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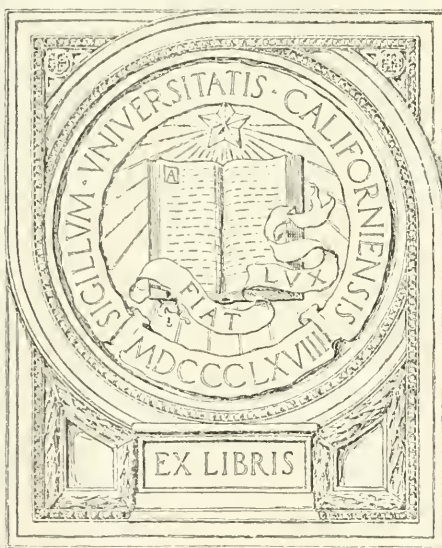
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OF
ROBERT BURNS.



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A SELECTED LIST OF EDITIONS OF THE

WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS,

AND OF

BOOKS UPON HIS LIFE & WRITINGS.

BY

J. C. EWING,

THE MITCHELL LIBRARY, GLASGOW.

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LONDON :

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To
W. CRAIBE ANGUS, Esq.,
GLASGOW.

The * denotes works which are indispensable to a Public Library.

- *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect, by Robert Burns. Kilmarnock. 1786. 8vo. [Reprinted 1867-1886.]
- Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect. By Robert Burns. [Second edition.] Edinburgh. 1787. 8vo.
- Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect. By Robert Burns. The third edition. London. 1787. 8vo.
- Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect. By Robert Burns. The second edition considerably enlarged. Edinburgh. 1793. 2 vols. 8vo.
- *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect. By Robert Burns. A new edition, considerably enlarged. Edinburgh. 1794. 2 vols. 8vo.

THESE five titles constitute a complete enumeration of "author's editions" of the verse of Robert Burns, with which, of course, the Public Reference Library would do well to begin.* The list makes a very meagre show. Its weakness lies not in the want of material, but in the non-publication of the material that was afterwards entrusted to Burns's earliest editor, Dr. James Currie. We are told by Maria Riddel, in a letter written after his death, that Burns had contemplated a revised edition of his *Poems*. Regarding her last interview with the poet, Mrs. Riddel wrote:—"Burns shewed great concern about the care of his literary fame and particularly the publication of his posthumous works. He said he was well aware that his death would occasion some noise, and that every scrap of his writing would be revived against him to the injury of his future reputation; that letters and verses written with unguarded and improper freedom, and which he earnestly wished to have buried in oblivion, would be handed about by idle vanity or malevolence, when no dread of his resentment would restrain them or prevent the censures of shrill-tongued malice or the insidious sarcasms of envy from pouring forth all their venom to blast his fame. He lamented that he had written many epigrams on persons against whom he entertained no enmity and whose characters he should be sorry to wound, and many indifferent poetical pieces which he feared would now, with all their imperfections on their head, be thrust upon the world. On this account, he deeply regretted having deferred to put his papers in a state of arrangement, as he was now quite incapable of the exertion." We know, too, from a letter of Burns's to George Thomson (May 1796), that the matter gave him much concern:—"I intend pub-

* A "first Burns" is not within the reach—or, should I have said, the present mood?—of the rate-supported library; but the book is easily accessible—and is sufficient for all purposes save that of the bibliographer—in the *fac-similes* of 1867-1886. The 1877 "Statue edition"—a reprint of that of 1786, though smaller in size and different in pagination—is also useful as showing variations in Burns's text.

lishing a Collection, on a cheap plan, of all the songs I have written for you, the [*Scots Musical*] *Museum*, &c.—at least of all the songs of which I wish to be called the Author. I do not propose this so much in the way of emolument as to do justice to my Muse, lest I should be blamed for trash I never saw or be defrauded by other claimants of what is justly my own." It is important to read these notes in view of the actual state of affairs. The poet's fear has been justified, as we know too well; and those lines which

" Dying he did wish to blot "

are now become public property.

No poet, I believe, has been more edited—or should I have said over-edited?—than Burns; none certainly has been more unfortunate in his editors. Truly, as the Marquis of Lorne puts it, Burns has suffered from too much "hugging." Even yet, a full century after his death, he waits a biographer. His "text," too, has not been respected as it ought. Faulty in the pages of Currie, it has gone from bad to worse. Dates have been altered; passages have been suppressed and others interpolated: generally, too, without any indication that such has been done. In his introduction to *The printed works of Robert Burns, a bibliography in outline* (1899), Mr. Craibe Angus says: "In bulk of material, if we include acting editions, translations, essays and the like, Shakespeare in a period of 276 years may out-number Burns, but in the number of editions (apart from the acting editions and the ana) Burns, with a circulation of 930 editions . . . takes (in the shorter period of 113 years) the foremost place among British authors." It will hardly be believed that in all these 930 editions of Burns there is not one which can lay claim to be the ideal edition. On the face of it that looks a rash statement, but nevertheless it is true. Not one of Burns's editors has given us such an edition as the poet himself, as revealed in his prose, would have approved. Particularly has the glamour of the phrase "never before published" over-mastered them, with the result that those "pieces local or unfinished, fragments the effusion of a poetical moment, and bagatelles strung in rhyme simply *pour passer le temps*" have been included in his published works, despite their author's express desire that they "should never see the light." That such is the state of affairs the chief blame must attach to Dr. Currie. That gentleman had an opportunity such as falls to the lot of few men, an opportunity which has not been afforded any other editor of Burns. That he did not rise to the occasion is Burns's own, as well as our, misfortune. "A thing of shreds and patches," inadequate, untrustworthy, unsatisfactory in every way—space will not permit a catalogue of the faults of this editor and biographer—Currie's *Works of Burns* (1800) stands a warning beacon to editors. It is the more remarkable when we find that, writing (1796) on the question of editing "the remains of poor Burns," Currie himself had said: "It is a national concern that this be done with care and skill."

We fear Currie's "care and skill" have not been commensurate with his desire, and one cannot help but echo Lamb's wish—expressed only a few months after the publication of Currie's work—that "the cobbler had stuck to his last."

But Currie is not the only editor who should never have tackled Burns; not a few of his successors are blameworthy. I do not propose, however, to say anything at present on the shortcomings of Cromek, Cunningham, Hogg or Chambers as editors of Burns. I would only draw attention to what has been said, without qualification, to be "the finest tribute ever paid to the memory of our greatest poet:" I mean *The Centenary Burns* (1896-7). Burns has at last received an editing worthy of his reputation as "the proud possessor of an exquisite literary gift," and I am on safe ground when I say that never before has his poetry been so carefully and systematically collated with the MSS. as has now been done by Messrs. W. E. Henley and T. F. Henderson.* *The Centenary Burns* may not be the final edition of his poetry, but, compared with existing editions, it is beyond all doubt the high-water mark of the literary editorship of Burns, and stands high among the standard works of the century. One regrets that Messrs. Henley and Henderson have not seen their way to treat in the same scholarly fashion the prose of Burns, for it must not be forgotten that he wrote "a prose which would shame no man," and which Scottish literature can ill afford not to have set forth at its best.

The Centenary Burns is the edition for the student; it is for the Reference, rather than the Lending, Department. If the editors could see their way to reduce their work to, say, three volumes foolscap-octavo size, I venture to say it would take the place of the two-volume Scott Douglas edition—by no means an ugly book, and, after all, the best Burns for the Lending Library. Such an edition would be "a boon and a blessing to men" and would ultimately supplant the "pot-boiler" Burns, against which librarians cannot be too much on their guard. The market is flooded with editions of the works of Burns—he used to be (I do not doubt he still is) one of "the booksellers' best friends, the four B's"—nearly all of which claim to be "complete and cheap." I do not deny that they are cheap; but, on examination, the pretension to completeness fades into air. Not only are many of Burns's verses omitted; the worse side of the case is that there are placed to his credit poems and songs which he did not write: "trash which he never saw." This "fathering" began with Currie, and has been continued through the entire century, even to *The Centenary Burns* and the "revised" edition of Robert Chambers's *Life and works of Burns*. Many of these pieces have been "nailed to the counter" as spurious by successive writers upon Burns, but that does not prevent their still finding their way into the "pot-boiler" editions. And so in these editions we get the "bastards" focussed, and a more disreputable family it would be hard to find. Let me illustrate.

* At the same time, I sometimes wish that Mr. Henley's exaggerated phrases—which, on occasion, are loose and capable of various interpretations—had, like Carlyle's essay, been edited by a judicial mind such as Jeffrey's.

In 1896, in honour (*sic*) of "Burns' Centenary," Messrs. Frederick Warne and Co., of London and New York, issued *Robert Burns' poetical works*, in a volume which styled itself "National Edition." Included in this book—from which, by the way, the editor has discreetly omitted his name—are certain "Verses to my Bed." Years ago it was pointed out that Burns could not possibly have been author of these "verses," for they appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine* some four months only after the famous "blast o' Janwar' win!" Here, too, we find stanzas "To the Owl"—long since known to have been penned by another than Burns—"The Vowels," "The Hermit" and "Lincluden Abbey," for none of which is there the least reason for attributing to Burns. Included here also are the songs of Burns, not to mention others than Burns. Among them is a "Mary," which, as it was published in 1774, was not written by Burns. "Shelah O'Neil"—rank Irish—the work of one of the Boswells of Auchinleck, also finds a place in the "National Edition." "Evan Banks"—by Helen Maria Williams—another "To Mary," "Katherine Jaffray" and a score more also are given. Edition after edition might be adduced in evidence, with the same poems, the same songs, given as "pure Burns." An edition issued (1895) from the house of Messrs. W. P. Nimmo, Hay and Mitchell—alas, in Edinburgh!—is also culprit in this respect. So also is an edition (one of "The Best Hundred Books" as appointed by Sir John Lubbock) issued (1893) by Messrs. George Routledge and Sons. Another, probably the most notorious, of the "pot-boilers" is a pretentious two-volume imperial-octavo "National edition of the Works of Robert Burns. Edited by William Wallace, M.A." (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co.). The journalistic editor of this "National" edition, having "edited" one Burns, "revised" a second and "elucidated" a third—the words are his own—has now budded into the "chief authority" in matters Burns, as the printed words of his publishers testify. A feature of this edition is that it makes an attempt to eliminate from Burns those whose work has been erroneously ascribed to him. To this end a division of the first volume is entitled "Pieces of Doubtful Authenticity." It is one of the many faults of the work that several pieces included there are not the least doubtful; it is another that several undoubtedly spurious poems are given in the volumes, though *not* among the "pieces of doubtful authenticity." One may be pardoned asking this "editor" on what grounds he admits as the work of Burns the "Verses to my Bed"—published, as I have said, in King George the Second's "hindmost year but ane"—or why he persists in foisting upon Burns "Lincluden Abbey," "Prayer to Mary," "Evan Banks" and others—too numerous to mention. It is not often that a writer throws his work into the melting-pot. Yet that is what this editor has done. He has no truer critic than himself. To do him justice, it is doubtful if ever any editor so entirely repudiated himself. It is only necessary to quote—from his "Preface" to the "National" edition—the remarkable statement that Currie's *Life of Burns* is "universally acknowledged to be the standard estimate of his life" to understand how completely Mr. Wallace has "rounded" and

thrown overboard Currie and the other false gods—the heroes of his former idolatry.

“ Thus bad begins,
But worse remains behind.”

In many editions, professedly complete, Burns has been “bowdlerised”—bowdlerised, too, as no poet before or since has been. One case, the most impudent outrage of all, I cannot pass over, particularly when the work is countenanced by the professedly “classic” Clarendon Press. I confess that—with many others—I do not like “selections,” although I can quite understand the utility of such. I do not mind much if an editor make a selection, provided he tell us it is a selection. But when he takes upon himself to interfere with the text of his author—to alter words and phrases in, and to omit stanzas from, his poems—one must protest. Such is the manner in which Burns is treated in *Selected poems. Edited by J. Logie Robertson.* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1889.) I do not doubt the editor’s good intentions, but there is a limit to all things. To begin with, the book is minus “The Jolly Beggars.” Scott without *Ivanhoe* would not be half so bad. Again, in “Scotch Drink,” twelve stanzas, at various parts of the poem, are omitted, in most cases for reasons which are not apparent. The next poem—following the order of the Kilmarnock edition—is the “Prayer to the Scotch Representatives” to

“ echo thro’ Saint Stephen’s wa’s
Auld Scotland’s wrangs.”

Again two verses are left out, without reason assigned. In one the sole offence seems to be Burns’s sublime threat to

“ drink Pitt’s health in auld Nanse Tannock’s
Nine times a week.”

From “The Holy Fair” the last stanza is omitted; the “Address to the Deil” wants two verses; “Hallowe’en” lacks stanza 6 and two lines of 16. I say nothing of some decidedly original readings to be found in the pages of this *Selected poems*. It is not so much that the selection is not representative—how could it be without that “puissant and splendid production, The Jolly Beggars?” It is that, without apology, without explanation, without even a hint—except a line in the Editor’s “Introduction”—that such is being done, stanzas are bodily omitted from the text—and stanzas, too, which have not been excluded from even “Drawing-room” editions. One remembers Burns’s trenchant “Gelding’s nae better than ’tis ca’t”; and wishes that Mr. J. Logie Robertson’s studies had extended to the prose works of his author, where he would read what Burns wrote (April 1793) to George Thomson:—“Ramsay, like every other poet, has not been always equally happy in his pieces; still I cannot approve of taking such liberties with an author as Mr. Walker has done with ‘The last time I came o’er the moor.’ Let the poet, if he chooses, take up the idea of another and work it into a piece of his own; but to mangle the works of the poor bard whose tuneful tongue is now mute for ever in the dark and narrow house, by Heaven, ’twould be sacrilege! I grant that

Mr. Walker's version is an improvement : but I know Mr. Walker well and esteem him much ; let him mend the song as a Highlander mended his gun : he gave it a new stock, a new lock and a new barrel." That is sufficient answer to him that would bowdlerise or amend the work of those who, after all has been said, remain their masters.



THE WORKS OF BURNS.

- Works, with an account of his life and a criticism on his writings. [Edited by James Currie.] London. (Liverpool printed.) 1800. 4 vols. 8vo.
- Works, with an account of his life and a criticism on his writings, by James Currie. Eighth edition. [With] further particulars of the author's life, new notes illustrative of his poems and letters, and many other additions, by Gilbert Burns. London. 1820. 4 vols. 8vo.
- Poems ascribed to Robert Burns. Glasgow. 1801. 8vo.
- Reliques, consisting chiefly of original letters, poems and critical observations on Scottish songs. Collected by R. H. Cromek. London. 1808. 8vo.
- Select Scottish songs, ancient and modern. Edited by R. H. Cromek. London. 1810. 2 vols. 8vo.
- Works. [Edited] with life, by Allan Cunningham. London. 1834. 8 vols. 12mo.
- Works. Edited by [James Hogg] and William Motherwell. Glasgow. 1834-6. 5 vols. 12mo.
- Poetical works. [Edited by Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas.] (Second Aldine edition). London. 1839. 3 vols. 12mo.
- Correspondence between Burns and Clarinda. Edited by W. C. M'Lehose. Edinburgh. 1843. 8vo.
- Life and works. Edited by Robert Chambers. Library Edition. Edinburgh. 1856-7. 4 vols. 8vo.
- Poetical works. Edited by Alexander Smith. (Golden Treasury series.) London. 1865. 2 vols. 12mo.
- Life and works. [Edited] by P. Hatley Waddell. Glasgow. 1867. 2 vols. 4to.
- Works. [Edited by William Scott Douglas.] Edinburgh. 1877-9. 6 vols. 8vo.
- Life and works. Edited by Robert Chambers. Revised by William Wallace. Edinburgh, Chambers. 1896. 4 vols. 8vo.
- *Poetry. Edited by W. E. Henley and T. F. Henderson. Edinburgh, Jack. 1896-7. 4 vols. 8vo.
- Poems, songs and letters. Edited by Alexander Smith. Globe Edition. London, Macmillan. 1891. 12mo.
- Selected poems. With introduction by Andrew Lang. London, Paul. 1891. 12mo.
- *Poetical works. Edited by William Scott Douglas. Kilmarnock edition. Kilmarnock, Brown. 1893. 2 vols. 12mo.
- Poems and songs. Edited by Andrew Lang and W. A. Craigie. London, Methuen. 1896. 8vo.

- Poetical Works. Edited by J. Logie Robertson. London, Frowde. 1896. 12mo.
- Johnson (James) The Scots musical museum. Edinburgh. 1787-1803. 6 vols. 8vo.
- Thomson (George) A select collection of original Scottish airs. London. 1793-1841. 6 vols. fol.

BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM.

- The more important biographies of Burns are contained in the editions noted above; Currie's *Life of Burns* (1800) in his edition of *Burns's Works*; Cunningham's (1834), Hogg's (1836), Nicolas's (1839), Smith's (1865) and Waddell's (1867) in their respective editions. Professor Nichol's *Robert Burns, a summary of his career and genius* is prefixed to Scott Douglas's *Works of Burns*; Mr. Henley's *Burns: life, genius, achievement* is included in the fourth volume of *The Centenary Burns* and has been published separately.
- See also *Chronological summary of the life and writings of Robert Burns* in Scott Douglas's Kilmarnock edition, 1893; and sketches prefixed to one-volume editions of Burns's works.
- Blackie (John Stuart) *Life of Robert Burns*. (Great Writers.) London, Scott. 1888. 12mo.
- Carlyle (Thomas) *Burns*. 1854. 12mo.
"Burns" is reprinted in the author's *Essays*, vol. 2.
- [Gleig (George)] *Critique on the poems of Robert Burns*. Edinburgh. 1812. 8vo.
- Hepburn (Thomas N.) *Gabriel Setoun*. Robert Burns. (Famous Scots.) Edinburgh, Oliphant. 1896. 12mo.
- Heron (Robert) *Memoir of the life of Robert Burns*. Edinburgh. 1797. 8vo.
- Higgins (J. C.) *Life of Robert Burns*. Edinburgh, Menzies. 1893. 12mo.
- *Lockhart (John Gibson) *Life of Robert Burns*. Revised by William Scott Douglas. London, Bell. 1882. 12mo.
- McDowall (William) *Burns in Dumfriesshire: the last eight years of the poet's life*. Edinburgh, Black. 1870. 12mo.
- Shairp (John Campbell) *Robert Burns*. (English Men of Letters.) London, Macmillan. 1879. 8vo.
- Turnbull (William Robertson) *The heritage of Burns*. Haddington, Sinclair. 1896. 8vo.
- [Walker (Josiah)] *Life and character of Robert Burns*. Edinburgh. 1811. 8vo.
- Wilson (John) *Genius and character of Burns*. *In his Essays*, vol. 3.

THE BURNS COUNTRY.

- The land of Burns: landscapes and portraits by D. O. Hill; the literary department by John Wilson and Robert Chambers. Glasgow. 1840. 2 vols. 4to.
- Adamson (Archibald R.) *Rambles through the land of Burns*. Kilmarnock. 1879. 12mo.
- Historical and pictorial guide to the land of Burns*. London, Ward. [1896.] 12mo.
- Shelley (Henry C.) *The Ayrshire homes and haunts of Burns*. New York, Putnam. 1897. 12mo.
- Dickie (W.) *Dumfries and round about*. Dumfries, Swan. [1898.] 12mo.

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- Annual Burns Chronicle and Club Directory, No. 1, 1892, and continued annually. Kilmarnock, Brown. 8vo.
- Ballantine (James) *editor*. Chronicle of the hundredth birthday of Robert Burns. Edinburgh. 1859. La. 8vo.
- Craigie (William A.) A primer of Burns. London, Methuen. 1896. 12mo.
- Cuthbertson (John) Glossary to the poetry and prose of Robert Burns. Paisley, Gardner. 1886. 8vo.
- [Gibson (James)] Bibliography of Robert Burns. Kilmarnock. 1881. 8vo.
Supplements to this bibliography appear in the *Annual Burns Chronicle*.
- Memorial catalogue of the Burns Exhibition, Glasgow, 1896. Glasgow, Hodge and Annan. 1898. Sm. fol.
- Reid (J. B.) Word and phrase concordance to the poems and songs of Robert Burns. Glasgow, Kerr & Richardson. 1889. La. 8vo.
- Rogers (Charles) and J. C. Higgins. The book of Robert Burns. Edinburgh, Grampian Club. 1889-91. 3 vols. 4to.
- Ross (John D.) *editor*. Round Burns' grave: the paeans and dirges of many bards. Paisley, Gardner. 1892. 12mo.



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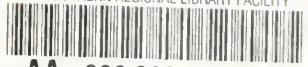
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