

## Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect

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

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## PREFACE.

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THE following trifles are not the production of the Poet, who, with all the advantages of learned art, and perhaps amid the elegancies and idleneffes of upper life, looks down for a rural theme, with an eye to Theocrites or Virgil. To the Author of this, thefe and other celebrated names their contrymen are, in their original languages, " A fountain fhut up, and a ' book fealed.' Unacquainted with the neceffary requifites for commencing Poet by rule, he fings the fentiments and manners, he felt and faw in himfelf and his ruftic compeers around him, in his and their native language. Though a Rhymer from his earlieft years, at least from the earlieft impulses of the fofter paffions, it was not till very lately, that the applaufe, perhaps the partiality, of Friendship, wakened his vanity fo far as to 2 2

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make him think any thing of his was worth flowing; and none of the following works were ever composed with a view to the prefs. To amufe himfelf with the little creations of his own fancy, amid the toil and fatigues of a laborious life; to transcribe the various feelings, the loves, the griefs, the hopes, the fears, in his own breaft; to find fome kind of counterpoise to the flruggles of a world, always an alien fcene, a tafk uncouth to the poetical mind; these were his motives for courting the Muses, and in these he found Poetry to be it's own reward.

Now that he appears in the public character of an Author, he does it with fear and trembling. So dear is fame to the rhyming tribe, that even he, an obfcure, namelefs Bard, fhrinks aghaft, at the thought of being branded as 'An impertinent blockhead, obtruding his nonfenfe on the world; and becaufe he can make a fhift to jingle a few doggerel, Scotch rhymes together, looks upon himfelf as a Poet of no fmall confequence forfooth.'

It is an obfervation of that celebrated Poet, \* whofe divine Elegies do honor to our language,

\* Shenftone.

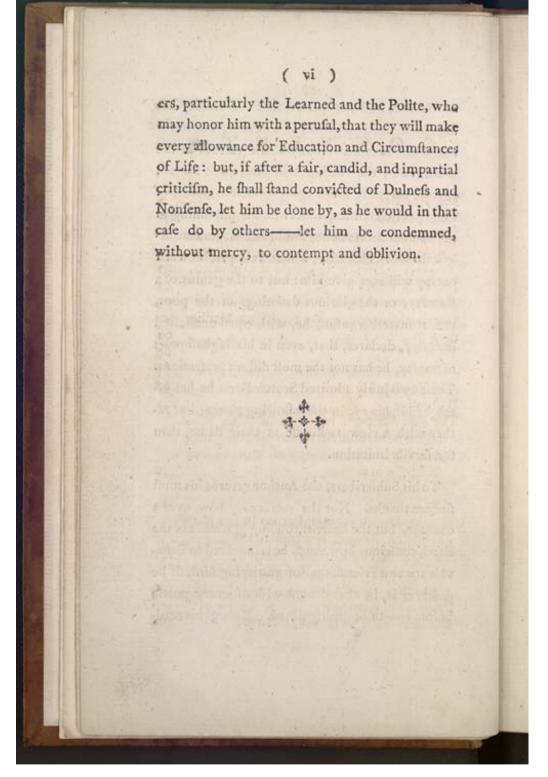
(11) Page iv Permanent URL: <u>http://digital.nls.uk/74571156</u> our nation, and our fpecies, that ' Humility has depreffed many a genius to a hermit, but never raifed one to fame.' If any Critic catches at the word genius, the Author tells him, once for all, that he certainly looks upon himfelf as poffeft of fome poetic abilities, otherwife his publishing in the manner he has done, would be a manœuvre below the worft character, which, he hopes, his worft enemy will ever give him: but to the genius of a Ramfay, or the glorious dawnings of the poor, unfortunate Fergufon, he, with equal unaffected fincerity, declares, that, even in his higheft pulfe of vanity, he has not the most distant pretensions. Thefe two juftly admired Scotch Poets he has often had in his eye in the following pieces ; but rather with a view to kindle at their flame, than for fervile imitation.

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To his Subferibers, the Author returns his moft fincere thanks. Not the mercenary bow over a counter, but the heart-throbbing gratitude of the Bard, confeious how much he is indebted to Benevolence and Friendship, for gratifying him, if he deferves it, in that dearest with of every poetic bosom—to be diffinguished. He begs his read-

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