



# Robert Burns: A Life in Letters

*George Scott Wilkie*

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## **Robert Burns: A Life in Letters** George Scott Wilkie

What is often forgotten about Robert Burns is that he was a prolific writer of letters and had the ability to correspond with people from every walk of life. Whereas his poems and songs were composed in the Scots dialect, his letters were written in perfect English prose. Many of his letters to his platonic lover, Clarinda, are to be found here along with many from Clarinda to Burns. The depth of feeling portrayed in this correspondence between two young people is compelling reading. His letters of advice to his young brother, William, are both serious and amusing. A letter of apology following a night of revelry at Friar's Carse is a masterpiece in its own right, as indeed are many more. Burns wrote like a man possessed. His quill could stab like a rapier or be used as a broadsword to cut down his enemies. It was a tool in his seduction of the fair sex and was also used to flatter his aristocratic friends. He revelled in his correspondence with Mrs Francis Anna Dunlop simply because she was a descendant of William Wallace. He describes in graphic detail the problems he encountered with the family of Jean Armour, revealing his intention to flee to the West Indies. This selection of letters offers a fascinating insight into his lives, his many romances, his fame and fortune and then his slide back to poverty and early death.

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