

life. I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably await me, and I am in some measure prepared, and daily preparing, to meet them. I have but just time and paper to return you my grateful thanks for the lessons of virtue and piety you have given me, which were too much neglected at the time of giving them, but which I hope have been remembered ere it is yet too late. Present my dutiful respects to my mother, and my compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Muir; and with wishing you a merry New-year's day, I shall conclude.—I am, honoured Sir, your dutiful son,

ROBERT BURNES.

P. S.—My meal is nearly out, but I am going to borrow till I get more.

VII.—TO SIR JOHN WHITEFOORD, BART., OF
BALLOCHMYLE.

SIR,—We who subscribe this are both members of St. James's Lodge, Tarbolton, and one of us in the office of warden, and as we have the honour of having you for master of our lodge we hope you will excuse this freedom, as you are the proper person to whom we ought to apply. We look on our Mason Lodge to be a serious matter, both with respect to the character of masonry itself, and likewise as it is a charitable society. This last, indeed, does not interest you further than a benevolent heart is interested in the welfare of its fellow-creatures; but to us, sir, who are of the lower order of mankind, to have a fund in view on which we may with certainty depend to be kept from want, should we be in circumstances of distress, or old age—this is a matter of high importance.

We are sorry to observe that our lodge's affairs with respect to its finances have for a good while been in a wretched situation. We have considerable sums in bills which lie by without being paid, or put in execution, and many of our members never mind their yearly dues, or

anything else belonging to the lodge. And since the separation* from St. David's we are not sure even of our existence as a Lodge. There has been a dispute before the Grand Lodge, but how decided, or if decided at all, we know not.

For these and other reasons we humbly beg the favour of you, as soon as convenient, to call a meeting, and let us consider on some means to retrieve our wretched affairs.—We are, etc.†

VIII.—TO MR. JOHN MURDOCH, SCHOOL-MASTER,
STAPLES INN BUILDINGS, LONDON.

LOCHLIE, 15th January, 1783.

DEAR SIR,—As I have an opportunity of sending you a letter without putting you to that expense which any production of mine would but ill repay, I embrace it with pleasure, to tell you that I have not forgotten, or ever will forget, the many obligations I lie under to your kindness and friendship.

I do not doubt, Sir, but you will wish to know what has been the result of all the pains of an indulgent father, and a masterly teacher; and I wish I could gratify your curiosity with such a recital as you would be pleased with;—but that is what I am afraid will not be the case. I have, indeed, kept pretty clear of vicious habits; and in this respect, I hope, my conduct will not disgrace the education I have gotten; but as a man of the world, I am most miserably deficient. One would have thought that, bred as I have

* It was in June 1782.

† The MS. of the foregoing joint letter in Burns's handwriting belongs to John Adam, Esquire, Greenock, and the letter was first published in 1878. Burns was first admitted in St. David's (Tarbolton) Lodge in July 1781. At the separation referred to he became a member of the new lodge, St. James's, of which, two years afterwards, he was depute-master.