John Stuart to Thomas Pennant, enclosing a transcription of a poem about Ben Lomond

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Killin March 4.th 1774

Dear Sir

Upon my arrival at home I am favoured with your very obliging letter of the 11th. of last month—

The remarks I sent you upon Sky, and likewise those upon Coygach, Loch-Broom&c. would I dare say come to your hands before you left Downing on the 1st. curr.-

But a letter which I sent you with some remarks on Glenelg, and containing according to your desire a particular account of the round ruinous towers found in the inland Highlands, and another of which I wrote you last week by Glasgow, containing an Account of the islands of Mull, Lismore, Eisdale, the measurement of the large horns seen at Lochnell, and concluding the remarks on *your voyage* at Ardmaddy, as they were both directed under Cover, as fomerly, To Sir Roger Mostyn at Mostyn, Flintshire, could not overtake you in the country. I would hope however they may find their way to you in town in proper enough time.[1]

You'll observe that the rural œconomy, the customs and manners, and particularly the musical turn, which prevail perhaps more remarkably in Sky, are not however altogether perculiar to that island. In these respects a similarity may be often traced through all the W. isles, and along the whole W. coast.

I am happy to find that my old Acquaintance The Revd. Mr. Donald McQueen of Sky is your Correspondent. In many respects you could not have a properer channel of information. The account of the intended emigration from that island I had from a Tacksman of that place, whom I saw upon his way to Edinr. As Mr. Mc Queen however makes no mention of it, I would not desire to give absolute credit to it till it is further confirmed.

My obligations to you for the desire which you are pleased to express of furthering my promotion in life, are such as I cannot sufficiently acknowledge. It is surely very kind in you to offer me, unsollicited, your services in that respect, — services which I had no just title to expect, unless perhaps the conferring of former favours could be thought sufficient to found a claim for new ones — The settlement which I have now got in the church is not attended with every disadvantage. The situation is far from being disagreeable, — at the head of Loch-long a branch of the Clyde, about a mile from the side of Loch-lomond and within a day's ride of Glasgow. The Charge is likewise an easy one; as there are not above 200 catechisable persons computed to be in the whole parish. The only objection I have to it is the exceeding smallness of the Stipend which is only about 32 £ Sterl.; and as the tiends are exhausted, the Court of Session have it not in their power to give any augmentation. The Laird of Mac-Farlane, who is the only considerable Heretor, sensible of the smallness of the legal allowance, gave for some years past 20 £ Ster. Pr. year by way of a gratuitous addition to the Stipend; but I am told that he now proposes to withdraw at least the half of it.

The following is a Copy of *an inscription which I found upon a pane of glass in one of the windows* of the inn at Tarbat, from which there is a good view of Ben-Lomond. As Mr. Lightfoot was upon the top of that mountain, I have likewise sent him a Copy of it in the Letter which I have used the freedom to send you inclosed —

Stranger if o'er this pane of glass perchance
Thy roving eye should cast a casual glance,
If taste for grandeur and the dread sublime
Prompt thee Ben-Lomond's awful height to climb,
Here gaze attentive, — nor with scorn refuse
The friendly rhymings of a Tavern muse —
For thee that muse this rude inscription plann'd,
Prompted for thee her humbe Poet's hand.
Heed thou the Poet, — he thy steps shall lead
Safe o'er yon tow'ring hill's aspiring head,
Attentive then to this informing lay,
And how he dictates as he points the way.
— Trust not at first a quick advent'rous pace,
Six miles it's top points gradual to it's base;
Up the high rise with panting haste I pass'd,
And gain'd the long laborious steep at last.
More prudent you, when once you pass the Deep,
With measur'd pace, and slow ascend the lengthen'd steep —
Oft stay thy steps, oft taste the cordial drop,
And rest, oh rest! long long upon the top —
There hail the breezes, nor with toilsome haste
Down the rough slope thy precious vigour waste
So shall thy wondring sight at once survey
Vales, Lakes, Woods, Mountains, Islands, Rocks & Sea
Huge hills that heap'd in crowded order stand
Stretcht o'er the Norther and the Western land,
Vast lumpy groups — while Ben, who often shrouds
His loftier summit in a veil of clouds,
High o'er the rest displays superior state,
In proud preeminence sublimely great —
— One side all awful to the gazing eye
Presents a Steep three hundred fathom high,
The scene tremendous shocks the startled sense
With all the pomp of dread magnificence —
All these and more shalt thou transported see;
And own a faithful monitor in me —

Thos. Russel Oc^r.^ 3^d.^ 1771.

I saw *an advertisement last week in the Glasgow Newspapers*, which I must own I could not read without feeling some concern. Our old Friend The Lady Frederick, said to be a vessel of 80 tun, and her Sister The Jessy, are it

seems in these days to be both exposed to publick sale.[2] The Company of the Mess[s.] Campbells the Owners, is now to be dissolved. —

I remain
Dear Sir
with great esteem
Your most obliged and
most humble Servant

John Servant

P.S. I return you a thousand thanks for the most acceptable Present you are so good as to make of both your Tours.[3] I am sorry to think of putting you to so much trouble. You may direct them to the care of D[r.] Ramsay, who I am informed, altogether forgetful of his Glasgow flame, is upon the point of being married to Miss Dundass, another agreeable Young Lady ———

JS—

To —
Thomas Pennant Esq[r.]

March 4th 1774.
of his getting a living

Editorial Notes

[1] The whereabouts of the two letters Stuart mentions here are currently unknown.

[2] *The Lady Frederick Campbell* was the vessel used by Pennant and his retinue during their 1772 voyage to the Hebrides.

[3] Pennant's *A tour in Scotland 1769* (3rd edn., 1774) and *A tour in Scotland, and voyage to the Hebrides 1772* (1774).