

my very grateful acknowledgments; but your patronage is a bounty peculiarly suited to my feelings. I am not master enough of the etiquette of life to know, whether there be not some impropriety in troubling your lordship with my thanks, but my heart whispered me to do it. From the emotions of my inmost soul I do it. Selfish ingratitude I hope I am incapable of; and mercenary servility, I trust, I shall ever have so much honest pride as to detest. R. B.

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XXXIX.—TO MR. JOHN BALLANTINE.

EDINBURGH, *Jan. 14th, 1787.*

MY HONOURED FRIEND,—It gives me a secret comfort to observe in myself that I am not yet so far gone as Willie Gaw's Skate, "past redemption;" for I have still this favourable symptom of grace, that when my conscience, as in the case of this letter, tells me I am leaving something undone that I ought to do, it teases me eternally till I do it.

I am still "dark as was Chaos" in respect to futurity. My generous friend, Mr. Patrick Miller, has been talking with me about a lease of some farm or other in an estate called Dalswinton, which he has lately bought near Dumfries. Some life-rented embittering recollections whisper me that I will be happier anywhere than in my old neighbourhood, but Mr. Miller is no judge of land; and though I daresay he means to favour me, yet he may give me, in his opinion, an advantageous bargain that may ruin me. I am to take a tour by Dumfries as I return, and have promised to meet Mr. Miller on his lands some time in May.

I went to a mason-lodge yesternight, where the Most Worshipful Grand Master Chartres, and all the Grand Lodge of Scotland visited. The meeting was numerous and elegant; all the different lodges about town were present, in all their pomp. The Grand Master, who

presided with great solemnity and honour to himself as a gentleman and mason, among other general toasts gave "Caledonia, and Caledonia's Bard, Brother Burns," which rung through the whole assembly with multiplied honours and repeated acclamations. As I had no idea such a thing would happen, I was downright thunderstruck, and, trembling in every nerve, made the best return in my power. Just as I had finished, some of the grand officers said so loud that I could hear with a most comforting accent, "Very well, indeed!" which set me something to rights again.

I have just now had a visit from my landlady,\* who is a staid, sober, piously-disposed, vice-abhorring widow, coming on her climacteric; she is at present in great tribulation respecting some daughters of Belial who are on the floor immediately above. My landlady, who, as I have said, is a flesh-disciplining godly matron, firmly believes her husband is in heaven; and, having been very happy with him on earth, she vigorously and perseveringly practises such of the most distinguished Christian virtues as attending church, railing against vice, etc., that she may be qualified to meet him in that happy place where the ungodly shall never enter. This, no doubt, requires some strong exertions of self-denial in a hale, well-kept widow of forty-five; and as our floors are low and ill-plastered, we can easily distinguish our laughter-loving, night-rejoicing neighbours when they are eating, drinking, singing, etc. My worthy landlady tosses sleepless and unquiet, "looking for rest and finding none," the whole night. Just now she told me—though by-the-by she is sometimes dubious that I am, in her own phrase, "but a rough an' roun' Christian,"—that "we should not be uneasy or envious because the wicked enjoy the good things of this life, for the jades would one day lie in hell," etc., etc.

I have to-day corrected my 152nd page. My best good wishes to Mr. Aikin.—I am ever, dear Sir, your much indebted humble servant,

R. B.

\* Mrs. Carfrae, Baxter's Close, Lawnmarket, Edinburgh, according to John Richmond, law clerk.