Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect

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First collection of Robert Burnsâ€™ work to be published. Printed in Kilmarnock by John Wilson in 1786. Known as the Kilmarnock Burnsâ€”or the Kilmarnock Edition. The poems include Scotch drink, The Cotter's Saturday night, ùò a mouse, ùò a louse.

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THE following trifles are not the production
of the Poet, who, with all the advantages
of learned art, and perhaps amid the elegancies
and idlenesses of upper life, looks down for
a rural theme, with an eye to Theocrites or
Virgil. To the Author of this, these and other
celebrated names their contrymen are, in their
original languages, ‘A fountain shut up, and a
book sealed.’ Unacquainted with the necessary
requisites for commencing Poet by rule, he sings
the sentiments and manners, he felt and saw in him-
selves and his rustic compères around him, in his
and their native language. Though a Rhymer
from his earliest years, at least from the earliest
impulses of the softer passions, it was not till very
lately, that the applause, perhaps the partiality,
of Friendship, wakened his vanity so far as to

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make him think any thing of his was worth showing; and none of the following works were ever composed with a view to the press. To amuse himself with the little creations of his own fancy, amid the toil and fatigues of a laborious life; to transcribe the various feelings, the loves, the griefs, the hopes, the fears, in his own breast; to find some kind of counterpoise to the struggles of a world, always an alien scene, a task uncouth to the poetical mind; these were his motives for courting the Muses, and in these he found Poetry to be its own reward.

Now that he appears in the public character of an Author, he does it with fear and trembling. So dear is fame to the rhyming tribe, that even he, an obscure, nameless Bard, shrinks aghast, at the thought of being branded as 'An impertinent blockhead, obtruding his nonsense on the world; and because he can make a shift to jingle a few doggerel, Scotch rhymes together, looks upon himself as a Poet of no small consequence fortooth.'

It is an observation of that celebrated Poet, * whose divine Elegies do honor to our language,

* Shenstone.
our nation, and our species; that "Humility has
depressed many a genius to a hermit, but never
raised one to fame." If any Critic catches at the
word genius, the Author tells him, once for all,
that he certainly looks upon himself as possess'd of
some poetic abilities, otherwise his publishing in
the manner he has done, would be a manoeuvre be-
low the worst character, which, he hopes, his worst
enemy will ever give him: but to the genius of a
Ramsay, or the glorious dawns of the poor,
unfortunate Ferguson, he, with equal unaffected
sincerity, declares, that, even in his highest pulse
of vanity, he has not the most distant pretensions.
These two justly admired Scotch Poets he has of-
ten had in his eye in the following pieces; but ra-
ther with a view to kindle at their flame, than
for servile imitation.

To his Subscribers, the Author returns his most
sincere thanks. Not the mercenary bow over a
counter, but the heart-throbbing gratitude of the
Bard, conscious how much he is indebted to Bene-
volence and Friendship, for gratifying him, if he
deferves it, in that dearest wish of every poetic
bosom—to be distinguished. He begs his read-

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ers, particularly the Learned and the Polite, who may honor him with a perusal, that they will make every allowance for Education and Circumstances of Life: but, if after a fair, candid, and impartial criticism, he shall stand convicted of Dilnefs and Nonene, let him be done by, as he would in that case do by others——let him be condemned, without mercy, to contempt and oblivion.