

remarks on the songs. A copy of this kind I shall leave with you, the editor, to publish at some after period, by way of making the *Museum* a book famous to the end of time, and you renowned for ever.

I have got a highland dirk, for which I have great veneration, as it once was the dirk of *Lord Balmerino*. It fell into bad hands, who stripped it of the silver mounting, as well as the knife and fork. I have some thoughts of sending it to your care, to get it mounted anew.—Yours, etc.,
R. B.

CXCIV.—TO MR. PETER MILLER, JUN.,* OF
DALSWINTON.

DUMFRIES, Nov. 1794.

DEAR SIR,—Your offer is indeed truly generous, and most sincerely do I thank you for it; but in my present situation, I find that I dare not accept it. You well know my political sentiments; and were I an insular individual, unconnected with a wife and a family of children, with the most fervid enthusiasm I would have volunteered my services; I then could and would have despised all consequences that might have ensued.

My prospect in the Excise is something; at least, it is—encumbered as I am with the welfare, the very existence, of near half-a-score of helpless individuals—what I dare not sport with.

In the meantime, they are most welcome to my Ode; only, let them insert it as a thing they have met with by accident and unknown to me. Nay, if Mr. Perry, whose honour, after your character of him, I cannot doubt, if he will give me an address and channel by which anything will come safe from those spies with which he may be certain that his correspondence is beset, I will now and then send him any bagatelle that I may write. In the present hurry

* He had offered Burns a post on the staff of *The Morning Chronicle*, of which newspaper Mr. Perry was proprietor.

of Europe, nothing but news and politics will be regarded ; but against the days of peace, which Heaven send soon, my little assistance may perhaps fill up an idle column of a newspaper. I have long had it in my head to try my hand in the way of little prose essays, which I propose sending into the world through the medium of some newspaper ; and should these be worth his while, to these Mr. Perry shall be welcome ; and all my reward shall be, his treating me with his paper, which, by-the-by, to anybody who has the least relish for wit, is a high treat indeed.

With the most grateful esteem, I am ever, Dear Sir,

R. B.

CXCV.—TO MRS. RIDDEL.

MADAM,—I dare say that this is the first epistle you ever received from this nether world. I write you from the regions of hell, amid the horrors of the damn'd. The time and manner of my leaving your earth I do not exactly know, as I took my departure in the heat of a fever of intoxication, contracted at your too hospitable mansion ; but, on my arrival here, I was fairly tried, and sentenced to endure the purgatorial tortures of this infernal confine for the space of ninety-nine years, eleven months, and twenty-nine days, and all on account of the impropriety of my conduct yesternight under your roof. Here am I, laid on a bed of pitiless furze, with my aching head reclined on a pillow of ever-piercing thorn, while an infernal tormentor, wrinkled, and old, and cruel—his name I think is *Recollection*—with a whip of scorpions, forbids peace or rest to approach me, and keeps anguish eternally awake. Still, Madam, if I could in any measure be reinstated in the good opinion of the fair circle whom my conduct last night so much injured, I think it would be an alleviation to my torments. For this reason I trouble you with this letter. To the men of the company I will make no apology.—Your husband, who insisted on my drinking more than I chose,