

National Records of Scotland, Transcription of a letter from John Mitchell, Collector of Excise, to Robert Graham of Fintry, Commissioner of Excise, 2 September 1796

Dear Sir,

I hope you'll excuse (as having been in the country) not answering sooner your favors, of the 15 Ultimo, regarding poor Burns's Family. He has left a widow, with the following five sons,

Robert, --- 9½ years old
Francis Wallace, 7--Ditto
William Nichol, 5 — Ditto
James Glencairn, 2— Ditto
Maxwell, 5 Weeks

The singularly curious Father had far outrun his bounds, as to finances, & hence debts, to some amount, are owing. The boys are promising, very much so. It is expected from a post humuous Publication of his Letters etc. etc., to his friends (which is collecting) something seasonable & important to his Family will be done, & the more so if Mr. Creech relinquish his right to the former publication, which is expected.

It is too expected something will be allotted to his Family from the Exchequer, which, together with the subscriptions that are commenced, will, it's hoped, prove altogether a competency, & towards the accomplishing these, or any other measure I am perswaded you will be disposed to contribute, by your influence.

He had certainly many shining qualities, blended with foibles of various kinds, the most irreconcilable whereof were his political principles, which somehow unluckily was rooted, & proves now a drawback to the humane feelings of many, but such a Genius as he possessed behoved to have eccentricities of some kind or other.

His books & papers are in the custody of the Commissary, on account of the confusion and embarrassment of his affairs. There are, it seems, Creditors, to some amount. I am of the number, but in that arrangement lenity will be shown.

How soon his papers etc are legally inspected your Books I shall take care shall be carefully selected.

Respectfully, I am,
Your obedient humble servant
John Mitchell

Dumfries,
2nd September 1796

(National Records of Scotland, GD151/11/26/47A)

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