

notes through the book. I would not give a farthing for a book, unless I were at liberty to blot it with my criticisms.

R. B.

CXCVII.—TO MRS. DUNLOP, IN LONDON.

DUMFRIES, 20th December 1795.

I HAVE been prodigiously disappointed in this London journey of yours. . . . Do let me hear from you the soonest possible. As I hope to get a frank from my friend Captain Miller, I shall, every leisure hour, take up the pen and gossip away whatever comes first, prose or poetry, sermon or song. In this last article I have abounded of late. I have often mentioned to you a superb publication of Scottish songs, which is making its appearance in our great metropolis, and where I have the honour to preside over the Scottish verse, as no less a personage than Peter Pindar does over the English.

December 29th.

Since I began this letter, I have been appointed to act in the capacity of supervisor here, and I assure you, what with the load of business, and what with that business being new to me, I could scarcely have commanded ten minutes to have spoken to you, had you been in town, much less to have written you an epistle. This appointment is only temporary, and during the illness of the present incumbent; but I look forward to an early period when I shall be appointed in full form; a consummation devoutly to be wished! My political sins seem to be forgiven me.

This is the season (New Year's day is now my date) of wishing, and mine are most fervently offered up for you! May life to you be a positive blessing while it lasts, for your own sake; and that it may yet be greatly prolonged is my wish for my own sake, and for the sake of the rest of your friends! What a transient business is life! Very lately I was a boy; but t'other day I was a young man; and I

already begin to feel the rigid fibre and stiffening joints of old age coming fast o'er my frame. With all my follies of youth, and, I fear, a few vices of manhood, still I congratulate myself on having had in early days religion strongly impressed on my mind. I have nothing to say to any one as to which sect he belongs to, or what creed he believes; but I look on the man who is firmly persuaded of infinite Wisdom and Goodness superintending and directing every circumstance that can happen in his lot—I felicitate such a man for having a solid foundation for his mental enjoyment; a firm prop and sure stay, in the hour of difficulty, trouble, and distress; and a never-failing anchor of hope when he looks beyond the grave. R. B.

CXVIII.—TO THE HON. THE PROVOST, ETC., OF
DUMFRIES.

GENTLEMEN,—The literary taste, and liberal spirit, of your good town has so ably filled the various departments of your schools, as to make it a very great object for a parent to have his children educated in them. Still, to me, a stranger, with my large family, and very stinted income, to give my young ones the education I wish, at the high-school fees which a stranger pays, will bear hard upon me.

Some years ago, your good town did me the honour of making me an honorary Burgess. Will you allow me to request that this mark of distinction may extend so far, as to put me on a footing of a real freeman of the town, in the schools?

If you are so very kind as to grant my request, it will certainly be a constant incentive to me to strain every nerve where I can officially serve you; and will, if possible, increase that grateful respect with which I have the honour to be, Gentlemen, your devoted humble servant, R. B.*

* With the Poet's request the Magistrates of Dumfries very handsomely complied. He was induced to make the request through the persuasions of Mr. James Gray and Mr. Thomas White, Masters of the Grammar School, Dumfries whose memories are still green on the banks of the Nith.—CUNNINGHAM.