

Mary Campbell

In the year 1786 Burns was still bitterly disposed towards Jean Armour when he started his affair with Mary Campbell. Jean's father had dispatched her off to live with a distant relative until her pregnancy was over which Burns continued to believe was an act of treachery on the part of Jean. Mary Campbell had originally been employed as a nurse-maid in the house of Burns' friend, Gavin Hamilton, but latterly was a dairy-maid at a nearby farm.

Reports of her character are varied in the extreme, but it appears that the majority of Burns' friends regarded Mary as being beneath him and tried to dissuade the Bard from continuing with the relationship.

Burns, however, had other ideas and arranged that he and Mary should leave Scotland and sail to Jamaica together. Jamaica was a favourite refuge in the 18th century for young Scots in trouble.

They were to meet at Greenock after settling their affairs in Scotland, but before this happened, tragedy struck. Mary died, whether of fever or premature childbirth still remains uncertain. Mary's family had no doubt it was the fault of Burns and her father refused to have his name ever spoken of again in his household. Burns was distraught over the death of his Highland Mary and never forgot her.

MY HIGHLAND LASSIE, O

Nae gentle dames tho' ne'er sae fair
Shall ever be my Muses care;
Their titles a' are empty show,
Gi'e me my Highland Lassie, O.

Chorus -

*Within the glen sae bushy, O,
Aboon the plain sae rashy, O,
I set me down wi' right gude will
To sing my Highland Lassie, O.*

O were yon hills and vallies mine
Yon palace and yon gardens fine;
The world then the love should know
I bear my Highland Lassie, O.

But fickle fortune frowns on me,
And I maun cross the raging sea;
But while my crimson currents flow,
I love my Highland Lassie, O.