

I am exceedingly pleased with your fancy in making the author you mention place a map of Iceland, instead of his portrait, before his works; 'twas a glorious idea.

Could you conveniently do me one thing?—whenever you finish any head, I should like to have a proof copy of it. I might tell you a long story about your fine genius; but, as what everybody knows cannot have escaped you, I shall not say one syllable about it.

R. B.

CII.—TO MR. ROBERT GRAHAM, OF FINTRAY.

SIR,—When I had the honour of being introduced to you at Athole House, I did not think so soon of asking a favour of you. When Lear, in Shakespeare, asked Old Kent why he wished to be in his service, he answers, "Because you have that in your face which I would fain call master." For some such reason, Sir, do I now solicit your patronage. You know, I dare say, of an application I lately made to your Board to be admitted an officer of the Excise. I have, according to form, been examined by a supervisor, and to-day I gave in his certificate, with a request for an order for instructions. In this affair, if I succeed, I am afraid I shall but too much need a patronising friend. Propriety of conduct as a man, and fidelity and attention as an officer, I dare engage for; but with anything like business, except manual labour, I am totally unacquainted.

I had intended to have closed my late appearance on the stage of life in the character of a country farmer; but, after discharging some filial and fraternal claims, I find I could only fight for existence in that miserable manner, which I have lived to see throw a venerable parent into the jaws of a jail, whence death, the poor man's last and often best friend, rescued him.

I know, Sir, that to need your goodness, is to have a claim on it; may I, therefore, beg your patronage to forward me in this affair, till I be appointed to a division, where, by the help of rigid economy, I will try to support that

independence so dear to my soul, but which has been too often so distant from my situation. R. B.

CIII.—TO HIS WIFE, AT MAUCHLINE.

ELLISLAND, *Friday, 12th Sep. 1788.*

MY DEAR LOVE,—I received your kind letter with a pleasure which no letter but one from you could have given me. I dreamed of you the whole night last ; but alas ! I fear it will be three weeks yet ere I can hope for the happiness of seeing you. My harvest is going on. I have some to cut down still, but I put in two stacks to-day, so I'm as tired as a dog.

You might get one of Gilbert's sweet-milk cheeses, and send it to. . . . On second thoughts I believe you had best get the half of Gilbert's web of table linen and make it up ; though I think it damnable dear, but it is no outlaid money to us, you know. I have just now consulted my old landlady about table linen, and she thinks I may have the best for two shillings a yard ; so, after all, let it alone till I return ; and some day soon I will be in Dumfries and ask the price there. I expect your new gowns will be very forward or ready to make, against I be home to get the *baiveridge*.*

I have written my long-thought-on letter to Mr. Graham, the Commissioner of Excise ; and have sent a sheetful of poetry besides.

CIV.—TO MISS CHALMERS, EDINBURGH.

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES, *Sept. 16th, 1788.*

WHERE are you ? and how are you ? and is Lady Mackenzie recovering her health ? for I have had but one

* On her first appearance in public in a new dress a young woman was subject to this tax, if claimed by the young man who happened first to meet her.