation. My heart should be petrified or purified beyond the feelings of grief or any other passion. But I am not so constituted. God did not make me either a saint or a stone. In losing Lord Alemoor I have lost the friend and early companion of both these friends, and my greatest support under these losses. His superior understanding knew how to overawe, as well as his tenderness knew how to soothe, the passions.

He wished me to rely on his friendship, and I did so. I have no extravagant passions of grief to conquer. I saw and embraced his cold clay with the same feeling that I kneel before my God. I neither need reason nor religion to support this loss; both of them teach me what I have lost; the more I am mistress of my reason, the more I feel my worst. There lies by me a book which he commissioned, partly at my desire, and some transcripts of it in the reviews pleased him; it was the last book that was read to him, for that was the constant amusement in the sick bed. Half the first volume we heard read and observed upon. I have read the second; it is my only amusement; but when I come to anything that pleases me, how much do I feel! I remember every observation—not now, but twenty years back, for much his sisters and I had of that amusement with him. There was at Haining an old fir-tree I had known for forty years; it made the house smoke; it was cut down. I cried for *it;* one feels to lose an object they are accustomed *to*, even the old and useless. What is it, then, to lose a forty years'

friend, with all his great qualities fresh and entire! one on whose wisdom and counsel you could depend. Under the shadow of his wing you sat safe and sheltered from the storm. It appears to me as if heat, light, and air were taken from me. Indeed, his influence was great and beneficent; but I lose my own sorrows in that of his sisters.

"Next year is my grand climacteric, so it's probable the separation will not be long. He has left a brother worthy of being *his* brother in every word and action. He is what hearts could wish, but few could hope—a good symptom that an idea of virtue and worth still remains in this desolate, licentious age, where hardly any one that dies escapes being hawked through the streets in ridiculous elegies. Was this that when the funeral went up the Canongate it was lined with people in the attitude of sorrow, and not a word spoken, only deepest silence? You are too young, sir, yet to know what it is to part with the companions of your youth and the friends of your age; we *must* submit to it, as we must to death, however abhorrent to our

nature; and when we know that *must* is imposed upon us by the God who made and therefore loves us, we submit the better. Adieu! May you be as happy in your friends through life as I have been, whatever the partings cost you! I would rather be the friend of the deceased Lord Alemoor than Empress of Russia."

A year later comes once more "the season" in Edinburgh, with the old press of engagements and care for the enjoyment of others.

"You see Peter's answer. Our Jock will make one, so I fancy your number is complete. I hear Mrs. Horn is far from being well. Jenny Duff is feared she will not get leave to go. Could you procure me a concert-ticket for Miss Wauchope of Edmiston? She is a heartsome lass, and would do well on Saturday."

There is also a renewal of the old social gatherings, the inducements to attend which are sometimes so drolly and inimitably blended:—

"Will you step in here to-morrow night? There is a hen, veterans, and philosophers."

In 1779 there is a note which contains the last mention alike of Mrs. Cockburn's son and of Mrs. Chalmers:—

"Mrs. Cockburn's love to Mr. Chalmers. If he can bestow Tuesday evening on her and Adam, he will find something of the two-legged kind much to his taste. If sweet Anne Page come, so much the better. Compliments to the gudewife."

It is significant of Mrs. Cockburn's nature that there is, at this time, a blank of a whole year in her correspondence with Mr. Chalmers. It is probable that, during 1780, the year of Mrs. Cockburn's son's death, Mrs. Chalmers also died, as her name drops out of the correspondence from this date.

Adam Cockburn appears to have inherited his father's delicate constitution, and to have been in declining health for some time. We know nothing of him, except from loving side-

lights thrown on him in his mother's letters. But slight as these are, we get the idea of a character true-hearted and manly, as his mother's was open-hearted and womanly. According to the report of the day he was engaged in marriage to his cousin, Anne Pringle, who had been reared in a great measure by his mother, and who did credit to that rearing by her beauty, sweetness, and fidelity to the memory of Adam Cockburn, a faint fragrant tradition of all of which yet lingers in her and his mother's Forest. Failing health, slender incomes, and slowness of promotion may have delayed the cousins' marriage. Adam Cockburn died on the 22nd of August, 1780, having attained the rank of captain of a dragoon regiment.

In one of the lately-recovered letters of Mrs. Cockburn she thus refers to her son :—

"I am much pleased with my son's character, justly marked in one line—'endeared him to the few to whom he condescended to make himself known.' That is truly characteristic. He had a reserve that grieved me much, because

he could not communicate his griefs, and even tried to hide from me the pains of death."

In another letter, when alluding, as she often does, to the rarity with which she had shed tears for her own sorrows, she says that not even by the death-bed of her son could she find that relief, until she rose up to write to his intimate friend, and then the pent-up tears flowed in a torrent.

In her will, when bequeathing a remembrance of her to Sir Walter Scott's father, she refers particularly to the kindness which she had received from him and his wife at the time of her great sorrow. The greatness of that sorrow is illustrated by Mrs. Cockburn's reflections, many years afterwards, on another poor woman's trial, and by the wise, tender advice offered to the sufferer.

"I feel much for the distress of that excellent young woman. I have drunk of the waters of affliction. . . . . . Should she lose her husband or another child, she would recover; we need corrosives often. In the mean-

time, if she could accept personal severity it would do well;—ride in rain, wind, and storm till she's fatigued to death, and spin on a great wheel, and never sit down till weariness of nature makes her. I do assure you I have gone through all these exercises, and have reason to bless God my reason was preserved, and health now, more than belongs to my age."

If Mr. Chalmers lost his wife the same year that Mrs. Cockburn lost her son, the common ordeal of sorrow, of which one of them never wrote a word in the correspondence between the friends, must have served to draw the two closer together.

Mrs. Cockburn's first letter in the year following that of her son's death tells its own tale. The irrepressible humour of the writer glints through the weariness and the scar over the wound in the anguish of which she had been dumb:—

"I took an airing for my health lately, and came in so sick. I dined on valerian and snake-wort, a drug I heartily abhor. I intended that

day to dine with you, as I know your viands are always tempting, and I wish to be tempted —tempted; but Satan would not let me come, but confined me to my couch. Now, sirs, I beg pardon for being old and weak, for upon my honour I cannot help it. I love my friends, if possible, more than ever; but *you see* I must lie horizontal ways. I cannot eat. This season puts me in mind of what Swift says to Stella:—

> "So little gets for what she gives,
> We really wonder how she lives."

I declare I am so weak I can hardly walk; meantime, I cannot for the soul of me get my soul at rest. I must know how you are; send Anne to tell me. It's a little angelick figure that makes me think of those I am going to. Adieu, my dear friends. I imagine I may write after I am dead."

This is the burden of a few more tired, clinging, tremulously gay letters:—

"I wish Anne and you would invite yourselves some night to toddy and supper. I could

easily get more hands, but I have no strength for fabricating an invited supper. Yours, Saturday, Sunday, and all,—A. COCKBURN."

"Let me know how the child is to-night. Yours,—A. C."

"My friend, Sir Hew Dalrymple, is very ill; I expect the worst. Well, he has enjoyed the best of his palace, *the project* and *the prospect.* What are all our enjoyments of life but these two words? I shall outlive all my early friends. Thank God, I can adopt young ones with pleasure. Suff is fond of Anne—sees nothing like her."

In 1783 something of the old flow of spirits reappears in the offer of a treat no longer craved:—

"Mrs. Cockburn puts Mr. Chalmers and Miss Anne in mind that unpareleled brose is ready for them on Monday, 3rd, in the mansion of their friend,—A. COCKBURN.

"Cannot spell unparaleled."

The ungrumbling, ungrudging sweetness of

the next letters rises to nobility: it is a sight worth stopping to look at. With inexhaustible and tender sympathy, the old bereaved woman of seventy-five enters into the joys of others which she can no longer hope to share; only alluding to her own sorrows by incidental and innocent little touches, that, in their very unselfishness, go straight to hearts which bitter outcries and morose gloom would have repelled.

"I have not broke cover these three weeks; even in a chair been coughing with the utmost vigour. If I live till April I may be able to see you—indeed, I am growing very frail. You are well off that has such a companion as my sweet Anne Page. My Anne Pr[ingle] was at the Archers' last night, where was six set (my fair American came here at eleven to supper, and was in fine spirits with a country bumpkin)—people all merry, and men, women, and matrons danced. I love to hear of it—it's like the days of my zenith and health. Peace be restored to us, Amen! Love to my sweet Anne. Thanks for the crocus dish."

"I have received all your kind remembrances

of my good friend, both just before you went and this morning, by a salt-wife—a basket full of the cleverest, living, crawling creatures ever I saw—crabs, I believe, but yet when they are boiled they are like chicken lobsters; also three fine small trout—they look like river trout, but we shall see. I'm sorry and angry at your attempting to cast your cowl: mind not to be so young again. Now for news. I had a letter from Mark Pringle, where he says, 'The parties themselves being hurried, requested me to inform you that Mr. Shaw and Mrs. Menzies joined hands Thursday, in St. Martin's Church, in presence of your humble servant—who acted as father and gave the lady away—Lady Townsend, Miss Townsend, and Miss Montgomery. They set out immediately for Plymouth, 30th April.' Now, how to send this to you is the question. I fancy the post-office is surest; so, with my love to the lassies, and thanks for all your good things, I am, dear Browny, yours,

"A. COCKBURN.

"Me come! Alas! alas! long since I was in a coach."

"Thank you, my good friend, for not playing me a trick most of my best friends have done—to walk before me, though I am entitled to take the door by many years' seniority. I began to think you were worse, and had given orders to call when yours arrived. Happy that I did not hear of doctors, et-cætera, which would have done me ill, and you no good. I am so desponding now, I never believe anybody can recover, so nobody tells me of such friends, so thanks for dry and sappy. Now keep well, and oblige your friend,—A. C.

"As for me, I sit in my black chair, weak, old, and contented."

"Though my body is not portable, I visit you in my prayers and in my cups."

"It's difficult for me to inquire after my good friends, having lost my fleet page, Jenny. Sorry was I to hear you was confined by rheumatiz. I hope you are better. You would be sadly missed by your Christmas friends; for me, all seasons and their change is the same. I wear the same infirm carcass, and submit to its infirmity as cheerfully as I can. My love to the two

dears—may they have health, mirth, and lovers in plenty; and may you get whatever your heart desires, if it is good for you, prays your affectionate friend, A. COCKBURN."

With more deliberation and earnestness she records to Dr. Douglas:—

"Now I feel all the blessings of old age, and thank my Creator and Preserver that He did not hear my prayer for death when my mind was in a tumult of passion and despair. I now seem to myself to be seated on a height under a serene sky, looking back on the tempest I have escaped, and thankful to my Preserver for allowing me ease, eyesight, and a capacity to be amused with kind friends, and a heart grateful and cheered by their kindness. No anxious cares for futurity, no desires for what is out of my power, a wish to make everybody as happy as I can, or at least less miserable, a violent desire to be more devout than I am. I pray to be so; for God himself can only infuse the love of himself into the human soul, and, waiting patiently, I answer

myself, 'You are seeking pleasure here that belongs to a future world.' Am I right?"

"All the world are feasting, and I cannot get a man to eat a turkey with me to-day, and I think a female feast but flat; however, we must take what we can get."

Here is what may prove a valuable piece of information regarding an old beverage:—

"The balm will not be ready for brewing till July, for it does not grow yellow till then."

Next follows Mrs. Cockburn's description of the result of a fashion with the revival of which we are every now and then threatened:—

"Do you know, I did not remember Kate t'other day. I fancied her a Balcarres bairn—the nasty powder which spoils her fine hair disguised her."

The announcement of a batch of marriages does not omit the opposite side of the question, socially and morally:—

"Robie Anderson is to be married to Lady

Anne Charteris; Macdowel of Logan to Lucy Johnstone. Ante-marriages—a young knight about a year married has left his wife, as she is a devil and he cannot live in peace; Lewis of France has sent his wife to meditate in the country. You'll see a man here burned his wife just for a Sunday's amusement."

Here are miscellaneous extracts:—

"My heart and my taste in eating would soon carry me to a fish-dinner with you; the spirit is willing, the body is unfit for any sort of motion. . . . . I return the basket, full of thanks for fine trouts; they came just in time for supper, and feasted Colonel Lyon, Peter Inglis, Muir, and me. This town affords nothing but perpetual herring."

"I wish you would send me a pen, for really I cannot write for want; I sent a dozen and a half to a lady in your name. I have a receipt for toothache, cured a lady subject to it, and now has not had it for twenty years. Shall I send it to you? In haste,—SANS PEN."

"I own the temptation of my dear Mrs.

Mackay is great—I do not need any to come to you; but I am incapable of sitting on any chair: I have also lost all my teeth, and I cannot yet submit to let my joes see me so disfigured. You send me palatable meat that my tongue can masticate—that's right. When will we drop this clay tenement we pay so dear a rent for? When shall we meet in a better?—Yours, both here and there."

Is this saying of Lord Kaimes preserved? "Lord Kaimes is writing yet anecdotes of his life.; he is also sitting to a statuary for his statue in marble. . . . . Somebody rejoiced to see him so cleverly employed. "What," says he, "should I sit with my finger in my cheek waiting till death take me?"

Mrs. Cockburn herself tells us the original of a toast which she had once composed—the same Sir Walter Scott erroneously applied to his father, unless, indeed, Mrs. Cockburn may have let fly her shaft with a double aim :—

"You know my earliest and much-loved friend, Mr. Swinton, has gone to heaven—as twenty-

six years since I made a toast to him, which may be his epitaph:—

> "To the friend of affliction, the soul of affection,
> Who may hear the last trump without fear of detection"

The winters were hard on the cheerful old woman.

"Do ye stand the storm? I lie it—my legs are of little use."

"I hardly knew I existed all last week, except by the exertion of coughing and blowing my nose. Now a blink of the sun has brought me alive again, like a fly; so I will send some black lines to you to ask how you do, and if you have got any new regimen from your London doctor, and what effect. This should be a gay week in Edinburgh, but I see and hear of nothing but rain. Oh yes! I have heard of two marriages, both to widowers; they must be true, because nobody could have invented them. . . . . I am as I told you; but, dead or alive, yours and the bairns',—A. COCKBURN."

"I hope you divert yourself with novels. I

have read out one library and begun another. Have you read ——'s 'Religious Opinions'? I recommend it, though his name is recommendation sufficient.

"I think it is winter already, for I am old and cold."

Dating according to New Style was a change of fashion introduced into Scotland in Mrs. Cockburn's day; hence this joke:—

"I enter my sixteenth year on the 8th October. A pretty miss!"

She writes of her birthday again:—

"I was once born in September, but now it's in October."

In age and weakness her sympathies were wide as ever. She writes:—

"It's a solitary life now. Selkirk Ball was yesterday; Lady Napier, Queen. . . . . I have thirteen sheets from Plymouth, with a full description of the royal, grand gala. O happy king! Poor Lewis!"

"This comes by a young man that wishes much to be employed in some stirring business in the excise or customs. If you will speak to him he will explain what he wishes and what he can do. He is an honest, clever lad; his name Sandy ——, born in the Isle of Skye."

Besides the toasts for which Mrs. Cockburn had a great reputation, here is an allusion to another old pastime—that of writing character, in which she had also dabbled like a busy woman:—

"If ye promise to return it, I will send you the characters of two ladies, writ forty years ago by a gentleman you know. Send your man on Sunday for it.

"To satisfy your curiosity, the writer of the characters was Monboddo. Delia is Lady Dalrymple Cranstoun, of merry memory; and Sophonie was her intimate friend, Mrs. P. Cockburn. You see it is rather a panegyrick than a character. . . . . If you like the Ossian poetry, I have found something of my own written in that

style. But, oh dear! this, my last and only pen, says, I am yours sincerely, A. C."

"Sorry I am you still suffer; these eastern breezes suit me very ill too. I feel every weak part—I feel I have a neck, an arm, a shoulder; and I don't want to feel any of them."

But, in spite of these eastern breezes, Mrs. Cockburn narrates the visit of an old friend with all her old sprightliness :—

"I had the joy of seeing Sir Robert Keith the very day he dined with you. He is ten year younger since I saw him, which is twelve years ago. Bless us! how we talked!—in short, we could not get speech for speaking. I intended he should take your Anne and my Anne to Vienna; but behold, he's off without either! My Anne thought fit, for love of him, to take the blybs: it's better it struck out on the skin, so it was but skin deep. . . . . I have dined four days abroad within these two weeks, which is wonderful. There has been a universal flitting among my people. Your lover, Lady Fair, has come down a storey."

This is not a bad turning off of her infirmities by a fine lady hard upon eighty:—

"I certainly did not get that billet-doux ye mention, as I am commonly ready with my pen. It's true I have been engaged for a week with so ardent a lover that I could not escape from his embrace. These Spaniards! His name is Don Sorebonia Rheumatica. He took my pen-hand so hard a gripe he would not let it move;—jealousy, I suppose; fear I should write to other lovers. . . . . My salt has lost its savour, but love is yours.—A. C."

Nor is this:—

"It was fortunate that I was asleep t'other morning, else I might have lost my reputation; for I certainly would have received you *à couchée,* as I believe my nightcap was clean. Had it been otherwise, I am too much of a coquette to have appeared."

"Doctor ——— said, and it's true—'None but fools or beggars can starve of cold.' To show I'm none of these, I'm clad this moment, and always am, in a scarlet flannel short gown

over all my clothes. Some of my lovers allege it is coquetry, I look so handsome in it, but I'm warm. . . . . "It is not my maxim but my nature to write what I think, and never to think what I write."

There are lively comments on the excitement caused by Mrs. Siddons's visit to Edinburgh. In unusually hot May weather, the doors of the theatre were besieged from eleven o'clock forenoon till five afternoon, and there were more than two thousand applications for six hundred places. The very debates of the General Assembly, then sitting, were interrupted, in order that preachers might hear the great mistress of eloquence.

Mrs. Cockburn could no longer mingle in such a throng, but she could hear of it with the greatest interest, and be entertained by its *contretemps*, as this letter testifies :—

"She (Mrs. Siddons) has occasioned much mischief—broken heads, broken shins, of which Mr. Pringle is one; but he has made his sister famous for strength. When she saw him fallen

she lifted him up as he had been a pussie, and neglected to accept Duke Roxburgh's hand, which he offered to hand her out of the fray. I hear one man has got five challenges."

"I am in high provocation with the gay world. One would think the very mention of a Christian duty scares them from their pleasures. Nobody of fashion would attend Mrs. Siddons, because she acted for charity; and Paul might have preached for the Orphan Hospital—he would have had as thin an audience as Mr. Hill, who is next best to Paul. What can be the reason, think ye? Should not our magistrates have gone in a body to the workhouse? Pray are they a terror to evil-doers and a praise to them that do well? I dined yesterday with Lady Fair, Lady Don, Miss Murray, and Don Mark. I got a fine sleep after the fatigue of her stair. The influenza has come here. The treasurer has had it, but is so well again as to go to dinner yesterday where Mrs. Siddons is to be till Glasgow theatre open. Our lawyers have presented her with a grand tea-tray with a fine inscription.

Her curtsey of leave brought the tears into every eye. She needs no words: she can speak with every gesture, every motion."

Here are more free selections:—

"I was thinking of you in my bed, and saying to myself, 'I use my friend as we all do our Maker—forget him, unless we receive something uncommon from him.'"

"I owe my good friend and kind purveyor a vote of thanks for his kind card and fine trout; also for the sight of a rarity—a creel-wife that would not take a dram."

"I would not write my thanks so soon, but that I imagine Lady Fair is cheated of her pears. You said in your note to me, 'Compliments to Lady Fair, with a few pears.' I emptied my basket, and thought the man had gone in with hers; but they never arrived. *N'importe*, she shares with me. It was not the sober man who won't take a dram and has an eye."

"Have none of you got the Effie Lindsay yet? Neither has your obliged A. COCKBURN."

"I will make no apology—not *I*. I might as well beg a milliner's pardon for bidding her make me a cap. But to my story. One of the under-officers of my household, commonly called the water-wife, being often in a state of intoxication, I had again and again ordered her dismission, but found I had as little power in giving or retaining officers as the King of Britain, unless my Premier chose it. I then inquired what extraordinary merits she had to counterbalance her enormities, and was informed a little ragged child, who gets our sour milk, and whom I always supposed to be her own bastard she bore nine years ago, was only a foundling which the parish had given her to suckle (her own child having died), and that she had maintained the child ever since, getting nothing from the Kirk-session but her nurse-fee. I own this made a full excuse for all her sins. I have got the little creature some clean clothes, and find her the cleverest errand-goer I ever saw, and most distinct at a long message, and as literal as Homer's messengers. I also find a little deranged sister of the water-

carrier's has taught her the Catechism, and learned her to read. Now comes my use for you. Mrs. Douglas's uncle, Mr. Tod, is Father to the Orphan Hospital; and by the account I hear of that house, I think if our young ladies were educated there instead of boarding-schools, it would make a general reform of manners. Now, if this poor child grew up under the wings of the water-wife! Alas! she has fine black eyes. In short, I have set my heart on preserving her from my friend; so, if you will petition Mr. Tod, you will greatly oblige me, and secondly, do a real act of charity. Her name is Christie Fletcher, for she was found in a stair of Fletcher's Land. I congratulate you on getting my niece, Mrs. Sands, for a neighbour. You will find her a well-bred, entertaining woman, and him a plain, worthy man.

"I have no more time. Consider now what has been said, and lay it to heart. Amen."

Here we have a shrewd definition :—

"I know not what to say about our poor king.

The prince feels he is a son. Yorke is a two-legged animal."

Again news of marriages,—the first two contemplated under exceptional circumstances:—

"I have a long letter just now from Anne Keith. All doing well with Lord Bal. He is so keen of his brother's wedding, he has made a point of Lady Dick (the bride's mother) coming over and having the marriage performed at his bedside. They are to humour him."

"What think ye of Andrew Stewart's wedding? Threescore is a reasonable age.

"Yea, Stewart gave his brother £10,000 on the wedding-day. Glad the excellent Dempster can dance yet. I had the mind to dance an election minuet for him at St. Andrew's with a candle-maker."

"What think ye of cousin Mackay's wedding? She has strange luck to Highlanders. God bless you! Amen.

"Perhaps you have not heard of her wedding, so I will tell you. She was married Thursday morning in the Abbey to Mr. Farquhar-

son, of Invercauld, and went away with him directly."

The author of "Auld Robin Gray" was known from childhood to Mrs. Cockburn, who could hardly fail to be acquainted with the fact of the authorship; but Lady Anne Lindsay swore her friends to secrecy, and there is no allusion to the ballad in the personal description of the writer, even at a time when in the world of fashion the "Werther hat" had given place to the "Robin Gray hat."

"I had a visit yesterday from the Dowager Lady Balcarres and her two fair daughters, Lady Anne and Lady Margaret, who, I assure you, are so far from being the worse of the wearing that they are handsomer than ever. Lady Anne is grown not jolly, but plump, which has greatly improved her looks."

Mrs. Cockburn had still a few old friends to lose and to mourn for. This friend's death she had foreboded :—

"My old friend Sir Hew Dalrymple is going fast. I fancy Mrs. Dalrymple and the children should have been in last week for the High School. By their not coming I reckon he is worse."

"How are you, my friend? I should have thanked you before now for goodies, but really both my mentals and corporals were frost-bound. My earliest companion and constant friend he was, Sir Hew Dalrymple, died Tuesday last."

"This minute my young favourite has been with me. His grandfather's corpse will not come till Tuesday se'nnight. It's ten days yesterday since he died. None of us can tell the reason of the delay. Hew has just read me the chapter he wishes for the funeral sermon—thirteenth chapter, First Corinthians. He says all his failings proceeded from charity. What a noble boy he is!"

"My fingers and my fancy are frozen, but my heart is warmly yours.—A. C.

"My old friend is to be buried to-morrow."

The old lady was delighted with "Burke on

the French Revolution," and it provoked some sparks of her former vivacity:—

"What are the natural rights of man?
To oppress the weak, take all they can.
What are the natural rights of woman?
If she does not like her spouse, to take another man.
From natural rights, from liberty,
Good Lord deliver me! Amen.

"I am quite in love with Burke. Who would have thought it? My mind agrees in every sentiment he utters. Such a book has not appeared for a century."

This is probably Mrs. Cockburn's last poetical epistle:—

"While time runs on, and years are flying,
True affection's never dying;
Its proofs are annuals strong and clear,
Which I receive from Chalmers dear.
Dull thanks in prose I would not send,
And said, 'Dear Muse, now pray attend.'
She came, but with her came a blast,
So white, so strong, she would not stay,
And bid me say 'Good day, good day.'"

"Health, love, and peace be with my earliest friend and his most excellent nymphs this and

every year of their lives. Thanks for all your good gifts, especially the capacious Dutchman. It is the first goody I ever appropriated to my sole use. No, I indulged Lady Fair in a dram of it; but never told the giver, for fear of jealousy. . . . . This is my first penmanship of the year, from your sincere friend, on her own bed, her own back, writ with her own hand; so witness my mark, A. C."

Mrs. Cockburn writes again:—

"Always willing to contribute to the ease and pleasure of others, why should you suffer pain? I wish I could transfer it to some who never feel but for themselves. But we are assured from good authority chastisement is a proof of the love of our heavenly Parent. Who, then, would not kiss the rod?"

"Are you not starved? I imagine this winter will congeal my blood; and so adieu to my good friend, but not for ever—no, no."

"May you be ever free from pain and salt-pans! Amen."

"It is long since I heard of or from my dear

friend. I fear you are in distress. Do let somebody tell me about you. I hope the dear wenches are well. I expected Mark and Anne all the week, and delayed writing till Anne should see you, but they are not arrived. . . . . I am, with my blessing to you and the bairns, your deaf, blind, lame, sincere friend, A. COCKBURN."

Yet the kindly old woman took pains to write "to Anne, my friend," such good advice as the following :—

"I greatly disapprove of the licentiousness of publishing living characters. Satire, no doubt, is one weapon to scourge vice and folly; but it rather hinders than mends when roughly handled. . . . . A delicate music does more good to the human mind than any satire. Two lines have often made me assume a cheerful air when I was sad at heart :—

> 'What a beautiful creature 's a woman of reason,
> Never grave out of pride, never gay out of season!'

"Never read bad characters, my dear Anne."

After penmanship had become a task to her, Mrs. Cockburn could, for the gratification of a young girl's curiosity, laboriously take down "the list of Selkirk Ball, which turned out very heartsome." Then come two long columns of ladies and gentlemen, with the summing-up,—"Everybody danced with everybody,"—and the careful chronicling of a class of sovereigns who have long been deposed:—"Whytebank and Miss Elliot, King and Queen. Mrs. Mackay, Queen-elect for next ball; Mr. Ogilvy (the nabob), King."

Here is a treat Mrs. Cockburn is still able to enjoy; and what she can enjoy, she enjoys to the last:—

"I was yesterday on a grand expedition—went with Violy Pringle and Lady Fair in a carriage to see Raeburn's pictures. Wonderful was the sights!—I saw 'Edinburgh going out of Town;' the 'Tron Kirk,' my delight; 'View of the South Bridge, College,' &c. As for Raeburn, nothing can equal that picture of 'Sir John and Lady Clerk.' Lady Arniston looked so glad to see me, I had almost kissed her. Tib

Hall—her very self. After all this, I dined with Lady Don: a farewell dinner to our dear American family, who sail to-morrow. God grant a safe voyage! What a charge for a mother—five fine creatures! No, no, for all your questions. Lady Fair and all the Pringles well. Mark arrived at eleven last night. I have not yet seen him, as it is only eleven o'clock. I must go back to Raeburn. There is John Macgowan in high beauty; he's very nicely drest; he really makes as good a figure as any in the room. I wish I saw you and your two nymphs on one canvas; you sitting, Kate giving you tea or wine, Anne at the harpsichord. I am sorry you still feel you have a jawbone. My tongue has done a great deal of business, for at last it has pushed out two teeth that were very fashious. My blessing to the misses, and believe me, though sans teeth, never sans love to you, while A. COCKBURN."

This birthday, with its appropriate feast, was very nearly the last:—

"A liberal heart deviseth liberal things; yet

you did not know what you sent will grace my birthday—the first I have kept at home. Good Lady Fair made me keep it with her for twenty-five years, and she insists on me giving her a dinner that day. I have not been down my stair since that day twelvemonths. More venerable than me? That's impossible. I set down my years to sum them up, and see:—

A Virgin	17
A Wife . .	22
A Mother . . .	49
A Widow	39
	127

A goodly sum! and really, to be a woman of a hundred and twenty-seven, I write tolerable, though I can hardly read it myself. . . . Would I had the power to remove pain! No; bodily evil is soul's physick. Our Master knows best. I hope we will not need the grace of patience in the other world—much needed here."

"The note that brought the goodies said she would call next day, so I wrote the enclosed. She got the basket. You certainly mistook—you said you had sent a little bottle,

instead of which it was the widow's cruse. The people drank Mr. Chalmers, and the health of the day (being my birthday), out of it. The cruse was remarkable. It's a pity woman does not mend with age, as wine does. Shall I tell you my company? First, your lover, our Lady Fair, with her miss; secondly, niece Simpson and her miss; Suff Johnstone and me made a woman; Colonel Lyon, nephew Peter Inglis, and the Laird of Dunnottar. Pity society should fatigue. I enjoyed my friends, for spirit was willing—flesh weak indeed.—Yours sincerely, A. C."

So the curtain falls on a wonderful glimpse of the old life of Crighton Street and Castle Hill, with its sunny foreground and dark background—the latter "the soul's physick," as its bright old heroine wrote, to prevent the former becoming a hard, cold glare.

In Alison Cockburn's long career—which was long enough to make her a connecting-link between the Edinburgh of Allan Ramsay and Burns, and the Edinburgh of Scott—her house

was the rallying-ground, while she was herself a queen, of the literati of Edinburgh.

In a letter dated 1786 Mrs. Cockburn writes:—

"The town is at present agog with the ploughman poet, who receives adulation with native dignity, and is the very figure of his profession, strong and coarse, but has a most enthusiastic heart of love. He has seen Duchess Gordon and all the gay world: his favourite for looks and manners is Bess Burnet—no bad judge, indeed."

In another letter:—

"Sorry I am my poems are not returned from niece Scott, though she promised them this week. I would have been glad to oblige Miss Douglas with them. The one I admire most is the 'Cottar's Saturday Night.' The man will be spoiled, if he can spoil; but he keeps his simple manners, and is quite sober. No doubt he will be at the Hunters' Ball to-morrow, which has made all women and milliners mad. Not a gauze-cap under two guineas—many ten, twelve, &c."

In a third letter she asks :—

"Are you fond of poetry? Do you know Burns? I am to get a very pretty little thing he calls 'The Rosebud.' Maybe I'll send it next week. I wish I could write a ballad called 'The Forest Restored!'"

This curious reminiscence of Sir Walter Scott's youth has been already published in Lockhart's "Life of Scott:"—

"I last night supped in Mr. Walter Scott's. He has the most extraordinary genius of a boy I ever saw. He was reading a poem to his mother when I went in. I made him read on; it was a description of a shipwreck. His passion rose with the storm; he lifted up his eyes and hands. 'There's the mast gone,' says he; 'crash it goes: they will all perish!' After his agitation he turns to me. 'That is too melancholy,' says he; 'I had better read you somewhat more amusing.' I preferred a little chat, and asked his opinion of Milton and other books he was reading, which he gave me wonderfully indeed. One of his observations was,

'How strange it was that Adam, just new come into the world, should know everything. That must be the poet's fancy,' says he. But when told he was created perfect by God himself, he instantly yielded. When he was taken to bed last night he told his aunt he liked that lady. 'What lady?' says she. 'Why, Mrs. Cockburn; for I think she's a *virtuoso* like myself.' 'Dear Walter,' says his aunt, 'what is a *virtuoso?*' 'Don't you know? Why, it's one who will know everything.' Now, sir, you will think this a very silly story. Pray what age do you suppose that boy to be? Name it now before I tell you. 'Why, twelve or fourteen.' No such thing; he is not quite six, and he has a lame leg, for which he was a year at Bath, and has acquired the perfect English accent, which he has not lost since he came, and he reads like a Garrick. You will allow this an uncommon exotic."

Mrs. Cockburn, with her wise economy and simplicity, was by all her antecedents and proclivities an aristocrat. More than forty years a widow, she lived to see the dying out of the City

Guard and the Caddies, and the taking away of the Luckenbooths. She saw the Burgh Moor built upon for half a mile in the line of Princes Street. During that memorable period, the parlour in Castle Hill or in Crighton Street —with chairs worked in faded tent-stitch, Queen Anne's china, and tabby cat—beheld the cream of Edinburgh society for two generations: not only the *élite* of rank, but of what Lord Kelly, in his vile pun, called the "eaterati." Among Mrs. Cockburn's constant visitors were Mrs. Murray Keith (old Lord Balcarres' Dr. Anne Keith, and Sir Walter Scott's Mrs. Bethune Baliol), the Dowager Countess Anne of Balcarres, with her famous daughter, Lady Anne Lindsay, Mackenzie, Robertson, Hume, and Home, down to young Walter Scott, and very possibly his lively friends—brother advocates and volunteers—Kirkpatrick Sharp, Erskine, and Cranstoun, with their piquante and friendly sisters, Mary Anne Erskine, afterwards Mrs. Campbell Colquhoun of Clathick, and Jane Anne Cranstoun, Basil Hall's Countess of Purgstall.

In the winter of 1756, six or seven years before

the date of the earliest of those letters of hers which have been recovered, Mrs. Cockburn was no doubt an eager and interested supporter of the tragedy written by the Scotch minister, acted in an Edinburgh theatre for many nights, and attended by a portion of his clerical brethren; and it is more than probable she was interested in the contests which arose in consequence of it in the Kirk Courts. Doubtless Mrs. Cockburn shared the zeal of Mrs. Betty Fletcher, daughter of Lord Milton of Brunstane, who, by her interest with my lord her father, and with Archibald, Duke of Argyll, helped to prevent John Home of Athelstaneford and "Jupiter" Carlyle of Inveresk, his friend, from being expelled from the Kirk as two of its most degenerate sons.

In the autumn of 1773, in the course of her hail of notes to Mr. Chalmers, although not noticed in them, Alison Cockburn had the best chance of paying her duty to the mighty bear and lexicographer who arrived on the 14th of the previous August at the White Horse Inn, and took the famous night walk up

the unsavoury High Street, arm-in-arm with Mr. Boswell, to Mr. Boswell's house in James's Court. Neither would she have got a rebuff for her pains, because the great, good, uncivil Tory Doctor kept a soft spot in his heart for a fine woman of quality. Among the illustrious seven houses which the proud biographer carefully reckoned up as those that Dr. Johnson honoured with his company at dinner were the houses of Sir Alexander Dick and Lady Colville — an Erskine of Kelly, and an old, intimate neighbour of the Balcarres family. At one or other of these dinners Lady Anne Lindsay made the acquaintance of Dr. Johnson, and so in all likelihood did Mrs. Cockburn.

As years waned, Alison Cockburn tied a lace hood over her undimmed auburn toupee, wrapped a shawl round her shoulders, with their puffed-out Queen Bess sleeves, and exchanged her fan for her snuff-box—very probably with her son Adam's portrait inside the lid ; but her cheery gift of humour flourished unabated. No calamity could permanently crush, still less sour her. Sir Walter Scott knew her in her

great age, and he spoke of her mental power and spirit as something almost miraculous. He makes special mention of her *petits soupers* in Crighton Street, where wit and genius met their match, and thought themselves well entertained by—

"Three nothings on three plates of delf,"

according to the hostess's apt quotation, when the nothings were seasoned with the charm of her manner and conversation.

Incidentally, Sir Walter, while writing to Lady Anne Barnard, recalls the ludicrous traits of a common friend—Suff Johnstone—and gives a specimen of the freedom as well as the grace of these old social gatherings.

One evening all the set were at Mrs. Cockburn's in Crighton Street, and with the Scotts and the Lindsays was their eccentric ally, Miss Suff, who, before women's rights were mooted, took the law into her own hand, and wore a man's great-coat, hat, and square-buckled shoes; practising, along with the habiliments, a man's habit of striding, spitting, and swearing. She shod a horse better than a smith,

played on a fiddle, and sang a man's song in a man's bass voice.

Gentle young Anne Scott's feet happening to tread upon the space appropriated by the Amazon, Anne was punished by a rough kick on the shins, and the fierce challenge, "What are ye wab-wabstering there for?" The innocent offender was overwhelmed, and the rest of the party electrified.

Both Sir Walter and Lady Anne bear emphatic testimony to Mrs. Cockburn's goodness; and her letters speak for themselves. She had truth, generosity, and tenderness, without which no very great personal influence can ever be attained; qualities which shed radiance over the corresponding reign of two still better known leaders of society—Mrs. Delany and Madame de Sévigné.

As a consequence of the old game of writing characters, we have two characters of Mrs. Cockburn—the one written by herself, the other a merrily impudent parody upon the first, written by her friend, Andrew Pringle of Haining, Lord Alemoor. These characters are not very

reliable sources of information, as the writer is only half in earnest, and writes chiefly for the purpose of displaying ingenuity in fitting into each other a bundle of paradoxes.

According to the lady's character of herself, she is a sentimental, high-flown woman, not so much unreasonable as impulsive, with an idle susceptibility to pity, but with no abiding sense of her obligations to her neighbours. She is haughty, but not sensitive; sufficiently ashamed of herself to tempt her to be a hypocrite; while at the same time she is an incorrigible, although not a hardened, sinner. The sentence which follows, and which is the last, appears fabricated in order to play with fire—and David Hume—in the approved fashion of the wittily irreverent beaux and belles of the eighteenth century. It introduces the great argument of the day, and, by an epigrammatic contrast, pits the authority of a cynically honest and philosophic history against the inspiration of the Bible, in which Mrs. Cockburn was a sincere believer. The character winds up with the sufficiently gloomy moral reflection, "If I am

never to be better and happier than I am, I had better never have been born."

Andrew Pringle, the best speaker at the Scotch bar in his day, in a mockingly mischievous travesty of Alison Cockburn's words, reverses the original. He prefers contrary charges of inconstancy, arrogance, self-conceit, hard-heartedness, caprice, wilfulness, contumaciousness, and deceit. He follows her lead in lugging in the Bible and David Hume, but gives as an explanation of her conduct that Alison Cockburn will not renounce her errors, and yet will not consent to scepticism, "as I can neither be better nor happier than I am." Without the key which Mrs. Cockburn's letters supply to the close connection and cordial intimacy between the couple, it might have been possible to attribute any amount of malice to Lord Alemoor in this sarcasm, in place of the privileged impertinence of one who was well-nigh a brother.

Alison Cockburn died in her house in Crighton Street, on the 22nd of November, 1794, aged eighty-two. She had survived her young lover,

John Aikman, sixty-three years, her husband forty-one years, and her son fourteen years. It is pleasant to think that she had still her grand-nephew and niece, Mark and Anne Pringle, her Browny and his daughters, with Miss Violy, Lord Alemoor's sister, to watch by her death-bed and close her eyes. In her will, made several years before her death, she disposed of the bulk of her property, which was not much more than three thousand pounds, dividing it chiefly between her niece Simpson and her niece Anne Pringle, who should have been her daughter. She left many friendly little bequests, and in expressing her wishes she alluded more than once to her son. She desired locks of her hair to be enclosed in two rings for her "earliest and most constant and affectionate friends, Mrs. Keith of Ravelston, and her brother, William Swinton" (the latter of whom had predeceased Mrs. Cockburn); and she did not forget her cat. She gave directions for her funeral, and referred to her epitaph, which she seems to have written, as she did her character, but it has not been preserved. She was buried beside her son—the

tombstone over the grave bearing no other inscription than their names and the dates of their death.

Old ladies yet living remember those who knew and loved the last remnants of Mrs. Cockburn's circle. "Old Auntie Violy," as they called her, dwelt at Haining with her nephew and niece, who were also Mrs. Cockburn's grand-nephew and niece; and Auntie Violy never grew old in mind, though she lived to be nearly a hundred in years. She was always anxious for her nephew the laird to marry, had troops of young ladies at Haining for the purpose of providing him with a wife, and among them Anne Chalmers. Mrs. Cockburn's "sweet Anne Page" at last captivated "Don Mark." Their daughter could well remember her aunt Anne Pringle, who in her beauty and goodness had won and refused many an excellent offer, and lived and died unmarried for Adam Cockburn's sake. An old crooked tree stood at the back of the house of Fairnalee; and the third generation were wont to point to it and say Anne Pringle cared more for that old tree than for all the

woods of Fairnalee—it was believed because she had sat under its shelter "on the bonnie summer nights" with Adam Cockburn. Perhaps this was the "naked oak" where Alison Rutherfurd had often met John Aikman, and of which Mrs. Cockburn wrote in one of her letters.

Alison Cockburn's gifts were eminently social, and bore a very considerable resemblance to those of Mary Pendarvis, belonging as the women did to the same era. The Edinburgh lady also was great in toasts, sentiments, and improvised verses. On occasions she, too, might have performed the curious feat of singing "A blackbird sat on a pear-tree," with sips of water between the words and the notes of the chorus. Mrs. Cockburn's song on the household at Balcarres is a succession of toasts in verse, supposed to have been composed on the spur of the moment. But a much happier instance of her wit is her satirical song on the rejection of her brother's hand by a fantastic lady of fashion—a parody on "Nancy's to the greenwood gane:"—

"Nancy's to the assembly gone
To hear the fops a-chattering;
And Willie he has followed her,
To win her love by flattering.

* * * *

"Wad ye hae bonnie Nancy?
Na, I'll hae ane was learned to fence,
An' that can please my fancy,
Ane that can flatter, bow, and dance,
An' mak' love to the ladies;
That kens how folk behave in France,
An's bauld among the caddies."

Can the reader not call up heartless Nancy, mincing in her high-heeled shoes and her *négligé;* the husband of her choice in his coat without a neck, and "his own hair;" for to appear in it was deemed "vastly" more conceited at that particular epoch than to figure in any form of wig?

Alison Cockburn's "I've seen the smiling," although not equal to "I've heard them lilting," is deservedly a national song. To borrow the use of an obsolete word, it is elegantly melodious in its woe, passion, and despair. There may be a degree of pomp in the rendering of the woe, the passion and the despair may be slightly elaborated and artificial after the manner of the

day, but they are woe, passion, and despair nevertheless. In

> "I've seen the smiling
> Of fortune beguiling,"

sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.

> "But now 'tis fled—fled far away,"

is the moaning reiteration of every stripped and bereft Job.

> "I've seen Tweed's sillar streams,
> Glittering in the sunny beams,
> Grow drumly and dark as they row'd on their way,"

is a fine local figure.

THE FLOWERS OF THE FOREST.

I've seen the smiling
Of fortune beguiling;
I've felt all its favours, and found its decay:
Sweet was its blessing,
Kind its caressing;
But now 'tis fled—fled far away.

I've seen the forest
Adorned the foremost
With flowers of the fairest, most pleasant and gay;

Sae bonnie was their blooming!
Their scent the air perfuming!
But now they are wither'd and a' wede away.

I've seen the morning
With gold the hills adorning,
And loud tempest storming before the mid-day.
I've seen Tweed's sillar streams,
Glittering in the sunny beams,
Gıow drumly and dark as they row'd on their way.

O fickle Fortune!
Why this cruel sporting?
Oh, why still perplex us, poor sons of a day?
Nae mair your smiles can cheer me,
Nae mair your frowns can fear me;
For the Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away.