Elegy on Sir J. H. Blair —

The lamp of day with ill-presaging glare,
Dim, cloudy, sunk beyond the western wave;
Th' incenstant blast howl'd thro' the darkening air,
And hollow whistled in the rocky cave. —

Lone as I wander'd by each cliff and dell,
once the lov'd haunts of Scotias* royal train,
Or mus'd where erst revered waters well*
Or mouldering ruins mark the* sacred fane. —

Th' increasing blast roar'd round the beetling rocks;
The winged clouds flew o'er the starry sky;
The groaning trees untimely shed their locks;
And shooting meteors caught the startled eye. —

The paly moon rose in the livid east,
And 'mong the cliffs disclos'd a stately Form,
In weeds of woe, that frantic beat her breast,
And mix'd her wailings with the raving storm. —

Wild to my heart the filial pulses glow,
Twas Caledonia's trophy'd shield I view'd;
Her form majestic droop'd in pensive woe,
The lightening of her eye in tears imbu'd. —

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* The scene, the king's park at Holyroodhouse —
* St. Anthony's well —
* St. Anthony's chapel —

Revers'd that spear redoubta
Reclin'd that banner, erst u
That like a deathfull meteor glea
And brav'd the mighty Monarchs of the world. —

"My Patriot son fills an untimely grave!"
With accent wild and lifted arms the cry'd:
"Low lies the hand that oft was stretch'd to save!
"Low lies the heart that swell'd with honor's pride

"O weeping bounty joins a widow's tear;
"The helpless poor mix with the Orphans cry;
"The drooping Arts surround their Patron's bier;
"And grateful Science heaves the heart-felt sigh.

"I saw my sons resume their ancient fire,
"I saw fair Freedom's blossoms richly blow:
"But ah, how hope is born but to expire!
"Relentless Fate has laid their Guardian low. —

"My Patriot falls; but shall he lie unsung,
"While empty greatness saves a worthless name?
"No: every muse shall join her tuneful tongue,
"And future ages hear his growing fame. —

"And I will join a Mother's tender cares
"Through future times to make his virtues last,
"That distant years may boast of other Blairs"
She said, and vanish'd with the sweeping blast.

R Burns the
Poet with Ex
on Sir J. H Blair

Robert Aitken Esqr.

Agd

Burns handwriting

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46 Burns, Robert. Original MSS. of "Elegy on Sir J. H. Blair" in the hand of an amanuensis, but with correction by Burns, and three lines in his hand. 2 pp. Folio. With address. "Robert Aiken Esq."

Special mention is made of this in Burns' published works.

"The lamp of day with ill-presaging glare,
"Dim, cloudy, sunk beyond the western wave,
"The inconstant blast howl'd thro' the darkening air,
"And hollow whistled in the rocky cave." Etc.

A mortal quite unfit for fortune's strife,
Yet oft the sport of all the ills of life;
Prone to enjoy each pleasure riches give,
Yet haply wanting wherewithal to live;
Longing to wipe each tear, to heal each groan,
Yet frequent all unheeded in his own.

But honest Nature is not quite a Turk,
She laugh'd at first, then felt for her poor work.
Pitying the propless climber of mankind,
She cast about a standard tree to find;
And, to support his helpless woodbine state,
Attach'd him to the generous truly great,
A title, and the only one I claim, [ham.
To lay strong hold for help on bounteous Gra-

Pity the tuneful muses' hapless* train,
Weak, timid landsmen on life's stormy main!
Their hearts no selfish stern absorbent stuff,
That never gives—tho' humbly takes enough;
The little fate allows,† they share as soon,
Unlike sage, proverb'd, wisdom's hard-wrung boon.
The world were blest did bliss on them depend,
Ah, that "the friendly e'er should want a friend!"
Let prudence number o'er each sturdy son,
Who life and wisdom at one race begun,
Who feel by reason and who give by rule,
(Instinct's a brute, and sentiment a fool!)
Who make poor *will do* wait upon *I should*—
We own they're prudent, but who feels they're good?
Ye wise ones, hence! ye hurt the social eye!
God's image rudely etch'd on base alloy!
But come ye, who the godlike pleasure know,
Heaven's attribute distinguished—to bestow!
Whose arms of love would grasp the human race:
Come thou who giv'st with all a courtier's grace;
Friend of my life, true patron of my rhymes!
Prop of my dearest hopes for future times.
Why shrinks my soul half blushing, half afraid,
Backward, abash'd to ask thy friendly aid?
I know my need, I know thy giving hand,
I crave thy friendship at thy kind command;
But there are such who court the tuneful nine—
Heavens! should the branded character be mine!
Whose verse in manhood's pride sublimely flows,
Yet vilest reptiles in their begging prose.
Mark, how their lofty independent spirit
Soars on the spurning wing of injur'd merit!
Seek not the proofs in private life to find;
Pity the best of words should be but wind!
So to heav'n's gates the lark's shrill song ascends,
But grovelling on the earth the carol ends.

In all the clam'rous cry of starving want,
They dun benevolence with shameless front;
Oblige them, patronize their tinsel lays,
They persecute you all your future days!
Ere my poor soul such deep damnation stain,
My horny fist assume the plough again;
The pie-bald jacket let me patch once more;
On eighteen-pence a week I've liv'd before.
Tho' thanks to Heaven, I dare even that last shift!
I trust, meantime, my boon is in thy gift:
That, plac'd by thee upon the wish'd-for height,
Where, man and nature fairer in her sight,
My muse may imp her wing for some sublimer flight.

ON THE DEATH OF

Sir James Hunter Blair.‡

THE lamp of day, with ill-presaging glare,
Dim, cloudy, sunk beneath§ the western wave;
Th'inconstant blast howl'd thro'the dark'ning air,
And hollow whistl'd in the rocky cave.

Lone as I wander'd by each cliff and dell,
Once the lov'd haunts of Scotia's royal train;‖
Or mus'd where limpid streams, once hallow'd, [sky,
well,¶
Or mould'ring ruins mark the sacred Fane.**

Th' increasing blast roar'd round the beetling rocks,
The clouds, swift-wing'd, flew o'er the starry
The groaning trees untimely shed their locks,
And shooting meteors caught the startled eye.

The paly moon rose in the livid east,
And 'mong the cliffs disclos'd a stately form,
In weeds of woe, that frantic beat her breast,
And mix'd her wailings with the raving storm.

Wild to my heart the filial pulses glow,
'Twas Caledonia's trophied shield I view'd:
Her form majestic droop'd in pensive woe,
The lightning of her eye in tears imbued.

Revers'd that spear, redoubtable in war,
Reclined that banner, erst in fields unfurl'd,
That like a deathful meteor gleam'd afar,
And brav'd the mighty monarchs of the world.—

"My patriot son fills an untimely grave!"
With accents wild and lifted arms she cried,
"Low lies the hand that oft was stretch'd to save,
Low lies the heart that swell'd with honest† [pride!

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* VAR.—Helpless.—MS.
† VAR.—Bestows.—MS.
‡ [In one of the Poet's memorandum-books these verses were written with a pencil: he intimated that he had just composed them, and noted them down lest they should escape from his memory. They were admitted into the first Liverpool edition, but excluded from others; they are now placed among the works of Burns. Sir James Hunter Blair was born at Ayr in 1741, and died July 1, 1787, in the forty-seventh year of his age. He rose to eminence as a member of the banking-house of Sir William Forbes and Company, of Edinburgh.]
§ VAR.—Beyond.—MS.
‖ The King's Park, at Holyrood-house.—R. B.
¶ St. Anthony's Well.—R. B. Burns wrote originally,
Or mus'd where erst revered waters well.
** St. Anthony's Chapel.—R. B.
†† VAR.—Honour's.—MS.