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"Truth will stand when a' thing's failin'."

The Land o' the Leal

Irrefutably proved from a Searching Investigation
to be

THE DEATHBED VALEDICTION OF
ROBERT BURNS.

BY

A. CRICHTON.

With an Introduction by
WM. M. STENHOUSE, M.D., DUNEDIN.

THIRD EDITION:

Containing the Latest Discoveries, including a very
Vital Disclaimer by Baroness Nairne.

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Yours Sincerely
Alex Crichton

Preface.

SOME years ago I contributed to the "Glasgow Weekly Herald" a series of articles on the question of the authorship of "The Land o' the Leal." The subject created considerable controversy, and subsequently the articles were re-published in pamphlet form, and met with appreciation from a wide circle of readers. Dr Stenhouse, an eminent medical gentleman in Dunedin, got my permission to re-publish the pamphlet in New Zealand, and it—the second edition—received a gratifying reception in that country. Both the first and second editions are now out of print, and this—the third edition—which includes Dr Stenhouse's cogent introduction to the whole subject, contains much new information, discovered in the course of recent investigations, which completes the case for the National Poet, and should convince every impartial reader that Robert Burns wrote the original poem of "The Land o' the Leal," and that the claim of Lady Nairne is mainly the invention of Dr Rogers, whose reputation for accuracy and truth was never of the best.

ALEXANDER CRICHTON.

Burrelton, Perthshire, 1919.

Introduction

BY

WM. M. STENHOUSE, M.D.,

DUNEDIN, NEW ZEALAND.



The mystery surrounding the authorship of "The Land o' the Leal" is neither a strange nor isolated example of the difficulties that beset the student of literature. Rival claimants have often disputed the renown to be derived from the authorship of a popular piece of writing. Many of the most singular of these rival claims have been treated at length in the elder Disraeli's "Curiosities of Literature," to which work we beg to refer the ingenuous reader. In Scottish literature let it suffice to mention the storm that raged around the Ossian of Macpherson, many scholars asserting that the entire work sprang from the vivid imagination of the translator, while he averred that he gathered the poem from oral traditions throughout the Highlands. Then there is the case of the Rev. John Logan, who published as his own, poems

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and paraphrases which were undoubtedly from the pen of his friend, Michael Bruce, who had appointed Logan as his literary executor.

The authorship of that exquisite song, "There's nae luck about the hoose" has been ascribed to Wm. Julius Mickle, although local, and for a long time undisputed, tradition ascribed it to an old maiden schoolmistress of Greenock, to which source we still prefer to trace its origin.

Then there were rival claimants to the paternity of that fine song, "Logan Braes," perhaps arising in this case from the circumstance that two distinct versions are in existence, of one of which John Mayne of Dumfries is the accredited author.

But the circumstances attending the rival claimants for the authorship of "The Land o' the Leal" are unique, and have excited more widespread interest than belongs to any of the instances given above. In the first place, this song is so touching in sentiment, so perfect in execution, and so beautiful in melody, that it became universally known, not only in Scotland, but all over the world. Then the rival

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claimants are the two most beloved personalities in all Scottish literature—Robert Burns and Lady Nairne. Still further to deepen the interest, although it undoubtedly appeared in print anonymously, it was from the very first *ascribed to Robert Burns by the universal consent of his countrymen*. And tradition, both oral and written, not content with merely naming him as its author, condescended to the very circumstances attending its composition, viz., that it was written on his death-bed very shortly before his demise, being his last loving legacy to his darling Jean. It will be seen later on that every line and sentiment of the song is consistent with this tradition. At any rate, the public were allowed to rest in this belief for about 70 years, when at length a circumstantial claim was made on behalf of Lady Nairne, so fortified by minute detail, that the question was considered settled in her favour by the great majority of the literary public of that time.

Still, however, the older generation of Scotsmen, including the most enthusiastic admirers of Burns, in whose mouths his writings were familiar as household words, and who

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were thoroughly acquainted with all the local traditions attached to them, *remained true in their allegiance to Burns*, and continued to regard him as the undoubted author of the now famous song.

It was some time in the Sixties when the song was first publicly attributed to Lady Nairne, through the advocacy of the Rev. Dr Rogers, and I well remember the storm of controversy that arose throughout the length and breadth of the land, nearly every newspaper teeming with correspondence on the subject. I read with avidity every scrap of writing that appeared, and dived into the various editions of his works, biographies, memorabilia, etc., and the conclusion I then arrived at, and to which I still adhere, was that Lady Nairne altered the song, and claimed only the authorship of that variation, *a claim which no one will dispute*; but that the original Jean version was really the work of Burns, bearing on its face the imprint of his masterly touch.

At this time, or shortly afterwards, I enjoyed the friendship or acquaintance of several gentlemen who took a leading part in

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discussing the question. On the one side the Rev. Dr Rogers (to whom I was introduced about 1870, and who already knew me by repute as having suggested improvements to the Wallace Monument on Abbey Craig, and whom I met on several occasions); on the other side, M'Kee of Kilmarnock, publisher of a re-issue of the original Kilmarnock edition of the poet's works—a man who had at his fingertips everything relating to Burns and his writings; Mr Ferguson, of Stockwell Street, Glasgow, a gentleman deeply imbued with the Burns cult, a highly popular brother of the mystic tie, and my introducer to Mother Kilwinning; and Andrew Glass, landlord of the Tam o' Shanter Inn at Ayr, a perfect glutton of Scottish song and story, a night in whose company was as entertaining as those ambrosial nights depicted by Christopher North and James Hogg; also W. W. Mitchell, a Glasgow merchant, whose hobbies then were like my own—chess and Scottish literature. Unfortunately at that time I neither took notes of conversations nor kept newspaper cuttings, but relied on a tenacious memory, which, though become treacherous as to details,

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enables me still to remember accurately enough the import of these discussions.

I remember perfectly reading and discussing with some of these gentlemen, an account of the production of the song given by Jessie Lewers. She said she remembered when it was written, very shortly before Burns's death, that he gave it to her to read, and then placed it under his pillow. Dying soon afterwards, and his wife's confinement taking place on his funeral day, is it a matter of surprise that the manuscript should have disappeared, and fallen into alien hands?

The Rev. Dr Rogers had many fine qualities, and it was a treat to be in his company for a social hour. But he had a full share of the weaknesses that beset men of talent or genius, and would not too carefully enquire into the truth of any matter in case it should spoil the point of a good story. At all events his reliability was entirely discredited in Scotland by his connection with the Wallace Monument, out of which quarrel he came with *a very tarnished reputation*. His *Colquhoun story is incredible*, and as Mr Crichton points out, is quite inconsistent with Lady Nairne's

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account of the reasons that led her to write the song.

The only other grounds for attributing to her the authorship is the letter said to have been written by her in old age. But this letter has never been produced and authenticated, and the recipient of it seems to be unknown. If we admit the genuineness of this letter, it goes no further than to confirm her in the authorship of the altered, and inferior, version. But an entirely new light has been thrown upon the incident of this letter by recent investigations of Mr Crichton, which have led to the discovery that other letters said to have been written by Lady Nairne are indubitable forgeries for the purpose of giving Mr Purdie the copyright of certain songs. Now, as *these Purdie letters are clear forgeries*, are we not driven to the conclusion that the letter referring to "The Land o' the Leal" is also a forgery? And this conclusion we shall be justified in assuming until the representatives of Lady Nairne are willing to produce it and let it be examined by experts. As further evidence in Lady Nairne's favour, Dr Rogers affirms that in conversation with her friends, Miss

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Stewart and Miss Helen Walker, she asserted that she was the authoress. But of this there is positively no proof. Neither the time, occasion, or words in which the claim was made, are reported; and as these conversations at best could only have reached the editor at second or third hand, no more reliance can be placed upon them than is given to uncorroborated gossip generally.

The only conclusive proof of the authorship would be the production of a printed copy of the "Jean" version, bearing the date 1798, or earlier. Such a copy may be in existence in some obscure corner, or buried in the lumber of a country library, and may hereafter be produced. Until this is done, the next best method of settling the dispute is that adopted by Mr Crichton, who, by a critical analysis of the song, and of the allegations in favour of Lady Nairne, has shown that it bears the impress of Burns's genius and style, rather than that of Lady Nairne. And to this conclusion I believe every unprejudiced reader of Mr Crichton's brochure will be forced to come.

To summarise the grounds on which Lady Nairne's claim rests, these are :—

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1. The Colquhoun story, as told by Dr Rogers.

2. The existence of a letter in which Lady Nairne claims the authorship, and explains how she came to write it.

3. The existence of a manuscript of the "John" version in her ladyship's handwriting.

4. Vague conversations with Miss Stewart and Miss Helen Walker.

As to the first, the story is absurd on the face of it, as there is nothing in the song suitable to the occasion—the death of an infant. The probability is that Lady Nairne, having come across the song and admiring it, sent it with alterations to Mrs Colquhoun on the occasion of writing a note of condolence on the death of her baby. In accounting for the production of the song, Lady Nairne makes no allusion to the Colquhoun story as told by Dr Rogers, which she must have done had it been true, but gives an entirely different account of its genesis.

As to the second, the letter has never been produced and examined, and the recipient is unknown. As other letters bearing Lady Nairne's signature are now proved forgeries,

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the probability is that "The Land o' the Leal" letter is also a forgery. At all events the onus of proving it genuine rests with the representatives of Lady Nairne, and until this is done, it is practically out of count.

The argument under the third head is very weak, as it is a common habit of some people to write out verses or prose extracts which hit their fancy; and to make alterations in old songs and then claim the authorship was a fashion of the times in which Lady Nairne lived. So that if the letter is genuine, the authorship of the altered version may be assigned to Lady Nairne without impugning her good faith.

The claim of Burns to the authorship rests on these grounds:—

1st, Universal oral tradition in Scotland for about seventy years which led to the song in the "Jean" version being included in certain editions of Burns's works, and the claim was never challenged during Lady Nairne's lifetime, and not until Dr Rogers's life of her ladyship appeared in 1868.

2nd, During a portion of the sixty or seventy years in which the song was univers-

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ally accepted as Burns's, the poet's widow, sons, brothers, sisters, and most intimate friends were living, and knew that the poem was ascribed to him. Had they not known this to be true, they would have undoubtedly set the public and the literary world right by disclaiming the authorship for him. Their silence under the circumstances is a powerful argument in his favour.

3rd, The singular appropriateness of the "Jean" version to the circumstances of Burns and his wife at the time when he is said to have composed it.

4th, The internal evidence of the song which is all but conclusive as to its authorship. The words "fain" and "leal" are favourite expressions of Burns's, and do not appear to have been so with Lady Nairne. If one would but compare "John Anderson my Jo, John," with "The Land o' the Leal," few literary experts but would come to the conclusion that they were both from the same pen. The "Jean" version being in every respect *superior to the "John" version*, it is incredible that Lady Nairne, who was gifted with a fine discriminating taste in verse, should have

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allowed the "John" version to go down to posterity instead of the other.

That she did so is all but proof positive that she had nothing to do with the "Jean" version, and that she only claimed the "John" version as her own, if indeed she ever made any genuine claim to it at all. In a word in conclusion, it may be said that while Burns's claim is all but proved by the internal evidence of the song, Lady Nairne's claim to its origin is by the same means completely disproved.

W. M. STENHOUSE.

DUNEDIN, *March*, 1903.



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NOTWITHSTANDING all that has been said and surmised as to the authorship of what is perhaps one of the tenderest and most pathetic of our Scottish songs, and despite the general acceptance of Lady Nairne as the writer, there appears, on investigation, to be much cause for disputing that lady's claim to the honour. That she wrote a version of the song is doubtless proved, and not now to be disputed, but that this was the original copy there is nothing to show. Indeed all the evidence available is decidedly against such an opinion. According to Lady Nairne's biographer, of whose evidence we shall have more to say, her version of the song was written in 1798, out of

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sympathy with Mrs Colquhoun on the death of a baby. Other authorities say with reference to the "Jean" version that it appeared shortly after the death of Burns, just in time for Burns to have written it; and though the authorship was not fully proved before the public, it passed current for about 70 years that Burns had written the song while on his death-bed. With a note to this effect indeed it was published in collections of the poet's songs (see Crosby's Musical Repository, dated 1811), and also in some editions of his works; and in pursuing our investigations we must keep in mind that this occurred at a time when, if the authorship could not be proved, there could not at all events be any lack of proof as to which version was the older, and that then the people could not have been so completely deceived as is alleged by Lady Nairne's biographers. Had the "John" version been the original, as is claimed by them, then not only must the address have been changed, but the song must have been completely revised and remodelled before it was known to the public, otherwise what could have possessed the people to think that it was originally written

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by Burns to his wife. If it was originally "John," and changed privately, the question arises, Who did it? or if publicly changed, did the people effect the alteration, and then believe forthwith that the song had been written by Burns on his death-bed? The change of a few words might have been accomplished without much ado; but to say the address was completely reversed to serve a purpose, by the people, without the people's knowledge, is surely inconsistent enough. Consider how difficult it would be to change the address of any popular song with which we are acquainted. At what time in its history could it be possible? See, for instance, with what persistency "Jean" still clings, although almost everybody is persuaded it should be "John." Then, had the address been "John" at first, it would be clear to everybody that the song had no reference to Burns or his affairs, and that he had not written it to his wife. Where, then, was the reason for changing it? "John" was equally as good in that case as it is in "John Anderson," which nobody would or could change. Then isn't it strange that the only name that can be decently substituted

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for "John" should happen to be the name of Burns's wife, and that she by chance brings a chain of circumstances exactly suited to the nature of the song. And how does it so strangely happen that the song bears no reference to anything else? Again, why is the "Jean" version the more natural, and in every respect the better of the two? Why is it so characteristic of Burns's handiwork, and so true to all the circumstances that attended the poet when his life was about to close? Why does it refer to his only daughter and darling child so recently dead, and whose loss he mourned to the end of his life, as well as to the sorrow, cauld, and care which were his continual assailants through life, and the experience of which could be but hearsay to the Baroness Nairne?

On the other hand, if the Baroness wrote the song out of sympathy with Mrs Colquhoun of Killermont (as stated by Dr Charles Rogers), wherein is the sympathy expressed, since no consistent reference is made to either that lady or to the circumstances in which she is placed. Moreover, when we consider that for more than twenty years previous to the

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time Lady Nairne published it in Purdie's Scottish Minstrel, the song had been attributed to Burns, is it not rather singular that the words were not accompanied by an explanatory note stating that hers was the true original copy, and that the song had not been written originally by Burns, as had been believed, and yet there is no such explanation.

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That the Baroness was in the habit of putting new words to the songs that seemed to please her fancy, a glance at her printed works will sufficiently show. "The Lass o' Gowrie," "Huntingtower," "The Ploughman," "Charlie is My Darling," "Doun the Burn, Davie," "There Grows a Bonnie Brier Bush," "Gude Nicht, and Joy, etc.," "Kind Robin Lo'es Me," "My Ain Kind Dearie," "Cauld Kail in Aberdeen," etc., etc., were all songs before her ladyship had seen them.

In an alleged letter by Lady Nairne, of which for some unexplained reason we only

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get some detailed fragments, she is made to say, "I wrote it and put these words to it." Will any person say for certain what these words were, or that hers is not like the position of one who had remodelled the song but felt that a full claim of authorship could not be asserted. At the time this letter is said to have been written, the Baroness was fully aware that the question was one that required not only a decisive answer, but a full explanation, and apart from what could only be regarded as a duty, it would have been quite as modest for her to have said, "I am really the original author," had such been the case. For some unexplained reason we are not told the wherefore of this letter, and the vague, indefinite manner in which it is written seems altogether inexcusable. When she is said to have written it, the Baroness was verging on old age, and could not have been ignorant of the fact that the world was waiting to see the matter explained. She must also have been aware that with her rested the responsibility, and something like the following would have set the matter at rest:—"It has long been asserted that "The Land o' the Leal" was

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written by Burns. It is my duty to put the matter right, and to say that I alone am responsible for its origin."

The authorship of the song "Auld Robin Gray" is frequently mentioned as a parallel case; but unless we are to suppose that Lady Nairne has made her claim in full, the comparison must be seen to be a very odd one. Lady Ann Barnard made a full avowal of her authorship when she was 72 years of age. If we could accept this letter as having been written by her ladyship, we might conclude that she has also claimed all she had a right to by saying she put words to it. But more of this anon.

A Parody.

From what we have already seen, it is evident we are dealing with a parody, and "John," ridiculous though he may appear, must be in it to take the place of "Jean." Moreover, the feminine character must be his; the masculine is that of his wife, she betraying

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a self-consciousness of her superiority in both wisdom and fortitude. It is quite apparent that this unnatural state of things has resulted from transformation. Otherwise, why do we find everything in the "Jean" version *natural and as it ought to be*. It is a strong point in favour of the Burns side of the contention to see that "John" is a superfluous character altogether. But for the fact that his is the only name that can be decently substituted for "Jean," we see no cause for his introduction at all. His personality spoils the picture, and utterly defeats the object for which the poem is said to have been written—introducing as he does a second bereavement, and a deplorable scene for which there is absolutely no necessity, and the poem would have served the purpose infinitely better had it been composed without regard to any personal address whatever. As instance—

My bonnie bairn's there,
She was baith gude and fair,
And oh I grudged her sair
To the Land o' the Leal.

It is easier to transform an old plan than it is to devise a new one, but transformation is not

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always followed by success. We may find much evidence of this in the works of Lady Nairne. Whilst her original pieces have made her name famous, her imitations, which doubtless include "The Land o' the Leal," are seldom, if ever, heard of; and with such an excellent subject, why did she miss her opportunity?—simply because another author held the field.

The Addent of the Song.

"The Land o' the Leal" made its first appearance in George Thomson's "Select Scottish Airs," in 1802, in the following form:—

THE LAND O' THE LEAL.

(Thomson says) These simple and affecting verses came under the editor's notice but very lately. He wished to give the name of the ingenious author, but his endeavours to find it have not been successful.

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I'm wearin' awa, John,
Like snaw wreaths in thaw, John,
I'm wearin' awa,

To the Land o' the Leal.

There's nae sorrow there, John,
There's neither cauld nor care, John,
The day's ay fair

I' the Land o' the Leal.

O dry your glist'ning e'e, John,
My soul lang's to be free, John,
And angels beckon* me

To the Land o' the Leal.

Ye have been leal and true, John,
Your task's near ended now, John,
And I'll welcome you

To the Land o' the Leal.

Our bonny bairn's there, John,
She was baith gude and fair, John,
And we grudg'd her sair

To the Land o' the Leal.

But sorrow's sell wears past, John,
And joy's comin' fast, John,
The joy that's ay to last,

I' the Land o' the Leal.

Our friends are a' gane, John,
We've lang been left alane, John,
We'll a' meet again,

I' the Land o' the Leal.

Then fare ye weel, my ain John,
This warld's cares are vain, John,
We'll meet, and ay be fain,

I' the Land o' the Leal.

*Note.—The word "beckon" must have been substituted by George Thomson. In the Montrose copy, "wait" is the word, and in Urbani's this word is by a printer's error changed to "wink."

The Advent of the Song.

In September, 1792, Mr George Thomson, Clerk of the Board of Trustees in Edinburgh, and a distinguished musical amateur, projected a work entitled "A Select Collection of Scottish Airs for the Voice, with Accompaniments." Although personally unacquainted with Burns, he wrote him asking his assistance in the work. With this request Burns very readily complied, and thus a friendship was begun which ended only with the poet's life. In all, Burns had given Thomson over 120 songs, practically without fee or reward, having scorned to take money for such an undertaking. When distress overtook him, however, his spirit of independence was forced to give way to necessity, and on 12th July, 1796, he wrote Thomson as follows:—"After all my boasted independence, cursed necessity compels me to implore you for a five pound note. . . . I do not ask all this gratuitously, for upon returning health, I hereby promise to furnish you with five pounds worth of the best song genius you have seen." Although aware of the distressing circumstances under which the poet wrote him for his assistance, Thomson sent only the bare sum with the remark that

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it was just what he had intended to give him. Five pounds for 120 of the best songs Scotland had seen was thought to be a poor reward at the time when their author was almost dying of starvation; and the transaction getting into the public prints, Thomson was (whether deserving or not) severely censured time and again for meanness in his behaviour towards the dying poverty-stricken poet, and being thus publicly *spotted as an unleal friend*, with a spectre haunting him perpetually (it followed him to the grave), he dared not publish what he well knew to be the dying wail of Burns—"Our friends are a' gane, Jean, etc." Hence, no doubt,

The "John" Disguise,

and all the mystery surrounding the authorship. The "Jean" is changed to "John," and to prevent questionings the song is issued as of unknown authorship; just as if it had fallen from the clouds. We see by the prefatory note, however, that the song was not publicly known at this time. Otherwise Thomson did not need to print such a note; neither did he

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need to trouble about the author. We notice also that he is careful to keep the secret of how the song came into his possession, although he must have seen the importance of that information. He tells, for instance, that "The Laird of Cockpen" was communicated to him by Sir Adam Ferguson. But where he got "The Land o' the Leal" was a secret which he seems never to have revealed, although he must have been well aware of the unsettled state of the authorship.

It is well known that *after the poet's death Thomson visited Mrs Burns at Dumfries*, and that she also visited him, and stayed for some time at his house in Edinburgh, and it is very probable that it was on some of these occasions that he got possession of the song.

The "John" Disguise Probed.

Pieter Urbani was one of the celebrated Italian musicians who at that time dominated the music of Edinburgh. He was the first to get up, at great cost, Handel's oratorios in the Scottish capital. Along with George Thom-

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son he was a regular contributor to the programmes of the St. Cecilia concerts, then carried on by the elite of the city; and it is notable that he is the first after Thomson to publish "The Land o' the Leal." His musical work, which consists of six vols. of Scottish song, with accompaniments by himself, is *largely composed of the songs of Burns*—a fact which proves his intimacy with the poet. Apart from this we have direct evidence from Burns himself to the effect that Urbani had visited him at Dumfries, and that the great singer had charmed him with his music. Burns at this time—according to his own statement—showed Urbani the air "Hey Tuttie Taitie," to which "The Land o' the Leal" was afterwards written; and Urbani was so pleased with it that he begged him to make soft verses for it. Judging from this circumstance, it is more than likely that Urbani would be *the first to sing the song in Edinburgh*. That he was in the habit of introducing Burns's songs appears in the poet's letters. Writing to G. Thomson, he says: — "Whatsoever Urbani sings at your concert must have immediate celebrity. You will hear him shortly in a song

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of mine, viz., 'Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon'." Urbani's work was published in six vols. betwixt the years 1792 and 1804. In the latter year "The Land o' the Leal" appears with the title "I'm Wearin' Awa, John," and immediately under the title is the statement in large capital type—

"WRITTEN BY A GENTLEMAN."

A very damaging statement, surely, to the inconsistent claims that have in recent years been set forth for the Baroness Nairne. But this is not all. A careful scrutiny of the copy reveals other evidences of equal importance, among which we have no difficulty in detecting the ungrammatical Scotch style of Burns, together with his peculiar spellings which are traceable to no other writer, and which were certainly never used by the Baroness Nairne. This is surely proof positive that the original version of the song was not by any means the work of Lady Nairne. We cannot think for a moment that the printers of the time preferred this bad grammar, and bad spelling, to the correct grammar and orthography of the Baroness, or that they perverted correct spell-

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ing to make it appear as the work of Burns in a poem which to all appearance he had never seen; and before making a claim to the origin of the song, the supporters of Lady Nairne must give an explanation as to why these peculiarities in grammar and spelling, which (in connection with the song) can be traced to no writer whatever save Burns, should be found in the first printed copies, all of which are, in a manner, linked to Dumfries through the publishers—*Thomson and Urbani*—gentlemen who are well known in their connection with Burns, but who seem to have had no correspondence with the Baroness Nairne at any time. As for the gentleman author so prominently referred to, there is only one gentleman (taking all the circumstances into account) that can be put into the breach, and that gentleman, as everybody knows, or ought to know, is Robert Burns. Indeed the song and all it refers to claims him as the author. It is indeed the great poet's last farewell—addressed to his wife.

It is perfectly clear from Urbani's evidence that he knew all about the origin of the song; and why should he not? If he got the copyright

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— and he could not proceed without it—he would certainly know from whence it came. That he got this right is perfectly apparent, and that he got it with certain restrictions attached, is quite as clear, for had it been otherwise there would have been no disguise whatever. He would have given his information straight out, instead of giving it by hints, as he clearly does. Now, why these restrictions? Following up the case, as proved by Urbani, that G. Thomson issued the song under a disguise, we may well suppose that he did so with the consent of Mrs Burns. This would not be difficult to obtain at that time, when the gossips were busy, and modesty forbade the publication of such private matters as the song was calculated to reveal. But what were the consequences that followed? The song lost its author, and what was really Burns's last farewell and *a thing of the utmost importance, was rendered of no special consequence to anybody.* A great mistake had been made which neither Thomson nor Mrs Burns could remedy without bringing ridicule upon themselves. True, Mrs Burns might have produced the poet's manuscript, and

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thereby have upset the disguise, and so proved the authorship, but what was she to say when asked to explain the reason for the falsification and practically the denial of her illustrious husband's last farewell? Was she to say that she did not wish to be identified with it because of the revelations it contained, or that she took her name out of it in order to screen George Thomson from public ridicule? It was a statement which for her own sake, as well as for the sake of Thomson, *she could not enter upon*. The die was cast—what had been done could not be undone. The song had lost its author, and no claim could now be put forth without bringing disgrace on the parties concerned. The only thing that could now be done was to endeavour to arouse a strong suspicion as to the author by some such means as could not well be mistaken, but which at the same time could not be regarded as a direct claim. And it would seem as if Urbani had been employed to carry this scheme into effect—hence the statement, in extra large type, “WRITTEN BY A GENTLEMAN,” together with the “John” in italics.

Written by a Gentleman.

Urbani's copy of the song differs from Thomson's in this much, that while Thomson's is a complete copy, revised (doubtless by himself), Urbani's is unrevised, and is minus the verse relating to the unfeal friends. We see from this that Urbani did not get his copy from Thomson, but we can also see that both copies are from the same original. How then are we to explain the absence of this important verse? There is only one explanation visible, and that is, that the verse gave away the secret of the wherefore of the poem, and also revealed the private matters which had been the subject of conversation betwixt Burns and his wife at that time, when, as we are told, she said to him, "What has become o' a' our grand friends now?" and he replied, "*Never mind them, Jean, we'll be better kent a hunder year after this.*"

In order to realise Burns's feelings at this time it is only necessary to see his farewell letter to his much respected friend, Mrs Dunlop, written eight days before he died. It runs as follows:—

Madam,—I have written you so often without receiving any answer, that I would not trouble you again but for the circumstances in which I

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am—an illness which has long hung about me, in all probability will speedily send me beyond that bourne whence no traveller returns. Your friendship with which for many years you honoured me was a friendship dearest to my soul. Your conversation, and especially your correspondence, were at once highly entertaining and instructive. With what pleasure did I use to break up the seal! The remembrance yet adds one pulse more to my poor palpitating heart. Farewell!!! R.B.

Burns emphasises his last farewell to this particular friend by three exclamation points.

Our friends are a' gane, Jean,
We've lang been left alane, Jean, etc.

Thomson and the Disguise.

We have already seen reason for believing that George Thomson was deeply interested in the "John" disguise, and we have now to consider a circumstance which seems to warrant such a belief. After the true "Jean" copy of the song had made its appearance in public, Thomson issued a second edition of his work (1822), in which the song he had spoken of so highly in his first edition was *not to be found*

Thomson and the Disguise.

in any shape—neither “Jean” nor “John.” What can be wrong with it now? Certainly nothing, so far as can be seen. It was by this time passing current as Burns’s farewell to his wife, and as such was the subject of universal admiration. But there was something that affected Thomson—he stood in a false position. He had committed himself to the “John” disguise and the unknown authorship, and therefore could not face the questions that would have been put to him had he attempted to support the authorship of Burns. Therefore in order to let Burns have what he knew to be his own, his only safe course was to withdraw the song altogether. This he did, and from this circumstance we are free to judge that he was deep in the secret of the John disguise, and that to him is due all the mystery surrounding the advent of the song. It is well known that Thomson was at this time *still writhing under the public censure* for his neglectful treatment of the poet, and it was therefore not to be expected that he would publish words out of the mouth of Burns that were calculated to reflect disgrace upon himself. Mrs Burns was in the same

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boat with Thomson. Hence, although the song was made to appear in Burns's works with the intention of making his claim good, still it did not carry the proper warrant, and editors and other investigators, who were considered wise in their generation, and who had seen the song on its first appearance in Thomson's work, with the "John" address, refused to admit the Burns claim. They satisfied themselves with the assumption that the people had changed it falsely, to make it appear as Burns's farewell to his wife, and thus saved all further investigation. As to who the real author was, *they were entirely ignorant*, and as would seem, pleased to remain so. George Thomson could doubtless have informed them, but he didn't.

Annexed is a facsimile of the song as given by Pieter Urbani in 1804:—

No. LI.—I'M WEARIN' AWA, JOHN.

A Duett.

WRITTEN BY A GENTLEMAN.

AIR—TUTIE TAITIE—PLAYED WHEN ROBERT BRUCE LED HIS
TROOPS TO BATTLE, AT BANNOCK-BURN.

I.

I'm wearin' awa, *John*,
Like snaw wreaths when its thaw, *John*,
I'm wearin' awa, *John*,
To the land o' the leal.
There's nae sorrow there, *John*,
There's neither could nor care, *John*,
The day's ay fair, *John*,
I' the land o' the leal.

II.

Dry your glist'ning e'e, *John*,
My soul langs to be free, *John*,
Angels wink on me, *John*,
To the land o' the leal.
Ye've been leal and true, *John*,
Your task it's near done now, *John*,
And I'll welcome you, *John*,
To the land o' the leal.

III.

Our bonny bairn's there, *John*,
She was baith gude and fair, *John*,
And we grudg'd her sair, *John*,
To the land o' the leal.
Sorrow's sell wears past, *John*,
And joys are comin' fast, *John*,
Joys that's ay to last, *John*,
I' the land o' the leal.

IV.

Fare ye weel, my ain *John*,
This world's care is a' vain, *John*,
We'll meet, and ay be fain, *John*,
I' the land o' the leal.
There's nae sorrow there, *John*,
There's neither could nor care, *John*,
The day's ay fair, *John*,
I' the land o' the leal.

The Colquhoun Allegation.

Taking now the story of the Colquhouns (which we get on the authority of Dr Rogers), there seems no means of tracing this to its source, and, whencesoever it may have come, it seems so inconsistent that it must be regarded at sight as being chiefly the work of conjecture, if not invention. The story runs as follows:—In the course of the year 1798, whilst Carolina Oliphant was staying with her brother's family in the north of England, Mrs Campbell Colquhoun of Killermont, an early and attached friend of the poetess, had to mourn the death of her first-born child, which had died when scarcely a year old. When tidings of her friend's bereavement reached her, Carolina set to work, and immediately composed "The Land o' the Leal" (as if "baith gude, and fair" identified an unweaned child!) which, accompanied by a letter of condolence, she forthwith despatched to Mrs Colquhoun. This, we are told, was accompanied by an entreaty not to divulge the authorship—a request which Mrs Colquhoun strictly fulfilled, for *she never revealed the secret to anyone.*

The Colquhoun Allegation.

So the story runs with regard to this extraordinary child—and in putting it to the test we would first ask

WHENCE CAME THE PRECIOUS INFORMATION?

There is no allusion to this story in what is said to be Lady Nairne's own statement. Neither does she say the song was written for any purpose. On the contrary, she says she wrote it *merely* because she liked the air so much, and put these words to it, never fearing questions as to the authorship. How are the two statements to be reconciled? Whether are we to give credit to Dr Rogers or to the Baroness? It seems a very unnatural thing for voluntary sympathy to be given under conditional restraint in such circumstances, and we see the Baroness had not the slightest fear for questions regarding the authorship. Who, then, can blame us if we refuse to believe this paltry inconsistent story? If we think for a moment, the idea of anyone deliberately sitting down to paint such a picture for the express purpose of comforting the bereaved

DWINDLES INTO UTTER ABSURDITY.

The Land o' the Leal.

It is as impossible for anyone to realise or understand the comforting effect as it is for the "John" of the picture, whose condition at the prospect of a second bereavement is seen to be truly deplorable. "John's" only chance of hope is made conditional, and depends entirely on the good conduct of his widowerhood. "Sorrow, cauld, and care," and all the other evils, including bad weather, may freely take their will of him—yet we are to accept of this as a genuine picture of consoling sympathy! Before we can do so, we must regard life as a mistake, and earthly enjoyment a failure under any circumstances. The Colquhouns were in the prime of youth, and had access to all the comforts which the world could afford. Barring the loss of a child, scarcely a year old, happiness, so far as can be seen, was theirs for the taking. Where, then, was the excuse for such an invention? Cauld, care, and bad weather were not the harassing experiences of either them or the Baroness, and the prospect of an escape from such trials could have no effectual meaning in their case; the prospect of an escape from affliction can only bring joy to the afflicted;

The Colquhoun Allegation.

and such a picture could never have been drawn from reflections on the condition of the nobility. Again, if the child's death caused so much sorrow, why picture the mother dying also as *a source of comfort*. As a piece of sentiment, such a picture is surely unique; as a work of sympathy in practice it is utterly untenable.

It is quite clear that "*John*" is made an *ass of*, and when we consider that it is a personified picture of the Colquhouns, as it must be (for it is their bairn), the story gets to be highly ridiculous. How are we to imagine such glaring stupidity as is evinced in this uncalled-for picture to have been associated with the exceptional genius that originated "*The Land o' the Leal*"?

Once more, if the song was really sent to Mrs Colquhoun on the solemn occasion stated, why was it not done up in a more presentable form, since with very little thought this might have been accomplished? If, instead of "*I am wearin' awa,*" it had been "*We are wearin' awa,*" the unsightly might have been avoided by picturing the decline of age; and with some degree of consistency we might have seen an

The Land o' the Leal.

attempt at condolence in a way not altogether unnatural. But, as the matter stands, who can blame us if we refuse to endorse even a single sentence of this *inconsistent evidence adduced by Dr Rogers*? The child, which, on his authority, ought to have figured as the chief centre of interest appears secondary in importance, and is mentioned only as it were by the way. How is this accounted for? There is apparently nothing to say; but we can well understand that before a claim to the authorship can be established, a child must be found other than *the much lamented darling child* of Robert Burns.

AN ALLEGED LETTER BY LADY NAIRNE.

We are told that when Lady Nairne (who is said to have written the song at the age of thirty-two) was verging on old age, she wrote concerning the origin of "The Land o' the Leal" in these words:—

The land o' the leal is a happy rest for the mind in this dark pilgrimage. . . . Oh, yes, I was young then. I wrote it merely because I liked the air so much, and I put these words to it, never fearing questions as to the authorship. However, a lady would know, and took it down,

The Colquhoun Allegation.

and I had not Sir Walter's art of denying. I was present when it was asserted that Burns wrote it on his death-bed, and that he had it "Jean" instead of "John"; but the parties could not decide why it never appeared in his works, as his last song should have done. I NEVER ANSWERED.

Such is the testimony of Lady Nairne after it has been carefully doctored for our edification. We are at a loss to know why this important letter should be so sadly mutilated, especially as it seems to us that the passage or passages omitted must have relation to the authorship. Perhaps we might have wanted a little of the Colquhoun story if we had got more of this letter. But be that as it may; allowing the letter to be genuine, we see distinctly that the passage or passages that have been omitted are not for our eyes, and in these vague detached fragments we are expected to see conclusive proof of her ladyship's superior claim to the authorship. Can we do so? We will first place Dr Rogers' statement alongside, and see how the matter stands.

Dr ROGERS.

The song was expressly written by Lady Nairne in testimony of her affectionate sympathy with Mrs Colquhoun on the death of her first-born.

The Land o' the Leal.

LADY NAIRNE.

I wrote it merely because I liked the air
so much, and I put these words to it.

An attempt to reconcile these two statements works out as follows:—"The Land o' the Leal" was expressly written in testimony of her affectionate sympathy with Mrs Colquhoun on the death of her first-born, by Lady Nairne, who wrote it *merely* because she liked the air so much, and *put these words to it*.

Could anything appear more wretchedly absurd? This indefinite, deceitful scrap of a letter is so worded that it may be read two ways. The writer appears extremely modest, and expects in the absence of contrary proof to be credited with the full authorship. But should Burns's M.S. turn up, then she escapes blame by saying she merely put words to it. If the Baroness wrote that letter, as maintained by her relations—and there is now little reason to doubt it—then her reputation is the poorer for it to-day. That she had a strong desire to be credited with the full authorship of "The Land o' the Leal" is quite apparent—otherwise she would not have put her signature to it in the "Minstrel" while conscious of having

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merely interpolated a few words to what she knew was credited to Robert Burns.

Dr Rogers tells us that Lady Nairne's husband never knew that she was a writer of songs, or that she had composed "The Land o' the Leal," and we must regard this as a *very uncommon bit of truth*. The fact that Lady Nairne was staying in the north of England when she is said to have written the song must also appear very ominous in the face of so much evidence of the original having emanated from Dumfries. It seems strange, too, that she should have taken so great a fancy to the air of the song when staying in what may be called the immediate neighbourhood of the Land of Burns.

And might we not ask what were the words attached to this air which pleased her so much? "Scots Wha Hae" seems the only song that has lived to our time, but the air in this case is so differently accented that we cannot trace her fancy to it. As a matter of fact, the air of "The Land o' the Leal" is, without the words, very common-place, and must be sung to these words to be admired. Was it in this connection that the air took the

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Baroness's fancy, when as we are told *she put words to it?*

LADY NAIRNE'S TINKERED VERSION.

I'm wearin' awa, John,
Like snaw wreaths in thaw, John,
I'm wearin' awa,
To the land o' the leal.

There's nae sorrow there, John,
There's neither cauld nor care, John,
The day is aye fair,
In the land o' the leal.

Our bonnie bairn's there, John,
She was baith gude and fair, John,
And oh we grudged her sair
To the land o' the leal.

But sorrow's sel' wears past, John,
And joy's-a-coming fast, John,
The joy that's aye to last,
In the land o' the leal.

Sae dear's that joy was bought, John,
Sae free the battle fought, John,
That sinfu' man e'er brought
To the land o' the leal.

(Doggerel as referred to by George Thomson).

Oh dry your glistenin' e'e, John,
My saul langs to be free, John,
And angels beckon me
To the land o' the leal.

The Colquhoun Allegation.

Oh haud ye leal and true, John,
Your day it's wearin' thro', John,
And I'll welcome you
To the land o' the leal.

Noo fare ye weel my ain John,
This warld's cares are vain, John,
We'll meet and we'll be fain
In the land o' the leal.

This copy made its first appearance in Purdie's "Scottish Minstrel" about the year 1822 (Burns's copy had been in print 20 years before this time). It is quite apparent that the writer of the above fails to realise the true nature of the subject as seen in the Burns version, and the sentiment is so loosely guarded that in some parts the sense has to be strained to avoid the ludicrous. The words "oh," "saul," "beckon," etc., *do not realise the earnest frame of mind which ought to characterise the speaker*. But although these are blemishes, they do not strike us as such until we have seen the other version. It is then that the superior skill and sensibility of the writer becomes apparent, and it is difficult to imagine such a clear discernment in any writer who was not in the actual experience. On account of this and other circumstances

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already seen, it must be impossible to arrive at a conclusion that does not admit of an original and unrevised manuscript of a prior date to Lady Nairne's, as well as an exceptional genius to whom obscurity is impossible, and who can never be called by any other name save that of Robert Burns. It is a noticeable fact that the subject of the above copy is *entirely out of line* with the early copies of Thomson and Urbani, and it is likewise seen that *it does not carry the title*, since there is no reference made to the unleal; whereas in the other copies the unleal is felt to be the whole burden of the song. These facts are sufficient to warrant the fullest enquiry. Dr Rogers in his memoirs mentions the Baroness no less than twenty times as the authoress of "The Land o' the Leal," after which he waxes eloquent in statement by rendering an illustration which he begins as follows:—"The tenderness of the composition is exquisite; the *bonnie bairn* has departed and the *aged parents* are mourners." Rogers, when he penned such drivel, must have had some of the old patriarchs in his eye, for there is nothing human at the present time that will

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bear to be spoken of in such terms. Perhaps we need a thorough Nairnite to explain the mystery of such an association—the case is seen to be far beyond the reasoning powers of ordinary mortals.

The Internal Evidence of the Song.

In considering the claim of Lady Nairne, we meet with nothing but inconsistency; on the other side we have no inconsistencies to deal with, as, barring the want of the manuscript, everything harmonises without the exception of a single jarring note. Accumulated misfortune, and *the cruelty of mankind, broke the poet's heart*. This is the language of Mr Gray, of the High School, Dumfries, who saw the poet daily during his last illness, and it may well be taken as the text or keynote on which the whole poem is built. The sorrow of bereavement and of other trials, the friendships that had grown cold, and the care which in consequence bore with extra weight, are

The Land o' the Leal.

all found here. Sorrow and care are quite the common lot, but cold friendships specially referred to on a death-bed *require an exceptional case*,—and of necessity a real one. The words “There’s neither could nor care” must be held to make reference to an absence of sympathy at a time when sympathy was to be expected, and such a case is seen to be a special one which fits exactly to the circumstances of Burns at a time when, according to Allan Cunningham, the family were all but wanting bread. “When others have proved false, ye’ve been leal and true; you have not flinched from the task, severe although it has been; your loyalty has borne the test, and I’ll welcome you to the land o’ the leal.”

We wonder at such an uncommon display of what may be called heroism, and might even ask if it were possible that anyone could have written the song in the circumstances. But we remember that Burns when face to face with the worst anticipations, said of himself, “*I am tranquil, and would despise myself if I were not*” (see letter to Mr Clarke, dated 26th June). If the song should lose its author, here is one who is at least equal to the task.

The Internal Evidence of the Song.

Again, "I'll be better kent a hundred year after this," was, as we have already seen, among *the last utterances of Robert Burns*, given expression to at a time when he felt bitterly the loss of friendships that had failed in the hour of need; when in the direst of poverty and distress, he had a full view of how false the world was. What else but the prospect of an escape from the trials and sorrows of a faithless world to the enjoyment of the association of the faithful and true, could have suggested to the mind of anyone the designation "Land o' the Leal." We have no evidence of the hereafter ever having been called by that name before the advent of the song, and there is certainly *nothing in Lady Nairne's version that could have suggested it*. But the prospect was everything to the dying, friend-forsaken poet, who had mourned man's inhumanity to man under many aspects, but never with such bitterness as when on his death-bed deserted by the friendships he was wont to trust,

THE COLD AND THE UNLEAL,
he beheld his own wife and family starving.

The Land o' the Leal.

Sorrow, cauld, and care. The dark, threatening cloud overhead was a true picture of the scene; but the clouds were soon to be rolled away, for "The day is aye fair i' the land o' the leal."

Then it is also noteworthy that *the word leal is one of Burns's stock*; but is not used by the Baroness. The intensity of Burns's hatred of the false, which is only equalled by his admiration of the true, is evinced throughout his entire works, and may be said to form the most prominent feature in his whole character. And who was more likely to originate the contrasting name "Land o' the Leal" than this extraordinary genius, who had had such an extensive and disagreeable experience of the land of the faithless?

The Song itself claims Burns as the Author.

If we refer to a letter addressed to Johnson, the publisher, dated 4th July, we find the

The Song claims Burns as the Author.

very idea which is conveyed in the first verse. After speaking of personal and domestic affliction, Burns says:—"This protracting, slow-consuming illness will, I doubt, arrest my sun." This letter is written only seventeen days before Burns died, so that the origin of the ideal comparison is not far to trace. It is the same mournful tale—I'm wearin' awa, like snaw when 'it's thaw" (slowly but surely). It is the break of the storm, and the cold winter will soon be over. The subject of the second verse is also found in this same letter, as the following extract shows:—"You may probably think that for some time past I have neglected yo^u and your work; but alas! the hand of *pain*, and *sorrow*, and *care* has these many months lain heavily on me. *Personal and domestic afflictions* have almost entirely banished that alacrity and life with which I used to woo the muse of Scotia." We have here not only the subject but the identical words of the song, which strike so forcibly that we cannot help thinking that the theme must have been running in Burns's mind at the time when this letter was written—"There's nae sorrow there, Jean."

The Land o' the Leal.

But we would pause here to ask: "By what strange coincidence does the Baroness Nairne picture at this time a slow-consuming illness which has not the slightest foundation in reality?" If the Colquhoun story had the slightest semblance of truth in it, we would ask: "Why, indeed, does she picture the whole circumstances of Burns without exception, and nothing more, for the express purpose of administering sympathy to the nobility of Killermont, whose case utterly evades comparison, and whose experience of men and things are as far removed from those of Burns as the east is from the west?"

It may be argued that the poem represents circumstances such as are quite common, and that the subject is one of every day life. So far this may be true. But when we consider that *the common name "Heaven" is not expressive enough*, and that a new designation has been created to suit the case, we have a clue to what is not found in the general experience of every day life. Also when we see that the poem is addressed in the name of Burns's wife, who is actually mourning the loss of her only daughter, and that the dying

The Song claims Burns as the Author.

speaker pictures so accurately what we know to have been the peculiar circumstances of the great poet of Scotland, we have a case which may be said to be without a parallel, and one which must for ever appear to the minds of the intelligent of the people of Scotland as the only fitting subject extant.

We have already dealt with the Colquhoun story, and the inconsistency that attaches thereto; we will now take the opportunity of comparing its feasibility with the sad tale which attaches to

THE DARLING CHILD OF ROBERT BURNS

which we find in a letter, dated 31st January, 1796, addressed to Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop, and which reads as follows:—"These many months you have been two packets in my debt. What sin of ignorance I have committed against so highly valued a friend, I am at a loss to guess. Alas, madam, ill can I afford at this time to be deprived of any of the small remnant of my pleasures. I have lately *drunk deep of the cup of affliction*. The autumn robbed me of *my only daughter and*

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darling child, and that at a distance, too, and so rapidly as to put it out of my power to pay the last duties to her. I had scarcely begun to recover from that *shock* when I was seized with a severe rheumatic fever, and long the die spun doubtful; until after many weeks of a sick bed it seems to have turned up life . . .

“When pleasure fascinates the mental sight,
Affliction purifies the visual ray;
Religion hails the drear, the untried night,
And shuts, for ever shuts! life's doubtful day.”

R.B.

The foregoing letter leaves us in no dubiety whatever as to the child mentioned in the song—it is in all true consistency the three-year-old daughter of Robert Burns which died at Mauchline in the autumn of 1795. In Chambers's “Life and Works of Robert Burns,” vol. 4, page 246, we find the following information: “In the autumn of 1795 *Burns suffered deeply from the protracted illness of his infant daughter*, who at length died so far away from him that he could not himself lay her in her grave. He was indeed so prostrated that all literary business was suspended.”

This child, Elizabeth Riddel, born 21st

The Song claims Burns as the Author.

Novr., 1792, died, and was buried at Mauchline. In this same volume, page 255, the following statement occurs: "Burns died from the result of a relapse after a slight recovery from the attack of rheumatic fever that supervened on the extreme physical and mental prostration *caused by his daughter's death.*" Seeing this it need not be the subject of wonder that this child should be so pathetically referred to in his last farewell poem. What could be more natural than this reference to the crushing affliction that was still so fresh in the minds of both the poet and his wife—"We grudged her right sair to the land o' the leal."

In the verse beginning "You were aye leal and true," we have the strongest proofs that Burns must have been the author. It bespeaks exactly the frame of mind in which he passed the last days of his existence, as seen in these Dunlop letters, and elsewhere, and is briefly stated as being the outcome of bitter reflection on friendships that had failed in the hour of need, when Jean, in the direst of poverty, nursed him till she could no longer stand, and was to be regarded as *the only*

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really true friend he could then rely on. None but Burns himself could have said—

“Your task’s near ended now, Jean,”

since we fail to find a genius who at that time could have been so intimately acquainted with Burns’s affairs. Then the welcome in this verse is an idea incident to Burns. It occurs in his works thus—

When death’s dark stream I ferry o’er—
A time that surely shall come—
In Heaven itself I’ll ask no more
Than just a Highland welcome.

Such utterances will linger in the mind, and it is surely reasonable to suppose that this idea would assert itself again, when such prospects were in view. Besides the following quotation from what Burns speaks of as being the finest song in the language, identifies the first line of the verse:—

My Turkey slippers maun gae on,
My hose o’ pearl blue,
And a’ to please my ain gudeman,
For he’s baith leal and true.

In comparing the Jean version with the John copy of Lady Nairne, we find that the verse with which we are dealing—

The Song claims Burns as the Author.

You were aye leal and true, Jean,
Your task's near ended now, Jean,
And I'll welcome you
To the land o' the leal.

—is the only one in the whole poem that has been remodelled. That it should have been so changed while all the others remain intact, is suggestive of some necessitating cause. Supposing the "John" version to have been the first, there seems no apparent reason for the reconstruction of this verse. The substitution of "Jean" was as ample in this verse as it is in the others, and then the verse would have stood exactly as it is commonly sung at the present time:—

O, haud ye leal and true, Jean,
You day is wearin' thro', Jean, etc.

Where, then, is the explanation? If we put the Jean version first, we find a key to the mystery. Jean has a task to perform, and this task, of which the poet speaks so impressively as being nearly ended, will not adapt itself to John—*John does not make a good sick nurse*; "Your task's near ended noo, John," would require a deal of explanation before any one could find trace of what John's particular task really was—hence its inadmissibility. This

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is surely sufficient in itself to prove that—

THE JEAN VERSION WAS THE FIRST.

—in other words, the original—and that the “John” is the tinker version.

If further proof were still necessary we might find it in the fact that *the “John” version of Lady Nairne will not carry the title.* The unleal is not even hinted at, and we must appeal to the original copies before we can see for what reason the new name—“Land o' the Leal”—has been created. There we see at once that *the common designation ‘Heaven’ does not express the special meaning required.* It must show a contrast to the land of the faithless, and must of necessity be “The Land o' the Leal.” In remodelling the verse alluded to, the unskilful tinkerer has cut off the original reference, and the specially expressive designation has become alienated from the subject and exists only as an incongruity.

THE TINKERER IS THUS CAUGHT IN THE ACT,

and there is no longer any cause to doubt that the song was originally addressed to Jean.

The Song claims Burns as the Author.

Having gained this point, we have a clear prospect that, whoever the writer may have been, the subject is undoubtedly Burns's, and from what we know of his genius and character, together with the circumstances that attended the close of his life, we need seek for no other author than the great poet himself. When saying this we find refuge in the fact that *the "Jean" version bears the unmistakable mark of the master hand*. Who can read this and say it is not stamped with the trade mark of Burns?—

Dry your glist'ning e'e, Jean,
My soul lang's to be free, Jean,
Angels wait on me, Jean,
To the land o' the leal.

This is at once seen to be *the language of nature's true nobility*, and is felt to be far too seriously realistic to have been the conception of anyone who was outside the reality. To waste such transcendent language on a mere creation of the fancy would be bordering on profanity. The meditations of the great ideal mind are not ill to trace. He is wearin' awa, slowly but surely. There is little to

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regret—*sorrow, could, and care* have been his lot. The friendships in which he used to take so much delight have failed to bear the test. Even the *friendship of Mrs Dunlop*, which he valued so highly, and in which he put his utmost trust, *has failed to bear the test*. This world is seen to be the land of the faithless. The next stands out in happy contrast. It is "The Land o' the Leal," where the sun will ever shine, and where false friendships will be unknown. Filled with the prospect of the happy change, his soul longs to be free.

In his poem "To Ruin," we find the same desire expressed in terms as follows:—

When shall my soul in silent peace
Resign life's joyless day?

In tracing the hand of Burns still farther, we have to mark the uncommon adaptation of the word "fain"—"We'll meet and ay be fain." This, as every one knows, is a very common word when used in the sense of eagerness or as an expression of anxiety ("as I would fain show"), but as a substitute for the word joyful, its use is so rare that we might search almost the whole realm of poetry in vain to find a single instance of its application outside the

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works of Burns. Yet strange to say, we have it there so common that it may be said to characterise his style. In his epistle to W. Simpson he says—

Auld Coila noo may fidge FU FAIN,
She's gotten poets o' her ain.

In his tale of "Tam o' Shanter" we find it thus—

"Satan glowered, and fidg'd fu' fain."

In the tale of "The Twa Dogs," we find it twice repeated—

"My heart has been sae fain to see them,
That I for joy hae barkit wi' them."

And again—

"Nae doot but they were fain o' ither."

And might we not add—

"We'll meet, and we'll be fain."

Had there been no rival author in the field, this evidence might have been sufficient in itself to have traced the authorship to Burns.

Viewed as a whole, the "Jean" version of the song is seen to be all worded in the same simple, yet realistic style, and shows the one hand throughout. In the Baroness's copy a combination is at once apparent, her alterations being easily distinguishable by their

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inferior quality, as well as by the spirit of indifference in which they are conceived. "The battle that sinfu' man e'er brought to the land o' the leal," if not doggerel pure and simple, must be classed as *very poor logic indeed*. "O haud ye leal and true, John," etc. (taken literally), is decidedly conceived in the ludicrous. This is seen to result from a difficulty in the work of alteration, which difficulty, "Your day is weel near through" (as we have it in the manuscript) tries to get over—but fails. In short, while the Baroness's version is seen to be full of unnatural affectation, the version attributable to Burns is *simple and real*, and true to all the circumstances under which, in its early history, it was said to have been written.

Then, in comparing the two versions, we have to mark a very different arrangement of the verses, and there is much to be seen that requires explanation. Why does the "John," or "Jean" as it may be, occur in the third line of the verses of both the Montrose copy and that given by Urbani, when it is not in the version of Lady Nairne. Had her ladyship's version been the first, surely the

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copyist would not have introduced a very apparent blemish that did not occur in the original. Nothing happens without a cause. What, then, must have been the cause of this? After taxing our wits to the full, the best, and almost the only explanation we can find (all things considered) is that the version attributable to Burns is the original—taken word for word from *the manuscript which the poet did not live to revise*.

In the verse, "A' our friends are gane," we may see further strong proof of the Burns authorship. This verse breathes the very subject of his latest lamentations. It is well known that Burns was in a raving condition at intervals before he died, and it is also well known that the subject of his latest lamentations was the unfeeling manner in which he was left alone, when distress overtook him, by those of whom he had expected better things—

A' our friends are gane, Jean,
We've lang been left alane, Jean—

tells a tale that cannot be refuted. That Burns felt his friends were all gone is proved by his last letter. Writing of Jean to her

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father on 18th July, he says—"What a situation to be in, *poor girl—without a friend.*"

What more do we require to prove the authorship? No outsider could have taken upon him to say Burns's friends were all gone, and seeing he was deeply concerned on the very subject of the verse about the time it is said to have been written, we have no alternative but to give the credit to Burns himself. The circumstances are at once seen to be exactly those of Burns, and no one knew them except himself. The child referred to in the song died in the autumn of 1795 (in her third year) at Mauchline, while Burns was staying in Dumfries. That circumstance is therefore seen to have been completely isolated from all outside concernment, until Currie's biography appeared. Burns's domestic affairs could not have been so fully known to the outer world, and certainly no one could have pictured what is known to have been more imagined than real, but Burns himself. The air to which the song is set is suggestive of Burns. He knew it well and all its history. His correspondence with George Thomson shows that it was with him a very especial

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favourite. He says, "I am delighted with many little melodies which the learned despise as silly and insipid. I do not know whether the old air 'Hey Tutti Taitie' may rank among this number, but well I know that, with Fraser's Hautboy, it has often filled my eyes with tears." To this air he had composed "Scots Wha Hae," and who can say that Bruce's march at Bannockburn, which the air is said to have been, may not have caught the great ideal mind, when confronting the last enemy. His biographers tell us that—

The manly spirit of Burns never deserted him to the last, and when we consider that he wrote verses to Jessie Lewers, and other verses, mentioned by Mr Gray, besides a poetical intimation of his death to Rankine, all within a very short period of his death—it amounts to an accusation of wilful neglect to say that though living in poetry he had *not a single word for Jean*. In support of this we need only give an extract from his letter to Mr Clark, dated 26th June, 1796—"Alas, Clark, I begin to fear the worst. As to my individual self, I am tranquil, and would despise myself if I were not. But Burns's poor widow and

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half a dozen of his dear little ones—helpless orphans—there I am weak as a woman's tear. Enough of this, 'tis half my disease." Was not his last will and testament—"I'll welcome you to the land o' the leal?" If it really was, and the evidence bears it out, *there is certainly a black stain that requires to be removed from the history of Scotland*; and it is for Scotsmen to see to it who from Burns have accepted a priceless gift, but who in many cases have despised the giver.

Having now seen that the whole song and all the circumstances connected with it claim Burns as the author, and that no other claim can be substantiated, we cannot surely throw away so much accordant evidence for the want of the manuscript. When we consider that for some days before Burns died his wife was laid aside through illness, and that for weeks after the house was in the hands of strangers (Maxwell Burns having been born on the day of the poet's funeral), we can see enough to account for the want of the manuscript. But it is better not to charge anyone, we know not what might have been used for a manuscript. Verses to Jessie Lewers were written on the

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back of a menagerie bill; and indeed we need not be surprised that the song has come to the world in a mysterious way, for if we regard it as *the private property of Mrs Burns*, which no prying eyes had any right to see (and how are we to regard it otherwise), it must have come in a secret way, else would the world never have seen it. Viewed in this light, *the very fact that it has come mysteriously adds proof to our theory*. Be that as it may, the ever popular version of the song came to the world as the work of Burns, and to-day it is to be seen apparently as it left the author's hands—the last verse bearing out the proof that it was indeed the last effort of the muse of Robert Burns.

In introducing the song it would seem as if a plan of secrecy had been devised and carried out for certain reasons which may in some measure be conjectured. We cannot think that the writer of the song, who must have been a practical genius of the highest order, could have felt ashamed to own such an excellent piece of work; nor can we think that he walked the earth in full knowledge that his name would live for ever if he but

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revealed it, and yet did not do so. *He must have died, as the song indicates.* On the other hand, if the song was originally addressed to John, and we take it as being written in the reality, we must find proof that *a poetess gifted above all we are acquainted with*, and who must have written many things besides, died at the *same time*, and amid all the *peculiar circumstances* that attended the death of the poet Burns, *unnoticed and unknown*. Is it possible that her husband could have been ashamed to give her name to the world as the author of a poem that was too good to keep. It is here the mystery thickens, and we must seek revelations elsewhere.

Again, if we suppose the song to have been written from pure imagination, we are no nearer to a solution of the problem. We find the writer is a genius of the very highest order and a poet of experience, *yet this is the only thing we have from his pen*; and there is a mistake visible which no such genius could have made—the song ought to have been addressed to a woman, then it would have been perfect. The sentiment is undoubtedly *masculine*, and a *woman's task* would have called

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for no explanation. It seems impossible that these things could have escaped the discernment of the writer, had the subject been one of his own creation. Again, if the writer is relating a real experience that was not his own, there is a great want of detail which the ingenious and (as we see experienced) poet could not have overlooked. What caused the uncommon weight of sorrow so specially referred to throughout the poem—sorrow so very uncommon, so unmitigated, that it must be called "*sorrow's self*," *so very oppressive that the soul longs to be free*. And why the lamentations for the want of friends? "*The could and the unleaf*." These things ought to have been explained—whether we regard the poem either as a creation of the writer's fancy, or the detail of a real experience not his own. To explain this want of detail we must conclude that the poem has been written in the reality, and that the writer is referring to things that did not require to be explained to the person whom he is addressing, the said person being a sharer in the sad experiences. *It was Jean*.

Starting with the assurance that the song

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has been the outcome of a real experience, and believing that the writer actually died as indicated, we need not be wholly surprised at the mystery connected with its advent. But who was the poetess capable of writing such a masterpiece that died amid such tribulation at this time? In looking for her we are only gazing into darkness. Such a person has never been referred to at any time. We know that Burns died at this time, and that his case suits exactly, but we must find another case *identical in every particular*, and must admit that a poetess of extraordinary talents died at the same time and amid the identical trials and sorrows that attended the death of Burns, if we are to believe that the original of the song was addressed to John. But we have no warrant for this belief. We see distinctly that *the John address does not suit*, and we likewise see, or at least suspect, that the mysterious advent of the song has been the outcome of a *purposed intention* on the part of those in possession of the secret of the authorship. In short, the whole mystery seems to have been created by a change of the address which must have been effected for the purpose

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of a disguise. John and Jean are the only names that can be *decently* applied, and the latter is the only name that fulfills all the requirements. *Change the name to Jean and the song becomes perfect in every line and the whole mystery of the authorship disappears. Jean's task does not puzzle anyone.*

It passed current for nearly seventy years that Burns wrote the song on his deathbed. "There seems no record of how this statement originated, but it seems quite feasible to suppose that at one time there were persons in the secret who could testify to the truth of it. Pieter Urbani, the great singer, who says in his book that the song was written by "A Gentleman," was doubtless quite able to name the gentleman author, and very probably did so when occasion required. If he was in the habit of singing the "Jean" version, as may be reasonably supposed, the people could not fail to see that it referred to the dying circumstances of Burns, and must have been written by him in reference to such things as were severely felt by both him and his wife. Some people hold the contention that had Burns been the author, his wife would have made

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the claim good. But what would they themselves have done in the circumstances. Given but a fraction of the modesty claimed for the Baroness Nairne, Mrs Burns would certainly not have given her name with it. It was a revelation of things which the public had no right to expect, and doubtless she would not be inclined to expose herself rashly to the sympathies of the world as she had known them. Besides being her husband's last dying lamentations, she may have had her doubts as to whether the world was worthy of them. The song is clearly the embodiment of a private conversation betwixt Burns and his wife, and refers to things in their experience that were well understood to both, and which needed no explanation.

The Inaccuracy of Dr Rogers.

It has been said of Dr Rogers that he was not too particular about truth, so long as he had a good going story, and in his fable of the Colquhouns, the unscrupulous story-

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teller clearly betrays himself. Instead of a trustworthy biographer, we find we have merely a scheming inventor to deal with, who's word is of no value whatever in the case. We have seen the *gross inconsistency* of the whole Colquhoun story, and we have also seen the fabulous story flatly contradicted in a letter professedly written by Lady Nairne herself. However reluctant we may be to do so, there is now no alternative but to throw the whole fabricated concoction overboard. According to this letter, the song was not written, as stated by Rogers, for any special purpose, and if Lady Nairne was the originator, she must have created the subject from her own imagination. It follows then, that if the song was really sent to Mrs Colquhoun at the time stated, it must have been prepared before the sad tidings—the alleged subject of the picture—came to hand. But how, we ask, does she unwittingly write from pure imagination, and at this most remarkable time, the negative to a subject so unique that it applies only to the deathbed circumstances of Burns. We require Dr Rogers to give an explanation of this, as well as of several other things which

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are anything but satisfactory. Referring to the "Jean" version of the song, published by G. Farquhar Grahame in 1848, Rogers says (quoting from Grahame):—"It seems to have been altered to make it appear as Burns's parting address to his wife." He then adds: "The verse referring to Jean's task, and also the one referring to the friends, are interpolations by a different hand. What would the great authority have said had he known that these verses occur in the oldest copies extant *addressed to John*. But was Dr Rogers really ignorant of this fact? He makes reference to the song appearing in Thomson's work, and if he actually saw it for himself, he must have made the unscrupulous statement simply *to clear the way for his story of Lady Nairne*. Such a statement was necessary—none of the verses referred to being found in Lady Nairne's copy. It is frequently asserted by Lady Nairne's supporters that the publishers of the "Scottish Minstrel" knew her as the author of "The Land o' the Leal," and the following is said to have appeared in a preface to the last volume:—"The editors would have felt happy in being permitted to enumerate the

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many original and beautiful songs that adorn their pages, for which they are indebted to the author of the much admired song, 'The Land o' the Leal,' but they fear to wound a delicacy that shrinks from all observation."

Allowing this to be a true statement, it requires to be reconciled with the following by Rogers, which appears on page 46 of her ladyship's notes:—"Twenty years after the 'Minstrel' was published, Lady Nairne was known to the editors only by her *nom de plume*." (*Were the editors afraid to wound the delicacy of a nom de plume?*). There is practically no room for truth here, and the two statements are opposed to each other even in the novel of Mrs Bogan of *that ilk*. Following this we read—"Certain rivals in trade had reproduced some of B.B. contributions to the 'Minstrel,' and the publisher was led on two occasions to apply to Lady Nairne through the ladies of the committee for her permission to vindicate his rights. In reply to the first of these applications, Mrs Bogan (L.N.) says she is sorry to have to repeat what she stated when the "Minstrel" was first published, viz., "That the songs marked

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B.B. in that work are her property, etc.” Strange to say, the first edition of the “Minstrel” has *not a single B.B. within the boards of it*, and “The Land o’ the Leal” is there among others marked “author unknown.” What have the creditors of Dr Rogers to say to this? The reply to the second application of the publisher is in these terms:—“Mrs Bogan of Bogan understands Mr Purdie wishes to have a line from her with regard to the songs written by her for the ‘Scottish Minstrel,’ viz., ‘Jeanie Deans,’ ‘The Lammie,’ and ‘The Robin Redbreast,’ which she declares to belong to Mr Purdie.” On examining the “Scottish Minstrel,” we find Mr Purdie had not published any of the songs named, and had therefore no such rights to protect, and no cause whatever to ask for such a letter. This is therefore proof positive that the great authority who has produced so many fabulous stories when crediting the authorship of “The Land o’ the Leal” and many other songs besides to Lady Nairne, was *a genius in invention*, when scope for pilfering was deemed a necessity. We notice, however, that her ladyship is credited with

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rendering bogus certificates at the age of 78 (Bogan had no existence neither had its mistress, consequently such a certificate was of no use to anyone—was she guilty?).

Again he says, "When the *parts* of the 'Scottish Minstrel' began to appear, Mrs Nairne became greatly alarmed lest her secret of authorship should be unveiled. She had subscribed her contributions B.B., and these initials had been attached to them in the printed pages of the 'Minstrel'." *The schemer is again seen at work.* The first edition of the "Minstrel" has not a single B.B. within the boards of it, and L.N. had no cause for fear as stated by her biographer, who says that she was so alarmed that she ceased to claim all the compositions she communicated to the publishing office. Some were inscribed "Sent by B.B.," others were despatched anonymously. These latter he says appear in the "Minstrel" as of unknown authorship. The committee of ladies received, and despatched others, which were simply inscribed "S.M.," the initial letters of "Scottish Minstrel."

Alas, the "Minstrel" has another tale to tell. Instead of the foregoing invention, in

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the second edition in which the signatures are given for the first time, the B.B. is quite as conspicuous in the last volume as it is in the first. I don't know how others may regard these false statements, but it seems to me that Rogers made them in order to provide scope for lifting from Purdie's "Minstrel" any unclaimed thing that suited his fancy. In support of this opinion we find the following songs inserted in her ladyship's book, which appear in the "Minstrel" with the signature "Unknown":—"Wha'll be King but Charlie?" which made its first appearance in Captain Frazer's "Melodies Peculiar to the Highlands;" "He's Ower the Hills," Rogers says, appears in the "Minstrel" with the signature "S.M.," while the fact remains to be seen that it is there marked "author unknown;" "The Highland Laddie," which Rogers says is assigned to L.N. on internal evidence alone, is also marked "unknown" in the "Minstrel." There are others too which need not be enumerated. There are altogether 12 songs in L.N.'s book that have been merely tinkered by her; four of these are marked B.B. in the "Minstrel," eight others appearing in

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her book are marked "author unknown." It seems no exaggeration to say on the foregoing evidence of the *unscrupulous story-teller*, that he has by his scheming invention put many things into Lady Nairne's name for which he seems to have had no warrant whatever. Had "The Land o' the Leal" escaped his clutches, it must have been by a miracle, but his sins have found him out, and *we have now ample proof that Burns was the originator of that coveted piece of work.*

Dr Rogers wrote the biography of Dr George Cook of Haddington for Chalmers' Biographical History of Eminent Scotsmen, and his son, viz., John Cook of Haddington, criticised it as follows:—"The account here given is extremely inaccurate. A person who professed to be entrusted with the drawing up of it applied to me for information, and I gave him in answer an accurate statement which was not used. The person referred to is Charles Rogers." The foregoing information is written on the margin of the page in the volume in which Dr Rogers' biography of Dr George Cook appears, and is signed by his son, John Cook, Hadd., 1857. A holograph

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letter from Dr Rogers asking the information is bound in the book in evidence of the untruthful biographer. Dr Rogers must have been aware that Lady Nairne was not the original author, and that she could claim merely the tinkered copy. Seeing these things, we are not surprised at the inconsistency of the Colquhoun story, nor need we wonder that the letter referring to "The Land o' the Leal" cannot be seen. This letter, which not only established Lady Nairne's fame, but which it was believed cleared up what had been a mystery to the world for over half a century, had it existed as a genuine document in Lady Nairne's handwriting, had surely not been awaiting to-day. But *it was written at nowhere, addressed to no name, and to nowhere sent*. Dr Rogers says it was written in reply to a correspondent who had urged the authoress to give some particulars regarding her most celebrated composition. Was he ignorant of the name of this person? One would naturally suppose that the possessor of such an important letter would have seen the necessity of giving a name as a guarantee of good faith, and would have been proud to have done

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so. A subsequent part of the letter is given as follows :—“I have only acknowledged the authorship to *a single other person except at your bidding*. Then we are told that that other person was Mrs Colquhoun. Thus the two persons known to be in the secret are Mrs Colquhoun, who Rogers tells never revealed the secret to anyone, and that mysterious person known as the gentlewoman in Edinburgh who possessed all Lady Nairne’s secrets. It follows then that the gentlewoman is asking information that she did not need to ask, or some other person has bidden Lady Nairne to acknowledge the authorship to the gentlewoman who, it is clear, knew all the story of the authorship from the first. Is it possible that such a letter could have been written to anyone and all the other tales be true?

Dr Rogers tells that he undertook the editorship of Lady Nairne’s works (in 1868) at the instigation of this gentlewoman, and we may reasonably suppose that he got much of his information, such as it is, from her. But why has she concealed her identity?*

*The gentlewoman is known to have been Miss Helen Walker of Dalry, an eccentric who attended tea parties with a black bag which she filled of the eatables to treat cabmen on her way home.

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had reasons for it which in a straight course do not appear to us; and the want of her signature is as inexcusable as the want of the important proof letter. *Truth does not appear as the characteristic of a class—neither is there a rank known as the infallible.*

In comparing the copies of Thomson and Urbani we see that both are from the same original. But if we compare these with the copy attributed to Baroness Nairne, we see at once that *she has not caught the idea of a true reality*, and that she has been *merely a tinkerer of the song*, and like all others she is seen to have been puzzled with John's task, having changed the verse. Again the verse beginning "Sae dear the joy was bought" is seen to be a patch by our inferior author, and whoever wrote the original, *the writer of that verse has clearly proved her incapacity*. These things, taken along with the fact that all the evidence to be either obtained or imagined refers to the National Bard, ought to decide who wrote "The Land o' the Leal."

Minstrel Committee accused of Plagiarism.

"The Scottish Minstrel," in which Lady Nairne's songs were first published, was projected by Robert Purdie, an Edinburgh music-seller, in 1821. It was conducted by a coterie of ladies, chief of which, according to Dr Rogers, was Mrs Nairne, who subsequently became the Baroness. The method of these ladies in dealing with the song, Thomson says, may be guessed from their subsequent proposal to prepare a family edition of Burns. Erring stanzas they cut out, and as for drinking songs, they would have none of them. R. A. Smith was the musical editor of the work, and the situation was complicated by the fact that Smith was one of George Thomson's correspondents and helpers. Writing to him in 1822, Thomson says he cannot help regretting that Smith's name should be connected with a publication so utterly tasteless—such wretched doggerel so copiously distributed—such mangling of good verses—for what purpose? Heaven knows, unless to please absolute fools—such interpolations with-

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out the least acknowledgment. All this provoked the unmeasured wrath and scorn of Thomson. In a letter to Allan Cunningham, dated 1823, he says:—"It mortifies me not a little to find that a paltry collection called 'The Scottish Minstrel,' published under the auspices of some canting old maids, in 5 vols. octavo, *Partly copied from my folio*. (*"The Land o' the Leal"* is doubtless included in this reference), and partly filled with the most vulgar rants ever chanted by the lowest of the rabble, is selling better than my collection. It is ushered into notice by a prudish preface in which a protest is entered against the songs of Burns, many of which (the writer says) have been purposely omitted." One might think this sufficient to damn the book, but the sisterhood go a great deal further, and without mercy have cut and maimed all the songs, ancient and modern, in which the dangerous word *kiss* occurs, and have hewed and carved in the most curious fashion all such couplets or verses as contain sentiments of tenderness or endearment, changing what is natural and beautiful into stiff and wretched doggerel. Is not this unpardonable impudence and folly,

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and a fit subject of reprobation for those connected with the press as guardians of the literary reputation of those who have gone down to the narrow house. (*Thomson must have felt it his duty to guard the literary reputation of Burns, and who else can he be referring to?*) He says "The editor must be a silly, tasteless, canting old seceder. It is impossible to conceive who else would so mangle our harmless and beautiful amatory ballads."

These remarks by George Thomson are quite in keeping with what we find in Lady Nairne's book. Her parodies—and they are numerous—are mostly inferior to the originals and have never been sung in this world, and to all appearance, never will be. In attempting an improved version of "The Land o' the Leal," she has merely succeeded in spoiling a line or two of Burns's famous song and in adding a verse of doggerel. To some admirers this may seem severe criticism, but it must be kept in view that facts are of first importance, and plain speech becomes a necessity.

George Thomson's commentary, taken from J. Cuthbert Haddon's life of that gentle-

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man, shows how he felt regarding the conduct of Mrs Nairne and her committee. He seems furious over the way songs taken from his folio have been utterly spoilt, and rendered of no account by a coterie of silly women. It was surely more than he could stand to see "The Land o' the Leal," which he speaks of so highly in his prefatory note as being the work of a genius, interpolated with the silliest of doggerel. What could be more provocative of indignation than to see a doggerel verse introduced into such an interesting poem, which he doubtless knew to be the last effort of the muse of Robert Burns, written by him on his deathbed. Thomson's attitude towards the conduct of Mrs Nairne's committee shows conclusively that no correspondence had ever existed betwixt him and her ladyship. In fact, he seems never to have heard tell of such a being; and giving credit to her biographers, we cannot suppose that he ever did. We have therefore no grounds for supposing that she wrote the song originally, as has been maintained by her ardent supporters; and it is for them now to clear her of the credit of claiming a song which did not belong to her, by attach-

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ing her signature to it in "The Minstrel," while conscious of having lifted it almost entirely from Thomson's folio, and with the knowledge that it had been credited to Robert Burns. If it was unpardonable impudence for Mrs Nairne and her committee to take songs from Thomson's work, and thus, as he says, convert them into wretched doggerel, what construction are we to put on the conduct of her ladyship's most ardent supporters who at the present time are so insistent in claiming the origin of "The Land o' the Leal" for her, despite the strongest proof that she was merely a tinkerer of the song which she found in Thomson's book. Impudence fails to be a name for it!

The Original Manuscript.

A DISTINGUISHED PHRENOLOGIST'S TESTIMONY.

The following is a verbatim copy of a letter which appeared in the Dundee "People's

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Journal" about the date given, and may be seen in the files of that paper :—

"Sir,—About a year or so before her demise, I had the pleasure of listening to Mrs Hamilton, the distinguished phrenologist, lecturing in Edinburgh. When discoursing on a cast of Burns's head, she read a few unpublished letters and poems of the poet. I forget the particulars of how she came in possession of these relics, but remember quite distinctly of her reading what she asserted was the original M.S. of 'The Land o' the Leal.' The reading of the said poem convulsed the audience with sobbing and grief, and Mrs Hamilton said, this is the unrevised manuscript of 'The Land o' the Leal,' written by Burns on his deathbed, his wife, Bonnie Jean, standing at the bottom of the tent bed on which the poet lay, wiping her fast falling tears with the print curtains, suggesting the verse—'Dry your tears, etc.' Mrs Hamilton also showed the audience a small piece of the curtain, and finished by saying—'The Land o' the Leal' was written by Burns when his feet were on the very edge of the mystic margin dividing the eternal and spiritual from

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the seen and transient, and with the cold dew of death on his brow. The accomplished lady designated it a poem born with the travelling pangs of an immortal spirit cleaving its covering of flesh, and that the poet was so exhausted that he fell back on his pillow, listing at the end of every line. I may mention that the asserted original copy, while including all that we find in the printed popular version, was considerably longer and more spontaneous and pathetic. Mrs Hamilton was then very aged, but her mental vigour and enthusiasm were unabated.

I am, &c.,

A. R. WILKIE.

1 Caledonian Road,
Edinburgh, Novr. 1st., 1884."

Regarding Mrs Hamilton, the following extract from a letter received from her son-in-law, viz., Dr Boyd, a retired medical gentleman, may be of interest:—

"Gowanlea,

Slamannan, 2nd Jany., 1900.

"Dear Sir,—I regret I am unable to answer your queries as to my late mother-in-law and

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Burns. She having been born three years after the poet's death, could not be called a contemporary. My wife remembers her being engaged in lecturing in Dumfries when a cast of the skull was taken; but as to being possessed of the MS. you refer to along with other Burns relics, she has no knowledge. She may have owned the articles at the time, but Mrs Hamilton being of a generous, free-handed disposition, would most likely have parted with them to gratify some enthusiastic admirer of the Bard. Mrs Hamilton's maiden name was Sillers, and her mother was spoken of as a descendant or relative of the Davie Sillars to whom he made frequent allusions in his poems."

Dr Boyd concludes with a summary of the Continental poets, all the chief of which he has studied in their own language. The above letter favours the opinion that Mrs Hamilton, as stated by Mr Wilkie, possessed the MS. Being in Dumfries at the time of Mrs Burns's death, she would very probably take the opportunity to secure the relics named. It is feasible to suppose that Mrs Burns would not part with the manuscript

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which contained her husband's last words, while she lived. It was at this time that the cast of Burns's head, referred to by Dr Boyd, was taken. More than likely it was the same cast that Mrs Hamilton used when discoursing on Burns's head to an audience in Edinburgh. It is still to be seen among the Burns relics in Dumfries.

The Montrose Copy.

It has been asserted by professing authorities, time and again, that no editor of Burns, nor any of his friends, ever claimed the song for him. *We are now able to confute these assertions on the very best of proof.* In the year 1819, what has been named "The Lyric Muse of Robert Burns" was published in Montrose, and in that work "The Land o' the Leal" appears with much evidence that it had been written by Burns when on his deathbed, as had been the common belief for well nigh seventy years. (This date gets in about four years before Lady Nairne's tinkered copy is either seen or heard of). At this time the poet's

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lawyer cousin, "James Burness," was living in Montrose, and it was no doubt through his instrumentality that the works of Burns came to be published there. Previous to the time the muse appeared, Smith & Hill (its publishers) had issued several editions of Burns's works; these seem to be all lost now, and are not to be found, otherwise our evidence might be more complete. It is feasible, however, to suppose that Smith & Hill *held the copyright from Mrs Burns*, and that James Burness must have been instrumental in procuring it for them; without the intervention of James Burness it is difficult to see how these editions should appear in Montrose. After the poet's death, James Burness was much interested in the welfare of Mrs Burns and the poet's family, with whom he was in regular correspondence, and we may well suppose that he knew all about these publications, which must have been gone about in legal form, otherwise he would have prevented them as infringements of the copyrights of Mrs Burns. It is therefore a likely supposition that James Burness must have been very much interested in the works of his illustrious cousin, and

The Montrose Copy.

being so, we cannot fail to see that he must have got the correct copy of "The Land o' the Leal" direct from the original manuscript which the poet wrote on his death-bed, and which he did not live to revise. As has been stated by Mrs Hamilton, the copy we see has not been revised, and for that and other reasons must be regarded as authentic. We observe particularly the peculiar spelling of Burns in the words *Bonie*, *ay*, and *sell*, and we know for certain that such orthography was *never used by Baroness Nairne*. What then accounts for these spellings appearing in the very first printed copies, which have evidently been disguised to make appear as if written by an unknown author? Are we to suppose that the printers of the time changed the correct spellings of the Baroness to make it appear as the spelling of Burns, in a poem which (to all appearance) Burns had never seen. If L.N. was the original author, this must have been the case, and to say so would be quite as feasible as the other tales told by Rogers, and which the friends and supporters of the Baroness never dream of calling in question. Inconsistency has no meaning to

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them—at least so it would appear. Apart from these peculiar spellings, which cannot be traced to any writer, except Burns, who by any possibility could be suspected to have written the song, we have the ungrammatical Scotch style which is also peculiar to Burns. “Joys *that's* ay to last” identifies Burns's style as seen in “Here's a health to them *that's* awa,” “Shouts o' war *that's* heard afar,” etc. We also observe that the copy is, with the exception of the “John” address, and the word “wink,” which is seen to be a printer's error for “wait,” identically the same as that given by Pieter Urbani, and which he says has been written by A Gentleman. Again we have to notice that the verse referring to the unleal friends which is given in Thomson's copy is in both these copies awanting, and a repetition of verse second is substituted to complete the measure. This shows without doubt that both copies are from the same original, which Urbani knew to have been written by A Gentleman. As has been already remarked, this verse which in these copies has been withheld, makes strong reference to the cause from which the song resulted. It has

The Montrose Copy.

been suppressed to prevent revelations, and from fear of giving offence to certain friends.

See Thomson's copy for the missing verse.

I'M WEARIN' AWA, JEAN.

Tune—"Tuttie Taitie."

I'm wearin' awa, Jean,
Like snaw when it's thaw, Jean,
I'm wearin' awa, Jean,
To the land o' the leal.

There's nae sorrow there, Jean,
There's neither cauld nor care, Jean,
The day's ay fair, Jean,
I' the land o' the leal.

Dry your glist'ning e'e, Jean,
My soul lang's to be free, Jean,
Angels wait on me, Jean,
To the land o' the leal.

Ye've been leal and true, Jean,
Your task it's near done now, Jean,
And I'll welcome you, Jean,
To the land o' the leal.

Our bonie bairn's there, Jean,
She was baith gude and fair, Jean,
And we grudg'd her sair, Jean,
To the land o' the leal.

Sorrow's sell wears past, Jean,
And joys are comin' fast, Jean,
Joys that's ay to last, Jean,
I' the land o' the leal.

The Land o' the Leal.

Fare ye weel, my ain Jean,
This world's care is a' vain, Jean,
We'll meet and ay be fain, Jean,
I' the land o' the leal.

There's nae sorrow there, Jean,
There's neither could nor care, Jean,
The day is ay fair, Jean,
I' the land o' the leal.

"The Lyric Muse of Robert Burns," from which the foregoing copy is taken, is contained in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

Seeing that a lifelong correspondence existed betwixt Mrs Burns and George Thomson, and that she was also in full correspondence with the poet's lawyer cousin in Montrose, it requires no stretch of imagination to understand how the authentic copy made its appearance there. Besides the Lyric Muse, there was at one time another edition of Burns's poems containing the song, prefaced with a note stating that it had been written by Burns on his deathbed. This edition contained also the song "O, are ye sleepin, Maggie?" with a note explaining that it had been found among Burns's papers. Thirty years ago this edition was quite common, and the writer is aware of at least two copies in

The Montrose Copy.

existence to-day, only they are in the hands of pro-Nairnites, who have no desire to let the truth be seen. This is quite a characteristic of the Nairne faction. Robert Ford, a true Nairnite, in his "Harp of Perthshire," gives a poem written in reference to "The Land o' the Leal" by Christian Gray, a Perthshire poetess, which he names "An Answer to 'I'm Wearin' Awa, John'." Being in possession of Miss Gray's book, which is dated 1821, we find the title falsified (in favour of the Nairne heresy), the correct wording being—"Song in answer to 'I'm Wearin' Awa, *Jean*'." Having no sympathy with such detestable practices, we think it right to make this exposure of the falsification.

As a further proof of the Burns authorship, we observe the testimony of another old-time authority, viz., Robert Gairns, poet of St. Martin's, Perthshire, born 1804, who concludes an appreciative poem on Burns in these words—

When to lengthen his days
There was nocht could avail,
He made his last song
Of the land o' the leal.

Newspaper Controversies.

In recent years there have been many disputes in the public prints regarding the rival claims of Burns and the Baroness Nairne, but in all that has appeared there has been nothing seen in the nature of proof that her ladyship did more than merely write a tinkered copy of Burns's song. Her existing relatives profess to have in their possession the original of the letter herein referred to, but up to the present time it has been kept from public view—and perhaps better it should be. If it should prove a genuine letter written by her ladyship, then it must appear as indubitable proof that she coveted Burns's famous song, and made a very foul attempt to capture the credit of its authorship. Had her intentions been strictly clean and honourable, she ought to have written more definitely, and to have said in answer to the question—which is said to have been put to her:—*I copied it, with the exception of a verse, and one or two slight alterations, from George Thomson's Select Scottish Airs.* Her reference to Burns is clearly a misleading statement intended to

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make people think that she was the originator and not Burns as had been believed. It is difficult to conceive of such a person as the Baroness Nairne being guilty of such meanness, but the evidence available, which we get on the authority of Dr Rogers, leaves us with no other alternative. The proofs in favour of Burns are legion, and with George Thomson's information added, the case for the Bard becomes perfect and must now be considered as settled for all time.

Considering the amount of information that has been made to appear in the public prints time and again, it must be a matter of surprise to many intelligent people to see that there are still writers who in their unthinking ignorance are fain to perpetuate the silly inconsistent stories of Dr Rogers. Is it prejudice or stupidity or what is to blame for such a senseless state of matters? It has even been asserted, in controversy, that Burns with all his genius could not have written the poem, and that his voice is not in it. People who descend to write in such terms must be woe-fully ignorant of the genius and character of him whom they seek to traduce, and it may

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not be out of place to show them in what esteem the poet is held by eminent men, whose ability to judge of him through his works is beyond question. To this end we may be permitted to give a quotation from a lecture by Dr Fort Newton at the City Temple, London, on 27th January, 1918. Speaking of Burns's poems, Dr Fort Newton said that he was a living force knitting men in a great human league of love and goodwill. The whole world was gentler and more joyous because Burns had lived. He was the God-endowed prophet of the rights of the common people, of whom it was said the Creator must have loved them because he made so many. "Of that Christianity which I love," said Dr Newton, "I found more of it in the poems of Robert Burns than in the sermons of those who denounced him. With all his failings, surely the man who wrote 'The Cottar's Saturday Night'," said the Dr, "could not have been far from the kingdom of Heaven."

Prejudice among the Nairnites is quite rampant, but fortunately there are others who hold a more unfettered opinion, among whom we have to note Dr Andrew Carnegie, who

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says he is quite satisfied that nobody but Burns could have written "I'm Wearin' Awa, Jean," and thinks it highly improbable that Lady Nairne could have assumed the character of a man on his deathbed addressing the world. Quite the reverse. He thinks it must have been a real man, and who, he says, but Burns could have written the poem.

Harry Lauder writes:—"I have always looked upon the Nairne version as a bad copy of Burns. No other man in this world could have thought on the title 'The Land o' the Leal' but Robert Burns. I have been a student of Burns all my life, and my opinion is 'The Land o' the Leal' was written by our dearly beloved poet Robert Burns, and is his everlasting work."

The Rev. Wm. Wye Smith, of St. Catherine's, Ontario, author of the New Testament in Braid Scots, writing on the subject, says:—"I am now quite convinced of the Burns authorship; you have carefully sifted and made out your case, and I thank you for your pains."

Others too numerous to mention have written in a similar strain.

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It frequently happens when listening to a true rendering of the song that some attentive hearer will realise the thoughts and feelings of the great poet when his life was about to close, and will admire *the grand spirit that never deserted him even to the last*; but imagine the disappointment when someone tells him, on the authority of some paltry newspaper, that it was written by Lady Nairne on the death of a baby. Away now with such senseless rubbish, *Lady Nairne's song is proved twenty times over to be but a parody on the one here referred to*. Moreover it was twenty years after the original copy appeared before her tinkered copy was either seen or heard of.

Briefly in conclusion, "The Land o' the Leal" is the deathbed valediction of Robert Burns, and as such, is a thing of much importance, telling, as no other story can, the real frame of mind in which the great poet of Scotland passed the last moments of his existence. That such an important piece of work should be allowed to be claimed for Baroness Nairne is a shame and a scandal, and a thorough disgrace to the land in which Burns was

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born. Where are the guardians of the poet's name and fame that such a scandal should be tolerated for a single instant? What of the Burns Federation? Cannot the members of that body pull themselves together and do something to justify their existence? Surely they could do much to restore the crown of fame to the head of him who is so clearly seen to have the true and just right to wear it. What is the good of multiplying monuments to the memory of Burns when this monument erected by himself, and which is of more vital consequence than all the others put together, must be taken from him and given to an aristocratic scribbler for merely interpolating his famous farewell poem with a few lines of wretched doggerel? Clear out the scandalous iniquity and let the truth prevail. "The Land o' the Leal" was written by Robert Burns when his feet were on the very edge of the mystic margin dividing the eternal and spiritual from the seen and transient, and with the cold dew of death on his brow. So said the people of the olden time, and from a searching investigation we find them right to-day. "Facts are chiels that winna ding and downa be disputed."

A Questionable Authority.

In preparing this treatise the writer has consulted many so-called authorities, among which is to be named Mr Wm. Scott Douglas, editor of the Kilmarnock edition of Burns's works. This gentleman includes "The Land o' the Leal" in his edition, with the remark that it was written by Carolina Baroness Nairne, and sent to the press anonymously over seventy years ago. We can only accept this statement as a tall conjecture by Mr Douglas. We know that George Thomson was the first to publish the song, and his version, which appeared in 1802, and which contains the peculiar spellings of Burns, is in every way superior to the parody written by Baroness Nairne. The fact that these spellings are not found in the orthography of Lady Nairne proves conclusively that Thomson's copy was not written by her. Her tinkered version was never seen nor heard of until 1823, when it appeared in Purdie's "Scottish Minstrel," and there is every reason to believe that it was copied from Thomson's folio along with many others which her ladyship parodied,

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and which may be seen in her book. George Thomson complains bitterly of the Minstrel Committee copying songs from his works, and when we remember that Mrs Nairne was the chief moving spirit in this Committee, we have no difficulty with the mystery of the authorship. Scott Douglas has been no investigator in this case, he has merely copied from Dr Rogers with the exception of a few incongruous interpolations which are evidently of his own conception, and as such are very questionable improvements.

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The foregoing treatise on the authorship of "The Land o' the Leal" had just been completed for the press when the subjoined article dealing with the Lady Nairne letter came unexpectedly to hand.

Lady Nairne's Claim to Authorship.

A PHOTOGRAPHIC EXPOSURE.

Extracted from the "Glasgow Weekly Herald"
of 15th March, 1919.

Some years ago the vexed question of the authorship of "The Land o' the Leal" was thrashed out in these columns between Mr Alexander Crichton of Collace, Burrelton, who claimed the poem for Burns; and the late Robert Ford, and others who championed the traditional claim of Lady Nairne. The latter, it may be recalled, based their claim not only on commonly accepted tradition, and on what they regarded as internal evidence, but also and very specially on what was supposed to be a direct and unequivocal declaration made

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on the subject by Lady Nairne in the course of a letter written to a friend in her old age.

As reproduced by Dr Rogers, her Ladyship's biographer, the material portion of this letter read as follows :—

“The land o’ the leal” is a happy rest for the mind in this dark pilgrimage. . . . Oh, yes, I was young then. I wrote it merely because I liked the air so much, and I put these words to it, never fearing questions as to the authorship. However, a Lady would know and took it down, and I had not Sir Walter’s art of denying. I was present when it was asserted that Burns wrote it on his deathbed, and that he had it “Jean” instead of “John,” but the parties could not decide why it never appeared in his works, as his last song should have done. I never answered.

Despite Mr Crichton’s cogent reasoning to the contrary, this direct claim of the Baroness appeared conclusive, and the suggestion that the letter itself was surrounded by an air of mystery seemed almost unworthy. As regards either the existence or the genuineness of the

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letter there need now be no doubt. The original is in the possession of Major Blair Oliphant of Ardblair Castle, Blairgowrie, and through his courtesy we were enabled some time ago to have it photographed. From the

*Abundant
there is a happy end for them
in this South fulgurance - I was
was young then - I was not
anew because I liked the air so much
that these words that never leaving
questions as to authorship*

accompanying facsimile of the essential passage of the letter (the copyright of which belongs to Major Oliphant), it will be seen that Dr Rogers took considerable liberties in making his transcription; or, as Major Oliphant euphemistically puts it in a covering letter to the Editor—"Rogers has made one or two mistakes in deciphering it." Major Oliphant gives his own transcription, which is as follows:—

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"The land of the leal" is a happy rest for the mind in this dark pilgrimage. O yes, I was young then. I . . . wrote it—merely because I liked the air so much, put these words to it, never fearing questions as to authorship. However, a Lady would know and took it down, and I had not Sir W.'s art of denying. I was present when asserted that Burns composed it on his deathbed, and that he had it Jean instead of John, but the parties could not decide why it never appeared in his works, as his last lay should have done. I never made but 2 others, I think, except at your bidding.

Apart from the important point to which we are coming, our reading differs from the Major's only as regards the last sentence. To our seeing, it reads :—

I never made but one other, I think, except at your bidding.

But whether it was one or two other copies which the Baroness made except at the bidding of her correspondent—Miss Helen Walker, of Dalry, whom her Ladyship addressed as "Dear Miss Helen"—is as immaterial to the

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question at issue as the liberties which Dr Rogers took with the original.

The Missing Word.

What does matter is the word which the Major indicates as wanting. Rogers, in all his editing, took no notice of this. It will be noticed that, after the words "I liked the air so much," he interpolated the words "and I," which are not in the original. Similarly he wrongly inserted the words "it was" before the word "asserted," while he quite needlessly expanded Lady Nairne's "Sir W.'s" into "Sir Walter's." These, however, and even the transformation of the last sentence—

"I never made but one other, I think,
except at your bidding"—

into

"I never answered,"

are small matters compared with Dr Rogers' failure to note the partial erasure of what is obviously an all-important word. "Unfortunately," writes Major Oliphant, "there is an illegible word in an important place." But he leaves it at that, and makes no attempt to supply the omission.

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If we might venture to help him, it would be by way of suggesting that the missing word is none other than *never*, and that instead of writing "I wrote it," as has been so long represented, Lady Nairne actually wrote "I *never* wrote it." The word which we read as "never" has no doubt suffered somewhat badly from wear and tear, but there is at least ample room for it between the words "I" and "wrote," and what remains of it—notably the "ver" at the end—is so identical with the outline of the "never" two lines below, as to leave the careful reader no option but to fill in the gap. The suggestion is a startling one, and the emphatic disclaimer which it implies contrasts strangely with the vagueness of the rest of the letter. But this vagueness—studied or otherwise—is, it may be noted, quite in harmony with Lady Nairne's only other known reference to "The Land o' the Leal" and its authorship. This also occurs in a letter to Miss Walker, then residing at 14 Lynedoch Place, Edinburgh, and reads—

A Scotch Lady here—Ly. M'Niel—
with whom I never met in Scotd., is so

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good as, among perfect strangers, to denounce me as the origin of "the land of leal." I cannot trace it, but very much dislike—as ever—any kind of publicity.

Of this letter we have also a photograph, but, like the other (of which the top has been torn away), it is undated, though it is known to have been written from Paris.

If our theory is right, then Lady Nairne claims—not to have written "The Land o' the Leal," but merely to have added certain words to it, as Mr Crichton sought so assiduously to make out.

The all important proof letter, which has been kept in abeyance for over fifty years, has—thanks to the editor of the "Glasgow Weekly Herald"—been brought to light at last. That its publication should have caused an uncommon sensation in literary circles is not to be wondered at, when we consider the amount of literary effort that in times past has been wasted in lectures, essays, etc., extolling the

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Baroness and her work, by men who in their blind zeal never forgot to name her ladyship as the angelic authoress of the famous song "The Land o' the Leal." These opinionative critics held a belief that Burns, with all his genius, could not have written the poem—although all the many circumstances referred to in it were his, and his alone. He was in their eyes too much of a scapegrace to think on anything of the kind, and none but Lady Nairne could have done it. With none but Burns now to fall back upon, it is hoped that opinion will change and that the man who wrote "The Cottar's Saturday Night," who has been styled the poet of humanity, will be found equal to the task, and will be seen to have brought more of Heaven to earth than many of his critics have ever dreamed of in their philosophy. Who committed the forgery that lifted the crown of fame from the head of Robert Burns we may suspect but will never know for certain. That the falsification should have escaped the notice of all Lady Nairne's biographers we can scarcely believe. We trust, however, that Burns will now come into his own, and that instead of saying

The Land o' the Leal.

“Written by Lady Nairne,” the song books
will give the note as in the days of old—

“Written by Burns on his Deathbed.”

A. CRICHTON.

ADDENDA.

Since the book was printed, copies of the song have been found which require to be recorded.

In the Alnwick edition of Burns's Poems, printed by Wm. Davidson in 1812, there is a copy identically the same as the one printed in Montrose in 1819. This copy, which is evidently unrevised, has the Burns spellings, together with his ungrammatical Scots style. Another copy of Burns's works, printed by B. Chapman, in Philadelphia, in 1823, gives "The Land o' the Leal," with the statement that it is supposed to be the last song by Burns, and addressed to his wife. In addition to these copies there is the one already referred to on page 100, making in all four different editions of his works in which the song is claimed for Burns. It is therefore a great fallacy for professing authorities to say—as they do—that no editor of Burns's works has ever claimed the song for him.

Apart from these copies, there is yet another found in the "Universal Magazine" of date February, 1809, page 120. This copy, presumably an authentic one, is accompanied with the story of its composition, and is fully ascribed to Burns. With this we close our record, in the hope that Burns's claim will now be considered as settled.

The star o' Robbie Burns this day
Traverses every clime,
And sheds a glorious beaming ray
That brighter grows with time.
A.C.