

The memory of Mary Campbell was indeed inscribed deep in the heart of Robert Burns, for in spite of a stormy and turbulent period in his life, his memory of her was still fresh as he penned the following words in her memory six years after her tragic death.

He wrote in a letter to George Thomson:

In my early years, when I was thinking of going to the West Indies, I took the following farewell of a dear girl ... You must know that all my early love-songs were the breathing of ardent Passion; & tho' it might have been easy in after-times to have given them a polish, yet that polish to me, whose they were, & who perhaps alone cared for them, would have defaced the legend of my heart which was so faithfully inscribed on them, Their uncouth simplicity was, as they say of wines, their RACE.

WILL YE GO TO THE INDIES, MY MARY?

Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
And leave auld Scotia's shore?
Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
Across th' Atlantic roar?

O sweet grows the lime and the orange
And the apples on the pine;
But a' the charms o' the Indies
Can never equal thine.

I hae sworn by the Heavens to my Mary,
I hae sworn by the Heavens to be true;
And sae may the Heavens forget me,
When I forget my vow!

O plight me your faith, my Mary,
And plight me your lily-white hand;
O plight me your faith, my Mary,
Before I leave Scotia's strand.

We hae plighted our troth, my Mary,
In mutual affection to join;
And curst be the cause that shall part us,
The hour and the moment o' time!!!

Shortly afterwards he wrote again to Thomson with the following song:

The Subject of the Song is one of the most interesting passages of my youthful days; & I own that I would be much flattered to see the verses set to an Air which would insure celebrity. Perhaps, after all, 'tis the still glowing prejudice of my heart, that throws a borrowed luster over the merits of the Composition.

HIGHLAND MARY

Ye banks, and braes, and streams around,
The castle o' Montgomerie,
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
Your waters never drumlie!
There Simmer first unfauld her robes,
And there the longest tarry!
For there I took the last fareweel,
O my sweet Highland Mary!

How sweetly bloom'd the gay, green birk,
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade,
I clasp'd her to my bosom!
The golden hours on angel's wings
Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me as light and life
Was my sweet Highland Mary.

Wi' mony a vow and lock'd embrace
Our parting was fu' tender;
And pledging aft to meet again,
We tore oursels asunder,
But O! fell Death's untimely frost,
That nipt my flower sae early!
Now green's the sod, and cauld's the clay,
That wraps my Highland Mary!

O, pale, pale now those rosy lips
I aft hae kissed sae fondly;
And clos'd for ay, the sparkling glance
That dwalt on me sae kindly;
And mould'ring now in silent dust
That heart that lo'ed me dearly!
But still within my bosom's core
Shall live my Highland Mary.

drumlie muddy; birk birch