

September 23rd 1788 Burns letter to Graham of Fintry

Ellisland 23^d Sept.^r 1788

Sir,

Though I am scarce able to hold up my head with this fashionable Influenza, which is just now the Rage hearabouts, yet, with half a spark of Live I would try to thank you [?] generous favour of the 14th which owing to my [?]-alls at the Post-Office in the hurry of harvest, came only to hand yesternight. - I assure you, my ever-honored Sir, I read it with eyes brimful of other drops than those of anguish. - Oh, what means of happiness the Author of Goodness has put in their hands to whom he has given the power to bless; & what real happiness has he given to those on whom he has likewise bestowed, kind, generous, benevolent Dispositions" - Did you know, Sir, from how many fears & forebodings the friendly assurances of your patronage & protection has freed me, it would be some reward for your goodness. - I am curst with a melancholy Prescience, which makes me the veriest coward, in Life. There is not any exertion which I would not attempt, rather than be in that horrid situation - to be ready to call on the mountains to fall on me, & the hills to cover me from the presence of a haughty Landlord, or his still more haughty Underling, to whom I owed - what I could not pay. - My Muse, too, the circumstance that after my Domestic Comfort is by far the dearest to my soul to have it in my power to cultivate her acquaintance advantage - in short, Sir, you have, like the great Being whose image you so richly bear, made a Creature happy who had no other claim to your goodness than his Necessity, & who can make you no other return ^{than} his grateful acknowledgement.- ^{My farm} I think I am certain will, in the long run, be an Object for me; & as I rent it the first three years something under, I will be able to weather by a twelvemonth or perhaps more; tho' it would make me set Fortune ^{^more} at defiance, if it can be in your power to grant my ^{^request} as I mentioned, in the beginning of next Summer - I was thinking that as I am only a little more than five miles from Dumfries, I might perhaps officiate there, if any of these Officers could be removed with more propriety than M.^r Smith; but besides the monstrous inconvenience of it ^{for} to me, I could not bear to injure a poor fellow by outing him to make way for ~~me~~ myself: to a wealthy Son of good-fortune like Smith, the injury is imaginary, where the propriety of your rules admit. - [page torn] well, I intended to have troubled you far [page torn]-tion of me soul, & plan of farming [page torn]-ll call me to town about February next then to have the honor of assuring you in propria persona how much & how truly I am Sir, you deeply indebted & ever grateful humble serv.^t

Rob.^t Burns.

Transcribed from ms in ROBERT BURNS BIRTHPLACE MUSEUM