



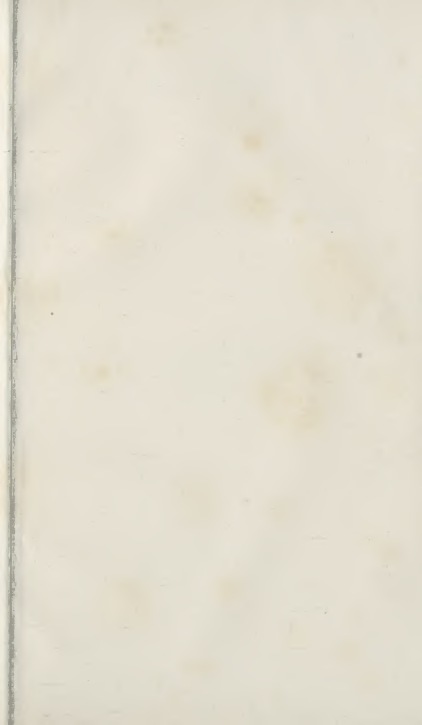
ABS. 1. 80. 49

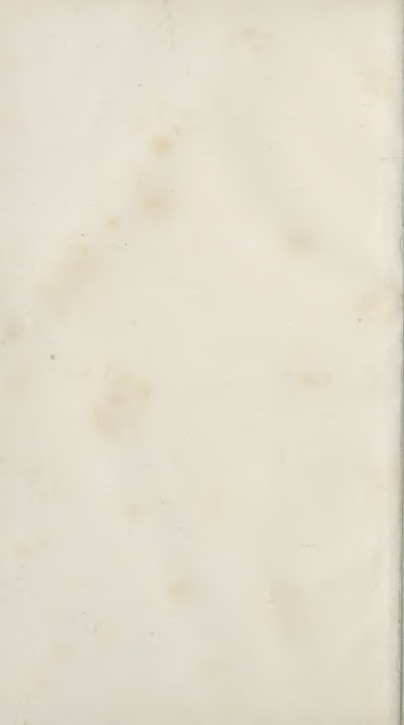
H/2

1750









LETTERS

AND

Narrative of Facts Relative Thereto.

BY THE LATE
GEORGE BEATTIE,
MONTROSE.
1823.

ABERDEEN:
LEWIS SMITH.
SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1870.

LETTERS

1879

Handwritten text, likely a list of names or addresses, mostly illegible due to fading.



Handwritten text at the bottom of the page, including a name and possibly a date, mostly illegible.

1879

INTRODUCTION.

THE publication of these Letters demands no apology. In the locality where the melancholy events to which they refer, occurred they have long been extensively perused in manuscript, and in that shape have greatly increased the sympathy universally awakened by the untimely end of their author. It may, therefore, be anticipated that their wider circulation, by aid of the press, will be welcomed by those already conversant with the facts, while their "ower true tale," so eloquently told, cannot fail to interest the general public, who are ever alive to "affairs of the heart," but from a want of adequate representations of real occurrences, too often suffer themselves to be excited and misled by fictitious woes, to the neglect of the truth that is stranger than fiction.

The late George Beattie was one of those who, though humble by birth, assert for themselves a nobility of nature, and by the buoyancy of their intellectual superiorities, attain a position in life far above their original starting point. He was born of humble parents in the parish of St. Cyrus, in the year 1785. His father was a salmon fisher, and followed his occupation on the neighbouring coast; but his energy and intelligence won for him the notice of the proprietor of Kirkside, by whose influence he got a situation in the excise. The parental roof being near the lonely and romantic burying-ground called the Lower Church-yard of St. Cyrus, explains a

passage in the Letters, in which he mentions the spot as one he was fond of visiting. Like the stricken deer seeking its native haunts, he here laid down his wearied life, a sacrifice to disappointed love. Many have been the tears and sighs that his sad fate have called forth, and kindly have all spoken of his memory. Whoever can appreciate true talent, literary accomplishments, integrity of character, refinement of feeling, and geniality of disposition, will feel a mournful satisfaction in perusing the following Epitaph, composed by so eminent a man as the late James Burnes, Esq., Town-clerk of Montrose:—

To the Memory
of
G E O R G E B E A T T I E,
Writer in Montrose,
who died 29th September, 1823, in the 38th year of his age,
this Monument was erected
by the Friends
who loved him in life, and lamented him in death.
In his Disposition,
he was
Just, Charitable, and Benevolent ;
in his Principles,
Firm and Independent :
in his Genius,
Forcible and Pathetic ;
and
in his Manners, Plain and Social.
His Virtues are deeply engraved
in the hearts of those who knew him ; and his
Literary Productions will be admired
while taste for Original Humour and Vigorous Expression remains.
September 29, 1824.

The name of George Beattie is already favourably known in literature as the author of "John o' Arnha',"—a satirical poem in the provincial dialect, which has passed

through seven editions. He also produced many minor pieces of poetical composition, which have commanded a great local popularity, and he was, besides, a frequent contributor to the columns of the *Montrose Review*. These posthumous letters, while they furnish the key to the fatal melancholy that sent him to a premature grave, will, it is confidently believed, sustain his reputation as an acute, well-educated, generous-hearted, and noble-minded man. They are to be viewed as the production of a mind unhinged—as the forced utterance of a lacerated spirit. Regarded in a sentimental aspect, they powerfully touch the springs of thought and feeling—in a more utilitarian point of view, they furnish a valuable contribution to the resolution of a species of insanity which, but for the intervention of others, would render suicide as common now as it was in an age when it was extolled as a virtue.

That George Beattie was the victim of insanity, does not seem to admit of any doubt. His mind had become morbidly set on one theme—the current of his thoughts ran only in one direction, and he thus became unfit alike for business, recreation, and repose. The question of his confirmed insanity would have received a practical solution had he been longer spared; for it would have thereby appeared whether his thoughts could have been diverted from the gloomy channel to which they had begun to be confined. Had they been so diverted, sanity would have returned—if they had not, the unhappy man would have sooner or latter exhibited some of those unmistakable symptoms of mental derangement which the vulgar notion demands. When the thoughts dwell exclusively on one theme, the mind passes into an abnormal state, which unfits the patient for society, and exposes him to unnatural delusions. Now, in the instance in question, the patient, as his letters prove, suffered his mind to become absorbed in his disappointment, and thus to lapse into a decidedly abnormal and unnatural state. That he did not break down as entirely as many have done

under similar circumstances, is to be accounted for by his greater physical powers of endurance, and by the brevity of the period of trial to which they were subjected.

It may be objected to this view of the case, that intense excitement and depression of spirits, unrelieved by sympathy or intermission, still left the powers of reason in full play. This is not disputed—on the contrary, the objection suggests several passages which discover the most acute and sound reasoning—such, for example, as the reply to Miss Gibson, page 32, in these terms: “The request you now make is so closely connected with what I made the exception, that I consider they are one and the same; and will you tell me honestly what you meant should follow the delivery of your letters.” There is logical precision here which would honour the soundest and clearest judgement; and page 54 furnishes still more decisive evidence not only of acuteness, but grasp of intellect. To that page the thoughtful attention of the the reader is directed, as also to page 46 and others, in which the intense agony of the unhappy man is believed to be candidly and justly stated.

It is therefore admitted, that his reasoning powers remained unimpaired; but it is equally to be admitted that such has very often been the case, in the most unmistakable cases of insanity. The last words and last labours of many insane suicides have evinced no defect in the individual acts of the reasoning powers. It is in the habit and temper of the mind that insanity is to be looked for—in the dark cloud that envelopes the soul; not in the lucid rents, through which—even in very desperate cases—the immaterial, indestructible, and immortal principle, occasionally discovers itself, in all its unimpaired vigour.

It is hoped that these remarks will escape imputation of being a palliation of suicide. They certainly assign a greater number of cases to the insane list, and point to the original design as more guilty, compared with the last

fatal act, than is generally believed ; but they are in perfect consistency with, perhaps, the best opinion mankind have formed on the subject :

" To run away
Is but a coward's trick ; to run away
From this world's ills—that at the very worst
Will soon blow o'er ; thinking to mend ourselves
By boldly venturing on a world unknown,
And plunging headlong in the dark ! 'tis mad :
No frenzy half so desperate as this "

The best service that can be performed in connection with the publication of these letters, is to point out the lessons they so forcibly present to the young and inexperienced.

In the first place, they surely speak in a trumpet tongue against such engagements as are described at page 36. Such oaths are fraught with unmingled ill, and should never be given or received. In the next place, this tragedy demonstrates anew the danger of parental control in regard to the disposal of daughters' hands, after the heart has disposed of itself. In the case of sons, such control is universally reprobated ; why should the female sex be still exposed to the despotism ? Let our daughters, by all means, consult the opinions and tastes of their parents, from the first stages of their youthful attachments, and regard these as their best counsellors ; but let parents remember, that to bestow a hand without a heart is sure to lead to misery and disappointment.

Mr Beattie has himself expressed a hope that his letters may prove a warning against placing our happiness on one object. Let us amplify the letter of this most momentous truth, without altering its spirit, by reminding the reader that there is no created object, or number of objects, worthy of our supreme affection and regard.

One great mistake Mr Beattie committed, so far as his own safety was concerned : he concealed his feelings and

intentions from his friends. In this he may have the sympathy of people of fashion, but neither religion nor philosophy sanction the policy of secrecy in such matters. Had he unbosomed his grief, he might have tided over the evil day.

Finally, it is scarcely necessary to anticipate the opinion of those who may now peruse these letters for the first time. They will have great difficulty in acquitting Miss Gibson, and they will experience quite as much in detecting any lack of honour in the conduct of Mr Beattie. Indeed, it will be generally admitted, that, had his sensitiveness been less, or hers greater, had he been less concerned with his own defence, and she more, the issue of their courtship would have been reversed.

BEATTIE'S LETTERS.

NARRATIVE OF FACTS.

BY

MR. BEATTIE.

IN drawing up an account of the connection between Miss Gibson and myself, I shall confine myself to facts alone, without making comments or drawing inferences. This most distressing task has been forced on me by occurrences of a late date, by which I have been much injured, and for which—I say it with sorrow—I am determined to seek redress. I need not attempt to describe the anguish of my mind which has compelled me to make the following disclosures:—

Some years ago, an intimacy and friendship commenced betwixt Miss Gibson and myself, little known except to ourselves. From what passed betwixt us, I conceived myself warranted in paying my addresses to Miss G. In this I may have been wrong, and it may here be necessary to admit this, as in a letter written by me to her, just to be mentioned, I confess, if I recollect right, that I had “unauthorisedly” formed an attachment. This, at all events, I stated from motives of delicacy. This letter

was written in August, 1821, and forwarded to Miss Gibson at Pitcaithly. I have no copy of it; the answer is also mislaid. In effect, my addresses were rejected; at the same time, I was strictly enjoined not to give over visiting at Stone of Morphie. I felt disappointed, but from the way in which Miss Gibson soon afterwards conducted herself towards me, I began to suspect she was not serious in her refusal. I, however, studied not to intrude myself, and as I felt delicate in speaking on the subject, and knowing that her parents had been made acquainted with my application, I wrote Mr Gibson asking his forgiveness, if I had done anything that was improper. I continued visiting Stone of Morphie as I had formerly done. Truth here compels me to state that Miss Gibson now began to honour me with more attention than she had formerly done; when in Town, she seldom failed to allow me the pleasure of accompanying her so far on her way home; indeed, it would be more agreeable to truth to say that she always told me when she was to allow me that honour. (I need not premise that the purpose of stating these facts is to show that I never at any time paid my addresses to Miss Gibson with the most distant view to the fortune which she so lately received; and to show that the engagements latterly entered into betwixt her and me need not be a matter of surprise).

Our intimacy continued increasing till the spring of 1822, when Mr Bell left Kinnaber; shortly after this period, the following note was brought me from Miss Gibson, by one of the servants of Stone of Morphie:—

“If Mr Beattie feels inclined to extend his evening walk, a friend will have much pleasure in shewing him some birds' nests in the garden of Kinnaber.—Monday morning.”* It need not be doubted that I willingly obeyed. I have some other cards of similar import. I need not repeat my regrets for mentioning these matters.

* It may be observed that at this time no person resided at Kinnaber, at least in the Mansion House.

I am determined to tell the precise truth, as far as I do tell at all; it has been extorted from me by cruel injustice.

Mr Gibson, shortly after this, unfortunately, became indisposed; I frequently visited him during his illness, and at these times, Miss Gibson made appointments with me as to meeting at Kinnaber. For a considerable part of the summer, we met at least twice a week in the House of Kinnaber. I need not state that on these occasions promises were made, and vows of fidelity and attachment passed betwixt us. Upon the approach of autumn, and when we were interrupted by masons repairing the house, I continued again to visit Stone of Morphie. Miss Gibson proposed at this time to visit at Cononsyth; and that her absence should not interrupt our correspondence, it was agreed that we should write to each other. At this time I received the following letter from the Post-Office:—

“Montrose, 30th August, 1822.—Particular circumstances have occurred, which prevent my going to Cononsyth this week. I therefore will not trouble Mr Beattie to be my correspondent at present; but as I intend to make out my visit a few weeks hence, I still propose troubling him to write me. I hope Mr Beattie will pay us a visit at Stone of Morphie within these few days, and he will very much oblige, William Gibson. Mr Gibson's spirits are affected by damp weather, none can raise them so well as Mr Beattie. Do come see him.”

I still continued visiting Stone of Morphie. Our intimacy increased, and promises and vows were repeated over and over. Shortly after this, I received the following letter by a servant:—

“We have received accounts of the death of my brother, Williamson. He has fallen a sacrifice to the bad climate of Jamaica. As I am afraid his loss may affect my father's spirits, could you, my dear sir, make it convenient to call on us some evening soon. You may think it strange in me to ask you to come out at present;

but I trust to your good nature excusing it, and there is not another, out of my own family, that I could apply to so readily, and believe me, your much obliged,

“WM. GIBSON.

“Stone of Morphie, Tuesday.”

I never failed to give due attendance, and from what passed between Miss Gibson and me, I conceived by this time, that nothing could prevent our union. Miss Gibson complained if I was absent, and her parents did not discountenance my frequent visits.

The next letter I received was through the post-office, addressed to Mr Smellie, to my care. This was a suggestion of my own, when I first wrote Miss Gibson, to prevent the letters being opened by any of my clerks. It is of the following tenor:—

“Stone of Morphie, Wednesday Morning.

“My father is disappointed that you do not now spend an evening with him, and I am afraid that I am the cause of your being such a stranger here. I suppose you cannot be ignorant of the report the good folks of Montrose have raised, and that it has prevented your coming to Stone of Morphie, for fear my parents should adopt the —— system; but allow me to inform you that they have not, and may never hear that report; and they have too few daughters to force them on any man against his will. On my account, they do not give young men a general invitation, for fear they should suppose they courted them; but those who do come are not the less welcome, and none more so than you. I expected to have got words of you in Montrose, that would have saved me writing, but I know you have too much honour to expose me. Will you spend an evening here this week? and if you will, let me know, by putting a note in the post-office, addressed to me, before two o'clock to-day. I shall take care to be out or in the way, as you choose, for I begin

to think you wish to shun me, and believe me always,
your much obliged,

WILLIAM GIBSON."

When I received this note, I had not been a week from Stone of Morphie, and I went there immediately on receipt, and found an opportunity of telling Miss Gibson how very far she was mistaken as to the cause assigned by her for my short absence, and left her convinced that although I might unavoidably be absent for some time, she needed never impute this to the cause assigned in her letter. My visits were still continued, and both parties were satisfied that a union was to take place. The storm prevented my visiting for a short time; I was also in a bad state of health, and had fallen back with business in consequence of having been for a considerable time at Aberdeen and twice at Edinburgh. I attended at Stone of Morphie, however, always when I could possibly get away, and our intimacy continued and increased.

Miss Gibson now received accounts of the death of her uncle, William Mitchell, Esq. of Granada, and that she and her mother had been left considerable sums by his will, and that Miss Gibson was his residuary legatee. After this, I visited as formerly, and, from the opinion I had formed of Miss Gibson, I apprehended at first no alteration in her affections or behaviour towards me. In this I was not mistaken — I found her the same as formerly.

On Sunday, 5th May, I called at Stone of Morphie as I before had intimated to Mr Gibson by letter, and found Miss Gibson at home. Old matters were talked over, and all our pledges and vows renewed; Miss G. declared that the fortune she had become possessed of could not alter her affections; but, on the contrary, make them more lasting. On my asking her as formerly, Miss G. declared herself willing to become my bride. As I had done before, I asked Miss Gibson if she held the consent of her

parents to be a condition.* She most unequivocally declared the contrary, and the compact was solemnly sealed betwixt us. It may here be necessary to state (as Miss G. attempts to give it another meaning in her letter), that Miss Gibson said, "I mean to say yes; but will you allow a little time?" I said "Certainly, as much as you choose; it is nothing new, you have thought of it before, and something may intervene." She replied, "Nothing can possibly intervene—I wish no time—I am yours for ever."

Miss Gibson then mentioned where she meant to reside, what house she wished purchased or taken, &c., and asked how far my means would go in such a purchase, mentioning that she would have cash of her own very soon. I, with the utmost candour, gave a state of my finances; a condition was even made as to my going to church. It may be necessary here to remark, in relation to what is afterwards stated by Miss Gibson, as to the being allowed a few hours' consideration, that our last engagement took place betwixt eleven and twelve, and that I did not leave Stone of Morphie till about nine at night. My happy moments, however, were now broken in upon and interrupted. Upon the Monday following, Miss Gibson received accounts from one of her uncle's executors of the extent of the fortune she would succeed to in this country, as residuary legatee of her uncle; and that the extent of the property in India could not be ascertained until the executors there wrote. I commenced by stating facts without comment, and I shall continue that course. On Tuesday at twelve o'clock, Miss Gibson (who now had become very particular as to the hour,) wrote me the following letter:—†

"Can you, will you, forgive me, if I ask you to give

* From the manner I had all along been treated by them, I had not the least reason to expect opposition from them, and Miss Gibson assured me I had nothing to fear there.

† This letter, as will afterwards appear, did not reach me till Thursday.

me back that promise which I gave you on Sunday?† I then asked for a few hours' consideration; had you given me that, it would have saved me this to-day. I then boldly declared that my mother's consent was of small consequence; but that is not the case, and she will never, I fear, consent; but you know I never mentioned your last letter, and I hope this correspondence may be kept as quiet. That this will give you pain, I do not doubt, but better give it now than afterwards; and believe me, you have little to regret in the want of a nearer connection with me, unless my money, and this is not one-tenth part of what they call it at Montrose.‡ That no one can like me better than you do, I do not doubt; yet surely in that case you might have come oftener and seen me in the spring, particularly when I heard of your being at Kirkside; but is needless for me to say more. I shall only add, that there breathes not the man in Europe I at present prefer to you; but still I consider that we may be better apart. That you will always possess my best wishes, and I hope God will grant you every happiness. Do not absent yourself from this house—my father has little need to be deprived of his friends. Do answer this, and address it to Mrs Sarah Bronker, Post-Office, Montrose, and a servant will call for it on Thursday. If you grant my request, enclose this billet in it."

Thursday, twelve o'clock noon."

This letter was addressed to J. Smellie, to my care, and was received by me on Thursday, 8th May, at eleven o'clock.

Far from expecting such a letter—indeed it was

† Miss G. displays considerable address here, in reference to *one* and her *last* promise. Supposing that if it were given back, the others previously given would follow, and by this time she wished to make lightly of the matter. We were as much engaged before as after the Sunday's engagement here referred to.

‡ This is pretty—knowing she had *by this time* learned that it was much more than she or others expected.

impossible to anticipate anything of the kind, after all that had passed—I could scarcely therefore credit my senses; next I thought it might be a *jeu d' esprit* to vex me. I was fortified in this idea, from the fanciful name by which Miss Gibson wished to be addressed. Again it struck me, if Miss Gibson wished to communicate anything so serious, that she would have sought my attendance at Stone of Morphie, as she had often done before. From the best judgment I could form, however, after consideration, I thought she would not jest on such a subject. The answer which I wrote the moment I could get leisure will best show my conviction at the time, and the state of my feelings. Miss Gibson says I wrote harshly. I am sorry I should do so to any lady, and more particularly that I should have occasion to do so to her; but I could not command my feelings at the time; I had no leisure for reflection, and even if it had been otherwise, I was incapable of reflection. This is a copy of the letter:—

“Montrose, 8th May, 1823.

“Madam,—I only this forenoon received your letter, which is dated on Tuesday. The reason of the delay I know not. Some very urgent business and the confusion of my mind prevented my answering it in time for being received from the post-office to-day. Still, I must send an answer, and I hope it will come safe. You know little of my feelings when you say simply that your letter will give me pain. I could not express what I felt on reading it—no language could describe my sensations. Oppressed as I am, I hope you will forgive me, even if I should write incoherently. I did not think Miss Gibson could have asked anything that I would not have granted, if in my power; but I have been fatally mistaken. I would much sooner part with my existence, than give you back the promise you mention—come what will.

“About two years ago, I paid my addresses to you—these were rejected. Still, you gave me liberty to visit

Stone of Morphie. I became resigned to my fate and content; and, although some might not have considered their case hopeless, I would not for the world have presumed again to intrude myself on you. This you know I never did. You, yourself, began to raise my hopes—you, yourself, made appointments, and, in fact, commanded my attendance when you thought proper. As far as I know myself, I am not presumptuous, nor, in most cases, sanguine; but, could I receive letters from Miss Gibson to meet her solitarily at the garden and house of Kinnaber without indulging hopes? These letters I have this day looked over with a sorrowful heart. You know you allowed me many other meetings which you yourself appointed verbally. God knows, I have no inclination to mention any of these things, and do so in justice to myself, to shew what I might reasonably suppose after all this. You spoke freely of the report of our union, rather with pleasure than disapprobation. It is mentioned in one of your letters, 'I would have thought it wrong to meet you by ourselves in the House of Kinnaber, unless I had implicitly believed that an union betwixt us was to follow.' What passed betwixt us on these and many other occasions justified this. I leave it to yourself if you did not put questions which were answered by me in a way where neither question nor answer could possibly admit of any other interpretation. I am sure you cannot forget what passed that day I called at Stone of Morphie, in going to the Mills.* I will say no more here on the subject. I looked upon the promise on Sunday as a continuation and confirmation of former pledges. It was voluntary, solemn, and decisive; and you pointed out the house you wished to be purchased or taken as a residence, &c., &c.; the jaunt the same as had been different times mentioned by yourself. You wrong me cruelly in speaking of your money; it never was at any time in my calculation. I

* This is explained in Supplement.

freely admit I was afraid your good fortune might bring you new suitors, and I was on that account alone anxious for a renewal of our pledges; and I am certain you believed what I stated to you, that your good fortune had been to me a source of uneasiness and even of regret. This certainly was not doing you justice, but it was a feeling of my own that I could not control. I explained to you what had prevented my seeing you for some time in spring. A long absence at Edinburgh had thrown me far back with business, and when I was sent for to Kirkside, I was obliged to go and return with all the speed in my power. I am sorry you should now attempt to make this an excuse for breaking faith. I was after this received by you with as much kindness as before; and at no time, I can honestly assert, did my affection suffer the least diminution. I need not speak of the many nameless endearments that passed betwixt us, they are all forgotten by you—money has obliterated all. I leave it to your honour and conscience if, for at least a year past, either you or I could have had any other idea than that our union was to take place. Sorry would I have been to have sought or taken a rash vow from you, because you had come to fortune (which I cared nothing about), and I was the last person in the world that would have made such an attempt, particularly with one of your acuteness and discernment. How I am to bear this sudden, unexpected, and to me, overwhelming calamity, God only knows. But I scorn to complain; I know I need not now do so to you; you know what has brought about this—I shall not attempt to scan your motives. As to the keeping secret my first letter, I now care no more about it than I do for anything in this world. Although particulars may not be known, it will be impossible to hinder the public from giving their decision, without the least aid from me; the matter has not slept there. It cannot, at least it should not, affront me with the world, that I have been spurned by you in consequence of your

having received what is called a fortune, the extent of which never entered my mind, as you seem to surmise in your letter. On a review of my whole conduct and actions, as connected with you, I have nothing to blame myself with; and I have no doubt it will be conducive to your own happiness if you can lay your hand on your heart and say the same. I have given you my ideas sadly out of order. You told me your good fortune would not in the least alter your affections. What you state as to your mother's consent, is ambiguous, as connected with what you said on that head on Sunday, and previously; and also with the contents of one of your letters, where you say I need not fear your parents will adopt the —— system, as they have too few daughters to force them on any man against his will. I was at all times aware that you were capable of acting for yourself. I mean to act honestly and fairly to the last. I cannot give you back your vow, or rather I should say vows. I cannot give you back your letters—justice, honour, truth, forbid it; the use of these letters must now be regulated by circumstances. I will renounce no claim, but maintain and defend them to the last. There is something so peculiar in this business, that I fear I cannot refrain taking steps to justify myself to your parents and the world. It grieves me to the heart to write in this style, but I cannot help it. Wishing you much more happiness, than you have left me in the possession of, and improvement in your health—I have still more to say, but I cannot now proceed.

GEO. BEATTIE."

To this letter, Miss Gibson sent in course the following answer:—

"Stone of Morphie, 9th May, 1823

"I own the justice and truth of all you have written, and now ask you forgiveness. I had not any idea of the pain my letter has given you; but on that head we are

now quits. May God forgive you for the harshness of yours; but I would require to take care what I write; as you are a man of law, and therefore not fairly matched. However, I hope you will excuse me—I shall endeavour not to hurt your feelings again. I allow it was unguarded and highly unfeeling, and I am sorry to say that I have no excuse for myself. I have only one thing more to add; if you still wish me to become your bride, I beg, that previous to my quitting my father's house, all letters that have passed betwixt us, may be destroyed. I beg you will write by the bearer, and you may address it to my father, who is from home, and as I know your hand, shall open it.

WILLIAM GIBSON."

This letter was enclosed in another from Miss Gibson, of the following tenor:—

"The enclosed was written on Friday, and I sent it into town with orders that it should only be delivered into your hands; you were from home; I shall address it the same as formerly, and put it in the post-office, and I request that you will answer it, and tell me what you intend with regard to myself. The former request shall never again be made; and it would be a relief if I thought you would forgive me, and forget it. Address it to Mrs Sarah Bronker, and I will endeavour to make some one call at the post-office on Monday for it.

W. GIBSON."

"Stone of Morphia, Saturday evening."

Received, Monday, 12th May, 1823.

This letter I received on the forenoon of Monday, the 12th May, and in case the servant should call at the post-office and be disappointed, I immediately wrote, and carried the following answer to the post-office:—

"Montrose, 12th May, 1823.

"My Dear Miss Gibson—I have this moment received your letters; I am too happy not to forget and forgive

what is past. The trial was severe—you are an angel still. God Almighty bless you. My already enervated frame tells me I could not live without you; you must therefore be my bride. I can prove beyond what I have stated, my continued ardent and honourable attachment, for years. Make of your fortune what you please, personally I neither wish control over, nor the smallest benefit from it in any shape, and it will be the happiest moment of my existence when I can formally renounce it. I only want Miss Gibson; and she knows I could have begged my bread with her. My anxiety for the delivery of the last, induced me to put a note in post-office, addressed to you, the meaning of it will be known to none but yourself. Adieu, and I am yours for ever,

GEO. BEATTIE."

I should conceive this a most solemn engagement, confirming former ones; and the lady herself only can account for her conduct after this in immediately after shunning me, and setting out upon a jaunt without ever mentioning the circumstance to me, or conferring on me the honour of "being her correspondent." The foregoing statement consists merely of facts, supported by documents, the preservation of which depended on chance; for, till within the period of "one little month," Miss Gibson's simple word would have been held amply sufficient by me in any case. The observations which might be made upon, and the moral which might be drawn from, these facts, accompanied with some additional ones, would fill a large and not an uninteresting volume. This may be an after task, if my mind ever resumes its wonted serenity. Miss Gibson has said in one of her letters, that I have too much honour to expose her. In this she is correct. Nothing but the most cruel treatment could have wrung this information from me, to be communicated even to her nearest connections. But has she kept her honour with me? I leave her to answer the question herself.

Whatever I may feel, and I feel much more than I can express, I am determined to seek whatever redress may be within my reach; and this I do fearlessly but justly. I can say without vanity, that, for at least a year past, and up to the moment of Miss Gibson's receiving the last mentioned letter from her uncle's trustee, the attachment was as strong on her part as mine, and that previous to the last period, I could not have withdrawn, with honour to myself or with her consent.



This ends the Statement sent to Mr Gibson. It did not contain the foot notes.

SUPPLEMENT

TO

STATEMENT OF FACTS.



The narrative of the "Statement of Facts" concludes with my answer to Miss Gibson's two letters, when a complete reconciliation had taken place. This statement having reference only, as there stated, to facts supported by writings, nothing further is stated in it, and it was not deemed necessary to state more, as I conceived that renewed engagement to be very ample and conclusive.

Soon after this, I saw Miss Gibson, who owned having received my letter, and all that had occurred of a disagreeable nature was completely buried in oblivion. Miss G. said she made the request merely to try me, and laughed at the idea of my having taken up the matter seriously. She also said she wanted a document from me, on the subject of our engagement; and that my two last letters were quite sufficient, and bound me very completely. She then voluntarily took a most solemn oath, that she would punctually and faithfully fulfil her engagements with me, and never think of retracting while

she drew breath. Miss Gibson then said she wished to reside a short time at the House of Kinnaber, which she had newly come to, and that as soon as arrangements could afterwards be made, our union would take place. I was happy once more, and had been so since receiving her last letter. I could not have believed that Miss Gibson could be so unjust and unfeeling as to enter into so many engagements, verbal and written, and afterwards to break them. I could not have believed, after what had passed on very many occasions betwixt her and me, that she could have been so deliberately cruel as again and again to raise my hopes for the purpose of blasting them, or of amusing herself by wantonly sporting with my feelings. This conduct was the more extraordinary and unaccountable, when it is known that she had been solemnly engaged with me for more than a year previously; and which engagement had been often and often repeated in many different ways during that period. I now, however, saw for the first time that the attention of others, at least another, had become more agreeable to her than mine; and that she now actually shunned me—the very reverse of what had happened previous to that time—circumstances so obvious, that they were noticed by the public, and were the subject of general conversation. Although she had not, at least for a year previously, moved the smallest distance from home without acquainting me, she now set off to Edinburgh without giving me the least intimation of her intention. She, in a subsequent letter, says that she took this jaunt for the benefit of her health. This certainly was not a good reason for concealing the circumstance from me; I was more interested in the state of her health than any other person, herself excepted. Unless it were possible to place themselves in my situation, no one could have any idea of the state of my mind and feelings at this time—they admit not of description.

It was at this period I wrote out the "Statement of

Facts," and forwarded to Miss Gibson at Edinburgh. If anything may have been wrong in this, considering all, I ought to be held excusable; after the way in which Miss Gibson had latterly conducted herself towards me, it could have served no end to address her on the subject. Feeling as I did, I certainly resolved at the moment to seek whatever redress might be within my reach, and I thought it no more than candid to inform Mr Gibson, so as he might have no reason afterwards to say that I did wrong in concealing the matter from him. I therefore forwarded the statement to him, while at Edinburgh with Mrs and Miss Gibson. The packet was delivered into his own hand by a gentleman to whom I sent it for that purpose, and the following letter from me to Mr Gibson was enclosed:—

“Montrose, 4th June, 1823.

“Dear Sir—It is with sorrow I feel myself constrained to lay the enclosed State of Facts before you. There has already been so much writing upon the subject, that little need be said here. The enclosed explains itself. As matters now stand, it would have been uncandid not to have put you in possession of these facts, with as little delay as possible. As yet, no person but Miss Gibson knows anything of the circumstances. This, however, cannot be the case long; that it will be distressing to Miss Gibson and her relatives, there can be no doubt. It is impossible, however, they can suffer the one-hundredth part of what I have and am suffering. When you have perused the enclosed, it will be obliging if you will take the trouble of returning it, and in case of the parcel being opened by any person in the office, you may direct it in a fictitious name, to my care. In case I have done anything wrong or strange, it must be imputed to my sufferings. I hope you are enjoying your jaunt, and with best wishes, I am, Dear Sir, yours, &c.,

(Signed)

GEO. BEATTIE.”

After Mr Gibson's arrival from Edinburgh, I met him at a party in Mr N—'s of Borrowfield, when he wrote in pencil, on a leaf of his pocket-book, which he handed me : "I received your letter and Statement ; William took away the Statement after she found it correct—she kept it."

I received the following letter from Miss Gibson, after her arrival at Kinnaber :—

"Your letter and Memorial my father received some days since. You have certainly proved what I never denied. I only asked you to release me from that engagement ; but I find my fortune has too many charms for you, and you are determined to prosecute me or have it. I certainly will submit to anything, rather than appear in a court of law—even to misery and contempt ; therefore, I have no alternative ; but recollect that at present I will not leave this house. My parents allow me to decide so far for myself. You reproach me for going to Edinburgh, on a pleasure jaunt, without informing you of it. I went for advice concerning my health ; and as I am ordered frequent sea excursions, I beg leave to inform you that I may be off in a few days again, and that one information may serve for all. I am also ordered to go to Pitcaithly in a short time. I also understood when you were here that you gave me up ; and I am certain you said you would vindicate me. Have you done so ? But at all events you have not acted towards me with much feeling. You might at least have written me before you wrote my father ; but he does not interfere. You will please inform (if I do not ask too great a favour), what are your determinations, and put it in the post-office, that I may receive it on Thursday morning, and you will oblige,

" W. GIBSON.

" Kinnaber, 9th June, 1823."

This letter is addressed Mr Smellie, to my care.

I must certainly have been much overcome and confused when I sent the following answer:—

“ Montrose, 11th June, 1823.

“ Dear Madam,—I am this day favoured with your letter of the 9th inst. I will not trouble you about my feelings. I wrote the Memorial in despair. I could do nothing else—it was sent off in a moment. I need not say whether I have repented it. I am so overwhelmed with misery, that I attempt to fall upon expedients, with a view to temporary relief, and in the next instant all appears like a dream. You still speak of your fortune. I cannot say more upon that head than I have already said. So far from its having too many charms for me, I would more willingly die that you might be relieved of me; but this is an event over which I have no control, although I have suffered as much in mind as would have broken in pieces any frame possessed of less physical health. You accuse me of selfishness. I need not make assertions which you may now think matters of course; but if you knew my thoughts, I am sure I would stand acquitted on that score. My pleasures, when I had any, were of the simple kind, and could be all gratified without a fortune. If you are not totally changed, I might safely refer to yourself, if you think that any one in existence cares so much for yourself, and so little for your fortune, as I do. I hope, at all events, you will change your new opinion as to the sordidness of my disposition. If you think dispassionately on this subject, and certainly I have no right to offer better advice than I can take to myself, you would find that it is the receipt of your fortune that makes you despise me, and not the fortune that has charms for me. I know, if you choose, you can take a just view of that or any other matter. I could mention some that would now worship you, that were very ready previously to joke me, not in the most delicate manner, upon the report of our connection. However, this is nothing. So

far from being selfish, if I could believe that I could ever enjoy a moment's peace in this world, I would grant your request. No doubt, I have little, very little as it is, but I cannot agree to extinguish hope altogether. I know what would ensue; and I cannot perhaps prevent this, do what I will. I am different from almost any other person that could be placed in the same situation. My affections have been so totally exclusive, that I never could care for another under any circumstance. I may say, I have never thought about any other than yourself for years, whether you were absent or present; and whatever I may have written in distress, I find that it is entirely out of my power to root out, or even in the smallest degree to abate, my affections, even although I should be despised and spurned by the object of them. This, in the meantime, is my most pitiable case. What can I do? You bid me state my determination, at the same time you tell me your own, which in a manner leaves me a nonentity. I am ready to do whatever you wish. You could not mention or think of that thing I will not do, if you only hint at it; all but give up my interest in yourself—in mercy do not ask it in the present state of my mind. Ask me to go to the uttermost ends of the earth, or not to see you, or anything else, and I will obey you in all but that. I cannot do business—I cannot look on a book, or sleep; and what is more distressing than all, I am obliged, as far as I am able, to act my former self, to save appearances; but this cannot long be done. If Colonel Straton were away, I must retire. This cannot continue long. As I have borne so much, I can bear you classing me with misery and contempt. I believe you are right after all. I never had a high opinion of myself, and I can assure you it is now low enough. If you had a year ago entertained the same opinion of me as you have so recently adopted, I would have been comparatively happy at the present moment. I ask your forgiveness for whatever I have done amiss, you will grant I have some excuse for not acting in all

respects as I ought. I do not do wrong intentionally—I am suffering for all. It is strange—I have been plunged all at once into such a sea of misery. I stand much more in need of pity than reproach. I intended to have been at Mr N—'s on Saturday; perhaps you are to be there, and our meeting might be disagreeable. I wish you to drop a single line on the subject; I can safely send word that I am indisposed. If you want anything stated more explicitly, I shall be happy to do it. Your letter is certainly very acrimonious. You, however, shall hear no more reproaches from me. I am sorry I cannot consent to break our engagement. Wishing you every improvement in your health, I am, &c., &c., &c.,

(Signed) "GEO. BEATTIE."

In the answer just quoted, I had by some means neglected to take notice of that part of Miss Gibson's letter which states: "I also understood when you were last here, you gave me up, and I am certain you said you would vindicate me." These, like the assertions in the same letter—that I must have the fortune or prosecute her, that she would submit to misery and contempt—are all meant as direct insults.

Miss Gibson presumes that by this means she cannot fail to force me to give her up in disgust. Whatever may now be my feelings on the subject, still the treatment I have latterly experienced is such that I cannot help thinking of retribution. I can speak with the utmost certainty, that Miss Gibson could not, on the occasion mentioned, or any other, have understood, that I gave her up. She must have understood, and did understand, the very reverse—she did not wish to be given up at that time. I particularly recollect what took place on the occasion alluded to, and Miss Gibson cannot deny the truth of it. After some conversation had taken place between Miss Gibson and me, she asked how I was looking so ill; I made no immediate answer, and I confess

I was a good deal affected, as she looked very poorly herself. Miss Gibson then burst into tears, and said she never could forgive herself for having latterly acted towards me as she had done. I did every thing in my power to soothe her—I mentioned that all this, happily, was now over, and added, "I will vindicate you, Miss Gibson, but I cannot vindicate myself, my conscience does not vindicate me—I must ever blame myself for making you suffer so much and so unjustly," or words to this very effect. We were both much affected, and fearing that Mr Gibson or some other person might enter the room and find us in this situation, we took leave, and Miss Gibson asked me to come back as soon as possible, and said we both would be in high spirits at next meeting. This is the last time I called. In two or three days after this, Miss Gibson set off to Edinburgh, accompanied by both her parents; she did not mention this circumstance to me, although she must have known it was to take place at this time. I had forgiven what was past, and on that head only was I to vindicate Miss Gibson; but I never meant to vindicate any after conduct unbecoming one in her situation. Whether her tears proceeded from sorrow for what had happened, or remorse for what was to happen, may now be problematical, after what had taken place; but I could only think of the former, and it may be supposed I would not vindicate the commission of farther wrongs against myself; nor could I have any idea that such would be committed after all that had taken place.

Miss Gibson returned the following answer to my last letter:—

"Kinnaber, 14th June, 1823.

"I have this moment received yours of the 11th inst., and it is now unnecessary to inform you that I was not invited to Borrowfield to-day. The person who took the letter from the post-office, had not an opportunity of

delivering it to me till this morning. I know there are people in Montrose who think more of me than they once did. I am well aware that were I free as air, the person you allude to could never be more to me than a common acquaintance. If my letter was acrimonious, recollect that you addressed a letter to my father, which you must be aware was very irritating. But I beg you will make no more complaints to him of me; his health is too feeble to permit of his being agitated, without seriously injuring him. Therefore what you have in future to say, address it to myself. I think I before informed you that I am ordered frequent change of air, and sea excursions. I am, on that account, going in a few weeks to Edinburgh, and from thence join my father at Pitcaithly; I trust when I do go, you will not think of sending such threatenng letters after me. You offer to grant me any request, save one. Will you return me all the letters I have ever written you? If you do so, put them in the post-office, that I may get them on Monday morning, and you will oblige,

“ W. GIBSON. ”

“ I never meant to class you with misery and contempt—far from it—it was your packet (which my father gave me to read before it was destroyed) that made me miserable, and in it you mentioned me with contempt—at least I thought so; but I again beg you will not tease my parents with such things, for they will not interfere on your side.”

To this letter the following answer was sent:—

“ Montrose, 21st June, 1823.

“ Dear Madam.—I only received yours of the 14th yesterday forenoon. I cannot account for the extraordinary delay, not at first advertng to the date of your letter, as I could not suppose it to be so far back. I thought you only wanted an answer on Monday first. I

now find, however, that it was to be called for on Monday last—it will be nearly a week behind. The letter was a good deal soiled. Being put in the post-office on Saturday, it would not, at any rate, have been delivered till Monday, as I seldom call for letters on Sunday, and they do not deliver them on that day; but I cannot account for the subsequent delay. The request you now make is so closely connected with what I made the exception, that I consider they are one and the same; and will you tell me honestly what you meant should follow the delivery of your letters? Had I really been disposed to grant your request, it is a task I could not perform; the enclosing these letters would to me be like shutting the very tomb upon myself. I shall now, however, if possible, write sober sense, without moralizing or troubling you with my own feelings, which to you, I doubt not, now appear troublesome and impertinent. I am sure you did not expect that I would send these letters through the post-office; besides, you know I had previously declared that I would not part with them, and you promised never again to make the request. I am still ready to do, however, what I previously promised—you may rest assured that I will not trouble or interfere with your parents, as you seem to apprehend. This I never intended. If I did what was wrong in this respect, I have already stated the cause and expressed my deep regrets. You know that no one would feel more reluctant than I would to irritate your father, or hurt his feelings in any respect. You may also be assured it is not my wish to be troublesome to you; but you will allow that a person may be treated in such a manner as to induce him to sacrifice everything to obtain whatever redress might be within his reach.

“As you seem disconcerted about the Memorial, I am sorry it was sent; but after it fell into your own hands, I think you should not have destroyed it. You do not mention this in your first letter. I wished to be checked if anything was wrong stated. It was my wish to draw

up a correct Statement while the circumstances were recent, to prevent any after misunderstanding. I beg leave, however, to mention that I have still an exact copy of this paper. I do not mention it as a threat, or that it should operate with you as such; nor do I wish to hurt your feelings—far from it; but as you have different times called on me to state 'my intentions' with regard to yourself, and my 'determination,' &c., I would be acting uncandidly if I did not state as distinctly as I possibly can, that as I intended neither to break my word or write, I will not permit the engagement on your part to be evaded, without seeking every redress, by every means whatever in my power. This determination I know I will never alter, and it can be of no use at any time to say more on that subject. I have honestly told you my intentions—you certainly are not so plain. I shall not, however, attempt to draw from you any explanations which you do not wish to communicate yourself.

"I made perhaps improperly an allusion in my letter to 'some' that would pay more attention to you than formerly—you apply this to an individual. It would have been highly improper in me to have made so pointed an allusion, and I shall not allow myself to guess at your application. It is a subject that I should not have interfered with; and I beg you will excuse me upon grounds already stated. I most sincerely wish that your health may be benefitted by your sea excursions and change of air, and I am satisfied that you have been well advised in this. I would fain say something more, but shall refrain. I am most unwilling to trouble you with complaints, and would wish to suffer in silence. Notwithstanding every exertion, I get worse and worse. No effort of reason or attempt to laugh away my misery have the least effect. My health is now suffering much. I shall seek no remedy. Will I never be allowed to look upon you again? In case anything may happen I shall seal up and lock past your letters, and leave written instructions as to the delivery to

yourself—so that, in the meantime, you need not be anxious on that ground. If I could reveal my misery to any person, it might give me some relief. I was lately one of the happiest of beings in existence, and I am sure I am now the most miserable. I am, &c., &c.,

“GEORGE BEATTIE.”

This Supplement and the Statement of Facts contain chiefly an account of what can be supported by documents; anything beyond this is of little consequence. It would be of no use to enter into a long history of all that has passed betwixt Miss Gibson and myself; the letters speak so far, and the rest may be imagined. As we never wanted opportunities of meeting, it is a chance that there was any writing at all. It may only be necessary farther to state that her parents did not discourage, on the contrary, they urged my attendance, at Stone of Morphie. Nothing prevented our union previously but apprehensions as to the extent of our means for living in a married state. I told Miss Gibson I was saving all I could; and she very often spoke of the prospects from her uncle, which she said would make her all right.

When the first accounts of her uncle's death arrived, I was entrusted with all the secrets. Miss G. was entitled to £3500 consols, certain. I presume she thought this sum would not put her beyond my reach. I was appointed to write for a copy of the will, and nothing at this time was concealed from me by Miss Gibson or her parents. As already said, upon Sunday, the 4th May, we had renewed all our engagements. On the next day, 5th May, the intelligence arrived of what Miss Gibson would be entitled to as residuary legatee, beyond the specified bequest of £3500 consols. It was resolved on, therefore, to discard me, to set all our engagements aside, and to give me no farther information on the subject; and upon the following day, the 6th May, Miss Gibson wrote me, wishing to be off from all engagements, without telling me of her

good fortune, farther than stating that the people in Montrose called it ten times more than it was. Her father had the civility to write me the following letter on the occasion :—

“ Stone of Morphie, 5th May, 1823.

“ Dear Sir,—We have this day heard from Messrs Barclay & Davidson, with a copy of the Testament, and about the amount of the late Mr Mitchell's subject in London. It is not worse than we expected; but he cannot say anything about the West India property until he hears from the executors there, and how soon he hears from them, is to advise William. I am, dear sir, yours truly,

“ R. GIBSON.

“ George Beattie, Esq., Writer, Montrose,”

ADDITIONAL SUPPLEMENT.

“ Statement of Facts,” page 17, where my letter to Miss Gibson of 8th May, 1823, is quoted :—“ I am sure you cannot forget what passed upon that day I called at Stone of Morphie on going to the Mills.”

As the Statement was written out and forwarded in the course of an afternoon, it was impossible to notice all circumstances, and, as already mentioned, it refers only to what was in write. On this occasion, I found Miss Gibson by herself, and had been immediately left by Lieutenant Wemyss. She must recollect what passed betwixt us, and what was spoken about while I remained. She complained that I had been jaunting without her. I mentioned that it was not on pleasure, but business, and that the weather had been disagreeable. On my rising to go

away, after having remained past Mr Jolly's dinner hour, Miss Gibson went betwixt me and the door, and said that we must repeat our vows. I mentioned that there could be no necessity for this, but that I could have no objection; she said that this was needless as to our marriage, but that something behoved to be understood as to the time or near about it. She then laid her hand in mine, and proposed repeating a solemn oath. I said that I could have no objection, but that it bound us whether her parents might be agreeable or not. She said, they are quite agreeable; I told them of our former engagement, and it was just what they expected. I then said go on; and she made me repeat these words:—"May I never know peace in this world, or see God in mercy, if I marry another than you, or if ever I go south again without taking you along with me as my wife." She took a similar oath herself—this I am sure Miss Gibson will not deny. To recapitulate all the different communings and engagements would be impossible. From some empty envelopes addressed to me, it will be seen I had other letters, which were destroyed. Others were destroyed, envelopes and all. It was by mere chance any were preserved. I shall proceed no farther, but state that Mr N. called on me on the 29th July, wishing up Miss Gibson's letters, which I refused to give. I here refer to

No. 1. Copy letter I wrote to him. I also refer to

No. 2. Copy letter sent to Miss Gibson of the 11th August, evidently written in considerable mental distress, &c.

No. 3. Letter from Mr Gibson of 13th August.

These are tied together. I sent no answer.

Copy letter, Geo. Beattie, to G. N., Esq., Borrowfield.

“Montrose, 29th July, 1823.

“Dear Sir,—After your calling to-day, wishing up Miss Gibson's letters, which I refused to give you, I became

anxious in case any misunderstanding might exist on the subject, although I expressed myself very plainly. I beg leave again to mention—and if you think proper to communicate it to Miss Gibson, you may do so—that I have never done nor intend to do anything evasive of, or in violation of, the engagements betwixt her and me. I shall be extremely sorry if she either has conducted or shall conduct herself unbecoming one in her situation. If she does so, I must state candidly and explicitly that in justice to myself, and as due to my wounded feelings, I will, if I live, take steps for my own vindication; nothing can possibly deter me from doing so. This I have explicitly stated to herself and to her father. I cannot say more—the matter is known to her parents; and if she, with their consent, may be inclined to violate her engagements with me, it will be known who are to blame—I am not. No person can know the circumstances, nor the extent of the injury I have sustained, but myself. I hope nothing can diminish the friendship subsisting betwixt you and me. I am, dear sir, yours truly,

(Signed) "GEO. BEATTIE."

No. 2. Copy letter, Mr Beattie to Miss Gibson.

"Montrose, Monday, 11th August, 1823.

"Miss Gibson,—It is humiliating for me to be under the necessity of addressing you. I beg you will hear me without reference to what is past; no person knows the state I am in, nor do I wish it should be known. On Friday last, I executed a settlement. From the nature of the greater part of my small property, and from the state of my mind and health at present, the settlement, I am afraid, would only be good on my living sixty days after its date. In the event of my dying before that time, David and my sister might be left unprovided for. I am now satisfied it is your intention to break the engagements betwixt us. I cannot prevail on myself to con-

sent to this; but as I cannot prevent your doing so, it would be conferring a very great favour on me if you would delay marrying another till after the lapse of that period. By the time it expires, I will be no more; and I now look most anxiously forward to a termination of woes—may it be the commencement of your happiness. In earnestly asking this favour, I do not mean to excite your pity, nor do I in consequence sanction any violation of these engagements; on the contrary, should I be granted strength to support existence, which I have no reason to anticipate, I would, as I have already said, seek every redress within my reach for these violations. A single line, though unsigned, unaddressed, and without date, will be satisfactory, and if you wish it, I pledge myself to return it immediately. This must appear strange, and it is so; I cannot help it. If I could make myself otherwise than I am, I would do it. I have struggled hard, but all is unavailing; I see my fate very clearly, and it cannot be avoided. My whole endeavours shall be to reconcile myself to it. O! do not do anything to hasten it!—not upon my own account, but on account of those who are dependent on me; and never have offended you; I never intended to do so, but I do not know myself. Will you yet offer my best respects to your parents? I will never see any of you again, nor the garden, &c.; it is better I should not—it would only make me worse. These recollections are bitter. Will you all pray for me?"

Copy letter to Mr Gibson accompanying the above.

"Dear Sir,—May I trouble you for this once to deliver the enclosed to Miss Gibson? To the best of my knowledge, there is nothing wrong in it; and she, I have no doubt, will communicate the contents to you if you wish it.

Copy letter Mr Gibson to Mr Beattie.

"Kinnaber, 13th August, 1823.

"Dear Sir,—I have perused your letter to William. Its

contents surprised me very much indeed. This world is made for disappointments and trials. I thought you one of those men that anything of the kind would cried buff on, and am sure you have more good sense than let any disappointment ever be known to the world, far less to interfere with your happiness or peace of mind. There is as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it. Do let us see you as before, and believe me, yours truly,

(Signed) "ROBERT GIBSON."

THE LAST.

A dreadful cloud has hung over me for some time past ; I fear much I shall never again enjoy the sunshine of this world ! This paper will be laid down beside the Statement of Facts, &c., respecting Miss Gibson. The letters from that lady are in John Walker's little black box. I beg that special care may be taken of these letters and the different papers ; they perhaps may be required as a justification of my conduct—if any such can be admitted, for I have suffered, and am suffering more than I can bear. I have thought myself, and have no doubt but most people will hold the same opinion, that I almost would have been the last man in the world that would have allowed himself to be so oppressed and borne down upon an occasion of this nature ; and I daresay, I might have laughed at any other person, under similar circumstances. None can know, however, until they are placed in the same situation, and unless they were acquainted with all the circumstances, which none can be but the poor victim himself. God knows what may happen—I have no distinct views on the subject ; my feelings have been lacerated in a dreadful degree. I shall blame no person, but I have been most cruelly and most unjustly treated ; and no person can know the extent of this treatment but myself. I can scarcely command resolution to look back upon the connection and intimacy that subsisted between Miss Gibson and me, and which was at all events as much cherished by her as me ; when I have at the same time to bring to my remembrance that no sooner did she acquire an accession to her fortune, and know the extent of this, than (forgetting without regret or remorse all our former pledges, vows, &c.) she

immediately wished to break her engagements with me, which she has actually done ; and no sooner was this done, than she instantly admitted the addresses of another. Could all the circumstances be revealed, no person could believe that such could have been the case. I could not tell my ideas on the subject ; they could not be expressed. Much will now be said about me. Fain would I have lived till overtaken by death in the ordinary course of nature ; but I have wrestled with my fate till I can wrestle no longer. I could have suffered any degree of bodily pain, penury, privations, and hardships of any description ; but the agony of my mind, contrasted with my former happy condition, cannot be borne—I must submit. I hope every person will endeavour to think as charitably of me as possible. I will not—I need not—attempt to justify my past life or conduct. I wish they had been much, very much better than they have been ; yet I may not on the whole have been very much worse than some others who have made greater pretensions than ever I did. What I most dreaded was my defects and deficiencies as a practical Christian and a good man—terms of nearly the same import. Without taking any merit on myself, I may state that I have undergone a pretty strict self-examination for some time past. I have had ample time for this during the nights, when sleep has not visited me. I have found myself lamentably deficient ; all my comfort is I never oppressed the poor or helpless, although I had the power and had been urged to do so. I never did a deliberate act of cruelty to man or beast. Although I sometimes got into a very temporary passion, which I never failed afterwards to regret, I never deliberately did, or wished harm to any person, although latterly accused, when I least expected it. I never was selfish, nor did I at any time acquire cash by improper means. Any means that I was in possession of I had no pleasure in squandering, and I could not justly do so while others were depending on me ; and I can say, as a dying man, that the

accusation brought against me by Miss Gibson, of wishing to possess myself of her fortune, is as cruel as it is unjust and unmerited. Although her fortune had been laid before me, I would not have touched a halfpenny of it, and it would now be of no use to me. If she really believed the accusation herself, what must she think of the individual preferred to me, who only paid his addresses to her after she had come in possession of it? As a dying man, I may pledge myself for the truth of this. I am, however, digressing, and my time is limited. I have only to say then, that although I found myself deficient in almost every respect, and although I die the death of a wretched suicide, yet, trusting in the unbounded goodness and mercy of God, I'm confident I will be happy.

I hope all my friends and acquaintances will vindicate me as far as they can do so with justice. I meant to have mentioned some of them by name; I have not time, however, and perhaps in the agitation of my mind, I might forget some of the best of them. May every happiness attend them through life, and may they never suffer themselves to be induced, as I have been, to place their whole happiness on one object.

I meant to have written a separate letter to my parents; this, however, I cannot do. I can only think of them with that dreadful degree of agony that the perspiration falls in drops from the tips of my fingers on the paper. I die as I lived, their dutiful and affectionate son. It gives me some consolation at this awful juncture to think that I have not been a bad son or a bad brother; my parents and David and Catherine can speak as to this. They are all good themselves. I feel for poor David; he must work away with the business. I hope some will employ him for my sake, and many for his own. A better young man—a more honourable or a more punctual, does not exist. He is well calculated, in every respect, for doing business—much better than ever I was myself. I hope the brethren of the profession will be kind to him. Catherine,

I know, will feel dreadfully. All this redoubles my agony, and urges me to a speedy oblivion of my woes. We will all meet in a better world. I have one consolation—they will not be left destitute here.

I have endeavoured by every possible means to conceal the dreadful state in which I have been for some time—it certainly must have been noticed. I have not slept many hours in the course of two months. I am a complete wreck and a ruin, totally unfit to do business. I have been different in every respect from what I previously was. Instead of reading my book, as I was wont, I have sought company and even dissipation; I do not mean that I have betaken myself to drinking, but I have left company with regret, knowing that I had not the power, as formerly, of returning into myself with comfort and placidity. Time, which flew over me with rapidity before, now lags, and wears me out of patience. I have not been the same man at all. I know myself, and I know that time, instead of giving me relief, will only increase my woes; and what impels me to fly from them just now, is the fear of an absolute and total insanity. I would then be deprived of the power of extricating myself from that deplorable state of existence.

Now when about to leave this world, I can say with truth, that before I was visited with this calamity, few enjoyed it so much, because I could delight in my earliest recreations. I had always a delight in the enjoyment of simple pleasures; the seeking of birds' nests in their season, playing with children, &c.; but I have latterly had not even an idea of pleasure of any description. In this fatal connection, I have been true to honesty and virtue, but blind to prudence. Still I cannot blame myself. We often talked of the difference of our dispositions, &c.; and Miss Gibson was so fully satisfied of our future happiness, I became of the same opinion, and she forged the chains which she afterwards broke, and along with them my heart. The injuries I sustain are manifold—the loss

of the object of my affections after she had repeatedly owned and given me unequivocal proofs of her attachment. The pangs which must wring one in my situation, to think that one in whom I had placed the utmost confidence, and whom I believed to be incapable of such conduct—the affront to myself and disgrace with the world—the humiliating idea that another should be preferred, after so long an attachment, and after solemn engagements had taken place betwixt us, and the scorn that must be borne from one who piques himself in having cut me out. &c., &c., &c. Here I might go on for hours, but I have said enough. Who could even bear what has been stated? And I have a thousand other feelings, many of them that I could communicate and many of them that I could not.

* * * * *

After an interval of suffering, I have again taken up my pen. I find no improvement in the state of my mind. On the contrary, the more I think of the matter, I feel the more astonished and oppressed. The great mistake was my allowing myself to get on an intimate footing with one who was great, or considered herself so. Miss Gibson knows what often passed betwixt us on this head; how she satisfied my scruples and urged me on. She seemed to have convinced herself, and convinced me, that in reality our dispositions were quite congenial. I should have been like the "Mynstrell of Dun," who prayed the great lady to be allowed

"To hirple his was to the cot-hoose doore,
And cheir with his layes the scampelle and poore."

The poor old man's fate somewhat resembles my own. I should therefore wish that piece preserved, particularly as it was originally written when I was a mere boy, and before I had almost read any poetry, and lay past for years before it was published, or supposed to be worthy of being so.

I must, however, say that till the moment Miss Gibson

wished to break her engagements, and for years previous, she in all cases conducted herself towards me with more than ordinary affability and condescension. I cannot now express myself as I could wish; but I hope it will be distinctly understood that it is not the breaking of written or verbal promises or oaths that troubles or astonishes me—these are no doubt the only palpable evidence that can be brought of a connection of this nature—but it is the breaking of the impalpable and continued chain of endearments that passed betwixt us for a long period—the long and uninterrupted course of interchanges of affections, expressed in a thousand different modes, the meaning of which was so well known to both—it is the breaking of these that utterly confounds me. It is to me altogether unaccountable, and displays such a dreadful want of faith and principle, that it shakes my resolution and overpowers my reason to attempt to scan the motives that could have led to all this. I allow that in many cases a female may change her mind, and in an ordinary case, I would be ready to mistrust myself; but had I not met with the strongest encouragement, I would not have continued my attentions. But the most extraordinary circumstance—after having been so long encouraged and when so many promises had passed betwixt us—was the wish to set the whole aside the moment the extent of Miss Gibson's fortune was known, and the instantly substituting in my place another, who had not paid the least attention to her till she came into possession of that fortune. During all my visits, and they were many, I never saw that gentleman unless when a party was invited. Miss Gibson wished to make it one excuse for drawing back that I had not visited often enough in the spring. That circumstance has already been explained; and I am sure that gentleman never was there in my absence during the spring.

If I could have acted agreeably to philosophy and reason, I would have shaken off this nonsense and despised

any daughter of Eve that could have acted in such a manner. I know it will be said that in not being able to do so, I have displayed a great want of spirit and pride, &c., &c.; that it was contemptible to allow myself to be troubled and depressed on such a subject, &c. I am fully aware of all this myself; and although I have been enabled at times to soar above my wrongs, still they returned upon me with increased force, and latterly I have been totally unbinged. The treatment I have received appears so extraordinary, that my very thoughts put me in a state of mind that I can neither account for or control. Even if it might have been allowable for Miss Gibson to have transferred her affections to another, notwithstanding of our engagements, and after all that had taken place, it might have been supposed that, from feeling and female delicacy, she would not immediately have rushed into the arms of another.

I now most freely forgive Miss Gibson. I forgive everybody. I cannot read over these papers. If I have written anything that may offend her, I am sorry for it. I have it only in view that these papers shall be used in justification of the awful step I have been impelled to take, partly from the acuteness of my own feelings—they are much more so than generally believed. I do not, indeed, know if such a step will admit of justification or palliation. It was inevitable. I need not say more. I wish, however, for this purpose, all circumstances, as far as I have revealed them, known to my friends, so as they may do justice to me as far as possible. Let none of the originals be given out. If necessary, a copy may be taken.

When at Edinburgh, Mr Farquhar, of the Custom House, Leith, Mr George Anderson, of this place, and myself, agreed that we should attend the funerals of each other, at whatever distance we might reside from each other. I wish Mr Farquhar to be accordingly invited—Mr Anderson will be so of course. I wish this the more so, as Mr F. repeated this the last time I saw him,

and we made promises. I shall never wish to hear again of these being broken, and I never did so. None will be more astonished at my fate.

If ever I had intruded myself upon Miss Gibson, or urged her to come under engagements or promises, implied or expressed, I would have had no right to feel myself much disappointed at the violation of these; but the very reverse was the case. This Miss Gibson knows well; and also what led to the connection and intimacy betwixt us. The attachment was reciprocal, but all the proposals as to a matrimonial union came from herself, and were most cheerfully acquiesced in by me. Can any human being suppose that I can now bear the violation of these, under all circumstances. I am certain there cannot.

It is not through the madness of passion or the love of fortune that I have suffered or fallen a sacrifice, but from the deep and indelible sense of the wrongs done me, and which I could not have done myself at any time of my life to any human being, under any circumstance. The least excuse for these has not been offered or palliation attempted.

I have perhaps written too much, and what I have written, not free from contradiction. This proceeds from the unsettled state of my mind and the different views I take at different times. However, I repeat that I most freely forgive Miss Gibson, and impute no bad motive to her; what I thought she had done wrong in at this instant appears like a dream. I shall endeavour to die with this impression on my mind. No man cared less for the opinion of the world at one time than I did. Now I would wish every body to speak as well of me as they can. I recollect the concluding lines written by Campbell on the grave of a suicide:

“ Ah! once perhaps the social passion glow'd
In thy devoted bosom; and the hand
That smote its kindred heart yet might be prone
To deeds of mercy. Who may understand
Thy many woes, poor suicide unknown?
He, whom thy being gave, shall judge of thee alone.”

I know my character has been a good deal mistaken; there were some things that I have observed other people extremely anxious about, to which I was totally indifferent, but not in all things. My feelings on other points were extremely acute; but I believe till of late few were so happy as I was.

It may be believed I had at first considered myself shockingly used, when I was induced to threaten one I had been so long on intimate terms with, to seek legal redress. It might have been but just to do so, under all the circumstances; but this is a step I never could have proceeded with; and even if I had done so from principle, a farthing of damages never could have gone into my pocket. Again I repeat my entire forgiveness.

Nothing has sickened my soul so much as the being accused by Miss Gibson with having designs upon her fortune. She no doubt puts a value upon it herself; but she reasons wrong when she takes it for granted that I hold it in the same estimation. God knows if I had all the health of the world, I would give it all that I were myself again; but this may not be. Nay, at times, I would give it all for a sound sleep. I am well aware the cool and calculating part of mankind could never enter into my feelings; and many will say it is sinful in me to let the loss of a single object have such an effect upon me. They reason wrong. In the loss of this one object, under all the circumstances, every thing else is lost to me. Reason and philosophy may say "Have you not still all the objects in nature which you formerly delighted in, your solitary walks, &c., &c. Have you not the society of your friends and acquaintances—your books and all your former enjoyments?" But this is not the case. I have none of all these. Nothing of the kind. The objects still exist, but they are not the same to me. I see them through a totally different medium. What most delighted me formerly is now painful in the same ratio, or interests me not at all. The smooth mirror of my mind, which for-

merly reflected all objects in such a pleasing and agreeable manner, and which was a continual source of happiness to me, is now broken and ruffled, and reflects everything distorted, hideous, and disgusting. I am a being different from my former self, and support a different and painful existence.

Miss Gibson must recollect how she was in the habit of treating me when at any time she only imagined herself neglected, and this, too, without the least cause. Nothing to me would be more curious than to know how she reconciles in her own mind her former with her latter conduct towards me. From anything that I can learn, and from appearances at least, she seems to act with a self-approving conscience. If she has also the approbation of her parents and connections, this must be so far consolatory to her. I have forgiven her and everybody; but although I might have lived far beyond the space allotted to man, I could never forget my wrongs. It is officious memory that puts me on the rack and keeps these continually staring me in the face. Of course, while I possess memory and consciousness, I must be miserable; and without these, I would be a second Edward Shore, and not even on a par with the beasts that perish. Beyond everything, I dread the falling into this state. I do already find many of my faculties considerably impaired, and still getting worse. There is no remedy for this dreadful calamity but one, and may Almighty God forgive one of his poor unhappy creatures for presuming to have recourse to such a remedy. Miss G. is not, and could not, from what has passed betwixt us, be ignorant of the state to which I have been brought—I shall not say by her; but truth compels me to state that she has evinced the reverse of anything like feeling or regret for my condition—a sad contrast to her former goodness. If she only but a very short time previous imagined that I was unwell or unhappy, she was all anxiety. All this certainly could not have been feigned. There was no occa-

sion for her latterly standing aloof. The time was gone by, and although she had made a tender of herself, with a fortune unheard of in extent, neither would have been accepted of by me; for she had inflicted a wound by her want of faith and feeling that shut me out from all the enjoyments of this world. I have already said that in many instances change of female affection might be excusable. This might be the case when the acquaintance or connection had been brief, and when no real attachment could be formed—when stratagem, misrepresentation, or strong entreaty had been used, or when any circumstance of importance had been concealed. Miss G., however, had none of all these excuses. It is a delicate matter to speak of the attachment that existed between us. I have avoided this as much as possible. I do not pretend to be versant in these matters. I thought I could not possibly be mistaken; but to set that matter at rest, Miss Gibson, without any question from me, voluntarily and unequivocally declared her attachment. This first happened in the House of Kinnaber, spring, 1822; this I am certain she will not deny; and when this attachment continued increasing and uninterrupted till the instant of time that Miss Gibson became acquainted with the extent of her fortune, I think I will stand excused for feeling as I do. If I could have figured any excuse for her conduct after this, it would have been of some relief to myself. No doubt an individual has now come forward since the receipt of this fortune, who undoubtedly is preferred. Had this happened at a previous period, it had been well. I admit him to be more suitable, more accomplished, and better in every respect; but as he came forward after a train of engagements had been entered into with another—and which still exist, I can see little difference betwixt this and coming forward after a marriage had followed upon these engagements. There may be some difference legally—morally none on the part of Miss Gibson; there might on the part of the

gentleman, if it could be supposed that these engagements, which had been a matter of common talk through the town, were concealed from, or unknown to him. All this now signifies nothing. I will however be excused, under the circumstances, for stating how my feelings have been wrought upon: I have held on till I can do so no longer. I must leave my business and home in the meantime. I repeat my most entire forgiveness, and expect forgiveness myself. In my settlement, I have burdened my sister and brother with no legacies. We have poor relations of our own, and they will not forget those who have been in the habit of getting some little assistance. I have only to give the hint, and I am sure it will be obeyed. I would wish them to pay ten pounds to the Kirk-session of St. Cyrus, for the poor of that parish; ten pounds to William Low, Kirk-treasurer here, to be given in charity, as he shall think proper; five pounds to William Blacklaws; and one pound to each of—John Hutcheon, cooper, John Graham, Mary Aitkenhead, and a poor man nearly blind, who often sits upon the Church-yard brae. It has arrived at a dreadful crisis, when the hand is lifted against the heart. Yet it partly deserves the punishment for enlisting itself in a cause which has terminated so disastrously for its unfortunate owner. That it was so pressed into the service is true. If I had acted prudently, I should have fled temptation; but this I was not permitted to do. Miss G.'s letters will faintly show this. What she stated verbally, was of a more determined nature. I could not help myself. I sincerely think, and die in the belief, that I am not to blame in any respect, though the contrary may be attempted to be proved, after I cannot answer for myself. I had it not in my power to act otherwise. From what I had experienced, if the proposal of breaking the connection (any time before the extent of Miss Gibson's fortune was known) had come from me, it would have been scouted with the utmost indignation: indeed, I confess she had so far attained the



ascendancy, that such a proposal could not have been hinted at. It was therefore ungrateful, unfeeling, and cruel, to bring it forward herself, at that period only, when she thought, or perhaps had seen, that this fortune had become an object to others, holding, no doubt, much higher pretensions, than ever I aspired to. However, all this now signifies nothing; it only shows that my mind has not been affected, nor my feelings wounded without cause. Miss G. and her fortune are now alike indifferent to me, but still the treatment has left an impression that can never be obliterated, even by time itself; on the contrary, it still wears deeper, as rivers wear their channels, as the poet aptly expresses it; and it cannot wear deeper without destroying both body and mind. This is the inevitable issue. It has already been busy with both. It is awful to think that I cannot live, and yet cannot die without shocking my relatives. They have not been out of my mind for one moment for a very long time. It is a dreadful alternative. I will make it as little shocking as possible. I will lay down the burden, which I can no longer bear, in some sequestered place—I think on that solemn, sacred, and silent spot where my bones will be deposited.

It was upon the 9th May, as I think, that Miss G. sent me a letter asking forgiveness for having asked to be relieved of her engagements, stating that her conduct had been highly unfeeling—that she had no excuse for herself—that she would not hurt my feelings again, and that she would never repeat a wish to be released. It is well known how she conducted herself at the rousp of Balnakewan only a few days after this—dates will speak for themselves—I am not in a situation for making these particular references. I hope some person of feeling—some good Christian—will yet lend their help with the view, as far as possible, of excusing the last act of my life.

Miss Gibson did, in a strange manner, inform me of her going to Pitcaithly. It is known that she went there

accordingly; and who was her companion? She should at least have acted more candidly towards me. My last letter, like some others, perhaps, was very foolish, and had evidently been written under dreadful depression of spirits, so much so, that I had thought it necessary to execute a will of the date mentioned in my letter. I then laboured under dreadful apprehensions. In this letter I foolishly besought Miss G. to do nothing for some time that might have the effect of accelerating my fate; the immediate consequence was her attendance at the theatre along with the gentleman of her choice and her mother on one occasion, and on another, with a lady of her acquaintance and that gentleman, all of whom were acquainted with the nature of my request. It was foolish of me to write such a letter, but it proceeded from the state of my mind and feelings at the time, and it would have been no disparagement to Miss Gibson to have spared my feelings for a short time. The period asked was not long. The system, however, had been laid down. It may have been thought that the word of a madman would not be believed, and a dead man tells no tales. Be that as it may, I have been studiously treated with every want of feeling; in other circumstances, this would not have affected me. I would have laughed at the whole; but when the spirit is deeply wounded, any additional unkindness sinks it beyond the power of recovery. May God forgive them who have been the ruin and the death of me. This will no doubt, be thought of little consequence. Mr S—— was in the use of telling, that upon one occasion Twedale's natural,* in taking a parcel from the mail coach, let it fall in the strand, and when challenged by the guard, he said, "What does it signify, it's only to Geordie Beattie." I believe the story to be very true, and a similar remark may be made here.

It is very true, as stated by Mr Gibson, in his last

* A half-witted creature employed by Mr. Twedale, the mail contractor, in delivering parcels.

letter, that this world is full of trials and disappointments ; but it does not follow that one fellow creature ought to stand acquitted for willingly inflicting these on another. Were this sound reasoning, the miscreant who sets fire to a person's house would only have to tell the sufferer to be content, as the world was full of trials and disappointments. Mr Gibson argues as if the trial inflicted on me was a dispensation of Providence. I certainly cannot see the matter in this light, nor can I think so lightly of it as Mr G. seems to do—the very reverse ; and from what he knew of the matter, and from what Miss Gibson mentioned to me that she had communicated to him, I thought it would have been viewed by him in a very different light. I have no right to exemption from trials and disappointments ; but I would have looked for them from a different quarter. Many injuries would have “cried buff” on me, that would have made others wince ; but in some instances, they would wound me deeper than they would do any other. That there is as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it, is very true—but this applies not to my case ; it might be thought applicable by some ; but my feelings will not admit the most distant application, or even meaning, here. How would a mother feel, who had lost her firstborn, if this proverb were offered her in the shape of consolation ? It would be equally true in her case. It cannot now be of the least consequence to me ; but I should like to know if Miss G., in the midst of her nuptial preparations, allows herself to recollect of what she was in the use of talking to me on that subject—about procuring the ring, providing furniture, and other matters ; and if she has forgotten that she was in the habit of making suppositions as to how I would acquit myself in these matters. This was a subject of mirth to us both. Trifling as they are, it cannot be supposed that these, and many other circumstances, can be forgotten by me. As I have often repeated—I am very anxious to justify myself as far as possible, and in doing so, I have no wish to throw blame

on Miss Gibson. There is nothing to be apprehended on this score. Any one possessed of a fortune, and living in prosperity, can never be in the least affected by any circumstance of this nature; he would have a superficial knowledge of the world that could think so.

I have continued my remarks longer, much longer, than I intended; it all proceeds from the wish to excuse myself for the commission of an act which I cannot avoid, do what I will. I have not done this in a pet, but after making every attempt to stem the torrent, and finding to a certainty that I really have not the power. I would not—I could not for worlds—pass such another period of suffering and misery—rendered doubly so by being reduced to the necessity of continually disguising my feelings, and concealing my misery and distress from the world. The punishment of attending parties, or attending to business, is distressing beyond description. Good fortune to myself in this world would now be worse to bear than anything. This may appear strange, but it is nevertheless very true. Misfortunes and disasters are more suitable to the present state of my mind, which appears unalterable unless for the worse. The only consolation I have—and it certainly at times makes me tranquil and always reconciled to my fate—is, that I am not suffering from any wrong that I have committed. It relieves me to think that I have injured no one, but that my sufferings proceed from injuries that have been done to me. The feeling or sensation therefore, hard as it may be to bear, is not remorse or anything akin to it. Had the tie been broken by a dispensation of Providence, over which mortals have no control, the feeling would have been very different—the regret, in this event, might have been equally strong, but must ultimately have been followed by a soothing melancholy which would have been unaccompanied entirely by the wounded spirit and irritated feelings—the self-degradation, and the many other feelings and sufferings

which have brought about the present crisis. I never dreamed that I could possibly have been visited by such a calamity. I was not previously acquainted with these matters. I hope few have suffered so much as I have done, and it is a very uncommon case; if it is not, the world is not worth the living in, and I have lost nothing by leaving it, if I could only have left it in the course of nature. This I did believe at one period I would have done; but however powerful have been the workings of my mind, they have had to operate on a frame so full of health, that it could not be pulled down but by violence. Many would have given much to be possessed of such health, but it has been my bane latterly—my agonies and want of sleep having no effect on my bodily health;—it could not be subdued by any operation of the mind, and it is impossible these operations could have been more powerful.

My will must now be perfectly good, for notwithstanding of my mental sufferings, I had a very distinct, clear, and satisfactory view of the manner in which I have disposed of my property. It was my intention to make a settlement in exactly the same terms before I fell into the shade, and I am sure it will not be challenged. If it should, it will be found good, otherwise my donees will be wronged, and my settled and unalterable intentions disregarded.

I have heard that some individuals enjoy a morbid and sickly satisfaction in fancying themselves to be miserable; this is far from being the case with me. I would fain leave misery far behind me—I would fain emerge from the cloud, but memory makes it more dense and dark, and the almost continual sunbine of the breast which I formerly enjoyed, is no longer my companion. I say to myself in words, "Live, and endeavour to do good; this trial ought to be a new era in your life; despise the wrongs that have been done to you, and forget them." I can do all but the last, and memory brings them before

me in so many different views at different times, that every hour visits me with pangs unknown before. I wish I could have watched the departure of the last sun that was destined to shine on me, with a pious smile, and blessed heaven for a long life, after having done much good here; but as I have become so miserable, and am so irresistibly impelled, I am not without hope that I am permitted to lay down a burthen which I have not been granted the power to support, whatever may have been the will.

I have never, to the last, been favoured with any reason by Miss Gibson for her breach of promise. I do not know what the ladies think on these matters; perhaps they conceive it a sufficient reason if they imagine they have got a better match. That point I shall not dispute; but Miss G. knows herself that she often said of her own accord that she was satisfied I would be a good husband. These were amongst the last words she said to me, on the Sunday on which our engagements were renewed—she never at any time hinted at an objection; on the contrary, she paid me compliments of which I was utterly undeserving. In the letter she asks to be free of her engagements, she even says she prefers no other to me. However, the minds of women have puzzled men of experience; they are beyond my reach. I admit that previous to this I had formed a very high opinion of Miss Gibson, and was therefore the less prepared to bear any trials that might be inflicted on me by her. That, however, and all my other trials are now at an end.

After every vexation, and finding that my fate was inevitable, it is astonishing how well I have become reconciled to it. I have (not without emotions, but free from despair) taken my last view of various places which at one time were highly interesting to me, and I have seen many acquaintances and friends whom I know I shall never see again. I have had longer time for preparation than most men. Although I could not, without being noticed, have relinquished altogether my ordinary pursuits, or show

publicly any visible alteration in my conduct, I have scarcely for a second of time forgotten the awful situation in which I stand. It can render me no service to cant to man—that I never could have done at any time, under any circumstances, and I will not do so yet. It is not the pretending to be good and making a noise about it that will avail; but it is the being really good in silence that will do so. I will make no pretensions—there is no necessity for doing so—it is enough to be known here (perhaps too much) that I have latterly at least done my best—and I know by whom I shall be judged. At a time like this, hypocrisy itself throws off its mask.

This brings to my mind that it was a condition betwixt Miss G. and me, and often expressed, that I should after our union attend the Church at least once every Sunday. This I had not the least objection to—it was reasonable and would have been necessary under the circumstances; but I might now have some reason to enquire what she intended I should learn there—not certainly to break sacred ties, promises, engagements, or oaths, or, as Shakspeare has it,

“ Make marriage vows as false as dicer's oaths. ”

This, however, I never could have done, that did not go often to church. Miss G. will recollect that she used to tell me I was a good practical Christian, and too honest, and not cautious enough—acting to please myself, without following the general example of others. This was saying more in my favour than I deserved. I have no doubt she is now ready to retract. My sufferings ought to have made me better in every respect, and I sincerely hope they have done so. As I am not granted the power to resist, I am perhaps better prepared than I would have been at an after period. When one full of bodily health, not far gone in years, easy in circumstances, and previous to this calamity, of a very happy disposition, can thus reconcile himself, it is astonishing that others, oppressed

with age, poverty, and disease, and all the other ills of life, should cling so unreasonably to existence. Indeed, I may say, for one in my situation, I was perfectly independent in my worldly circumstances. This is sufficient to show that a fortune under other circumstances was itself no object to me. I had at one time resolved to travel, with the view of endeavouring to forget my injuries and leave my sufferings behind. This I found could be of no avail—all places are now alike to me—existence could not have been supported anywhere, and, from my absence of mind and consequent indifference to comfort, I could not have lived apart from my relations.

* * * * *

The scene is now near closing. I feel not the common repugnance to death so much spoken about—if it had only been an honourable one, I had been happy. Often, on the afternoons of Saturday, when a mere child, I have visited alone the solitary place where my bones are to rest, even at that time, with a kind of melancholy pleasure, and then I am sure there was not a living being of more buoyant spirits, or fuller of life and glee, of frolic and fun of every description. The people of that neighbourhood speak of this to the present moment. I wish to sleep peacefully in this spot. I wish “life’s fitful fever o’er.” I admit I cast many “longing, lingering looks behind.” When I do so, what do I see? One who for a length of time (certainly myself nothing loth, but the very reverse) has unceasingly urged my entering into the most sacred and important of all engagements, which, after being entered into repeatedly in the most solemn manner, she herself wished to dissolve, and instantly formed another, without the least feeling towards me or delicacy towards herself and sex.

A dying man may surely be allowed to state what he believes, or rather knows, to be true. I merely meant to excuse myself; but if occasional gleams of resentment dart from my dark and clouded mind, I cannot help it. I will

soon be of another mood. I write from the instant impulse of the moment, without forethought or premeditation. I do so to unburthen myself, and as a satisfaction to my relatives and friends. They know I will state nothing but facts, and my reasoning, even if wrong, will be viewed by them with indulgence. Is there anything, therefore, in what I see, to induce me to court longer acquaintance with the world. If Miss G. could only have waited a short time—a very short time—it would have been a consolation to me. I told her in that event I would be insensible to anything she might do. Nobody can know her better than I do, and I know she is too susceptible—of too loving a temperament to have admitted of any such delay upon so insignificant a plea.

“Heaven and Earth!

Must I remember—how she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on! Yet within a month—
Let me not think — FRAILTY, thy name is WOMAN.”

Not a month—not a week—perhaps not a day after Miss Gibson sending me the two letters asking forgiveness, making excuses for hurting my feelings, and demanding with the utmost urgency my intentions towards her, which I stated with all kindness. I believe she was admitting the addresses of another, or did so a very short time after, without stating the circumstance to me—dates will speak for themselves. All this can now make no difference to me; nothing can now do so. But let any person not destitute of pride and feeling place himself in my situation, and say how he would have felt, and what would have been his fate under such feelings. All this too, immediately after Miss Gibson had come in possession of a fortune which she often spoke to me in anticipation of. For more than a year previous to this, I did not meet the least interruption—there had been no rivalry whatever; and although there had, from what had passed, or was passing betwixt us, I could have apprehended nothing.

And notwithstanding of a complaint of absence, there was not—during the year, I am certain—twenty days (with the exception of a short time I was from home), that I did not either see Miss Gibson at Stone of Morphie, Montrose, Kinnaber, or some other place, or hear from her verbally or by letter. As matters now stand, it can make no difference; still I had reason to expect that Miss Gibson would have spared my feelings as much as possible. I thought her own feelings might have dictated this to her. There certainly was something strange in her parading the streets with another in the open manner in which she has been in the habit of doing since the receipt of my last letter. Taking the whole of this matter in view, I believe few have been treated in the way I have been; and I do think full justice cannot be done to me without publishing the whole. I cannot now convince myself that such conduct does not deserve a full disclosure. This is my conviction at the present moment, but I leave it to others who are better able to judge; no other occurrence could have so unmanned me. From my interference for others, I have seen ruin staring me in the face, and only latterly averted by fortunate circumstances that could not have been anticipated—and it scarcely gave me a moment's uneasiness. Perpetual imprisonment, with all the "squalor carceris" and torture itself, would not have reduced me to my present state. Under all this, the spirit and the mind would have remained unsubdued. When these are deeply wounded—all is over. When the heart is sickened to the core, there is no remedy. What a difference there is in the fates and fortunes of different men. I envy none their good fortune or happiness; but at this moment I envy some whom others pity. I wish it could have been my fate to die like Marshal Ney; and yet many thought he was cruelly treated. What a glorious doom compared to mine; to get a few brave fellows to shower their bullets through the heart, particularly in his case, when they would only

obey his own orders. None will obey me, and I am constrained—God forgive me!—to do what, till lately, could not have a place in my mind. I have spent a summer very different from what I was wont; it is past with all its pains. Autumn has followed, and I shall fall before the leaves. Of a truth I have “fallen into the sear, into the yellow leaf.” The variegated fields that used to delight me, now palls upon my sight, and the changing foliage affords me no delight. I have no refuge but in the silent and peaceful grave.

* * * * *

That I would have obtained damages in a court of law, there can be no doubt. Whatever I may have said, however, perhaps by threat or otherwise, under my sufferings, I never could have resorted to such a measure. I would “sooner have coined my heart’s blood,” than raised cash by such means (indeed, anybody would have been most welcome to my blood, that would have saved me spilling it with my own hands). When I spoke of seeking redress, it was on the idea that I could by no other means expose conduct which I thought, and still think, most reprehensible. At no time did I ever think of pocketing a farthing. No one will blame me for this. What everybody seems so anxious to grasp at has, for a considerable time at least, been a matter of entire and total indifference to me. Whatever riches it might have been my lot to be possessed of, in other circumstances, I never could have been induced to live extravagantly; such a mode would not have been to my taste. I can say what few can: I believe I never asked a favour in my life—that is, for myself or relations.

When this matter came to be spoken about, I was astonished on overhearing people say, “there is no doubt but he will get ample damages”—just as if this could have healed my wounded feelings or cure the heart-ache. It was a gross, a sordid and vulgar idea; an idea that I would spurn with all my heart and soul. Had I even

died a beggar (which God be praised is not the case), and left those depending on me beggars, I am sure they would sooner have solicited alms from the cold hand of charity, than accepted of recompense or favour from those who had deprived them of their protector. I do not wish to punish Miss G. or the individual she has preferred to me. No, no. I have inflicted all the punishment on myself. Had I been prone to revenge, or wished to return evil for evil (as many in my situation would), I might have taken vengeance. I had to do what I have done. I had only to die at any rate. A man that is reduced to the dreadful alternative that I have been reduced to, would not fear any kind of death or mortal suffering. Were it not for the dreadful act itself, however, I might almost say I die innocent, whatever previous offences I may have committed, for I have not a wish to hurt a human being, not even those who have reduced me to my present condition.

Mr Gibson seems to think that I ought to be pleased if I can form a connection with another. Such an idea could never enter my mind. Men, I suspect, are more true to their attachments than women. This I did not previously think. Situated as I was, and having others to care for, I was not particularly desirous of changing my mode of life till Miss Gibson persuaded me to do so. She knows this to be the case, and that what I mentioned to her in my letter of the 9th May, and in the Statement of Facts forwarded to her father, on this point, is far within the mark and short of the truth. This, as may be supposed, was done from delicacy. She knows at whose instigation the first letter was sent to Piteachly—although that certainly could not be gathered from the letter itself. She knows how I stood aloof after receiving her answer to it, and how she immediately afterwards did so much to explain it away. After a connection was formed, I could not think of breaking it—particularly so long and peculiar a connection as ours had been. There is nothing I can less excuse Miss Gibson for than pre-

tending, in her letter seeking back her promise, that there had only been one given, and upon one occasion—and when she speaks of not having been allowed time. This, however, she does entirely away in her letter of the 9th May. The fact is, and Miss Gibson knows it, that (besides the different engagements and vows which had previously passed betwixt us, which are stated in my letter of the 8th May, and admitted by hers of the 9th) on the Thursday immediately preceding the Sunday so often mentioned, she asked me particularly to attend her in the garden. The time I by some means mistook; and she told me afterwards it was for the purpose of renewing our vows. It certainly was wrong, after all this, to pretend that she was taken by surprise, or that she stood in need of time to consider of a matter which had been so often discussed. There was a want of candour in it that struck me particularly at the time; but I had enough to upbraid Miss G. with at the time to take very particular notice of all these matters. What passed betwixt us on the Sunday was more matter of course; and I would have looked upon our engagement as every whit as strong although I had not seen Miss G. that day. No doubt, by that means there are some letters that would not otherwise have been in my possession, and therefore Miss G. may think she might not have been legally bound. Certainly one in her situation in life ought to hold a moral obligation as strong as a legal one. Although one letter had not passed betwixt Miss Gibson and myself, the engagements, in a moral and honourable point of view, would not have been the less binding. It would appear, from the anxiety to get possession of her letters (and as I have said, it was by mere chance there was one in existence), that when this object should be accomplished, her mind would be at ease; that she would hold any verbal obligation as naught; that when palpable evidence was wanting, the evidence of her own breast could be concealed from all but herself and me; and that she could,

without compunction, represent the whole as ideal and visionary. With submission, there is more here of the lawyer than the moralist—I mean of the chicanery lawyer. And although Miss G., in one of her letters, hints that she must take care of herself, as she is writing to a “man of the law,” I shall leave it to the determination of any person, which of us has shown most of the lawyer in the sense I have mentioned, in the last stages of this fatal business. Instead of acting with the duplicity of which men of the law are generally accused, I have been made the dupe by one whom I believed incapable of duplicity, and perhaps the subject of mirth to herself and an individual, however preferable he may have become to me in her estimation, I did not, at one time at least, consider my superior in intellect. I will not now venture to put myself in competition with any person on this head. Some people would comfort themselves with the assurance that all this had been ordained, and that what must be, must be. I will not dispute that point; but if it was predetermined that I should form a connection of so important a nature, I wish to God it had been with some “guileless, artless lassie,” whatever might have been her station, or with some “Highland Mary” from the harvest rigg. In that event, I had at least a chance of being happy. It may be said I have this still in my power; but it is not so. I had entered into a serious and solemn engagement, and I never could enter into another, nor could I live but in a state of misery, after that was broken under the circumstance it has been. There are reminiscences connected with that engagement that can never be obliterated from my memory. Miss Gibson cannot have forgotten, at least ought not to forget, how we anticipated the happiness we had in prospect, and how we imagined ourselves in the possession of all the happiness and enjoyments of the state in which we were to enter—that we hoped to be blessed with pledges of our affection, and Miss Gibson spoke with pleasure of

my fondness for children. Can this be forgotten? No, not by me; but it appears it can, and that in a very brief space too, by one in whom it might have been as little expected. In an honest and proper point of view, the accession to Miss Gibson's fortune should rather have been the means of cementing an attachment which had been formed under circumstances less auspicious, than of rending it asunder. Supposing the accession to have been on my side, I do not need to ask myself if I would or could have withdrawn—it would have been impossible—the idea never could have had existence. I know what would have been my feelings on the occasion. I need not express them. Miss Gibson was not so young as not to be qualified to judge and act for herself in entering into engagements, nor so old as to be entitled to have recourse to substitutes for getting clear of these afterwards.

“Gentle maid,
Keep your promise plight, leave aye its subtilities,
And grey-hair'd policy—its maze of falsehood;
But be you candid as the morning sky,
E'er the high sun sucks vapours up to stain it.”

What has, perhaps, made this bear stronger on me is, that my mind has, for as long as I can remember, been strongly impressed with the peculiarly sacred nature of any engagement or understanding of the kind. Indeed, that idea, I believe, is imbibed by all of us from our national songs and other writings, and there are few that do not hold poetical ideas on the subject. Theoretically, I had believed it impossible that such a breach could take place; and I never could have dreamed that, practically, I was myself to be made the unsuspecting and unfortunate victim to prove the contrary. That Miss Gibson is making light of, and laughing at, the matter, I have from the best authority. That she has also already spread it, and mentioned circumstances which have gone to the public, there is no doubt. That she has shewn and published my last letter, there can be no doubt. (Miss

Helen Gibson mentioned the particulars to a lady in town).

* * * *

Well, she has succeeded in bringing about what she wished. She is at full liberty to laugh at me. I suppose few after all, bad as the world is, will envy her of her sport. It is not in all cases the extent of the wrong, but the reflection of by whom it is inflicted, that plans the sting. When Cæsar saw Brutus stab at him, he offered no resistance—his heart burst, and muffling up his face in his mantle, he fell at the base of Pompey's statue. All is now over. I die in perfect goodwill towards every human being. If my feelings may have led me to say anything offensive respecting Miss Gibson, I am sorry for it. She has my entire forgiveness. If I have erred in anything, I hope she will forgive me, and it will be wise in her to forget whatever may have passed between us. If I could have done this, I would have been happy.

The sequel of this melancholy story is soon told. Shortly after 12 o'clock on the 29th of September, Mr Beattie left his house in Montrose, and walked to the Lower Church-Yard of St. Cyrus—a solitary spot on a narrow skirt of land between the cliffs and the waters of the ocean. This is the spot alluded to in his last Statement, where he says, "I will lay down the burden I can no longer bear in some sequestered place—I think on that solemn, sacred, and silent spot where my bones will be deposited." And truly a sequestered place it is—solemn, sacred, and silent as the poor woe-stricken soul could desire. To this lonely spot, the unfortunate victim of a too susceptible frame betook himself, and here was his body found on the following morning, the head shattered, and a pistol clutched in his right hand. The body was brought into Montrose, and a few days thereafter was interred on the spot he had himself chosen for

the awful deed; and a handsome tablet has been erected by his friends and acquaintance, bearing the eloquent epitaph written by his friend, James Burnes, Esq., which is copied in the Introductory pages of this small volume.

The following "Farewell Sonnet" was written by Mr Beattie a short time before his death, and was found among his papers:—

Farewell, maid, thy love has vanish'd—
 Gone off like the morning dew ;
 Farewell, maid, my peace is banish'd--
 Adieu ! a sad, a long adieu !

Weary world, I now must leave thee ;
 Sun and moon, a long farewell ;
 Farewell, maid, no more I'll grieve thee,
 Soon you'll hear my funeral knell.

Soon the lips that oft have kiss'd thee,
 Mouldering in the dust will lie ;
 And the heart that o't hath bless'd thee,
 Soon must cease to heave a sigh.

Soon the tongue that still rehearses
 All thy beauty, tickle fair,—
 Soon the hand that writes these verses
 Shall to kindred dust repair.

Friends that constant were, and true eye,
 Fare-you-well, my race is run :
 Heartless, lorn, beughted, weary ;
 Every earthly hope is gone.

Gloomy grave, you'll soon receive me,
 All my sorrows here shall close ;
 Here no tickle fair shall grieve me ;
 Here my heart shall had repose.

LETTERS

AND

Narrative of Facts Relative Thereto.

BY THE LATE

GEORGE BEATTIE,

MONTROSE.

1823.

ABERDEEN :

LEWIS SMITH.

SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1870.

