

XXII.—TO MR. JOHN RICHMOND, EDINBURGH.

MOSSGIEL, 9th July 1786.

WITH the sincerest grief I read your letter. You are truly a son of misfortune. I shall be extremely anxious to hear from you how your health goes on; if it is in any way re-establishing, or if Leith promises well; in short, how you feel in the inner man.

No news worth anything; only godly Bryan was in the inquisition yesterday, and half the countryside as witnesses against him. He still stands out steady and denying; but proof was led yesternight of circumstances highly suspicious, almost *de facto*; one of the servant girls made oath that she upon a time rashly entered into the house, to speak in your cant, "in the hour of cause."

I have waited on Armour since her return home; not from the least view of reconciliation, but merely to ask for her health, and to you I will confess it, from a foolish hankering fondness, very ill placed indeed. The mother forbade me the house, nor did Jean show that penitence that might have been expected. However, the priest,* I am informed, will give me a certificate as a single man, if I comply with the rules of the church, which for that very reason I intend to do.†

I am going to put on sackcloth and ashes this day. I am indulged so far as to appear in my own seat. *Pecavi, pater, miserere mei.* My book will be ready in a fortnight. If you have any subscribers, return them by Connell. The Lord stand with the righteous; amen, amen. R. B.

XXIII.—TO MR. JOHN RICHMOND.

OLD ROME FOREST,‡ 30th July 1786.

MY DEAR RICHMOND,—My hour is now come—you and

* Rev. Mr. Auld—Daddie Auld. † This accordingly he did.

‡ In the neighbourhood of Kilmarnock. Here he had deposited his travelling chest in the house of a relative.

I will never meet in Britain more. I have orders, within three weeks at farthest, to repair aboard the *Nancy*, Captain Smith, from Clyde to Jamaica, and to call at Antigua. This, except to our friend Smith, whom God long preserve, is a secret about Mauchline. Would you believe it? Armour has got a warrant to throw me in jail till I find security for an enormous sum. This they keep an entire secret, but I got it by a channel they little dream of; and I am wandering from one friend's house to another, and, like a true son of the Gospel, "have nowhere to lay my head." I know you will pour an execration on her head, but spare the poor, ill-advised girl, for my sake; though may all the furies that rend the injured, enraged lover's bosom await her mother until her latest hour! I write in a moment of rage, reflecting on my miserable situation—exiled, abandoned, forlorn. I can write no more—let me hear from you by the return of the coach. I will write you ere I go.—
I am, dear Sir, yours, here and hereafter, R. B.

XXIV.—TO MR. JOHN KENNEDY.

KILMARNOCK, *August 1786.*

MY DEAR SIR,—Your truly facetious epistle of the 3rd instant gave me much entertainment. I was only sorry I had not the pleasure of seeing you as I passed your way; but we shall bring up all our lee way on Wednesday, the 16th current, when I hope to have it in my power to call on you, and take a kind, very probably a last adieu, before I go for Jamaica; and I expect orders to repair to Greenock every day. I have at last made my public appearance, and am solemnly inaugurated into the numerous class.* Could I have got a carrier, you should have got a score of vouchers for my authorship; but, now you have them, let them speak for themselves,—

* The Kilmarnock Edition of his poems was published on 31st July.