

## The Burnets – a secret Georgian Edinburgh family

*..the girls yesterday called you Papa and we made no objection to it but it was a bitter pill to swallow. I could almost yet consider it as a dream from which I may happily awake..<sup>1</sup>*

The death of Euphan Burnet aged 34 years, on 16 May 1793 in a room in the building that is now the Museum of Edinburgh, had a lifelong impact on the lives of several people. Since around 1779 Euphan had been the mistress of Edinburgh banker Gilbert Innes with whom she had seven children, the last being born two hours before her death. At that time, Gilbert Innes was temporarily residing in London as one of 20 commissioners appointed by the government to hear the claims of merchants adversely affected by the trade conditions caused by the war with revolutionary France; and he remained in London until July.<sup>2</sup> From there he directed arrangements for the care of his bereaved illegitimate family.

Born on 7 February 1751, the fourth child of George and Marion Innes (nee Lauder), Gilbert Innes as the only surviving son, had inherited the wealth and Stow estate of his father in 1780. George, head cashier of the Royal Bank of Scotland, occupied a position equivalent of a modern managing director. The family originally lived in Niddry Wynd and then in Milne's Court in Edinburgh's Old Town.



Henry Gibson Duguid, *Milne's Court Lawnmarket*, National Galleries of Scotland.

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<sup>1</sup> National Records of Scotland, GD113/4/159/172, *Marion Innes to her brother Gilbert Innes*, 31 May 1793.

<sup>2</sup> Due to the temporary trade and credit stagnation an Act of Parliament authorised the issue of Exchequer bills to the amount of £5m. The Commissioners advanced sums on the credit of goods deposited in warehouses, the goods being sold if not redeemed before 1 May 1794. See *The Economist*, vol. 5, 1847, p. 1337.

On 8 February 1782, however, Gilbert Innes recorded in his account book, 'Bought Harden's house this day for £2500'.<sup>3</sup> By 1784 he had taken possession of 24 St Andrew Square in the New Town; removing there with his elder sisters Marion (1745-1799) and Jane (1748-1839).<sup>4</sup> In her abbreviated draft journal notes Jane Innes reckoned that her brother's liaison with Euphan Burnet had begun before George Innes' death in 1780. Certainly in the Innes Archive there are discharged accounts for room rents of £4 10s from 9 March 1779 to 25 April 1780 and 12 shillings for the next month received by a Mrs Paris from Euphan Burnet. Added to these, on 25 February 1780 James Gray factor for John Henderson of Leaston, collected £5 from Mrs Burnet as a year's rent of a house in Henderson's Stairs; Mrs Burnet having entry at Whitsuntide (April).<sup>5</sup> As these and subsequent bills and receipts are among Innes' accounts, often annotated by him, it looks as though he established her in accommodation at some point in late 1779 or early 1780; giving her £5 5s for furniture on 13 February 1780.<sup>6</sup>

Euphan Burnet's maternal grandparents appear to have been Jean Hamilton, daughter of Archibald Hamilton wright of Bo'ness (Borrowstoness) and George Robert (or Roberts) merchant of nearby Bridgeness. They had three daughters, the eldest of whom married William Burnet chairmaster in Edinburgh; the youngest being named Euphan or Euphame (married name Allan) and the other Ann (unmarried). On 23 December 1746 Jean Hamilton or Robert disposed to her second daughter Ann 'high houses' in Bo'ness with the witnesses including William Burnet.<sup>7</sup> On the same day Ann Robert obliged herself to share the property with her sisters as she said that had been the agreement. By 1766 Jean Hamilton owed her daughter Ann £15 12s but when she died in 1769 no part had been paid. Mrs Allan and her son George took possession of her mother's furniture, effects and heritable property in Bridgeness consisting of houses yielding £4 or £5 in rent; and by 29 April 1784 when Ann Robert claimed against George Allan, no part of the owed bill or interest had been paid her nor had William Burnet ever received the £5 said to have been a gift to him from the Hamiltons though both he and his wife had probably died sometime

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<sup>3</sup> NRS, GD113/1/407.

<sup>4</sup> Gilbert Innes is listed at 24 St Andrew Square in *Williamson's Directory for the City of Edinburgh, Canongate, Leith and Suburbs*, 1784-5, p. 44.

<sup>5</sup> GD113/5/129A; GD113/5/129C. Henderson's Stairs led from the Cowgate to the back of Parliament Close.

<sup>6</sup> GD113/1/407.

<sup>7</sup> GD113/5/372.

previously as no further mention is made of them. There is no record of Euphan Burnet's mother's first name but years later Jane Innes disparagingly claimed she served in an alehouse. The Burnets had at least two other children besides Euphan – a son dead by 1782 and a daughter Ann who by the 1780s had married and was living in London.<sup>8</sup>

Euphan Burnet seems to have taken up the cause of her aunt Ann, by the 1780s an invalid living in Craig's Close. She had some contact with her maternal relatives as a letter dated 6 November 1781 from J. Allan of Carriden addressed her as 'Dear Cousin' and referred to a recent visit by Euphan and 'dear lettel Marie'. The writer hoped to hear from her soon and 'how my Aunt keeps her health'.<sup>9</sup> A letter from George Allan of Dunmore dated 1 September 1783, apologised for his not visiting 'you and Aunt' and he asked about the price of a very good and large table with two leaves which she might buy for him. Six days later, however, he wrote to say he had heard that Euphan had been in Bo'ness to 'get a sight of the papers' but had been unsuccessful.<sup>10</sup> He assured her of being very desirous of settling the matter and willing to 'submit to any reasonable terms as I would always wish to live in Friendship with my Friends'. He concluded by hoping for his aunt's recovery:

You may let her know when she gets the account of the Rents since her mothers death along with the Accounts of repairs and the feu duty she will then find I have told no Lies.<sup>11</sup>

Notwithstanding, Ann Roberts no doubt via Euphan Burnet, pursued a claim against her nephew, by this time captain of the vessel *Jean*, for her share of her inheritance; and for the amount which should have been received by William Burnet. Some agreement must have been reached as on 22 December 1783, John Watt writer received 10s 6d for drawing a deed of settlement in favour of Mrs Burnet with 2s 6d each to two notaries for signing on behalf of her paralysed aunt.<sup>12</sup> Gilbert Innes managed Mrs Roberts' affairs, giving Euphan £1 13s for what she gave to Mrs Roberts' sick nurse on 3 September 1783; and then relaying £2 2s to Mrs Roberts from the account per Euphan on 4 November 1783. There were further payments in April and December 1784 and in 1785 and 1786. On 19 August 1788 Gilbert Innes paid Mrs Burnet £12 8s 7¼ d in full of the balance of Mrs Roberts account with £2 5s

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<sup>8</sup> GD113/5/136B/8.

<sup>9</sup> GD113/5/136B/1. J. Allan was probably James Allan, husband of Euphan's aunt.

<sup>10</sup> GD113/5/136B/2.

<sup>11</sup> GD113/5/136B/3.

<sup>12</sup> GD113/5/129C; GD113/5/129A. At this period unmarried women frequently took the title of Mrs. The Innes' sisters maintained the prefix of Miss.

6d in interest. When Ann Robert(s) died in March 1790, she was buried in the Canongate churchyard with the total cost of the funeral amounting to £4 1s for dues, covered coffin, best mortcloth, scarf, two ushers, two batton men and four bearers.<sup>13</sup>

When (if she did) Euphan informed her sister is unknown but Ann Paterson wrote from London on 28 December:

I am very sorry to hear of the death of my aunt and it gives me the greatest concern imaginable. I would take it as a great favour if you could send me up some of my aunt's books or something for a memorandum of her my husband is very well but I am indifferent and we wish you a good new year and I hope to keep it as your birth Day....I would like to hear what is become of my brothers daughter and it is my greatest desire that you would keep up more correspondence nor have you done as there is but two of us left in the family<sup>14</sup>

As Euphan Burnet died aged 34 years it can be presumed from the above that she was born on 1 January 1759 and was 20 when she entered into her relationship with Gilbert Innes.<sup>15</sup>

Some letters received by Euphan in the early 1780s bear the address 'Mrs Stewart Hendersons Stairs'; and several accounts from the years 1780-83 were discharged by a Mrs Stewart but whether Euphan lived with a Mrs Stewart is unknown and no usage of the title occurs thereafter. Emigrant James Russell writing from Philadelphia on 13 October 1783, sent his letter to Mrs Burnet, Henderson Stairs and asked:

How does the laird and children and your own sweet self – I hope you are still blessed/as you used to express/with the Company of the man you love – I sincerely wish you all manner of happiness with him and the Pledges of your joint love.<sup>16</sup>

Agnes Fraser, lady's maid to Mrs Henry Dundas wrote from London informing Euphan that she had seen Euphan's sister and family. Agnes enquired of many mutual friends in Edinburgh, expressed sorrow for Aunt Ann Roberts' health and hoped that 'Mr I is ben well and kind to you'.<sup>17</sup>

Although Marion Innes remained in ignorance of the event, Euphan Burnet's first child with Gilbert Innes was born in 1780 and named Marion after his sister but frequently called Marie in her young years. On 15 November 1780 Ann Murray charged £1 6s 5½d for making a cloak and Marie's cap. Throughout 1780 as well as clothing fabric and household necessities, Mrs Burnet also purchased various items of stoneware dishes and 12 silver teaspoons, the latter costing £5 9s 2d in total.

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<sup>13</sup> GD113/5/131C.

<sup>14</sup> GD113/5/136B.

<sup>15</sup> The burial records for the Canongate record her age as 34.

<sup>16</sup> GD113/5/136C/1.

<sup>17</sup> GD113/5/136B/5, 9 May 1784.

Amounts given to 'EB' in Gilbert Innes' account book for 1780 range from 10s 6d to £10 and total around £112. He made payments to various other women but none received sums on this scale.<sup>18</sup>

An indication of the nature of Euphan's relationship with Innes is given in a letter she wrote to him at Fountainhall towards the end of the year.

So you say you feel no desire to come to town only get me Fortunaness wishing cap and I down not care how long you stay but till that be got – I wish your dogs may loos ther sent your horses ther feet and guns ther locks and that the weather may be so bad that you can not get out to walk and you will be glad to come to swette Edinbr but to be serious the weather is turned so cauld that I suppose your sesters will not be able to stay much longer.<sup>19</sup>

Effie concluded by thanking Gilbert for his letter which made her as 'happy as a Prince' and hoped he would pardon her presumption in begging him to write or return to town. She sent her compliments to the gentleman at Fountainhall - 'tell him that I drink his health every day and that ther is a young girl here that sends him ten kisses'.<sup>20</sup> Gilbert noted in his account book that he went to Fountainhall in the parish of Stow with his sisters on 27 September and returned on 9 October.

Gilbert Innes obviously took pleasure in teasing Euphan or Effie. In a reply to letters he sent to her in 1781 from out of town, she wrote:

nothing in the world could if gaven me half the happness unless it had been the pleasure of your company you will be so good to gave my Compts to the shoolmasters Daughter and tell her if she is not less assiduous about you I will come out and pull her cap for her for I am with you as a miser is with his gold can not bear any body to be nere you but my self...<sup>21</sup>

She continued that she would give a thousand pounds if she had it to see him come in if only long enough to get a hole in his stocking mended.

I think I here you say o Effie Effie woman is odd sort of animals befor I went out of town you was not pleased with a holl owre and now you would gave a thousand pounds for two or three minutes

This trick of throwing back to him his own sayings was to become a family characteristic. An air of domesticity does creep into the accounts as, on 1 July when he paid her 2s 9d for stocking yarn; and on 30 November 4s 6d for bleaching his stocking yarn. In 1781 he repaid Effie for six cravats and four cambric neck napkins and she worked six pairs of green thread hose for him at a cost of 8s. Similar entries occur throughout the 1780s, such as him paying for her making him cambric shirts on 22 August 1784. An optimistic purchase was noted on 13 March 1782, when he spent 1s 2d on Newberry's Spelling Dictionary given EB. Gilbert also treated her to

<sup>18</sup> GD113/1/406; GD113/1/407.

<sup>19</sup> GD113/4/156/137. The spelling is as written.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> GD113/4/156/303, 15 August 1781.

tavern suppers, bottles of rum, tickets to plays; and he paid her substantial bills from Dr Dewar, mostly for stomach powders, purging pills and emetic mixture and worm powders for the children as well as inoculation.

A second daughter born on 5 September 1782 received the name of Jane (nickname Jeannie) after Gilbert's other sister.<sup>22</sup> From the receipts for the payment of annuity tax and poors' money it appears that Effie moved her lodgings to Wilson's land in the Canongate around this time.<sup>23</sup> Her household had been extended by the inclusion of William (Willie) McLaurin, an illegitimate son of Gilbert Innes born around 1775 and whose mother probably died in 1779. In spite of his relationship with Euphan, Gilbert Innes continued his liaisons with, and payments to, numerous women all through his adulthood much to the chagrin of his sisters when they found out about his 'other life'. (Jane's notes in the Archive indicate the amount of detective work she undertook to find out about these liaisons and the backgrounds of the women involved.) Innes' accounts show that he had paid a Mrs McLaren various sums for Willie's board in 1780 and on 29 December he repaid Euphan five shillings for a hat she had given the boy, so clearly she knew then of the situation. They must have decided at some point early in 1781 that Effie should take over the responsibility for Willie as both she and Gilbert seem to have settled Mrs McLaren's account in March and April and no more mention is made of this woman.<sup>24</sup>

Effie paid for the use of some 'furniture' for her new abode – mattresses, bolsters, a chest of drawers and carpeting in August 1783 but in the next year she bought a wainscot table and a tent bed from William Hamilton and Son and paid for linen for Willie's bed. At some point she employed a servant Betty. Gilbert wrote in his accounts against 2 June 1782, 'Betty came this day' but this may have referred to Betty Porteous, another illegitimate child whom Jane Innes said had been placed with Euphan but would not stay.<sup>25</sup> In his accounts for 28 October 1784 Gilbert also noted that Betty came on that date. Betty received a cap costing 10s in 1782 but in 1784 Euphan provided Betty with gowns, stockings, ribbons, a mantle, handkerchief and linen.<sup>26</sup> On 19 March 1785, Alex Petrie was paid 14s 3d for weaving linen for servants' sheets most likely because the Burnet family, augmented by another

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<sup>22</sup> GD113/1/406. Innes wrote against the date 'To EB £1 1/- JB born this day.'

<sup>23</sup> This might have been Wilson's Court east of the current Bakehouse Close or near Niddry's Wynd at the west end of Canongate close to the present day Netherbow Centre.

<sup>24</sup> GD113/1/406.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> GD113/1/407.

daughter named Ann (later spelled Anne) born in 1783, had moved into property owned by Gilbert Innes. They now occupied apartments with 14 windows in what had been the Hammermen's great lodging on the west side of Hammermen's (now Bakehouse) Close sold by the Incorporation of Hammermen in 1762 to William Wilson and George Innes. Both men had died by 1780 and on 8 March 1782, Gilbert Innes purchased Wilson's share of the Hammermen's former property from Philip Wilson his heir.



James Grant, *Old and New Edinburgh*.

The Burnets possessed the most spacious of the accommodation in the buildings which fronted the Canongate and stretched down the close. Entering off the front street via stairs, the property comprised the first story and part of the second with a dining room, drawing room, one closet, two presses, four bedchambers, one with a large closet, housekeeper's room and servants' room, kitchen and coalhouse off the stairhead, two cellars and larder and the long area and garden to the south. The Dowager Duchess of Gordon had lived here as a tenant of the Hammermen until 1760, followed by her son Lord Adam Gordon who paid a rent of £27 in 1762. When his wife Lady Jean Gordon vacated the premises after 1784, Innes must have decided to relocate his family to his own property. Several paid accounts for 1785 show repairs being carried out and items of furniture purchased. Messrs Hamilton and Son located in premises now known as Acheson House, provided a bed, rush bottom and elm chairs, a handsome mahogany tea tray and tripod basin stands for 10 guineas and a dining room carpet from E. Gilfillan cost £2.

Effie also spent three guineas on a silver ladle and a child's spoon; and on 31 December paid 4s for a cradle for her first son George.

Whether deliberately or because she was not an enthusiastic letter-writer, Euphan did not maintain much contact with her sister in London. Ann Paterson had written tetchily in 1782 that she had answered Effie's letter by the first post 'but you did not think it proper to answer mine or let me know how my aunt is'.<sup>27</sup> Certainly no change of address had been communicated, for on his wife's behalf, John Paterson wrote to Mrs Burnet at Henderson's Stairs on 1 January 1784.

Notwithstanding whatever distance the nearest relations may be removed from each other they ought never to loose sight of their connection nor forget that such relationship exists...I beg you will remember us to your aunt on whose account your sister has been exceedingly anxious for many weeks past having heard a transient report that she had had a severe stroke of the Palsy...Some time ago we sent a bundle containing some dolls for the children with the Lovely Mary Captain Betson (I believe) but we never heard whether you got them or not...

He ended his letter rather topically:

I suppose you to see the News-papers I shall not say anything about them only that our ministry has undergone many chops and changes that we do not know what to make of them. My opinion is they are all thieves alike.<sup>28</sup>

Notwithstanding his liaisons with other women, by the time the Burnets moved to their address opposite the Canongate Church, Gilbert Innes had established a private domestic arrangement for himself not known to his sisters and not replicated in his other relationships; and he seems to have regarded himself very much as paterfamilias. At his expense Effie provided comfortable surroundings, paying William Hamilton £24 17s 6d for a handsome four poster bedstead with clawed mahogany posts, green marine edging, silk binding, featherbed bolster and two down pillows with blankets and sheeting on 8 March 1786. Over the next few years she added soft furnishings, a large chest of wainscot drawers, two deal stools, a good hair mattress for a bed put in a press, a handsome mahogany tea tray with a brass hooped rim and handles, a large mahogany footstool covered with a sewing of her own, dining tables, a tent bed, various fireplace and kitchen items and another silver spoon.<sup>29</sup> In 1790 she engaged James Watson to paint the outside of 12 windows and a room three times over as well as painting the dining room and whitening the dining room roof.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> GD113/5/136B/8, 6 April 1782.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> GD113/5/131A, GD113/5/133A, GD113/5/129B.

<sup>30</sup> GD113/5/131C/13.



An indication of the Burnets' settled status is given by the purchase in May 1787, of four seats in the Canongate Church for 12s.<sup>31</sup> In June Gilbert paid seven shillings and six pence for a profile shade given to EB; silhouette portraiture being very popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Bathing at Leith was another fashionable indulgence and Effie paid £4 7s 6d in July 1787 for coach hires to there as well as later spending on outings to Roslin, a favourite beauty spot of the period. Further children expanded the family with the birth of Euphemia (Phaeme) on 1 October 1787 and William Simpson (Simmie) in 1791. Gilbert took an active if stern interest in his children's education which can be gleaned from a number of letters written to him from 1786 to 1793 on occasions when he when he was out of town; and there are examples of handwriting exercises they undertook at their lessons. Much of the information comes from the correspondence of the teenager Willie McLaurin with whom he maintained an ambivalent and frequently troubled relationship until the latter disappeared from sight in 1815. Innes seems to have paid for a reasonable education for Willie and for classes at the College (1791-1793) possibly with the intention that he might become a clerk; but this was not at all to Willie's liking.

Four of McLaurin's letters from the summer of 1786 described the progress of George's inoculation against smallpox which involved introducing smallpox pus via a scratch in the skin. George survived this process which predated vaccination not pioneered until the 1790s; and apparently he managed to cut a tooth at the same time.<sup>32</sup> Willie casually mentioned in his letter of 26 July that Jane had got a blue eye which not surprisingly caused Gilbert to demand an explanation.

Accordingly McLaurin wrote:

But now I must inform you (as you ordered me) how Jean got her blue eye. Two or three days ago as she was running up and down the street a Child like herself chanced to be standing in her way upon whom she came with all her force and knocked her Eye against the other child's head but it is turning better and she is wearying to see you.<sup>33</sup>

When Innes departed for Pirnaiton on his Stow estate in September 1788 he left orders with Willie to write to him often about the state of the family.

I must inform you that I think it is very much as it was and that I do not perceive any particular alteration upon it since you left Edinburgh for Mamma and all the children are well. I made two copies of the paper you gave me on Saturday night as you desired me and gave then to

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<sup>31</sup> GD113/5/129A. Seat rents were paid annually and this sum was increased to 18s in 1792 – GD113/5/29B.

<sup>32</sup> GD113/5/319A.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 29 July 1786.

Mamma but whether she has sent them out of town to you or not I cannot tell. I am still busy turning the proverbs of Solomon into Latin...<sup>34</sup>

He described his reading activities and his daily timetable before indicating that Marion continued to go various schools to learn writing and sewing and that although Jean was not yet fit enough for this, her mouth had improved. The rest of the letter is pure padding for 'Mamma says I must find matter enough to fill up three pages'. He concluded by saying that he was as tired of the letter as probably Gilbert would be. Future letters were to follow in the same spirit of reluctance. Euphan (Mamma) added a postscript to say she had sent the oysters and some fruit and begged for future commissions for 'there is nothing I envy your sisters more for than they have it so much in there power to contribute to your ease'. She told him that she and the children wearied to see him and ended by blessing him and expecting a letter from him by the first post.

On 20 September Willie answered his father's two letters which had obviously chided him for not giving information about 'the daily lessons which Mamma gives Jean'.

It would be tedious to inform you of all the lessons which she has learned for these three eight days by past all at one time; but today she is learning one of the moral lessons of one syllable in the Spelling Book – George is well and sends his "best Copelents" to you. Marion and Jean are both well and likewise send their compliments to you. Ann and Fammy are both well.<sup>35</sup>

Gilbert also expected Marion to write a few lines to him and for Willie to send three letters a week. In her postscript, Effie expressed gladness for his pleasure in the oysters and fruit and assured him that his other commission would be carried out. Gilbert had obviously teased her for she concluded:

So poor man your in danger of being ravished Send for me and I will help you – and you say the wine is very troublesome I wish it be more so for I think you have been long enough in the country already....write tomorrow mind Ever yours E Burnet<sup>36</sup>

Reluctantly and only because of his 'orders', McLaurin wrote five more letters to Innes in September and October 1788. They are full of complaints about having to translate the Proverbs, of having nothing to say and it not being his fault if the letters were late in arriving. He did, however, manage to include some details of the execution of Deacon Brodie and of a fire in George Street near the church. A postscript from Effie to the letter of 22 September asked Gilbert how he had passed

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<sup>34</sup> GD113/4/158/286, 16 September 1788.

<sup>35</sup> GD113/4/285.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

his time the previous day as the weather in Edinburgh had been terrible – ‘was you at church I suppose not’.<sup>37</sup> An addition to Willie’s letter of 27 September from Marion in large writing, begged her father’s pardon for not writing as he had desired – ‘but I will not do so again’.<sup>38</sup> Effie added:

You have made marie very uneasy saying you do not like her so well as you did and she has wrote three lines it is very bad but you must not be angry with her – I received yours and was very glad you are well – but I did not think you was of so unforgiving a temper as to say you would have come to see me if I had not emited to write a line or two in Willie’s last letter – it was cruel of you not to come when you know how happy it would have made me I beg you will come to town soon or allow me to come to middleton to see you it is a long time since I saw you now it is long fourteen days – you left a blank for me to fill up for fear of making me too proud you was right for a word of praise from you would make me vainst than if all the rest of the world were to do it but you might have trusted me for once and I would have done all that I could to have been humble....at this moment Phem is at my elbow roring..<sup>39</sup>

On 29 September she confessed that she had been frightened of hearing of the fire in the New Town until she saw where it was; but she also inquired what there was so enchanting at Pirnaiton to keep him so long out of town and again longed for the wishing cap so she could be at his elbow. To Willie’s letter of 2 October she added that Gilbert would not hear another word from her till he saw her and she kept her word by writing nothing in the next.

Gilbert Innes visited London at the end of 1790 and Euphan wrote to him on 29 December indicating her unease at not having heard from him especially as the papers had reported an account of a most dreadful hurricane in the city – ‘I know you will laugh at my fears but I cannot help it’.<sup>40</sup> She begged him to grant the request in her previous letter to allow her to come up to London:

I will never have such an opportunity again and another thing you promised to let me come up the first time you was there and I am neither nursing nor with child....if you dont send word to forbid me before tomorrow eight days I will set of and take it for granted that you will not be displeased but if you don’t wish me to come write me and I will obey...I wish you a happy new year and many returns of the season it is the first time you was ever out of Edinr at this season since I knew you – the children sends all there best compts to you and twenty kisses inclosed<sup>41</sup>

Euphan did not write again until 12 January:

And are you angry with me for not writing you must not be so for I assure you it is not neglect what do you think I have got to say to fill long letters were I to tell you that I miss you very much you would say that I was grumbling and you would wrong me very much for I don’t grumble at anything that makes you happy....but you are a perfect coward for you never find

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<sup>37</sup> GD113/4/58/281.

<sup>38</sup> GD113/4/158/305.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> GD113/4/159/303.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. People talked of going ‘up to London’, it being the capital.

fault with me but when I am not present to justify myself now that is very wrong of you and I don't know if I will ever forgive you<sup>42</sup>

Taking matters into her own hands she said she had delayed her correspondence as she awaited his response on her proposed trip to London which she had set her heart on – 'I grudge nothing but the expence and you say you don't mind that I know you can afford it'. Having promised the children to bring them something home she intended to set off on Friday in the coach to York where she would rest for a day before reaching London on the following Tuesday – 'for Gods sake be not angry with me'.

In fact she arrived safely though much fatigued, on Monday as Gilbert informed William McLaurin on 19 January. Innes expressed gladness that the children were behaving so well but warned that this must continue if they expected fine things to be brought them from London. With his customary mix of strictness and teasing he commented on Marion, Jean and Ann's progress, adding:

I hope for their own sakes all the fine storys I have heard of them are true though I confess I have my doubts of this extraordinary improvement as they are but dull at least some of them (I won't mention names) are so – Georges cannon shall not be forgot though a large piece of Artillery will be rather troublesome in a trunk but he shall have a small field piece or what the soldiers call a Grasshopper that will be quite sufficient to kill all the enemys he now has or I hope ever will have in the world – you will tell Pheem her Mamma is sure she will keep her word in being a good child till her return – without Jestng I have been much pleased with the Accounts I have got of Jean's reading she is certainly greatly improven and probably will not require to continue at that school longer than your Mammass return then Hey for the Drawing writing etc.<sup>43</sup>

Innes gave Willie copious instructions as to when to write, how the letters should be folded and sealed, the posting times for London and the address, namely Gilbert Innes at the British Coffee House. He and Euphan occupied accommodation a good distance apart though she intended to change hers but not go to her sister which 'is miles off'.<sup>44</sup> Should any of the children become unwell or anything go wrong Willie had to write to his father immediately and not wait until his specified days. Gilbert also emphasised several times that the letters should not be shown to anyone and kept safe until the parental return.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> GD113/5/136A/1.

<sup>44</sup> GD113/5/136A/4.



Tallis' Street Views of London, *British Coffee House*.

Sometimes Innes included letters to people in Edinburgh in the mail with instructions as to what Willie should do with them. True to form Euphan did not 'intend writing many letters as they take up much time and she wants to see as much of London as she can in a short time and leave it sooner'.<sup>45</sup> It fell to Gilbert to communicate which he did regularly both to Willie and to Marion with messages for all the children. Willie's letters included the latest progress and sayings of the children and George's continued hopes for a cannon; these communications being augmented by several from Hutchison Dunbar, probably the son of Alex Dunbar who wove quantities of linen for the Burnets over the years and who was a neighbour in Hammermen's Close. Hutchison wrote on Sundays to Effie and gave her lengthy accounts of the children's activities – 'George and little Ann making a noise like thunder with stools and the hurrel barrow' – as well as best wishes from various friends.<sup>46</sup> McLaurin's last letter to London before Mrs Burnet's return included Ann's request that her father should 'write her another short letter at any time when you are at leisure'; and the information that 'Marion's bunch of flowers which she is drawing is, I believe, very nearly (if not altogether) finished. It makes indeed a very brilliant appearance being as well drawn as could reasonably be expected'.<sup>47</sup>

'hear I am safe arrived in ald reekie I wish I could say as much for you', wrote Euphan Burnet to Gilbert Innes on 23 February 1791.<sup>48</sup> She expressed the children's disappointment at his not returning home for some weeks but that they had celebrated his birthday by drinking his health and firing three rounds of George's cannon in his honour.<sup>49</sup> She enclosed three samples of fabric at 9s 6d, 10s 6d and 9s for dresses for the coming dancing class ball – 'I had not the idea they were so

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> GD113/5/136A/10.

<sup>47</sup> GD113/4/159/325, 9 February 1791.

<sup>48</sup> GD113/4/159/343.

<sup>49</sup> This must have been a post birthday celebration, the date being 7 February.

dear' – but asked him to choose a colour for her to have made up in a cheaper material. She urged him not to change his lodgings 'as they are so kind to you and your having an old landlady and an ugly maid what a comfort to me.'

Effie's letter of 20 April addressed to him at No. 2 Charing Cross scolded him.

have you really the conscience to expect me to write a hole weeks Journal no no my boney man you must content your self with one days and when you have read that you have the hole week for there are little or no variations in our life.<sup>50</sup>

She then described the children's routine which varied according to their ages. Marion rose at seven and attended writing school before returning for breakfast at nine. She then read or sewed till past eleven when she returned to the writing followed by a drawing class. Home at two o'clock for dinner, she went back to writing at four for another hour. Jean had two hours of reading class at nine followed by dancing and then more reading, ending at three then dinner and play time. Euphan generally heard Jean's lesson in the evening and about 8.30 pm the girls had supper and retired to bed. Ann and George had around four hours of 'schooling' a day.

Ann will not let me forget to hear her lesson as for George he is the most restless creature I ever saw there is no getting him to sitt still a moment in one place. Fanny sleeps with me and many time when we are in bed she asks me what his come of you she is a stout creature

Well aware of the situation of her family and herself she continued:

I have been looking with pleasure this half hour at the bairns playing at blind henry in the green how happy they are poor things I wish they may be as happy twenty years after this

The rest of the letter described her predicament over Willie McLaurin who seemed to have been suffering from a stiff neck and back pain. Mr Dewar had prescribed an ointment and a flannel waistcoat to wear next to his skin. After several visits Dewar opined that 'it was more laziness than anything else that was the matter with him and that he would turn perfectly lame for want of exercise'. Though out for five or six hours a day, McLaurin did not walk 'he only crawls and if he were to go till eternity that way it would never do him any good for he did not believe he was ever warm with walking in his life'. Dewar suggested that Euphan find someone to give Willie some physical work for a few weeks so she approached Dodds who worked in the close and he agreed. 'I would not have sent him to a stabler...for I would not like that he should be acquainted with any bodys servants'. She also hoped that Gilbert would not be angry with her for taking the initiative without asking his permission first.

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<sup>50</sup> GD113/4/159/380.

Mrs Stewart taught both Marion and Jane sewing for which she received £2 1s in December 1791 with an extra £2 5s 6d for Marie's picture of a clock.<sup>51</sup>

George's military obsession at this time continued as can be seen from a letter written on his behalf by Jane to their mother on 3 September 1792.

I am in great distress because you will not consent to give me a drum, as you know that instrument is so necessary that no regiment can be without it. If you will please to give Jean the sixpence to buy it tomorrow as she comes from the writing Ann and I will ask no Saturdays halfpence for six weeks

I am etc Colonel G Burnet

PS Pray do not forget to leave out the money tonight with Betty as the Grand Review is to be tomorrow.<sup>52</sup>

A few weeks later Gilbert wrote from St Andrews Square to Marion about his fancy that it would not be difficult to make her, Jean and Ann wiser than other girls of their age. His plan involved giving them three questions every day on general knowledge which they would have to research and learn by the following evening and in turn each of them would put a question to him on any subject they wished to understand.

If you and Jean approve of my plan let me know by a letter tomorrow which being Phaem's birthday will be a good day to begin on – write your letter in the forenoon for if your Mamma presses me hard I may dine with you in honour of the day – if your Mamma will give Phaem her choice of a dish I don't care though I will give you and Jean money to buy a Desert.<sup>53</sup>

In the spring of 1793, however, national affairs cast a shadow on family life. At the beginning of May Jane Innes, with no knowledge of the family he left behind, wrote in her journal – 'Gilbert appointed some two weeks ago one of the commissioners for managing the loan of 500000 to the merchants, the Royal Bank in danger and Mr Simpson in great distress'.<sup>54</sup> William Simpson (1742-1808), a cousin of Gilbert Innes and his sisters, succeeded George Innes in 1780 as cashier of the Royal Bank of Scotland. It seems more than coincidence that Gilbert's son William Simpson Burnet should bear that name and be known as Simpson or Simmie. Innes travelled to London in late April and as usual, family letters had to be forthcoming. On 1 May he wrote to Marion and Jane:

Your letters gave me much pleasure they are well wrote and tell me distinctly what you are about so you must continue them at least once a week till our joyful meeting when you say Marion you will deserve a London Journey. It has made me build Castles in the Air for your entertainment – so Jean you think you could chatter to me for an hour continuedly....My Compts to little Ann and the Colonel when they are able to write me Letters I will not fail to answer them as to little Pheem I suppose she is very tired of school as she is not the brightest

<sup>51</sup> GD113/5/13; GD113/5/129B/20.

<sup>52</sup> GD113/4/348.

<sup>53</sup> GD113/5/141/3, 30 September 1792.

<sup>54</sup> GD113/5/419/3.

Genius in the world ....so Semmie can say Pappa distinctly – I will kiss him I hope very soon for it.<sup>55</sup>

He concluded by describing a Mayday custom in London when the chimney sweeps dressed up bizarrely and collected money but said he was much hurried – ‘if you can read this it is more than I can’ – and begged them to ‘keep your Mother merry’.

Euphan Burnet, about to give birth, was in fact extremely unwell and this caused Marion to write to her father on 15 May 1793:

I sit now down to write you but with a very sad heart. Mamma is very ill with a bilious complaint, she has not broke bread these five days and she throws up every five minutes for these three weeks she has hardly been able to go up and down the house. She desires me to tell you that she wishes for nothing but to see you. Mamma never allowed me to write there was anything the matter with her as she thought she would grow better. She is now confined to her bed altogether...Dr Dewar attends Mamma three times a day...PS We received your letter yesterday and Mamma is much obliged to you for the newspapers.<sup>56</sup>

Gilbert meanwhile had been working long hours in London in what he described as his ‘prison house’ from which he escaped after nine o’clock at night, going to the British Coffee House as soon as possible:

to console myself after the fatigues of the day with a letter from you or the Bairns which is a always a treat judge then my uneasiness at hearing from Marion you had been so ill. In comparing however Marion’s letter with Jeans and Willies last I suspect she is putting a trick on me for both Willie and Jean say you was ill of Rheumatisms but Marion says it is a bilious complaint yet I have too good an opinion of her to think she could write me an untruth even though you had contrived a trick to bring me home...<sup>57</sup>

He retired to bed with a ‘heavier heart than I have had for some years’ and next morning (19 May) continued to be ‘strangely puzzled’ by Euphan’s illness about which the family must write to him daily as it was impossible for him to leave town – ‘if I were disposed to be vain I would say my staying here ten or fourteen days longer was absolutely necessary for the Merchants and Manufacturers of Scotland’. He went on to describe the nature of the undertaking he had become involved in – ‘Scotland must soon be easy or ruined altogether’.<sup>58</sup> Continuing with personal details he thought himself ‘much altered I think to the better’ as he rose earlier, dined late and generally alone, drank nothing, had cut out tea and supper and went to bed early. He also felt himself to be ‘softer and more squeamish than formerly’ and recounted two episodes to illustrate this; one being the assistance he gave to a passer-by who had been knocked out by sugar loaves being thrown from a wagon into the hands of a porter. Gilbert had caught the unconscious man as he fell and

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<sup>55</sup> GD113/5/136A/11.

<sup>56</sup> GD113/4/144.

<sup>57</sup> GD113/5/141/4.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 19 May 1793.



insisted on the porters helping him into the shop. When the porters refused 'I lost my temper and fine English at the same moment and began to swear in great stile in broad Scots'. Eventually after twenty minutes of cold water treatment and smelling salts the man regained consciousness whereupon Innes burst into tears.<sup>59</sup> On 20 May, the day after he wrote this, Gilbert Innes received the news that Euphan Burnet had died on 16 May.

The timescale of this tragic event has to be pieced together from various letters and from notes made by Jane Innes after she and Marion had been informed by William Simpson, on 17 May, of Euphan's death and the existence of the Canongate family. According to Jane Innes' account of what Marion Burnet told her, Euphan had given birth to a girl at six o'clock on the evening of 16 May and soon after had told Marion, Mrs Dunbar and the midwife Elizabeth Ferguson that she felt better than she had for two years; and that if she so continued she soon would be well and able to go about again. About seven, however, she began to cry aloud with pain and Drs Stewart, Hamilton and Dewar were sent for but none could be found. Eventually around nine when Euphan had become a little quieter the news came that Dr Dewar was on his way – 'very well Betty said she but I shall be gone e'er he comes and laying hold of the woman's hand she instantly expired'.<sup>60</sup> William McLaurin later recounted to Gilbert Innes that two of Dr Hamilton's men (a foreman and a student) had appeared that evening and next morning they and the doctor's son went to Mr Dewar to propose an examination into the cause of Mrs Burnet's death but he refused and referred them to Mr Simpson. A few hours later they arrived at the house 'and insisted so strongly upon it that we thought Marion who overheard them would have gone out of her senses'.<sup>61</sup> A post mortem did not take place and after the burial two men watched over Euphan's grave.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> GD113/5/419/3.

<sup>61</sup> GD113/5/441, William McLaurin to Gilbert Innes, 7 June 1793.



Henry Raeburn, *William Simpson*, 1809, Royal Bank of Scotland.

Whatever he may have told the Misses Innes, it is difficult to believe that William Simpson was unaware of the Burnet family although who informed him of Euphan's death is not recorded; and Gilbert himself indicated that he had not mentioned his family to anyone. Simpson made the arrangements for the burial which took place in the Canongate kirkyard on Sunday 19 May, the day before Gilbert received the news. As advised by the Misses Innes, Mr Simpson did not attend but a small company of respectable people, mostly Mrs Burnet's acquaintances invited by the undertaker, were present. The expenses amounted to £27 13s 9d; an account which included payment for two men 'watching' (the grave) for 15 nights. Burnet's shroud had ruffles and her lace-lined coffin was covered with a mortcloth and accompanied by four ushers and four baton men. The mourners appear to have consumed six bottles of port wine, two of white wine, three bottles of best brandy, three of best whisky and a platter of seed and plum cake and shortbread of different kinds.<sup>62</sup> When Gilbert Innes received the news of Euphan's death he immediately wrote to his eldest daughters.

My Dearest Marion and Jean

I need not add to your distress by telling you mine – I entreat you will endeavour to keep up your hearts and to comfort your brothers and sisters I will see you very soon and till then will write you I hope every day – do in every respect as Mr Simpson or my sisters desire you they are kind friends to me and mine – My dear girls I cannot write you more today (~~for my very~~ <sup>sent</sup>) God bless you indeed I will see you very soon<sup>63</sup>

Clearly in an emotional state he also replied to William Simpson – 'I cannot write to you as I would wish nor as I should' – but 'your attention to my children in their affliction makes an impression upon me beyond what I can express'.<sup>64</sup> He hoped that an 'Elderly Gentlewomen' might be found to take charge of the whole family and that 'the biggest lad' could be sent to some academy in the country as the college was in

<sup>62</sup> GD113/5/140D.

<sup>63</sup> GD113/5/141/5, 20 May 1793.

<sup>64</sup> GD113/4/46/1, 20 May 1793.

vacation; but he confessed to having 'a heavier heart and absolutely cannot write to my sisters'.<sup>65</sup>

A second letter to Simpson dated 22 May and reproduced from memory by Jane Innes in her journal after hearing it on 25 May, gave permission for the new child to be given any name thought proper.

Write me who has at present the charge of the family as I feel a great repugnance in writing to my sisters on this head – still I must write a few lines to the Canongate family to comfort them as some of them are too apt to brood over their misfortunes.<sup>66</sup>

In fact by 27 May when Marion, Jane and Willie responded, Gilbert had written three letters. Marion informed him:

Betty is still with us and continues to take charge of the house. The young child is not yet baptised as Mr Simpson says it will be better to let it alone till you come home. She is a very fine child and is as like Mamma as possibly can be. We have got a good nurse out at Blackhall they call the woman Dalrymple her husband is a quarrier. I wish you was home for I am wearying very much to see you.<sup>67</sup>

Jane added:

I would have wrote you sooner had my grief for the loss of my dear Mamma permitted me but I have been so much afflicted of late that I had no spirits to write...<sup>68</sup>

Willie's postscript contained apologies and excuses for not having written as Gilbert had expected and details about the funeral which he thought had not been managed as well as it might have been – a veiled criticism of Mr Simpson. He also relayed a message from Betty who requested a half year's wages for the girl Euphan had hired just before her death to take care of the baby and who was no longer required – 'if we keep her much longer she will insist on having board wages also'.<sup>69</sup>

By 25 May when Mr Simpson called to read Gilbert's letter, the Innes sisters had still not heard from their brother. Simpson described the biggest lad, 'a son by a former mistress', as 18 years old, 'remarkably ill looked' and extremely 'gawky like' who constantly wrote lines of French; and that he did not imagine he had sufficient understanding to do anything for himself.<sup>70</sup> The eldest girl had had fits and convulsions at her mother's burial. On 27 May Marion Innes received what Jane described as a few hurried lines from Gilbert written on 24 May and pleading pressure of business.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> GD113/4/151.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> GD113/5/46/1.

I understand from Mr Simpson how much I have been obliged to you on the late occasion and how warm an interest you take in that and every other Matter that concerns me – I have only to assure you that I am highly sensible of your kind interference in a matter in which I ought to be and am deeply interested. I can not thank you as I should but feel great comfort in your taking so great a burthen on you – while I remain here I beg you may not think of consulting me on any one point and I wish you entirely to consult your own inclination only as I am confident you can manage such a charge much better than I can direct.<sup>71</sup>

Jane Innes described this letter as curious and ambiguous that ‘no creature could know either of what he spoke or what Mr Simpson had spoken to him’.<sup>72</sup> In her reply, as recorded by Jane, Marion gave vent to her feelings. She denied having taken any active part over the Burnet family and though she had no aversion to the children neither she nor her sister could in any wise ‘relish or approve the connection which had reflected disgrace upon us and all his Father’s honour’.<sup>73</sup> The sisters were not volunteering to take on any role of responsibility for a ‘parcel of homely dirty things having no resemblance to either that cost or care which had been bestowed upon them’. She also confessed to their suspicion of the ‘connection’ from his spending every evening from home but denied knowing the facts of the case.

On 30 May, however, Marion received a letter from Gilbert in which he eventually stated that they had to ‘take the Direction of the children in all points’; and asking them to inform him what was happening with his family as Mr Simpson told him next to nothing. He made a token apology for ‘the very disagreeable scrape which my Imprudence has brought upon you but it is now impossible to be helped’. In spite of her reluctant feelings, on receipt of this letter Marion, via Mr Simpson, sent for the two eldest girls. ‘We saw them coming along the Square and waited their arrival with much agitation’.<sup>74</sup> The girls came to the steps then turned and walked away as they had been told not to arrive until the hour struck. Jane had to run out to bring them back for what must have been a difficult meeting. They were received with many tears but they shed none.

Now Gilbert do not think I am prejudiced against your family I only mention the fact and confess I would have been happy if they had shown more sensibility on the occasion in other respects. I was very well pleased with the children they seem sensible and intelligent and answered with great frankness every question that was put to them and even explaining when they thought it necessary... They said Betty gets money from Mr Simpson and takes the management of the family and I don’t know if they were tutored to it but they both broke out in her praise, said she was scrupulously honest the best tempered creature in the world and that there Mama had always placed the greatest confidence in her.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> GD113/5/498/60.

<sup>72</sup> GD113/5/46/1.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. In fact George Innes fathered several illegitimate children.

<sup>74</sup> GD113/4/159/172.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

Marion and Jane both agreed that it would be best to keep the family together but could think of no person to superintend them; and it 'vexed my heart to find a connexion so publicly known which I would give half my Fortune had never taken place'. Jane caustically wrote in her journal –'they call him Papa at every word....they are ill complexioned, homely ungenteel children but seem open and frank and of ordinary parts'.<sup>76</sup>

Jane Innes had a cynical attitude towards her brother whom she never forgave for not having supported her against their father who had refused his consent to her engagement with her second cousin John Row in 1778. Gilbert had also tactlessly told her that her father had never liked her. Row subsequently died of yellow fever in Jamaica in 1780. Jane and Marion quarrelled after receiving one of Gilbert's letters 'filled as usual with his children and their matters'.<sup>77</sup> Jane recorded:

I was provoked with this letter and threw it back to her saying it was both an unkind and selfish letter. I thought that he never wrote a word now but in regard to these brats...I knew very well his intention was to shove the care of these children entirely off his own shoulders if she wished to take the load it was her own will and not entirely necessary as he had been a father now these 18 years and could not be a novice as we were of what was necessary to be done, that I myself had no prejudice at the children or objections to act where he could not but saw no reason to volunteer by striping him of every care encourage him to live like a canary bird and hatch again over the old ones I knew his character better than she did that as he had lived with six or eight women whom I could name I should wait for some proofs of a Reformation before I would plunge myself into water the depths of which I know not.<sup>78</sup>

Marion, much upset by this, asked why she should be criticised for doing her duty to which her sister retorted that she had not taken into account the fact that none of their brother's letters had spoken fondly of his children nor had he 'expressed one sorrow of regret for their mother though his long Intimacy and her manner of quitting the world might have justified both sorrow and regret'.<sup>79</sup> Exhibiting more perception than her sister, Marion felt that Gilbert did not express his feelings out of deference to them for he knew very well that they had never approved of his 'vicious connections'. 'She said her life was miserable between us as she wished herself dead and then she would be free of us both'; but Jane was having none of this and told her she enjoyed blessings in abundance and the conversation was dropped.

On 2 June the Innes sisters received a visit from Mrs Simpson who brought with her a flustered letter from Gilbert written on 30 May the day of his eldest

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<sup>76</sup> GD113/5/419/3.

<sup>77</sup> GD113/5/46/4.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

daughters' visit to 24 St Andrew Square. He asserted that he had no time to think of his own matters but requested that Mr Simpson should ask his sisters to send for one or both of the eldest girls and give them their instructions. He ended – 'I am too confused and useful at the Board to Scotland to write on my private business'.<sup>80</sup> On 4 June, however he did write to Marion Innes confessing that, although he regretted certain connections he felt it a duty to take charge of the children 'who from wanting many advantages that others have, appear to a disadvantage, at the same time they neither have good looks or cleverness to set them off'.<sup>81</sup> He assured her that his daughters spoke the truth and would do as they were told; and that 'Ann is sharper than the two eldest but deaf in the extreme having been hurt at her birth'.<sup>82</sup>

Gilbert wrote regularly to his Canongate family and received in turn letters from Willie and Marion who still suffered from fits and seizures so bad that she had to be put in a straightjacket on one occasion according to the account she gave to the Misses Innes. On 30 May Marion told her father that she, Jane, Ann and one of the maids had been to Blackhall to see the young child who was in perfect health but she added 'I wish you could be so good as to tell me when you will be down for I am wearying very much to see you'.<sup>83</sup> In a postscript to Marion's letter of 5 June, Willie added 'Marion not well at present. She thinks every day a year till you come down'; but two days later he described her condition more graphically, indicating that sometimes she had to be held down by the servants and sometimes she lay quietly but foamed and stared wildly. Recollection of her mother's death brought on these attacks. Ann meanwhile had broken a tooth while chewing an Indian pea which resulted in an extraction by Mr Dewar. On the positive side Marion, Jane, George and Euphemia had been invited to tea with the Misses Innes on 6 June and on 9 June, Jean, George and Phaem had visited the Simpsons for tea at Parsons Green and had received fine flowers from the garden to take home.

Throughout June the Burnet family continued to operate as they had since the death of Euphan but the Innes sisters summoned them to St Andrew Square on a regular basis. On 9 June Jane Innes recorded that her namesake had arrived in the evening with the household account 'which appears moderate enough except in

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<sup>80</sup> GD113/5/46/2.

<sup>81</sup> GD113/5/498/69.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> GD113/4/176.

regard to tea'.<sup>84</sup> She added that the baby's nurse Dalrymple received £1 1s monthly as well as a bottle of spirits and a pound of sugar. On other visits Jane Burnet brought her drawing, satin work and darning for approval. By 19 June Marion Burnet had been free of fits for a week and accompanied Jane and Ann on their visit. Ann made a favourable impression – 'Ann aged nine reads beautifully and is the best looked and seemingly smartest of the whole'.<sup>85</sup> Since her tooth extraction she had heard perfectly well. Marion had by then been able to write to her father although with a shaking hand but Miss Innes felt it necessary to enlighten her brother concerning the state of his daughter's health.

You talk very lightly of Marion's complaints which I think very serious I should not have minded her being indisposed at the time of her mother's death but she had a relapse this day fortnight and was very ill several days. Mr Dewar ordered her assasetid pills and a glass of wine after dinner, he speaks too of sea bathing if the weather were favourable in the meantime she is desired to walk out frequently but I forbade her going to church or school till she is more to be depended on poor thing she looks much worse than when I saw her first and seems dispirited and is I imagine apprehensive but she is in no danger and will I hope get well as it is no constitutional thing<sup>86</sup>

As, however, it appeared that Gilbert would soon be back in Edinburgh his sister took the opportunity of imparting to him a few home truths which she would never be able to utter in his presence. In many ways he had been her 'pride of Boast, one of my chief comforts and ties to this world' but he had 'scattered many thorns' in her way.<sup>87</sup> She accepted that he had continued his relationship 'partly from a gentleness of temper and dread of giving pain to a person who might deserve well at your hands' but now he was:

free to choose between your right hand and your left and can no longer plead the restraints of Parents, the impetuosity of Passion or the imprudence of youth, you have now the full power of your fortunes and faculties and if you fall you fall<sup>88</sup>

In his reply of 24 June, Innes avoided the issue by saying he did not have enough time to respond as he ought but expressed his surprise that his sister had not been more severe in her correspondence considering the vexation she must have suffered. After some news of the government he continued:

your namesake's complaints seem to have been worse than I imagined but though fallow complexioned she is stout and healthy and as there seemed an evident cause for the fits she took I have little fear of her continuing long unwell provided she steers clear of Dewars Pills and sticks to the wine and the bathing...as to her looks and spirits the first cannot be worse and the last were never good, not that she was ever low spirited but she is of a serious turn

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<sup>84</sup> GD113/5/419/3. Willie told his father that he had written it.

<sup>85</sup> GD113/5/46/3.

<sup>86</sup> GD113/5/441/65, 21 June 1793.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

and her loss and present complaints will encrease that much – if you see the two younger Girls order them not to tease her, an Art they already understand enough of to increase her ailment which she will soon get the better of - As to the rest of these Brats order them as you chuse and I pray you give a name to the young one to save speaking about it when I return<sup>89</sup>

If Marion Innes hoped that Gilbert would reform his current lifestyle she was to be disappointed for he neither disassociated himself from his illegitimate family nor did he give up other liaisons during the rest of his life.

Gilbert Innes remained in London for another fortnight. Marion Burnet reported on the family including the news that Simmie had been unwell and that the Misses Innes had been kept informed by Jane. True to form Willie apologised for not writing; his excuse being that there had been nothing worthwhile to say. Mr Simpson had given him a Decimal book to copy – ‘It is somewhat tedious to me as I can’t find out the method by which it is done and as it is just an assemblage of figures I am very often in danger of committing blunders’.<sup>90</sup> He completed it by the beginning of July. Marion Burnet returned to writing school and on 8 July Miss Innes gave her and Jane permission to go sea bathing with Mrs James Miller.

On 10 July Jane Innes wrote in her journal, ‘Gilbert arrived this forenoon with Mr Spottiswood – Indifferent topecks talked on but no mentioning of his private concerns and no change in his manner whatever’.<sup>91</sup> Two days later Marion, to the disapproval of Jane, raised the subject of his family. He told her they had a ‘terrible awe on their minds for us she said they needed not because we had been very kind to them – aye so they had said’.<sup>92</sup> According to Jane Innes, Gilbert said that Jean had ‘Banter and discovered anything ridiculous soon enough’, Marion and Ann were close but they were all ‘homely and stupid and had not a spark of Genius etc etc’.<sup>93</sup> Marion had taken no fit on his appearance but had shut herself up for a few minutes as it had recalled her mother’s death. According to Jane Innes, she herself had said nothing except that she believed his partiality but ‘in regard to this terrible awe I myself had already seen enough of their want of feeling and impudence to know they seem incapable of standing in awe of any person’.<sup>94</sup>

When in London Innes must have contacted Euphan Burnet’s sister and brother-in-law, as a letter from John and Ann Paterson dated 24 June 1793

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<sup>89</sup> GD113/4/441/68, 24 June 1793.

<sup>90</sup> GD113/5/441/81.

<sup>91</sup> GD113/5/46/5.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.



empowered him to open Euphan's repositories. If she had died intestate, they renounced all claim to her effects provided Gilbert relieved them of any debts she might have left. Marion Burnet wrote to her aunt on 11 September informing her that she had recovered her health and that she and Jane 'are taking the best care of the family we can with the assistance of Mamma's confidential servant who has been many years in the family'.<sup>95</sup> She told Ann Paterson that since her father's return he had been so busy that he had had no time to 'look into Mamma's desk or papers which he delays till he gets in the accounts she was owing which are very considerable'.<sup>96</sup> Gilbert, however, relayed a message to Mrs Paterson that 'your friend Nelly Burnet has got some idle companions and would be better away from Edinburgh for some time'.<sup>97</sup> He suggested that if the Patersons could employ her as a servant he would speak to her, bear the expense of her travel to London and contribute to her wages to give her a chance of doing well which might not be the case if she remained in Edinburgh. Ann Paterson's response indicated her willingness to comply but from later letters it seems unlikely that the plan came to fruition and Mrs Paterson described her as a bad girl. Nothing exists in the Innes archive to indicate whether Nelly Burnet was the niece of Ann and Euphan or indeed any relative but Gilbert did receive a letter dated 18 August 1795 from Whitby which began 'Honoured Uncle' and was signed 'Helen Burnet'.<sup>98</sup> She wrote that she had had no opportunity of meeting him again at Musselburgh as the regiment had marched shortly after seeing him in Edinburgh; and she begged 'some small trifle' to enable her to subsist in camp 'as my husband is in hospital'.<sup>99</sup> She gave the address for delivery as 'Bony<sup>n</sup> Slack Sgt 4th Dragoons Whitby camp north shiels Northumberland'.<sup>100</sup> Marion Burnet continued to receive intermittent letters from her aunt until 5 November 1797 when she heard that the Paterson's shop had been burnt with the loss of everything.<sup>101</sup>

Several account books in the Innes Archive for the period 1793-1797 and 'practice' letters from the children to each other give some indication of the functioning of the family over which Gilbert continued to preside. He allocated an

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<sup>95</sup> GD113/5/138B/3.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> GD113/5/141/19.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> GD113/5/136B/14. There are no subsequent letters from Ann Paterson in the Innes Archive.

allowance to the older children and his word was law. As illegitimate offspring they depended, and continued to do so, on his financial provision and they always expressed their appreciation although this dependency and lack of formal social position remained problematic for most of them until later in life. It seems that initially Marion and Jane may have taken weekly turns in supervising the family as on 17 November 1793, George in the first letter he had personally written, informed Jean that:

I hear the next week is yours and I wish that you will not be angry to your sisters and your brother. I know that you are very angry when you begin and I hope that you will not be so angry this week your most humble servant George Burnet <sup>102</sup>

On the next day Ann wrote to Marion in a similar manner with regard to Jane but thought that Marion was a good girl when it was her week. George seems to have been seized with zeal for his new found epistolary skill as he subsequently wrote to his father on 20 November – ‘Dear Sir I hear you have no faults...’ – and on 25 November – ‘Jean is a good girl now and Marion a good girl and all the children are very good and you are a good Man yourself...’ <sup>103</sup> Ann’s letter to Gilbert on the same day was more down to earth:

I see that the slaters were busy working between eight and nine o’clock this morning I am not at any school this forenoon And I am much obliged to you for the half penny that you gave me last night <sup>104</sup>

John Ritchie the slater received £7 6s 8d for his work; and in subsequent years Innes paid for other repair work and for repainting various rooms in the Burnets’ accommodation with a lengthy memo to the painters with regard to paint colours and exact areas to be decorated. <sup>105</sup> Various items of furniture such as 14 chairs, a night stool, a mahogany tea tray and chest of drawers as well as silver-handled knives and forks, blue and white china, curtains and numerous other items were also acquired. <sup>106</sup>

Notwithstanding their social status, Gilbert clearly intended that his family should have a genteel upbringing. In addition to reading, writing, sewing, dancing and drawing lessons, he paid for harp and French tuition for Marion and Jane as well as Spanish guitar lessons for the latter; and he employed Charles Williamson for private attendance in the morning to help Mr George Burnet in his Latin ‘by his

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<sup>102</sup> GD13/5/141/8.

<sup>103</sup> GD13/5/141/15 and GD13/5/141/11.

<sup>104</sup> GD113/5/36A/16.

<sup>105</sup> GD113/5/113B/52.

<sup>106</sup> GD113/418.

Papa's orders'.<sup>107</sup> George enrolled in Mr Nicol's class in the High School at 8s 6d per quarter with Candlemas dues of 10s 6d to the Master, 1s to the Rector and 1s library money as well as payments to the janitor and for books. In due course Simpson also attended the High School and the younger girls followed their sisters in their education. The accounts do not record the purchase of a harpsichord but a cover for one cost 16s in September 1795 and the tuning bill amounted to 4s in June 1796. Elizabeth Burnet seems to have returned home on 13 October 1796 to take up residence in the nursery.



James Grant, *Old and New Edinburgh, The High School*.

Under the heading 'Public Amusements' in the Burnets' Account Book for 1793-1798 is listed the expenditure for circus tickets, play tickets, oranges and the cost of sedan chair hire. In the earlier years the attendees at public entertainments were Marion, Jean, Ann and George with Euphemia being included from 1795. On 7 March 1795 George wrote to his Papa to ask if he and his sisters could be treated with a ticket to the Circus as they had not been at any amusement of the sort for some time. In return he promised he would do his best to 'regain the Duxship of Mr Nicol's class and keep it as long as possible'.<sup>108</sup> Simmie saw his first show in 1797 with a servant. Sometimes friends such as the Walkers accompanied the family and sometimes they took the servants. Willie McLaurin generally attended plays on his own or with servants. The Burnets also enjoyed the occasional concert or visit to the Assembly Rooms which necessitated coach hire as did the trips to Leith for sea bathing.

<sup>107</sup> GD113/1/418; GD113/133B/42.

<sup>108</sup> GD113/5/141/16.



Henry Raeburn, *Reverend Robert Walker*, 1795, National Galleries of Scotland

At this time the Reverend Robert Walker, probably the ‘Skating Minister’ who features so strikingly in the collections of the National Galleries of Scotland, was senior cleric at the Canongate Kirk. His daughter Jane (Jean) and Jane Burnet were of similar ages and in August 1796 the latter accompanied the Walkers to North Berwick. Jane Burnett wrote two letters to her father, attempting a few French phrases in her descriptions of outings and asking when he and Marion would accept Mrs Walker’s invitation to join them. In her usual frank manner she told Gilbert that on Sunday Mr Walker had preached two ‘nice short sermons’; but that she did not think much of a Miss Murray whom she had met at dinner. Mr Walker had asked the lady if she understood French.

Oh yes sir I was once an exceedingly good French scholar, very right thinks I young woman to have a good opinion of yourself. Oh how stupid it is to people to be praising up themselves in such a manner.<sup>109</sup>

The two Janes seem to have been good friends, accompanying each other to the theatre and to Portobello on occasions though Jane Burnet was always careful to ask her father’s permission. When Euphemia reached an age to receive invitations she also consulted with her father – ‘Lady Dent asked me to spend the day with her and go to a race. I told her I could not go without your leave...’<sup>110</sup>

As part of his parental strategy, Gilbert Innes must have decided that some personal rules for behaviour were necessary but these had to be devised by the individuals themselves. Willie had already drawn up ‘Regulations’ in April 1794 and 1796 although these do not seem to have had much effect. On 17 January 1797 Jane Burnet prefaced hers with:

<sup>109</sup> GD113/544/25, 29 August 1796.

<sup>110</sup> GD113/5/141/43, August 1799.

Well I think it is just as well to begin now as after for I will have the worst of it, as you are resolved not to give me a new frock<sup>111</sup>

The proposed rules included hours of rising, school attendance, learning French vocabulary and sleeping in a night shift – with fines attached for non-compliance. Marion had already attempted to write down rules in the previous month but as she told her father in a letter to him at Rockville, she found it impossible:

when I think on what I have done and what I do everyday in neglecting my French and Music and many other things I find it quite different to what other people do and absolutely contrary to that conduct I know you wish me to adopt. But I will with the greatest pleasure in the world follow whatever rules you please to lay down and pay whatever fines you chuse to exact.<sup>112</sup>

Marion's list resembled her sister's but had items such as washing up teacups, going to market and studying 10 pages of French each day. She ended by writing:

If you at any time order any thing to be done about the Children, the House, Myself or any other thing if it is not done the next night when you come...<sup>113</sup>

then she would pay the relevant fine. Gilbert visited his family in the evenings but occasionally received a summons for a particular purpose, as on 27 April 1796 when Jane wrote to him at St Andrew Square. Phaem (Euphemia) had a swollen cheek for which Mr Dewar had prescribed two leeches – 'if you could come down and put them on as Marion says she cannot'.<sup>114</sup>

In spite of their consternation and negative views in 1793, the Misses Innes had some contact with the Burnets, at least when their brother visited his Stow estates. When Marion Burnet wrote to Gilbert at Rockville on 24 September 1796, excusing her delay on the grounds of toothache – 'always an excuse you will say but je vous en assure qu'il est vrai' – she informed him that she and Phoem were going to see Miss Innes in the afternoon.<sup>115</sup> In October more visits took place and involved Jane, Phaem, Simmie and George; the ladies being very kind and happy to see the children and offering to supply money if Marion needed it. Jane Burnet's communications to her father in the summer and autumn of 1797 included in a letter dated 5 August, the views of Mr Simpson who had asked Jane if she had seen the Misses Innes.

Do they tell you of your faults (said he) that they do to great perfection I told him, I am glad of it he replied for it shows they have an affection for you or they would not do so. He asked me also what George was about at school and if he got his task well I told him that he was able enough to get his lessons if he was not so headless and that you had been telling him that if

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<sup>111</sup> GD113/5/141/43/31.

<sup>112</sup> GD113/5/445/129.

<sup>113</sup> GD113/5/554/32.

<sup>114</sup> GD113/5/138B/5.

<sup>115</sup> GD113/5/445/196.

he did not get further up in the class before the examination you would not give him new cloaths, that would be a great pity he said for I think he is a fine boy...<sup>116</sup>

George seems to have redeemed himself somewhat as two days later Jane wrote that as he 'is 15 dux', she was going out to buy his shirt. She also described the last night of a play which she and Ann had attended – 'I did not think you would be angry' – in which the main part was Colonel Fairwell. 'You will be saying it is a great comfort she can remember the name of the Principal Character'.<sup>117</sup>

Marion and Ann accompanied Gilbert to Haddington in August 1798 and Marion's letter of 31 August to Gilbert at Rockville said they had had a delightful ride into town. In her introduction she wrote that she had never been any good at letter writing – 'nor any other sort that I know of says you' – before telling him of a visit 'pour voir vos soeurs'.<sup>118</sup> Miss Jean seemed happy to see her but she had not known of the Haddington trip and asked if Gilbert had business there; and she taught her how to do handwork with cotton, knitting needle and knife. Marion came away with fruit for the children, having spent a happy time.

Marion Innes died on 25 January 1799. Jane bitterly recorded some of her feelings:

I am left to the charge of one on whom I never received support but who on the contrary crossed me in all my expectation and hope – now in the decline of life I am held in contempt and retained to advance his and the interest of his spurious issue...overpowered by my past afflictions and mortified by his vice and multiplicity of his base lower vulgar connections, no wonder that I mourn and am sad and when watching all night and every night for his return home to supper I am treated with utter neglect and even derision because neither my face nor my manner is so young as that whore who he has from hypocrisy left<sup>119</sup>

Given her strong moral and religious views, her lifelong shunning of 'the social scene' and her opinion of her brother, Jane Innes' attitude to the Burnet family could hardly be other than ambivalent. She knew they would always support him against her and that they reported to him – 'Gilbert and his satilletes the Burnets' – as she graphically wrote to Colonel Scott in 1810.<sup>120</sup> Sometimes the family would be put in a difficult position, as in April 1800 when their father sent an unaccustomed letter of excuse to his sister about not returning home to supper but not explaining the reason. Instead he spent the evening with the Burnets who were obliged to be evasive when they next visited Miss Innes. In her journal she accused them of lying

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<sup>116</sup> GD113/5/446/158.

<sup>117</sup> GD113/5/446/157.

<sup>118</sup> GD113/5/447/94.

<sup>119</sup> GD113/5/410/10.

<sup>120</sup> GD113/5/409/82, 24 October 1812.

and impudence. Yet she maintained a relationship with them for the rest of her life and could be quite financially generous on occasions. Her accounts for 1800-1806 show items of expenditure such as seven shillings for tickets of admission to the Panorama of the Battle of the Nile with the Burnets; two shillings for three pints of gooseberrys with the Burnets; £1 4s for a gold locket given to Euphan Burnet; eight shillings for a cage to a greenfinch for Anne Burnet; three shillings for a ticket to the circus for George Burnet.<sup>121</sup> She had an acerbic sense of humour and made acute observations in a manner which her namesake Jane Burnet often employed.

Speaking of the opening of St Andrew's Church in 1784, for example, she told Carteret Scott:

the church itself is tolerably elegant but so extremely new and raw that I doubt it prudent for a delicate constitution to encounter the cold and terrible blasts upon the bridge (for a sermon in the city) or to sit listening to one within the dank walls of St Andrew's church....Mr Greenfield should always preach upon Preparation for Death seeing his congregation makes one very natural step towards it by coming to hear him..<sup>122</sup>



Thomas Shepherd, *St Andrew's Church*, 1829.

Jane Innes undertook more inquiries into her brother's personal affairs during his absence in London in June 1799. On 20 June Marion Burnet wrote to her father that she had been over to see his sister and had stayed to dinner. Jane had asked a great many questions about William, what he was doing, if he was teaching writing, had he ever given writing lessons to the children, was his mother alive, who was she and did she not have two children. Marion answered what she could, saying that she did not know about William's mother whom she thought died many years before 'as I had never presumed to ask you (Gilbert) any questions on the subject'.<sup>123</sup> Jane thought Willie's mother had died about 20 years previously. A few days later she invited some of the Burnets to supper and Marion wrote that she had not passed a pleasanter evening for many months. Jane Burnet echoed her sentiments saying

<sup>121</sup> GD113/1/422.

<sup>122</sup> GD113/1/422/8, 12-13 December 1784.

<sup>123</sup> GD113/5/448/78.

they had never had a more welcome reception. Gilbert must have commented on these letters to Jane Innes who retorted:

As for the pleasant Evenings which the Burnets have spent here there is certainly some mistake in this matter as I recollect only of one...and I recollect of nothing more that (sic) common civility and common place and common fare <sup>124</sup>

Following the death of Euphan Burnet, William McLaurin, then aged 18 years, remained with the Burnet family for two years. He expected his father to do something for him, though what is not clear. Only his version of the story exists in the archives in the form of letters written to Gilbert and to Jane Burnet. These are full of complaints, bitterness, apology, confession of faults and misdeeds, excuses, pleas for assistance, promises to reform, the realisation that this is impossible and eventually before he disappears from the scene, the acceptance that he is never going to achieve anything. He wrote verbosely but used excellent, if formal, English and punctuation and had an elegant handwriting style. As part of his education he had learned French and Latin and attended some classes at the College; and intermittently he wrote poetry. McLaurin frequently referred to himself as a gentleman's son and probably expected or wanted to live as one. He did not wish to be a clerk or copywriter as he thought his father intended. He certainly disdained enlisting as a common soldier in 1794, suggesting a commission as being appropriate to his education.

As cited earlier, William Simpson had described McLaurin as remarkably ill looked and extremely gawky like, probably with little initiative. In the first of many outpourings of grievance, Willie told Innes in 1794 that he had once thought of approaching Mr Simpson to intercede with him to make something of his son but that Mr Simpson:

never now takes notice of me when he meets me....the truth is the gentleman is ashamed to be seen speaking to such a mean shabby looking fellow as I am on the street....I have not the cloaths to appear like the gentleman's son I am <sup>125</sup>

He begged Innes to put him in the way of some business and not 'to cut me off with your usual short answer to go shift for myself' which was not in his power to do. <sup>126</sup> In the same letter he complained that Marion and Jane treated him badly on all occasions and that it was unreasonable to expect that he could live on amicable

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<sup>124</sup> GD113/5/448/73, 2 July 1799.

<sup>125</sup> GD113/5/442, 3 November 1794.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.



terms with two girls who hated him and 'don't care a farthing though I were dead and whom you authorise to treat me with all manner of indignities'.<sup>127</sup>

Clearly Gilbert Innes did not know what to do with McLaurin apart from sending him copying work for which he was paid and having him help with the children's lessons and give occasional French tuition. It seems Willie's track record which included lying and getting into debt, had not inspired confidence as he himself admitted in one of the several lists of regulations he drew up for himself in the years 1794-6.

I am sensible of the truth of what you allege that you cannot give me a good recommendation to any gentleman as an apprentice or clerk without endangering your own character and running the risk of incurring the imputation of falsehood...neither can I blame you for distrusting my best promises<sup>128</sup>

In the hope that Innes would do something for him if he amended his conduct, McLaurin resolved to be truthful, to give up a number of his companions, apply himself assiduously to whatever work was given him, wear decent clothing, instruct the children more regularly than he had done and pay off his debts. He requested that he be allowed to leave the Burnets' house and take a room in the neighbourhood.

Willie did move out taking a number of new clothes with him and his father gave him some further work in collecting rents from Hammermen's Close and showing rooms to prospective tenants. He rented a room at 2s 6d and purchased a flute for 14s in October. All was not well, however, for he wrote to Innes on 20 October acknowledging his ill behaviour and soliciting forgiveness – 'I am so ashamed of my past conduct that I cannot appear before any of the Burnets'.<sup>129</sup> He had changed his tune, as a few days later he admitted:

It is with the utmost regret that I find myself obliged by my own faults to leave a family of which I have been so long a member and for every individual of which I have conceived the warmest and most sincere affection<sup>130</sup>

By May 1797 he declared himself to be unwell which Mr Dewar attributed to melancholy and depression of spirits for which he prescribed fresh air and exercise – a remedy not to Willie's liking – but he expressed gratitude to Gilbert Innes for letting him have his old desk, as leaning over a low table had not helped him. In his illness,

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> GD113/5/443, 7 July 1795.

<sup>129</sup> GD113/5/445/179.

<sup>130</sup> GD113/5/445/178, 25 October 1796.

however, he had mislaid a number of his papers with the result that his private account 'is in very great confusion' but he would be 'more methodical' in future.<sup>131</sup>

He was not and from a letter of 11 November 1797 to Gilbert Innes via Marion, it looks as though he had been borrowing money from the rents he had collected. Nor had he been teaching the Burnet children. On 10 December he begged his father for assistance, having 'fallen into the deplorable situation which I have all along expected', being 'indebted to every person around me without any means of raising a shilling'.<sup>132</sup> He had no fire in the dirty garret in which he resided and had not tasted meat for two days.

Here I must submit to the insults of wretches whom I despise and to heighten my distress my landlady an old servant is cruel enough to brand me with the appellation of a cheat and says she does not expect a penny of what I owe her. This conduct, though my heart really feels for the distress to which the poor woman is reduced on my account, embroils me in perpetual quarrels with her of which I have no doubt several instances may have reached your ears misrepresented in a state of the most enormous exaggeration.<sup>133</sup>

He begged his honoured parent to forgive him and promised to return to teaching the children when he had recovered his health. What happened during the next two months is unknown but Willie wrote again on 24 February 1798 imploring Innes to revoke his vow of not seeing him till he had repaid £3 10s; and promising to work at a penny a page until he made up the sum.

Some reconciliation must have taken place after this as McLaurin told Gilbert Innes on 15 September 1798 that he had relapsed into his former conduct and that he wanted to go to London for he saw no point in what he had been doing (copying chemical speculations). He blamed Gilbert for not letting him study medicine or getting him into the Duke's militia; and for not clothing him decently and obtaining comfortable accommodation for him.

but you rather chose that I should be a hanger on about a family from which I had resolved and still wish to separate myself for ever – where I am considered as a stranger and a beggar where I am not thought worthy of a bed to lie upon where I have hardly one comfortable meal and where even the very servants despise me.<sup>134</sup>

Jane he exempted from criticism as she had helped him in the past and he also thought George to be fond of him. Having received no answer to this, Willie tried again on 9 October saying that he and the Misses B had quarrelled irreconcilably so that he could not bear going near the house. 'Your behaviour on Sunday night when

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<sup>131</sup> GD113/5/446/198, 26 May 1797.

<sup>132</sup> GD113/5/446/64.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> GD113/5/447/81.

you called thief after me on the streets sufficiently evinces that you care nothing for me'.<sup>135</sup> In an outpouring of self pity and self delusion he accused his father of treating his slight instances of misconduct too harshly, for, while he might have shone in the character of a gentleman, instead he risked falling into some disgraceful scrape every night in the company of the most abandoned of the human race.

At the same time McLaurin wrote to Jane asking her to inform Mr Innes that he had decided to enlist in a band of music of a militia regiment now recruiting and had little doubt of success. Poverty had overcome his pride and it would be good money for little work. In fact his playing did not match the required standard though he attributed this to lack of practice due to his illness. At the end of the month Willie complained to Jane that Mr Innes had kept him for about 14 years drudging at an employment he abhorred and for a trifle of money, the payment of which was constantly deferred. Destitute of all necessities and plagued by creditors, he received his meals at the Burnets' house but he considered this more of an affront than a favour and asked, 'is it not extremely degrading for a man of spirit to be coming every day about a family of which he was once a member and where he is now looked upon as a stranger?'<sup>136</sup> If Mr Innes would set him once more a-going, give him work and pay him regularly, William believed he could maintain himself. He did not deny he had been to blame but without help it was not in his power to behave better. 'I have given over applying to himself as a fruitless cause ... I therefore request that you will use your interest to persuade him to relieve me immediately and assure him in return that I will endeavour to please him'.<sup>137</sup>

By 23 January 1799 McLaurin had again relapsed into idleness and in April Gilbert forbade him from receiving his meals from the Burnets. He concurred but begged for work to do and to be allowed to sleep in the unlet house upstairs for a few days as he had nowhere else to go. From the late autumn until August 1800, there are no letters to his father in the Archive but on 15 August, hearing from Jane of Gilbert's willingness to speak with him, he approached his father. He confessed his fatality of behaviour but attributed blame to him:

I know perfectly well that you hate me, that you would disown me as belonging to you and that you would not care one sixpence though I were this night in eternity. Every meeting we have had for these several years past has almost uniformly (been) embittered by quarrels till at last the harshness of your behaviour to me forces me to shun you as an enemy while

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> GD113/5/141/41, 31 Oct 1798.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

necessity constrains me to break your bread. You tell me it is my own fault. Why don't I apply to my business – Indeed I cannot – it has now become morally impossible – I feel an invincible reluctance to the profession of a writer which will ever prevent me from passing this world with any degree of credit.<sup>138</sup>

Willie continued in this vein, complaining that he had wasted fifteen of the most valuable years of his life, had become sick of living and a disgrace and burden to his connections. Necessity had driven him into bad practices and the continual dread of Innes' displeasure had made him 'guilty of innumerable falsehoods the detection of which has ruined my credit with you'.<sup>139</sup> He wished he had been taken care of by some public institution and trained in some mechanical employment for then he might have been happier with a family of his own rather than being surrounded by friends who look upon him as an alien and a beggar. He concluded by saying he wanted to go into his Majesty's service but that his education and connection with Gilbert entitled him to the rank of gentleman.

Nothing changed in the early 1800s. By 1801 Willie had reached the age of 27 and he continued to undertake intermittent work for his father and to receive some sort of maintenance. He wrote verses to Jane on her birthdays in 1801, 1803 and in 1804 and she gave him sums of money from time to time. On 2 January 1804, however, McLaurin found himself in prison from where he wrote to Innes.

Owing to a former foolish connection with a very worthless woman of the name of Williamson a Decreet was obtained against me before the Sherriff in the end of June last at the instance of Richardson the Kirk Treasurer of Edinburgh for £15 odds in consequence of the person above mentioned having thought proper to pitch upon me as the father of the child she had about that time and which I believe is still alive.<sup>140</sup>

Though Willie had 'long known the girl very intimately' he denied paternity.<sup>141</sup> Innes arranged matters and extricated McLaurin from prison and 'the late misfortune' which had befallen him.<sup>142</sup> Undeterred Willie told Jane in February that he hoped the 'late accident which befell me disagreeable as it was' might have been a means of bringing about a reconciliation with his father.<sup>143</sup> By April, however, he feared he had been entirely abandoned but asked Gilbert his advice about advertising as a public teacher of French. Willie told Jane that he intended to have advertisements printed to recruit scholars but nothing appears to have come of this. Some improvement in McLaurin's relationship with his father does seem to have occurred, as in July he

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<sup>138</sup> GD113/5/449.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> GD113/5/452/13.

<sup>141</sup> GD113/5/452/12, 4 January 1804.

<sup>142</sup> GD113/5/452/10, 9 January 1804.

<sup>143</sup> GD113/5/319A/25.

received a new coat and reported to him about prospective tenants in Hammermen's Close. He continued to teach Simpson and Bess Burnet every night but reported that:

Simmy is a careless little wretch and miserably deficient in Latin; the multiplication table still remains a dismal difficulty; Bess scrawls her copies and this will ruin her writing.<sup>144</sup>

On 24 April 1807 Jane Innes wrote to her brother who was in London with Marion, Jane and George Burnet, to tell him that William Mclaurin had gone to Pirnaiton to act as a clerk following the suicide of the estate factor William Hall. Initially Mclaurin prospered at Pirnaiton and might have had a successful career in farm management but after a good beginning, he seems gradually to have alienated local people and to have lapsed into his former habits. Sometime in 1812 Gilbert recalled him. On 24 September after a long silence, William Mclaurin wrote to Innes saying that:

the first 12 or 18 months I lived there I always account the happiest of my life, my situation was respectable, as your agent I had something to do I acted according to the best of my judgement all as in many instances to your satisfaction. From that time or shortly after the insinuations of selfish people and several untoward accidents trifling in themselves but powerful when added together succeeded in throwing cold water on our mutual confidence, you grew dissatisfied and I disgusted and unhappy. I must however own that some of the most disagreeable circumstances I allude to did not arise from you ....Neither can I justly deny that my present unhappy situation may be in great measure owing to the same imprudent habits of dissipation and folly that led my predecessor poor Mr Hall to his ruin...<sup>145</sup>

The next few months followed the usual pattern of Mclaurin complaining of his ill health and debts, appealing to his father for help and desiring to go to London to make a new start. He seemed to be mortified that he had been replaced at Pirnaiton by a 'common servant'.<sup>146</sup> On 20 February 1813 he wrote a very long letter to Gilbert in which he poured out his grievances and from an adult perspective, analysed his upbringing and described how inappropriate it was for his personality and situation. While not wishing to 'throw any reflection on the memory of a worthy woman who was deserving of all the regard you shewed her and in many respects entitled to my highest gratitude' (Euphan Burnet), he considered that she had not unnaturally preferred her own children.<sup>147</sup> She was charged with the task of chaining him to a writing desk 'like a slave to the oar'; and from the age of 12 to 17 when he studied science and languages and mixed with gentlemen at the college, he frequently

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<sup>144</sup> GD113/5/453/103, 10 July 1804.

<sup>145</sup> GD113/5/463/71.

<sup>146</sup> GD113/5/463/91, 18 December 1812.

<sup>147</sup> GD113/5/464/130.

trembled at the thoughts of manual chastisement ‘from a woman. This naturally induced servility of manners, poorness of spirit and a puny habit of body that will for ever preclude me from the more laborious and active duties of life’.<sup>148</sup> He absolved Mrs Burnet but blamed his father for choosing to confine them together so as to be a mutual plague to each other. He frequently resorted to deception and double-dealing as a convenient strategy for coping with Gilbert’s ‘stern and injudicious treatment’. After Mrs Burnet’s death he found himself not totally abandoned but excluded from any arrangements for the Burnet family though he was thought to be useful for a year or two in instructing the children but:

As soon as Marion was thought capable of being mistress of the house my situation became again unpleasant. As she inherited a double portion of her mother’s antipathy to me that circumstance joined to the little sense to be expected from her years and the large stock of pride to which I was not disposed to pay homage made our altercation ever and endless. These trifles added to a few other instances of impropriety and lightheadedness excusable perhaps in a lad of nineteen or twenty kept your temper perpetually on the fret and upon the first charge you could muster against me I was (as I had sometime foreseen) banished the house...my leaving the family however you made to appear as my own act and deed and upon that pretence stood aloof as much as ever.<sup>149</sup>

All Willie’s suggestions for occupations had been met with objections and he was expected to remain as a copyist and to reform his morals. Only when Jane Burnet succeeded her sister in the house management did his situation improve for she allowed him access, though the rest of the family regarded him as a stranger and beggar.

He referred to his time at Pirnaiton as an experience he enjoyed for two years until ‘you gave over employing me in anything that could confer rank or respectability as your factor’ and he ‘dwindled into the mere overseer of a few ploughmen’. He added to this, accusations against local inhabitants ‘who were piqued because ‘I kept a distance from and reckoned myself above them’. Moreover ‘George thought himself entitled to treat me on many occasions with the most insulting hauteur and threatenly abuse’; while Marion wished ‘to interfere in my domestic concerns at twenty miles distance with which she had nothing to do and spoil my housekeeper’. Only Jane had taken unsuccessfully taken his part. He ended his eight pages with a Latin quote:

Convince me I am wrong in what I write  
Or let your candour own me in the right.

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

Mclaurin had returned to Edinburgh with some money but this he used very quickly. Innes paid for a list of clothing – eight shirts, five pairs worsted hose, two pairs stripped cotton, two pairs flannel drawers, four vests of different kinds, one pair of stripped orange coloured pantaloons, one night cap, one crape, one blue coat with brass buttons, two pairs of boots, one pair of worsted stocks (necktie) at a cost of £30 11s. He also seems to have given him an allowance but by January 1813, Willie was complaining of being ill, needing to have a few trifling debts paid and being a stranger in Edinburgh having been absent for five years. In the only piece of evidence in the Archive written by Gilbert Innes about William Mclaurin, Innes noted on 12 February 1813, that ‘ he tells me he has pawned all the cloaths I have lately given him in the Horse Wynd’; and on 18 March he wrote:

he says he owes his late landlady £1 4s also six shillings – he also owes his present landlady Mrs Gardener his room rent at 3s 6d from 28 December last but he has paid her 11s to account – I now see seven different pawnbrokers duplicates for his new cloathes pantaloons etc etc he shews me he has not a shirt on at least it is something dirty and unlike a shirt.<sup>150</sup>

In March one of Willie’s neighbours sent him a summons for 30 shillings. By this time Mclaurin had resigned himself to going to London and looked to his father for the fare. On 23 April Innes paid his son’s debts which included £17 12s 6d to Robertson and Murray spirit merchants, £10 to Mr Alex Wilson for bread and liquors and £1 16s 4d to Mr D Mitchell for liquors and rent money. Willie sailed from Leith in company, as it happened, with George Burnet and on 1 May 1813 Gilbert Innes intimated he would pay no more of Mclaurin’s future contractions.

Willie and George parted company when they docked. The former had a remittance of 20s weekly and a letter of introduction to a Mr Bainbridge, a business contact of Gilbert Innes but Bainbridge’s two attempts to find a situation for Mclaurin proved unsuccessful and he did not venture more. In June Willie told his father that his lack of experience and influential contacts prevented him from finding employment but by October he had agreed with the master of a respectable academy a few miles from town, to teach French but unfortunately this fell through as he told Innes in January 1814. Willie also referred to a relationship with a young woman concerning whom he had received ‘cautions and threatenings’ before he left Edinburgh but that she had died.<sup>151</sup> He might have saved her from poverty and want had he not been forced to go to London. When Jane and her new husband Robert

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<sup>150</sup> GD113/5/414/31.

<sup>151</sup> GD113/5/468/36.

Wallas spent some weeks in London before embarking for Madeira, Jane saw McLaurin. She told Innes she had never seen him looking 'so well and so neat in his dress He has been able to procure a scholar or two in French and seems to like the place pretty well'.<sup>152</sup> By June 1814, however, Willie was again blaming his father for never having allowed him to express a wish or entertain a prospect in regard to the future during his 40 years of dependency. He did not want the drudgery of a beggarly assistant in a Boarding School:

My habits and prejudices are too deeply rooted and my temper too impatient to allow the least probable chance of my submitting to the confinement of attending a parcel of children under a master perhaps in every respect my inferior. I have no objection to serve any gentleman whose character and manners can command my respect and insure my being well used, but I know that most of the head masters of Academies in and about London with very few exceptions indeed are nothing but the scum of Scots colleges, needy foreigners or discarded churchmen.<sup>153</sup>

McLaurin continued to receive his allowance from Gilbert and occasionally earned a guinea or two in giving French lessons, but not having heard from Innes for 15 months, he told him in a letter of 23 January 1815 that he had lost all hopes of 'getting into such employment as he would wish', without his father's assistance which he had so often 'implored in vain'.<sup>154</sup> In reply to Innes' letter of 19 February, he related that during his two years' sojourn in London he had received a total of £109 plus some payment for teaching. This included a sum of £10 from Jane Burnet, now married and departed for Madeira as Mrs Wallas, to Willie's chagrin. There seems to have been some occasional communication with George and Anne who admired his poem *The Elegy*. Gilbert Innes himself visited London in May and he called at Willie's lodgings only to find him absent due to being in prison. According to McLaurin:

The scrape I have been in though of no material consequence is nevertheless distressing to one who has or ought to have the feelings of a gentleman...it happened inadvertently and I regard it a sort of prelude to other and more severe misfortunes that I anticipate befalling me without a great and most un hoped for change in your sentiments and attitude towards me. I have long looked upon myself as being on the brink of ruin from which I can expect none but you to save me.<sup>155</sup>

Willie was obliged to change his accommodation once again but within days he wrote to Innes at Miller's Hotel to apologise for not having waited upon him in the morning due to 'a confounded scrape I foolishly got into last night for which the worshipfull Sir William Layton Alderman has been pleased to sentence me to eight

<sup>152</sup> GD113/5/467/126, 2 December 1814.

<sup>153</sup> GD113/5/468 /35, 5 June 1815.

<sup>154</sup> GD113/5/469/174.

<sup>155</sup> GD113/5/470/93, 2 June 1815.

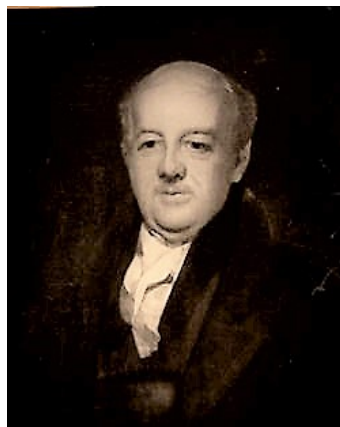


days confinement.’<sup>156</sup> He asked his father to take the necessary steps for his release – ‘my commitment is for being loose, idle and disorderly because I happened to abuse a night constable’.<sup>157</sup>

The last Mclaurin letter in the archive is dated 9 July and is by way of a farewell. He had intended personally to take leave of his father but found he could not.

Do not suppose there is any improper reason for this. I am under no restraint and (from your late kindness) in no material difficulties....O Mr Innes you know not my character or you might conceive the distress of my mind, I am in this moment of writing you. The hopes I conceived from your coming to London though not very sanguine, have been my only solace for these last two years. They are disappointed and I now feel convinced that I am irretrievably ruined...Half your fortune though I had it would be nothing to me in comparison to a return of mutual confidence between us. – My aim is at your heart and not your pocket....I hate the word farewell although I have a strong prepossession that I in vain try to banish from my mind that I will not again see you...You talk of being in town again next year and if I cannot settle here it is my intention in a short time to return to Scotland...<sup>158</sup>

He concluded by wishing to be affectionately remembered to George and the Misses Burnet and promising to return the three volumes of Edgeworths he had borrowed either by sending them on one of the Leith smacks or bringing them himself. Thereafter William Mclaurin’s name disappears from the Innes Archive.



*Gilbert Innes*, undated, Royal Bank of Scotland

Marion and Jane Burnet’s letter to Gillbert Innes in London in the summer of 1799 gives some indication of the progress of their younger siblings. Phaem appeared to be improving at her lessons but Elizabeth (Bess) was not yet at school and she went for a daily walk with one of the servants. Simpson, however, never

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<sup>156</sup> GD113/5/470/75, 13 June 1815.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> GD113/5/470/87.

seems to have been very healthy throughout his short life though there are not many references to him in the Innes Archives. On 21 June 1799 Jane wrote:

Simpson is quite well again and goes to school now very happy I believe at the idea of Sunday being so near that he may have it in his power to appear with a new suit upon his skinny back...<sup>159</sup>

George, on the other hand, exhibited the characteristics of many young males in attempting to leave the house in a dirty shirt, with unwashed face or uncombed hair; though he had been behaving well perhaps in the expectation of having something brought back for him from London. He had learned to play the violin and his accounts for the early years of the 1800s show expenditure on violin strings, mending a violin, portage of the instrument and sheets of music. Music sent to him by Gilbert in 1804 included chorus books and overtures and in subsequent years his collection was augmented by operas, Haydn and Mozart quartets and arrangements of symphonies. He also possessed a double bass.

In May 1802 Lothian Hut at the foot of Canongate came on the market. 'Hut' indicates a secondary residence and this town house had been built by the third Marquis of Lothian around 1750.<sup>160</sup> The advertisement in the *Caledonian Mercury* described the substantially furnished property as fit to accommodate a large family along with a stable for eight horses, an excellent loft and other offices; with entry at Whitsuntide 1803. The last tenant had been Dugald Stewart, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University who paid a rent of £50.<sup>161</sup> There is no evidence that Gilbert Innes bought Lothian Hut but rather that he leased it. In 1803 the Burnet family moved into their new home with its substantial garden for which tools had to be bought at a cost of 1s 4d, wages paid for gardening work and quantities of gravel and dung purchased.<sup>162</sup> In the spring of 1804 the seeds sown included sweet pease, yellow and blue lupens, candytuft, larkspur, convallulus and parsley among others.<sup>163</sup> The Misses Burnet also purchased a set of Worcester china – 12 cups and saucers, six coffee cups, a basin, two plates, teapot, flat sugar dish and milk pot – as well as dessert spoons, dining tables, a marble table, laundry table and a stove for their new abode. An inventory made in 1808 described furniture and household items in the dining room, drawing room, dressing room, lobby, Marion's room,

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<sup>159</sup> GD113/5/470/77.

<sup>160</sup> It was demolished in 1825 to make room for a brewery.

<sup>161</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, 29 May, 5 June, 3 July, 1802.

<sup>162</sup> GD113/5/340.

<sup>163</sup> GD113/5/319B.

nursery, Jane's room, Ann's room, George's room, the servants room, storeroom and kitchen. A list of other items included a large divider belonging to Euphan Burnet and six old tablespoons marked 'EB'.<sup>164</sup> Not all went smoothly however, as Jane wrote to her father on 14 January 1804; 'If convenient please come down this forenoon as part of the roof has within these two days let in water'.

Entries in account books suggest that George Burnet paid his final college matriculation fees in October 1803. Unlike William McLaurin, he now lived the life of a young gentleman with attendance at his first Assembly (George Street) on 22 February 1803 and at the Leith Assembly in April. In July he had 12 calling cards with gilt edges printed and he made his annual contribution to the Musical Society in October. This probably means he paid for subscription concerts as the Edinburgh Musical Society ceased in 1798. In 1804 he had riding lessons, attended concerts and the theatre, played golf, hired bathing machines in summer and skated in winter. He had military friends and dined with the cavalry at Musselburgh in July and with Captain Thomson at Lauder in September. In November he received entry into St John's Lodge of Freemasons and incurred the expense of entry fees, regalia and tickets to masonic dinners. A sum of 1s 6d given in October 1804 for a concave eye glass (the first of many pairs of spectacles) is an indication of his sight problems.

A letter from George at Pirnaiton to Gilbert Innes on 5 October suggests that he had been sent to report on estate affairs but also shows his sense of humour:

The post in the Meadow park was taken down that afternoon I heard from you to that purpose. Mr Hall seemed a little chagrined that a Breath from Edinburgh should blow down that which had withstood the wind here.<sup>165</sup>

Over the next few years George spent much time at Pirnaiton enjoying the country gentleman pursuits of fishing, shooting and keeping dogs for which his father had to renew the relevant licences annually; partridges, woodcocks and other game being sent home for the larder. (Jane Innes complained that it went to Lothian Hut and not St Andrew Square.) He also accepted invitations to visit elsewhere. 'You will already have heard of my flying about the country in post chaises' he wrote to Gilbert on 6 October 1805.<sup>166</sup> George had been asked by Mr and Mrs Grant to partake of their hospitality in St Andrews, though he did not sleep in their house having taken a small room nearby. He socialised with Colonel and Mrs Deas, Major Haddow, Colonel

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<sup>164</sup> GD113/5/140E/29.

<sup>165</sup> GD113/5/453/56.

<sup>166</sup> GD113/5/454/42.

Dewar, Major Dalrymple and Lord Kelly and managed to lose 18 pence playing blackgammon, fashionable game of the period, as well as indulging in a day's shooting. His expenditure for 1806 included £1 11s 6d for a dinner with Lord Melville's friends, nine shillings for the bill at Oman's with Lord Haddington, one shilling and three pence horse hire and tolls paid for dining at Dalkeith, four shillings for a ticket to the Peers Assembly, 17s 6d for the Society of Antiquaries dinner, £1 1s for violin lessons from Stabilini, seven shillings and sixpence for an eye glass given to Phaem and one shilling for mending his own spectacles. George Burnet seemed well launched into an Edinburgh gentleman's life; and at the end of the year Gilbert paid 20 guineas for a 1604 Stradivarius violin for his son.

Jane Burnet also spent time from Edinburgh in 1805 when she travelled to Glasgow to stay with the More family. She wrote to her father that:

everybody I have as yet met with has heard of our musical powers but I declare to every one of them that I never sing without ye all but after all I was very much against my wish last night forced to chant and I never felt more miserable.<sup>167</sup>

She also told him that her or rather 'your Jewels' were admired beyond imagination and 'I yawn and allow them to be putty well passablement bien'.<sup>168</sup> The programme of a concert Jane had attended included a little boy of eleven who played a quartette 'with about the ability of Simpson'.<sup>169</sup> On 2 February she visited Kirkpatrick with Mr More and saw the view painted by Nasmyth as well as Dumbarton Castle and Greenock.



John Clerk of Eldin, *Dumbarton Castle*, National Galleries of Scotland

When Jane returned home, however, she suffered the mortification of having to confess to Innes that she owed money, having purchased items on credit. Then in

<sup>167</sup> GD113/5/454 /202, 18 January 1805.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> GD113/5/454/203, 16 January 1805.

August she had to write to him, 'conscious that by disclosing my troubles I shall lose much in your good opinion', but that she, Marion and Anne had accumulated an immense haberdasher's bill. She blamed herself for allowing this to happen and pleaded that whether or not he assisted them 'let me be the only sufferer in your estimation'.<sup>170</sup>

On 10 April 1807 Janet Cummin, daughter of Professor Cummin of Glasgow University and a maternal relation of the Innes family, wrote to Jane Innes to tell her that she had received a letter from Jean Burnet:

which astonished me not a little as it informed me that she and her brother and sister were going up to London with Mr Innes, is it really the case for as the letter was dated the first of the month I thought perhaps she wished to make an April fool of me, I suppose they intend being very gay as she tells me they had got a box at the opera and Drury Lane.<sup>171</sup>

The London visit lasted until September though George returned by sea in mid August with packing cases of purchases, many for Miss Innes. Anne remained in charge of the household at Lothian Hut and she sent her father and siblings a song composed by Mr Walker about their London trip.

The plan once laid down was quickly assorted  
Miss Ann and Miss Phaem had the charge of the Hut  
While George, Marion and Jean by their father escorted  
All for London Ola what a new fangled Cut.<sup>172</sup>

Several further verses made punning references to the family's musical abilities especially their singing.

In London the Burnets enjoyed theatre and opera performances, masquerades, concerts and museum visits. Gilbert, however, had been charged by his sister with sourcing various items for her proposed new residence. For several years she had been house hunting and in April 1807 she paid £1,000 as half of the price of a house being built in Picardy Place. Jane Innes strongly disapproved of her brother's lifestyle and wished to be dissociated from it; and she particularly resented Gilbert's assertion that she had enjoyed free board. (Both Innes sisters paid £120 annually after the death of their parents.) Jane Innes kept careful accounts in which she wrote caustic comments.

Jenny Cumming informed me of Mr Innes and the Burnets conversation in May 1806. I learned by J Cumming and G Burnet that Mr Innes denied receiving any Board from me, a thing he could not possibly be ignorant of, as in using my board of 1801 and 1802 it had lasted a whole year save 14 days during which I received no moneys whatever from him either for women's wages (£30 10s 6d) or any other household demand whatever. I confess

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<sup>170</sup> GD113/5/454/61, 27 August 1805.

<sup>171</sup> GD113/5/80A/2.

<sup>172</sup> GD113/5/140E/16.

that I was displeased with such proof of pride and duplicity and afterwards did shew the account book with its receipts and expenditure in justification of my own Truth as well as economy....for some years I have had him, his two bastard sons, four men servants, three women servants and for the most part Colonel Scott to diet in the house.<sup>173</sup>

Nonetheless she had given Innes a list of items she would like to have purchased in London for her new abode but then had second thoughts. Anne Burnet wrote to her father that Miss Innes:

is quite frightened about the price of mirrors – she does not doubt that the monsieur has made a very good purchase but at the same time thinks from the description of them they must be too fine for her purse. Lord Methven's sale was yesterday where she bought (I think) three pair of English blankets for £1 10s – I did not see them but she says she has got a great bargain.<sup>174</sup>

Anne also reported on a circulating rumour of Miss Innes' going to be married to Colonel Scott and that 'you were going to honour Mrs David Ritchie with your fair hand'.<sup>175</sup> Jane Innes herself had written earlier to Gilbert about the sideboard she admired at Lothian Hut. She wished to know the maker so she could order one for herself. Anne did not know and 'Phemy says "you know it is quite impossible to remember anything so far back" – so be so good to let me know if you can remember'.<sup>176</sup>

When in London Gilbert purchased a pair of hoop earrings of brilliant diamonds for Marion at a cost of £39 18s and a pair of top and drop brilliant diamond earrings for Jane at £114 9s. He also arranged for the investment of £7000 each in 3% consols for Marion, Jane, Anne and Euphemia; Downe and Co having the management. £2000 of stock had earlier been purchased in the joint names of George Burnet and Gilbert Innes, the latter having the power to demand transfer of George's half and of anything that might be bought in the future. The first indication of George's health problems comes at this time in a letter to him at the British Coffee house from the singer Alice Corri, presumably a member of the Corri family of musicians. A later letter of hers referred to his 'palpitation of heart'.<sup>177</sup>

In September, with his father's permission, George accepted an invitation to St Andrews from Major Dalrymple and departed with his dogs via the ferry to Kinghorn, arriving at St Andrews on 27 September. He had to write to Jane to ask how much he should tip the servants and by October he was running short of money.

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<sup>173</sup> GD113/1/424. Colonel Scott was a cousin. His brother Carteret Scott had been a suitor of Jane Innes.

<sup>174</sup> GD113/5/456/42, 1 May 1807.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> GD113/5/456/53, 2 May 1807.

<sup>177</sup> GD113/5/402/26 and 27.

He successfully applied to Innes but was vexed to learn that his father attributed his shortage to card playing and tavern expenses – an accusation he hotly denied. Before returning home he visited Colonel Simson at Kellie Castle with Colonel Dewar and had a fine view of the Comet which had aroused great interest. In November, however, George's dissatisfaction with his situation came to a climax and apologising in advance for any offence he might give, he expressed his feelings in a letter to his father.

The situation in which I have been placed in this world with respect to each other is by general acceptance of mankind of such a nature as to leave me without a claim upon you or I add on any soul on Earth. I have been bred without any profession without having the means put in my hands of doing for myself in any way and may be at this moment turned to the wide world a beggar and a vagabond. I do not mean to repine at my lot nor would I have you think that I have forgot or am insensible of the thousand nay I may say all the benefits I now and have from my earliest infancy enjoyed at your hands....my sincere wish is to do something for myself...<sup>178</sup>

He requested an interview with Innes but received instead a letter asking him to state his wants – which he did, namely a situation abroad or in a merchants' counting house or anything which appeared suitable. No reply came nor to a further letter of 14 December so George poured out his disappointments on 21 December.

you desire me "to find out any House where there is a probability of ultimate success" – how often have you told me in matters of the most trifling consequence that I was incompetent to discriminate what was proper to be done yet in this case you leave altogether to my judgement what am I to think of this. Was my request so exorbitant or unnatural that it should lead me to expect an answer so unsatisfactory and that when consulting my nearest and dearest friend on earth. Surely your knowledge of these matters is much greater than mine....<sup>179</sup>

He ended by saying that the army was open to all and in a postscript mentioned that the India Company did not have great limitations on the age of their servants; but he asked that he should not be requested to write again. No resolution seems to have been achieved at this time and Marion urged her brother to give up being discontented and expecting to make a name for himself – 'your natural good sense ought to show you the folly of expecting and wishing impossibly'.<sup>180</sup>

In September of the following year, however, George requested permission to accompany Colonel Dewar to Fife for he wished to consult with him about an appointment to India which Innes had been 'pleased to put in my power as far as the price went'.<sup>181</sup> He also asked if the same sum of money would go towards

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<sup>178</sup> GD113/5/457/132, 18 November 1807.

<sup>179</sup> GD113/5/457/98.

<sup>180</sup> GD113/5/402/70, 24 November or 11 December 1807. There are two dates written on the letter.

<sup>181</sup> GD113/548/18, 2 September 1808.

purchasing a civic appointment at home. Nothing came of India and George admitted in 1813 that he found he could not be happy leaving his friends and home and so abandoned the idea. His life continued as before with a visit to Walter Scott's house at Ashestiel and a sojourn in Glasgow with trips to Hamilton Palace and Chatleherault. On 29 April 1808 Jane Burnet wrote to her father who was in London on business concerning stamp duties:

last night George had some of his fiddling men here they met at 8 o'clock and were off a little after 12 no supper but a round of beef on a by table which from the quantity they devoured I fancy they found tres bon we five damsels listened to this music but did not sing a note. George has not been much from home since you went away.<sup>182</sup>

Jane and Marion had themselves enjoyed a stay in Glasgow with the Moore family a few weeks previously with a social round of concerts, assemblies and theatre. Domesticity reminiscent of Euphan Burnet crept into Jane's letter of 8 March to Gilbert.

The muslin here is uncommonly cheap – I wish you could manage to find a pattern for neckcloths that I might procure some for you....please give Anne one of your neckcloths and she will send by the bank box proper directions...<sup>183</sup>

The sisters purchased muslin for Miss Innes but by mid March confessed to being tired with the constant uproar in the house with the noise of the children and 'the scolding, feasting, dressing, singing, dancing and play, silence reigneth never'.<sup>184</sup> Marion suspected she would 'come home with a better temper (that dear sir you'll say is impossible)'.<sup>185</sup>

When Gilbert sent an undated letter from London the family rejoiced and Marion replied:

our delight at discovering that the exact, the sensible Mr Innes, who it is generally believed always thinks what he is doing, should have sent a letter from London to Edr without any date, was almost as strong as the happiness we felt at hearing you were quite well.<sup>186</sup>

Euphemia and Anne, however, remained disappointed at not having been taken to London and the former wrote on 14 May:

surely my dear Sir when you was so ungrateful as to make a point blank refusal to our kind offer of our company you was not aware of the agreeable acquisition we would have been to your society, I deplore your want of taste more for your sake than our own for I am sure my dear sir you regret now having thrown away such a kind offer, one that may never occur to

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<sup>182</sup> GD113/548/169, 29 April 1808.

<sup>183</sup> GD113/5/457/24.

<sup>184</sup> GD113/5/457/13, 13 March 1808.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> GD113/5/458/159, 9 May 1808.



you again as no hint nothing under harsh command would induce Anne and I to go to London<sup>187</sup>

Unfortunately her father's response is not contained in the Archive but as usual he communicated regularly with them. Jane reported to him of Betsy's delight in receiving a 'very merry' letter and her astonishment that he could be troubled to write to her.<sup>188</sup> She understood all his puns. Marion gave Gilbert an amusing account of an hour's visit from Mr Thomas Trotter:

my patience if not my mind was greatly improved by his sensible conversation, what "I liked the best" was the sight of his back going out at the door.<sup>189</sup>

Miss Innes seemed to be in fine form and frequently out but she had told Mrs Simpson that she 'knew not when she would get into her house ' as her brother's going to London had 'disconcerted all her plans'.<sup>190</sup> Jane Burnet accompanied her on several shopping trips and Miss Innes arrived at Lothian Hut 'as sweet as a perfect lamb' to ask opinions on calico samples she had brought.<sup>191</sup> She admired everything she saw but to their relief declined to stay and Jane Burnet commented:

She drove off and we immediately sat all down and eat a hearty supper – what a pity it is a woman who surely might live very happily should( from her own temper and unkind behaviour to us) make a general rejoicing here whenever she leaves the house!!!<sup>192</sup>

In June Jane recounted that Miss Innes 'was in a passion with Colonel Scott' – she told him 'he just used the house as a hotel. What an extraordinary person she is'.<sup>193</sup>

During Gilbert Innes' time in London Mr Simpson's health caused much concern and by mid May he could not walk up to the Bank. By June he was in bed and vomiting all he ate. He died on 30 June, a week after Gilbert's return. His namesake William Simpson Burnet had by this time completed his college classes but his health did not shown signs of improvement. Little exists in the Archive about him. A letter of 19 October 1803 to his father contained mainly a list of his expenditure on apples and pears and ended by asking to be sent back to school – 'I will attend regularly and I will always speak the truth and tell no more lies'.<sup>194</sup> William Mclaurin who had begun his teaching of Simmie and Betsy favourably had by 30 July 1805, nothing but complaints.

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<sup>187</sup> GD113/5/458/157.

<sup>188</sup> GD113/5/458/150, 16 May 1808.

<sup>189</sup> GD113/5/458/147, 17 May 1808.

<sup>190</sup> GD113/5/458/164, 2 May 1808.

<sup>191</sup> GD113/5/458/138, 27 May 1808.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> GD113/5/458/126, 7 June 1808.

<sup>194</sup> GD113/5/319A/23.

Simpson I am sorry to say is doing no earthly good either at his Latin, writing or arithmetic – he has become for some weeks past such a compleat compound of laziness and insolence that few nights pass without disputes between us. His lessons are never studied notwithstanding it is within a week of the examination he attends the High School very ill indeed as I repeatedly have seen him at home or in the streets in the forenoon hours when he ought to be there. In the morning I suppose he seldom goes at all and I have known him for days together uncertain what was the session, a sure proof either of constant absence or total negligence. If I remonstrate with him he laughs in my face gives me impertinent answers. I really can bear with him no longer and should have complained long ago were it not from unwillingness to disoblige the Miss Bs who really spoil him by unwarrantable indulgence.<sup>195</sup>

By April 1808, however Jane could report to Gilbert that:

Simpson is behaving very well his College attendance is now over yesterday he got a certificate from Dr Christison saying he had behaved well and attended regularly when his health permitted – his quarter at writing was out some days ago but we thought it better to continue him there I wish also you would allow him to go to some French class and please mention whose<sup>196</sup>

Innes agreed to this and Simmie thanked him and according to his sisters he enjoyed his lessons.

On 18 July 1808 Simmie wrote to Gilbert to remind him that he had said some time earlier to Jane 'that when the college rose you would bind me an apprentice to anything I liked'.<sup>197</sup> He spent time that month and in August at Pirnaiton with his father. Marion wrote to George:

our gentlemen are returned Simpson rode the pony in he is very tired and looks extremely thin would to God he had something to do but all our entreatys on this subject availeth nought what a lot ours has been I grieve not now for myself to him I shall suffer but it shall be in silence, one more effort I shall make in writing for our dear Simpson may it on Providence prove successful I know not which of us all is most to be pitied<sup>198</sup>

Whether or not her pleas had any effect, an entry in Innes' accounts for 10 October 1808 shows the payment of fees of £41 1s on 'WS Burnet's being bound to James Dundas Esq.'<sup>199</sup> Simmie cannot have spent much time in his new role. Miss Cummin wrote to Jane Innes on 25 July 1809 that she understood that 'Simpson Burnet is very ill and there is no hope of his recovery, poor young man'.<sup>200</sup> The family, however, trusted in the efficacy of a warmer climate such as that of Madeira, destination of many invalids of the period. Gilbert Innes left Edinburgh in the London mail coach on 7 October while Simmie, Jane and George travelled by sea. Gilbert wrote to his sister to tell her that the sea party had arrived and Simmie had been

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<sup>195</sup> GD113/5/454/73.

<sup>196</sup> GD113/5/458, 29 April 1808.

<sup>197</sup> GD113/5458.

<sup>198</sup> GD113/5/402/4, 24 August 1808. This is an unsigned copy letter which, judging by the contents, seems to have been from Marion.

<sup>199</sup> GD113/5/148.

<sup>200</sup> GD113/5/80A/4.

wonderfully well notwithstanding sea sickness and the worst passage for years though he remained pale with a moderate pulse. London fogs did not help his lungs but 'he never coughed once on the way to Gravesend nor from that to the Tarleton', the vessel which he, Jane, George and a maidservant boarded on 4 November.<sup>201</sup> Jane Innes had arranged for Simmie to be given a Cairngorm seal but on 24 November Innes wrote to tell her:

Your present to poor Simmie was unfortunate in giving the last finish to the cutting the stone cracked and all was over I have got a new stone exactly like the last put in and engraved and it is now in Pirie's shipbroker's hands who will get it safe to Madeira.<sup>202</sup>

The Burnets arrived in Madeira on 20 November.



*Funchal Bay, <[www.madeirawineanddine.com](http://www.madeirawineanddine.com)>*

Their stay was not to be long. George's letter of 7 February 1810 to his father gave the news that Simmie had died three days earlier. In his distressed account of his brother's last days George attempted give some comfort – 'his sufferings though long and tedious were not great' and 'he left this world not only without pain but with a perfect composure and resignation'.<sup>203</sup> The only letters received from Edinburgh had arrived on 3 February and Marion's had made Simpson very cheerful all day but he suffered during the night and had to take more laudanum. By the morning his cough had worsened and after smiling at George, he 'resigned his soul into his Maker's hands' at 10 in the morning.<sup>204</sup> Simmie had spoken constantly of his sisters with affection and only regretted being separated from those he loved so much at home. Jane, when she could face writing to the family, hoped that her letter would not arrive before George's – 'God knows what I would have done without George

<sup>201</sup> GD113/5/498/33; GD113/1/431.

<sup>202</sup> GD113/5/498/65.

<sup>203</sup> GD113/4/165/372.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

here'.<sup>205</sup> Simpson had not had the satisfaction of reading his father's letter to him of 16 December as it arrived after his death. George added a postscript to his sister's letter which indicates a measure of their stress.

Since writing you last Jane has been very unwell but is now better and I have been much troubled with my old bowel complaint. We will come home by the first vessel that can accommodate us.<sup>206</sup>

Gilbert Innes received a letter of condolence on 14 March from the painter George Walker who had given lessons to some of the Burnets. He spoke of the loss of Gilbert's 'amiable young son' and remarked that 'of his gentle manners and early promise I had heard much praise'.<sup>207</sup>

Around the time of the sad death in Madeira, Jane Innes had at last moved into her new residence at 3 Picardy Place (later referred to as No 6). She wrote to a friend on 18 January 1810 castigating her brother for not understanding why she should want her own house – 'my (now displayed) independence of mind (by what penetration I cannot comprehend) seemed altogether (till now) escaped his notice'.<sup>208</sup> She triumphantly proclaimed that her receipts had tallied to a farthing with his book of outlay, but nonetheless 'he or his has sent forth a report that I have lived at free cost in his house'.<sup>209</sup> She declared her intention to quit her present residence Monday week. In her accounts for February 1810 she noted in the margin 'Simpson Burnet died at Madeira the 4<sup>th</sup> February' and for 7 February 'dined at No 3 my debut'.<sup>210</sup> Euphemia Burnet proposed to visit her there:

As you sometime express a wish to see what I am about I send a couple of card books for your inspection which I have this moment finished and crave your mercy for time so ill disposed on the follies of the day. I shall call for them tomorrow if you have the leisure to look at them before then.<sup>211</sup>

Life continued apparently as before with George's activities including hot baths at the Infirmary (7s 6d), viewing the college museum and library (3s), repeating the visit with Mrs Bogle and his sister Anne with the addition of ices (2s 6d), spending several weeks at Pirnaiton and in Fife, attending dinners of the Edinburgh Skating Club, the annual reunion of his college class and the Society of Antiquaries of which he was chosen one of two curators. He had now become a Director of the Equivalent

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<sup>205</sup> GD113/4/165, 20 February 1810.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> GD113/4/165/351.

<sup>208</sup> GD113/5/409/83.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> GD113/1/422.

<sup>211</sup> GD113/5/106A/3.

Company, receiving an annual allowance of £27 increased to £30 in 1815. The Equivalent Company (1721-1851) was a company of debenture-holders associated with the Royal Bank of Scotland.

While in Madeira, however, Jane had met wine merchant Robert Wallas and they appear to have corresponded. Wallas visited Edinburgh where Gilbert Innes entertained him and he subsequently wrote to Innes on 18 March 1811 prior to a proposed return visit to Britain in August. His prospects continued to improve and he hoped Innes would accept his proposal of marriage to Jane, 'knowing it is in my power to continue your daughter in the style of living she has been accustomed to'.<sup>212</sup> The courtship was not destined to be brief. On 8 April 1812 Jane Burnet wrote to her father:

I find it is impossible for me to speak on a subject (which although known to you is never mentioned on your part)...I had a letter from Madeira two days ago and from it I have reason to think that Mr Wallas will sail soon for England....I need not tell you that absence has made no change in in my sentiments in regard to Mr Wallas and my dear Sir I beseech and beg earnestly that you will receive him kindly for my sake...you have been the kindest father on earth to me and excepting one there is none I like so well and I cannot but deeply regret that it will likely prove my lot to be separated from one whose judgement and whose worth I do most sincerely reverence.<sup>213</sup>

Business prevented Robert Wallas from being in Britain that year but he wrote to Innes on 15 August 1812 asking if he had any objections to his being in Edinburgh 'as early as possible' and returning to Madeira with Jane with 'as little delay as convenient'.<sup>214</sup> The marriage, however, did not take place until 14 November 1814 in Gilbert Innes' house. Miss Cummin wrote to Jane Innes of her surprise at this event and that she had heard that Gilbert had given his daughter £500 for clothes, £1000 worth of trinkets and a box of silver plate. Jane Innes herself paid 3s for chair hire to and from St Andrew Square for the wedding and after the couple had departed for Madeira, she sent them an engraved 18 inch silver salver weighing 83 ounces and costing her £44 6s 21/2d.

Euphemia Burnet appears to have been at this stage the most vivacious and humorous of the family. When visiting the Shaftoes, family friends at Hexham in July 1811, Anne, a more anxious personality, wrote to her father of her pleasure in hearing he had got a new horse for the barouche – 'Phaem's head seems quite

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<sup>212</sup> GD113/5/460/1.

<sup>213</sup> GD113/5/462/131.

<sup>214</sup> GD113/5/463/167.

turned about it and the new lighter blue livery'.<sup>215</sup> Phaem on her part responded to Gilbert's queries as to her sister's return more flippantly:

it is supposed Anne is still at Newcastle awaiting directions as neither she nor the morning lark (?Jane) made their appearance since six this morning – Dieu merci as it gave me a comfortable nap but I was up in time, was you?...breakfast is really a temptation it is well known I could never resist.<sup>216</sup>

Jane Innes recounted what she considered a typical incident when she told Gilbert that:

Effie has just been here. She is as usual much potherd about nothing she goes to Peebles tomorrow and her outrigging has proved equal to all her pocket money so she wishes you would send her the odd moneys upon the inclosed being £1 3s 2d which she gives you leave to mark down on the face of such account. I would have given her the odd moneys and saved yourself this trouble but unfortunately am at present as devoid of pocket money as she.<sup>217</sup>

Miss Innes in her new found independence at Picardy Place, carried on as before in her relationship with the Burnets and in criticism of her brother. On 20 October 1811 she wrote to a friend:

My Brother to my mortification has been giving prodigious feasts at his house and to whom think you? The opera company which is here now the Men and Women singers etc at dinner and till 3 o'clock next morning – I can only regret it!!<sup>218</sup>

Gilbert had not yet, however, resolved anything about George Burnet's future. In a letter of 19 December 1811, George referred to his father's promise of supporting what prospects he might wish to pursue. He had heard that the Government might be about to appoint Lord Melville as governor general in India.

from your personal friendship and political influence with his lordship nothing could be easier for you than to give me such an introduction as would insure me one or other of the numerous appointments connected with his lordship's establishment....If you are at all anxious to promote my happiness you cannot think that living in the way I have been for years past can possibly be the means of doing so, everyman is doing something but myself and should I fail in discharging the duties of any office with which I might be entrusted either from being incapable or unworthy the fault is mine and mine alone..<sup>219</sup>

Neither Melville nor Burnet received an Indian appointment and George carried on as usual. In May 1812 he was back in Fife from where he took the opportunity to score a point.

You abused me the other day for apathy and want of interest in the affairs of the Country by not going to Parliament House to hear the speaking at the voting of the address to the Prince Regent, yesterday I rode most of the way to the ferry with the Sollicitor General....and would you believe it Mr Sollicitor General Monypenny knew nothing of the matter further than having heard there was an address voted...now if he one of the first law officers shows such

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<sup>215</sup> GD113/5/661/52.

<sup>216</sup> GD113/5/661/53, 22 July 1822.

<sup>217</sup> GD113/5/466, 23 June 1813.

<sup>218</sup> GD113/5/409.

<sup>219</sup> GD113/5/460/96.

indifference in those matters I who have no voice at all may in some measure be excused in not betraying an interest...<sup>220</sup>

In the summer of that year various members of the family spent time at Pirnaiton including Marion, Bessy and Anne who sent Marion's instructions to Phaem to have the blackberries bottled before her return. In September Marion wrote to Gilbert that she thought George 'much changed he is a great deal thinner and complains though not much of a pain in his breast'.<sup>221</sup> He had obviously been ill but sufficiently recovered to return to Edinburgh that month to stay at 24 St Andrew Square where he received invitations to dine and one from military friends in Perth barracks to visit them. On 23 September 1812 George wrote to Robert Hamilton at Barnton House to request a couple of days' partridge shooting, a privilege previously granted by the late owner.<sup>222</sup>

Yet all was discontent with him and the crisis came in the following year. He wrote to Innes on 25 April 1813, though not apparently received until 6 May – 'this day I leave you'.<sup>223</sup> He reiterated his unhappiness at his situation, thanked his father for all his kindnesses and enclosed a mandate 'by which you may recover what is your own'.<sup>224</sup> A power of attorney to recover the other stock would follow after he reached London. Without informing anyone else, he left Edinburgh by sea in the same vessel as William McLaren, either by accident or design. Marion received a letter from him dated 20 May in which he did not wonder at her surprise at his sudden departure as Mr Innes had neither shown her his letters nor said anything. He explained that for years past he had been in the habit of writing to his father asking him to use his interest to procure him some honourable employment but the answers he received were either evasive or in the negative. In his last interview before George left home, Gilbert had said that 'as I was remiss in my duty he did not see why he should do his'.<sup>225</sup> George reiterated his inability to pay his tradesmen and asked if his father would pay for the clothes which were necessary for him to appear as his relation and to 'retain my place in the society of gentlemen to which I have been accustomed for the last twelve years'.<sup>226</sup> His answer was 'that he would

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<sup>220</sup> GD113/462/114, 8 May 1812.

<sup>221</sup> GD113/463/152.

<sup>222</sup> GD113/5/119, Letters to George Burnet, many undated.

<sup>223</sup> GD113/5/466/77.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> GD113/5/466/42.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

pay nothing'. George therefore felt he had to try to do something for himself for he lived in fear of being arrested for debt with the consequent loss of credit 'in those people's eyes who it was impossible could know the truth'.<sup>227</sup>

In response to what must have been an attempt to persuade him to return, George wrote an angry response to Jane on 1 June telling her – 'you are entirely prejudiced in his favour and you are not possessed of all the plain matters of fact'.<sup>228</sup> He acknowledged there to be faults on both sides but she had not sufficient knowledge to be able to judge.

but no you do not do me that justice but immediately say Nonsense- your conduct to that man has been blameable all along -you owe him everything therefore it was your bounden duty to comply with everything he enjoined....I do not pretend to be blameless on the contrary I have done many things I ought not but tell me making the matter your own what were *your* feelings when consulting him on any subject to you most material and near your heart to find him return an evasive distant answer? How should you in my situation like to have been treated with a continual distrust as if you were neither possessed of ability truth or honour....at this moment he will probably say aye aye let him starve and then we will see enough of him – still I can never think that he would take pleasure in the ruin or unhappiness of anyone....if one does as he wishes he is in a hundred things a most lenient master, yet for all that I know not but he never was pleased with any one thing I did. I was miserable at home and left it thinking I could not be more so anywhere else.<sup>229</sup>

He was more miserable and wrote to Gilbert on 5 June asking him to use his influence to gain him laudable employment. 'My sister Jane in her letter speaks as if you had some apprehension of my taking to music on the stage'; and he was sorry to think 'you should entertain so despicable an opinion of me'.<sup>230</sup> Throughout June some form of negotiation seems to have taken place as various employments such as the army were ruled out on the grounds of age, slow promotion and poor pay. In his letter of 14 June George told his father that the concluding part of the letter he had received from him that morning 'afforded me the only real pleasure I have received since I left home – that you are my real friend I know it and am convinced of it'.<sup>231</sup>

By the end of the month the London heat and uncertainty of the future had affected his health and in his letter of 26 July he complained of shooting pains in his legs. Gilbert had sent him £30 and on 29 July he assured his father of his readiness to do anything he wished either in London or Edinburgh but that he could not return home to live as formerly. In September Gilbert Innes wrote to Jane Innes to tell her

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> GD113/5/466/1.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> GD113/5/466/18.

<sup>231</sup> GD113/5/466/37.



that he 'is in Harrogate taking the waters with his "misses"!'<sup>232</sup> He, Jane and Marion had journeyed there in August to stay at the Green Dragon Hotel. George wrote to Gilbert on 28 August to say his sisters wanted him to join them which he would do with their father's approval but that he still remained far from well and very weak. A few days later he wrote to say that he would not go to Harrogate as he dreaded the thought of being 'laid up on the road'.<sup>233</sup> A greater fear however remained of a recurrence of disagreeable circumstances such as might overturn his good resolutions 'and by breaking my word sink myself in your mind and render me still more unhappy in my own'.<sup>234</sup> From a later reference to a conversation in Harrogate, it would appear that George did join his family there in September but at some point he returned to Scotland for he wrote to Gilbert on 17 October from Pirnaiton – 'I shall need some money if you wish that I should ever come back'.<sup>235</sup>

The date on which George returned to Edinburgh is not recorded but he requested money from his father on 18 January 1814 as he wished to go to the Assembly. He had been admitted to the Caledonian Horticultural Society in 1813, was already a member of the Pitt Club, the Edinburgh Golfing and Skating Societies and he added a life membership of the Highland Society (paid by Gilbert) to his subscriptions in 1815. He acted as a steward for the Burns Anniversary dinners at one of which he proposed a toast to the memory of the 'biographer of Johnstone, father of the worthy chairman'.<sup>236</sup> Fellow masons appointed him Right Worthy Master of Lodge Canongate Kilwinning No. 2 on 24 January 1815, an office to which he was re-elected until 1819.<sup>237</sup> Cuninghame Jewellers engraved a Masonic medal for him with the words 'George Burnet Elected RWM 24 June 1817' at a cost of four shillings.<sup>238</sup> As RWM George participated in the grand procession and ceremony organised for the laying of the foundation stone of the Waterloo Bridge. With regard to his musical interests, in addition to his private performing and public concert-going, attendees at a public meeting on 28 December 1815 elected George Burnet

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<sup>232</sup> GD113/5/498/34.

<sup>233</sup> GD113/5/465/80.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> GD113/5/465/46.

<sup>236</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, 27 January 1816.

<sup>237</sup> Allan MacKenzie, *History of the Lodge Canongate Kilwinning No. 2*, (Edinburgh, 1888), pp. 170, 173.

<sup>238</sup> GD113/4/165/845.

and Dr George Wood as directors of the newly formed Edinburgh Institute for the Encouragement of Sacred Music.<sup>239</sup>

Family tensions remained. On 13 August 1814 he felt sick and unwell at Pirnaiton; while on 24 August he wrote to his father in whose house he resided, that it would be better if he did not appear at dinner 'as it would only make the whole family uncomfortable'.<sup>240</sup> Yet in September George transacted some business for his father in Glasgow and some for himself which involved a shipment of wine from Madeira. He wrote to Gilbert – 'I am going to dine with the Gardiners today where I regret much you cannot be present as the desert is well worthy of your seeing'.<sup>241</sup> In October George sent farm news from Pirnaiton and requested more shot if he were to stay there. He accompanied the newly wed Mr and Mrs Wallas on their journey south via Settle in North Yorkshire where they met Anne who was staying there with her friends the Shaftoes. Anne intended to return home the next day so George requested their father to send the carriage to Fushie or Bankhouse to meet her. He dreaded the prospect of the sisters' parting as they had already had 'a most distressing scene with my sister Anne'.<sup>242</sup> Jane writing from Wansford near Peterborough on 21 November mentioned that George had left them but that they had been extremely obliged to him for his kind attention and service on the road.

When Gilbert Innes visited London in the spring of 1815, George attended to the affairs of the Stow estate. Anne told her father that George – 'has a great running after your farmers'.<sup>243</sup> He had to deal with tenant debt, hiring people and antiquated farming methods but Anne thought the nurseries and hedges at Pirnaiton to be in fine order and everyone busy. Unfortunately, being troubled by corns, he had them extracted but according to Marion, he returned home 'quite lame and swearing furiously at his feet being much worse and his pocket lighted by a couple of guineas'.<sup>244</sup> She did not know whether his lameness or the loss of the guineas annoyed him more and when they walked round the Duke's grounds at Dalkeith he had to remove his shoe 'which had a picturesque effect'.<sup>245</sup> The landlady of the inn

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<sup>239</sup> *Scots Magazine*, 1 January 1816; *Strangers Guide to Edinburgh*, fifth edition (Edinburgh, 1817), p. 199.

<sup>240</sup> GD113/5/468/124.

<sup>241</sup> GD113/5/467/73, 13 September 1814.

<sup>242</sup> GD113/5/468/65, 18 November 1814.

<sup>243</sup> GD113/5/470, 20 June 1815.

<sup>244</sup> GD113/5/470/182, 23 June 1815.

<sup>245</sup> GD113/5/470/43, 2 July 1815.

where they dined gave him an old velvet shoe to wear to go home but he subsequently had a shoe cut specially to give him some relief.

George had more serious health issues relating to his past chest pains and these surfaced over the next few years. The family clearly attributed his problems to his life style. In his letter of 21 November 1818 to Gilbert Innes, Robert Wallas asked about the possibility of Mr Burnet's paying them a visit:

there is sometimes difficulty to a young man to shake off acquaintances which he meets every day although every inclination to get rid of them here we have no dissipation whatever going on nor has there been since the British troops left the island <sup>246</sup>

In a following letter Wallas indicated his and Jane's delight at Mr Burnet's recovery – 'from what you say he must have been seriously ill'.<sup>247</sup> He suggested that the warm climate of Madeira would be beneficial. Jane added – 'God grant my dearest Sir that he may keep his sickness in mind and act more happily for himself and his family'.<sup>248</sup> George did not accept the Madeira invitation and had a recurrence of his symptoms in August 1819. Euphemia, now Mrs Menzies and living in Dublin, wrote to her father that her sisters carefully avoided the subject:

on the 26<sup>th</sup> you say he is quite well again yet he was only brought home on the 21<sup>st</sup> ....his folly I lament beyond what I can express but my hopes of him are gone and however much it may distress it will not at all surprise me to hear his next attack proves fatal if not to his life, to his intellect which in my opinion is worse than death itself <sup>249</sup>

In January 1820 she expressed further dismay at her brother's behaviour, saying that she had given up hope years ago of his doing any good 'till he loses his wicked adviser, God forgive me I regretted when I heard she was better'.<sup>250</sup> This is the only reference in the Archive to any liaison engaged in by George but Sir Thomas Innes of Learney in an unpublished account of Innes of Toux and Coxton, claimed that 'George Burnet took up with Miss Murphy'.<sup>251</sup>

When Jane Wallas visited Edinburgh in July 1821 her husband wrote to her from Madeira that he hoped that Mr Burnet had shaken off his lameness for otherwise who would kill the grouse. A later letter expressed his sorrow at hearing her accounts of her brother and urged her to persuade him to return with her – 'perhaps if he was away from Edinburgh a while he might shake off some of his

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<sup>246</sup> GD113/5/473/41.

<sup>247</sup> GD113/5/473/33, 13 December 1818.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> GD113/5/475/138, 22 September 1819.

<sup>250</sup> GD113/5/476/134.

<sup>251</sup> <[www.anesfhs.org.uk](http://www.anesfhs.org.uk)>.

acquaintances and if he was here he would be obliged to live soberly'.<sup>252</sup> George, however, maintained his ironic sense of humour. He accompanied Jane and her two children to Greenock to see them embark for Madeira on the ship the *Eversharpe* but the weather caused delays. He informed Gilbert:

I have often heard you esteem steadiness as a first rate virtue either in things animate or inanimate, were you here now how much you would admire both the wind and the *Eversharpe* – they remain steady as the Bass.<sup>253</sup>

George, however, continued his lifestyle and added to his list of clubs and societies the Celtic Society founded in 1820 by Walter Scott and David Stewart of Garth. Gilbert Innes paid £12 for his son's Highland dress in 1822. His health did not improve. Elizabeth Burnet visiting her sister Phaem in Limerick expressed dismay that George had been complaining again:

but how can it be otherwise, you say it was nothing material. I hope it is so, I am sorry for poor Anne, being nurse to him is both hopeless and endless...<sup>254</sup>

His father told him bluntly that all his complaints 'are from your own misconduct and that temperance with gentle but regular exercise only, can ensure you of good health in the future'.<sup>255</sup> A subsequent letter remarked that as George had expressed anger at his criticisms:

There are some faint hopes of your amendment. I taught you long ago the play of the Old Man of St Andrew Square and though you get a rap over the knuckles now and then, it can do you no harm and may make you sharper in future.  
I cannot follow the advice I have given you.<sup>256</sup>

In the summer of 1824 George seems to have had a serious illness, possibly a heart attack or stroke and languished impatiently in Lothian Hut from where he sent a long complaint to Gilbert.

Although the losing or regaining the use of my limbs seems to those about me equally immaterial yet to me it is a matter of most distressing solicitude of anxiety at once irksome and wearing out, besides the pain and languor attending my complaint it is too trying for any man's mind or spirits to sit alone and I have been in the habit of doing so for thirteen and fourteen hours continuous. I have yet to learn what ailment mental or corporeal regimen such as this has ever been resorted to as a restorative – and who are my judges, jurors and executioners? My sisters it seems – this is too ridiculous.<sup>257</sup>

He asked if he might try the vapour bath – 'A drowning man grasps at a straw'.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> GD113/5/479/95, 23 September 1821.

<sup>253</sup> GD113/5/480/99, 28 October 1821.

<sup>254</sup> GD113/5/30D/11, Elizabeth Burnet to Gilbert Innes, 10 December 1822.

<sup>255</sup> GD113/5/505/51/5, Gilbert Innes to George Burnet, September 1823.

<sup>256</sup> GD113/5/505/5150, 10 October 1823.

<sup>257</sup> GD113/5/488/20, George Burnet to Gilbert Innes, 11 July 1824.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

By November George had returned to St Andrew Square where he indulged in some parodying of contemporary poetry. He sent his father a few additional pages of *Balaam* for him to correct if he detected downright 'tritism'. With tongue in cheek, he indicated his intention that his poem consisting of 159 cantos should shortly be published and asked if he could put his father down for 14 copies. This is the second last document relating to George Burnet in the Innes Archive although there are entries in Gilbert Innes' accounts for 1824-5 for coach hires and clothing items for George and for a dinner for Mr Burnet on 8 November 1825.

George Burnet died on 1 July 1830 aged 44 years. At three o'clock that afternoon Gilbert Innes wrote to his sister.

Our George has been for some time very unwell, yesterday forenoon he grew very ill indeed, but about 2 o'clock he was much better and Anne and Betsy thought him in no danger, he spoke to them quite easily and to me also when I saw him in the Evening, but in the night he was again taken ill and I am sorry to say he is now no more – he has had violent Bilious complaints which ended in flux and dessintery, Anne Betsey and Mrs Wood are in the greatest distress we have sent for the Menzies.

George's death announcement appeared in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and in the *Perthshire Courier*.<sup>259</sup> Sir Walter Scott wrote in his journal:

At two o'clock went to bury poor George Burnet in as direct a shower of rain as I ever saw...If Blessed is the corps the rain rains on poor George Burnet's obsequies have been as wet as he himself used to be a nights though with less generous liquor.<sup>260</sup>

The second of the Burnet sisters to marry was Marion but the path to matrimony proved hard and painful for her. Her future husband Dr George Wood, a widower by 1815, had known the family for many years. His father Alexander Wood – 'lang Sandy' Wood, so called because of his height – befriended Robert Burns and features among John Kay's portraits. He had been George Innes' doctor.



John Kay, *Original Portraits*, Dr Alexander Wood.

<sup>259</sup> *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 28 (Edinburgh 1830), p. 573; *Perthshire Courier*, 15 July 1830.

<sup>260</sup> W.E.K. Anderson ed., *Journal of Sir Walter Scott* (Canongate Classics, 1998), p. 680.

Born in 1761, George Wood, Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, King's Apothecary in Scotland and Physician to the Western Eye Dispensary, resided at 15 Heriot Row.<sup>261</sup> On 7 March 1815, Marion who now lived at 24 St Andrew Square wrote to her father that, from his indifference and the seeming lack of interest:

you feel in a matter which to me is of the greatest importance added to the desire you have to put it off drove me last night to speak in a more candid manner than otherwise I would have done. If I have offended you I am sorry for it...but I must again repeat that I can see no good in delaying to conclude this affair. I have heard you more than once speak very highly of Mr Wood and profess that to himself you have no objections and I whom alone it concerns have none to share his fortunes.<sup>262</sup>

There followed a protracted correspondence between Gilbert Innes and George Wood over the terms of a potential marriage settlement complicated by the existence of Wood's son. Only Dr Wood's letters are in the Innes Archive but according to him, there appears to have been three main issues – 'the preference of my son by the first marriage to a certain portion of the funds I may be possessed of, the consideration of the comfort of the lady during my life and the certainty of her moderate independence after my death'.<sup>263</sup>

Marion felt that her father had treated Mr Wood more unkindly than she had expected:

I entreat you my dear Sir to remember that it is a person who loves you sincerely and to whom you have ever been very kind you are about to render miserable and unhappy for life...In the event of my death of your own accord you have offered Mr Wood £300 a year can it be wrong then if that som should be secured to me were he to die first? At present I get from you yearly one way or another very nearly £100 and I cost you a great deal more perhaps were you to bestow the som upon me all parties might be satisfied...I trust I am not greedy but I own in marrying I should like to contribute something towards the additional expense I must occasion.<sup>264</sup>

On 7 April she attempted to erase the impression:

you seemed erroneously to take up that Mr Wood had endeavoured to prejudice me against your last proposal....I must suppose my conceptions of your intentions were wrong. I alone am to blame, again I assure you upon my sacred word Mr Wood said nothing more on the subject than what I have faithfully repeated...he is an honourable and good man who has shown the greatest affection and kindness to me all along.<sup>265</sup>

She begged to be allowed to remain in her room for a few days in order to regain her composure. Nothing could be settled and on 17 April George Wood reluctantly wrote to Innes to withdraw his 'pretensions to the hand of your daughter'.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> *Transactions of the Medico-Chirurgical Society of Edinburgh*, vol. I (Edinburgh, 1824), p. xxII.

<sup>262</sup> GD113/469/84.

<sup>263</sup> GD113/469/109, George Wood to Gilbert Innes, 23 March 1815.

<sup>264</sup> 24 March 1815.

<sup>265</sup> GD113/470/70.

<sup>266</sup> GD113/5/469/52,

Marion remained deeply upset and when her father had to visit London on business she wrote to him to say she had been ill and she asked forgiveness for the state of her writing - 'my nerves I fear are never to be steady more'.<sup>267</sup> She refused to give up, however, and wrote on 15 June to confess that her attempts at resignation and composure had failed, her health had suffered and she was depressed.

all this distress has been occasioned by a misunderstanding between you and Mr Wood for I am quite aware my dear Sir in the end you would have done everything for me – I am also convinced Mr Wood did all in his power for he has ever been to me a kind and most affectionate friend...would to God I had someone to speak to you in my favour but that cannot be...yet I cannot own the risk of being made miserable and useless for the rest of my life without one more effort to prevent it – I had set my whole heart and mind on the alliance. I liked very much the man – I should have continued near you, my dear Sir and my family – able to see you every day ...to be disappointed in all these cherished hopes and expectations – oh my fate is very hard to bear – Mr Wood has been here two or three times – once at dinner – he grieves much you should have treated him with so much suspicion and unkindness – it is unlike you to do so to anybody and your conduct in this affair has pained and afflicted me excessively – he has been very ill once dangerously....I did not tell him I meant to write to you – neither did I mention it to anybody for I have already given much uneasiness to my friends.<sup>268</sup>

Her sister Anne took it upon herself to write to Gilbert to tell him of Marion's state of health and she urged him to 'interfere a little more regarding this business of hers and Mr Woods... perhaps you might be able to make matters take another turn'.<sup>269</sup> On 23 June Marion made an emotional response to her father's letter which he had written return of post in answer to hers of 21 June.

If you suppose I am either unconscious or ungrateful for the various proofs of affection you have shewn me since the day of my birth you are mistaken- very much mistaken – could you this moment see me the tears which in spite of reason are streaming down my face- would convince you I speak the truth – no no – my intimacy with Mr Wood has not nor can diminish or change the affection I feel for you neither can it deaden the gratitude I owe you and I never wished to be rendered independent of you – at the same time – as I have told you before – it appears to me a hardship your refusing in the event of us making a proper marriage to make some annual allowance upon us...to see you and Mr W good friends and agreeing in these money matters – for in nothing else would you differ – would give me more heartfelt happiness than I can find words to describe.<sup>270</sup>

An agreement seems to have been reached although the marriage did not take place until the following year when the *Perthshire Courier* of 15 February 1816 announced – 'St Andrew Square 12 February at the house of Gilbert Innes Esq Stow George Wood Esq the Royal College of Surgeons to Miss Marion Burnet'.<sup>271</sup> Miss Innes

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<sup>267</sup> GD113/5/470/70 and 90, 28 May, 3 June 1815.

<sup>268</sup> GD113/5/470/81.

<sup>269</sup> GD113/5/470/87, 20 June 1815.

<sup>270</sup> GD113/5/470/82.

<sup>271</sup> *Perthshire Courier*, 15 February 1816. The announcement also appeared in the *Scots Magazine*, February 1816, p.159.

noted the expense of 2s 6d in her accounts for chair hire to and from St Andrew Square. The Woods quickly invited her to Heriot Row but being unwell she declined, sending her apology for 'not obeying your joint summons for next Tuesday' but 'when your bustle is over' she hoped to see them both 'in a friendly way' at No. 6 Picardy Place.<sup>272</sup> On the back of another invitation which she could not accept due to 'a visit (though without card of invitation) from the Rheumatism' she scribbled a ditty:

The story which Boswel has told  
Requires little Art to adorn it  
'twas how Goeorge found his home grown cold  
And fearing his friends might scorn it  
He with ev'ry dispatch  
Has made up a match  
And given all his wood to Burnet.<sup>273</sup>

Euphemia Burnet by her own admission, hated letter writing – 'one of the miseries of human life'.<sup>274</sup> She told her father she would 'rather trip the light fantastic toe with a mad bull as my partner'.<sup>275</sup> Nevertheless her lively and entertaining letters are full of humour. Having arrived at Wellshot, Glasgow in August 1814, '(unfortunately for my letter writing) without the smallest accident or hair breadth escape', what could she write about she wondered. She then gave an account of her being in Glasgow chapel twice to hear a Mr Saunders from London who preached three times in one day.

He told us 'Yea' that 'the Lord God Almighty holdeth the waters of the earth in the palms of his hands and the winds in his Fists'.<sup>276</sup>

She recommended that the religious members of her family should go to hear him. Phaem had no compunction in teasing her father. During his London visit in 1815 she wrote to him:

a Gentleman associating with Chancellors of the Exchequers and Lords of Admiralties will have acquired too much politeness to criticise Ladies letters though they may write quantity not quality and may not form their ABC as they were taught at writing school.<sup>277</sup>

There is no record in the Innes Archive of the courtship of Euphemia Burnet but on 26 April 1817, she married Major Archibald Menzies. George had a new shirt for the occasion at a cost of £1 4s 6d and Miss Innes paid four shillings for chair hire twice to St Andrew Square. Archibald Menzies of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Royal Highlanders had

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<sup>272</sup> GD113/5/410/31, undated.

<sup>273</sup> GD113/5/352/3, undated.

<sup>274</sup> GD113/5/470/44, Euphemia Burnet to Gilbert Innes, 4 July 1815.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> GD113/5/467/74, Phaem Burnet to Gilbert Innes, 16 August 1814.

<sup>277</sup> GD113/5/470/89, Phaem Burnet to Gilbert Innes, 5 June 1815.



risen from lieutenant in 1803 to Major in 1815 when he had been severely wounded at Quatre-Bras prior to the battle of Waterloo.<sup>278</sup> Phaem's first child, a daughter named Mary, was born on 19 February 1818 and Miss Innes attended her christening in June. Mrs Menzies lost none of her humour as she wrote from Farleyer to her father on 10 September 1818 – 'Although silent I am not yet dead and gone'.<sup>279</sup> She suspected her sisters' displeasure at her not writing 'but were they living in the retirement I am' they would not have much to communicate.<sup>280</sup> As the Major seemed happy in the Highlands she reckoned that they would not return to Edinburgh until the 26<sup>th</sup>. By December the Menzies were in Drogheda barracks as the Major resumed his army duties.

Anne Burnet remained unmarried. She dealt with much of the family business such as the drafts on her sisters' accounts, various of George's clothing bills repaid by Gilbert and matters concerning the Stow estate as in the paying of George's six buns and 12 cakes of shortbread sent to the country for New Year 1819. After Innes bought the estate of Drum in 1820 Anne was entered in Gilbert's accounts as paying £1 5s 6d for board wages to Ann Borthwick there on 26 September 1822; and various sums for servants' bread in 1823. When Euphemia was contemplating a visit to Edinburgh in 1823 she requested that Anne 'would be so good as to endeavour to procure us a moderate small lodging as near to St Andrew Square as possible'.<sup>281</sup>

On 25 May Phaem wrote:

My dearest Anne wishes to know in a 'distinct and understandable manner' when to take our lodgings! When did I ever write in any other way!!!<sup>282</sup>

A letter to Anne dated 7 June 1822 concerning a shipment of cows and three trunks from Ireland bore the address of St Andrew Square. As Lothian Hut was demolished in 1825 it is probable that Gilbert had given up the tenancy by this time. An account dated 31 December 1825 stipulates a cost of £22 10s for scarlet moreen furniture fabric for Miss Anne Burnet's bedroom.

Few of either Anne or Elizabeth Burnet's letters exist in the Innes Archive and information has to be gleaned from references in other correspondence. Betsy had much the same education as her sisters. In 1815 Marion told her father that 'Bess

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<sup>278</sup> John Percy Groves, *History of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Royal Highlanders – 'The Black Watch' now the first Battalion 'The Black Watch, (Royal Highlanders) 1729-1893*, (Edinburgh, 1893), p. 27.

<sup>279</sup> GD113/5/472/113.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> GD113/5/483/73, Mrs Menzies to Gilbert Innes, 7 May 1823.

<sup>282</sup> GD113/5/483/104.

begins to sing much better and to take pleasure in it – she has got Corri and practises a good deal’.<sup>283</sup> Betsy herself wrote to Gilbert in London that:

We were at Mrs Duncombe’s the other night and met the Corris there. Mrs Corri sung a great deal, I never having head her before was quite delighted with her, she must have been a very fine singer when she was in her glory, but her voice is evidently much gone now.<sup>284</sup>

She added a story to amuse him about a public show.

I suppose you have heard of the extraordinary Fish which was shewn here, many people came out considerably quicker than they went in and many were heard to say that they gave sixpence to get in but would give a shilling to get out again.<sup>285</sup>

Gilbert Innes was the patron of artist Thomas Campbell to whom he paid £8 8s for ‘modelling and casting bust Miss E Burnet’; and in September Gilbert gave Betsy blue opal agate earrings and a brooch.<sup>286</sup> In 1821 Elizabeth attracted the attention of a Dr W. Gourlay who wrote to Gilbert on 8 December to express his gratitude for the hospitality given him since his arrival in his native country. His frequent calls had resulted in ‘a warm attachment I have formed for your daughter Miss Betsey’.<sup>287</sup> He wished therefore to ascertain whether his continued attentions would be agreeable to both Innes and ‘the lady’. Nothing further came of this intended courtship.

In October 1822 Betsy visited her sister in Ireland and endured a stormy passage of 32 hours before landing at Belfast from where she wrote home – ‘I cannot tell you my dear sir how happy I am that you did not cross with me’.<sup>288</sup> From Limerick she thanked her father for his letters – ‘if you could only see the pleasure gratification and hearty laughs they afford us all I am sure you would not grudge the trouble of them’.<sup>289</sup> She wrote at the top of this letter that when Phaem’s bairns refused to obey her she only had to threaten not to take them to Drum and they instantly behaved. Elizabeth remained in Ireland for some time and Euphemia thought she liked their life and might perhaps encourage Anne to visit them. Phaem told Gilbert:

Betsy by no manner of means likes your joke upon my riding clothes, the very next day she squeezed herself in, in such a manner (even your squeeze into the scarlet belt to proclaim the Prince, King was nothing to it) I had my fears, aye my bowels yearned with compassion, to think how ill hers were used to shew me how far the clothes lapped over.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> GD113/5/470/82, Marion Burnet to Gilbert Innes, 15 June 1815.

<sup>284</sup> GD113/5/470/80, Betsy Burnet to Gilbert Innes, 13 June 1815.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> GD113/5/352/171, 16 August 1817; GD113/5/352/94, 27 September 1817.

<sup>287</sup> GD113/5/480/32.

<sup>288</sup> GD113/5/30D/9, Miss Elizabeth Burnet to Gilbert Innes, 24 October 1822.

<sup>289</sup> GD113/5/352/11, 10 December 1822.

<sup>290</sup> GD113/5/484/104, 25 May 1823.

Unlike her sister Anne, Elizabeth Burnet did marry but not until after her father's death in 1832. She and Anne had moved to 5 Heriot Row from where she wrote to Miss Innes to tell her that she was sending via her sister, the draft of her marriage contract for her valuable opinion.

On this most responsible of all Events in my Life I feel most solicitously for your sanction and approval for many reasons, but I shall now only trouble you by stating two – one – the very kind, great and disinterested Generosity which it pleased you to show to me and for which I shall cherish the truest gratitude and the latest Remembrance and the other that you are the much Respected sister of my ever to be lamented Father.<sup>291</sup>

In June 1833 Elizabeth Burnet wed John Dewar Esq. Advocate (1796-1856). She invited her nephew Gilbert Wallas and his sister Mary who were being educated in England, to be present but their mother told Jane Innes that Mary had determined 'that it was better they should not leave school nor go to the expense of such a journey at their time of life'.<sup>292</sup> She added that her nieces the Menzies being at the wedding 'would leave the bride little to regret'.<sup>293</sup> An astonished Janet Cummin wrote to Jane Innes – 'so Miss Betty Burnet is married, I did not think Mr Dewar had been a suitor at the time I met him at St Andrew Square'.<sup>294</sup>

Both Jane and Euphemia suffered miscarriages and the latter lost an infant child due to a liver abnormality. Gilbert Innes, however, enjoyed being a generous grandfather to the children who survived – Mary, Gilbert, Marion and Jane Wallas; Mary, Anne, Gilbert, Euphemia and Robert Menzies. He set up accounts for them and indulged them on their occasional visits to Edinburgh. When Jane Wallas thanked him for his gift of money to 'wee Mary' she hoped her daughter would take better care of it than she had done 'as I was very much too fond of gingerbread and barley sugar'.<sup>295</sup> Jane remarked on the coincidence of her and Phaem's having the two finest children in the world. Family letters relate the children's progress and recount their sayings and a fragment of baby Anne Menzies' hair still remains attached to Euphemia's letter of 8 November 1819.

Major and Mrs Menzies and family visited Edinburgh in the autumn of 1820 when Gilbert put Lothian Hut at their disposal and Jane ventured from Madeira with Mary and Gilbert in the following year. Robert Wallas, a regular correspondent with both Miss Innes and her brother, wrote humorously to Gilbert Innes on 30 September

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<sup>291</sup> GD113/5/106A/7, 4 April 1833.

<sup>292</sup> GD113/5/92/11, Jane Wallas to Miss Innes, 28 August 1833.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> GD113/5/80A/16, 14 June 1833.

<sup>295</sup> GD113/5/476/13, 7 March 1820.

1821 and expressed his fear that on Mrs Wallas' return he would 'have to make a serious complaint against you for spoiling me a good wife and perhaps a daughter also'.<sup>296</sup> He thought Gilbert very noble to have taken them to Drum and Pirnaiton 'whence there was no chance of escaping home at night....

and if you ruin them I must put them to right again as well as I can'.<sup>297</sup> On his family's return at the end of November, Wallas told him that 'Mary frequently talks about Grandpapa's box and barley sugar'.<sup>298</sup>

Three months later in her letter to her father, Euphemia Menzies asked him to:

Tell Uncle George his neice spelt and put together his letter herself and observed she heard Uncle George to call it Gaarden and asked what Taties were I declared my entire ignorance of so vulgar a word.<sup>299</sup>

The Menzies paid another visit to Edinburgh in 1823 when Robert Wallas was glad to hear that Mr Burnet had been able to be at Pirnaiton with Major Menzies. Wallas added that his son Gilbert talked a good deal about the pony Grandpapa was to give him but that he abhorred ABC. The birth of another daughter delayed the proposed visit to Scotland though in June 1824 young Gilbert still hoped that Grandpapa would get his pony ready and his sister 'Marion says "one for me too"'.<sup>300</sup> Jane expressed her wonder at the bilingual ability of her children.

Mary, Gilbert and Marion are sitting on the carpet with the Portugese woman attending...is it not a most enviable talent that children have of acquiring a language, how different with me uphill work indeed.<sup>301</sup>

She thought that Gilbert resembled his grandfather and 'Marion is a solid lump of fat'.<sup>302</sup> Jane and Robert Wallas remained in Madeira but Major Menzies retired on 25 December 1828 and the Menzies family took up residence at 17 Dean Terrace. Letters from Euphemia to Miss Innes and presents of foodstuffs to and from both households suggest their socialising. In a letter inclosing some drawings of Gibraltar which the Major thought 'very correct representations' but 'your eye will soon discover' some to be unfinished, Euphemia hoped that Miss Innes was 'not the

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<sup>296</sup> GD113/5/30H/15.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> GD113/5/481/132, 30 November 1821.

<sup>299</sup> GD113/5/481/19, 18 February 1822.

<sup>300</sup> GD113/5/488/10, Robert Wallas to Gilbert Innes, 13 June 1824.

<sup>301</sup> GD113/5/488/49, Jane Wallas to Gilbert Innes, 2 July 1824.

<sup>302</sup> GD113/5/490/99, Jane Wallas to Gilbert Innes, 15 February 1825.

worse of her long visit last night'.<sup>303</sup> Mrs Euphemia Menzies and her husband initiated a summons of damage against Robert Orr of Ralston on 12 November 1829. This related to an episode of anonymous letter-writing during Major Menzies' command of his regiment's depot companies near Paisley. The letters were addressed to Ensign John McDuff of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Regiment and to Miss Jessie C. Macdougall who then resided with the Orr family. Robert Orr accused Euphemia of having written the letters but she claimed the responsible person to have been a Miss A. M. Sause also staying with the Orrs. The judge, Lord Meadowbank remitted the case to the Jury Court which returned it to the Court of Session in June 1831. To date no further record has been discovered of Euphemia's claim of £500 in damages.

The 1830s saw the beginning of family bereavements commencing with the decease of George Burnet in July 1830. On 26 February 1832 soon after his 81<sup>st</sup> birthday, Gilbert Innes himself died, followed by his daughter Marion aged 52 on 16 July 1832. Her husband George Wood survived until 1833. According to his obituary in the *Caledonian Mercury* Gilbert Innes had been taken ill on 24 February and died two days later in his house in St Andrew Square. He left no will and this had major implications for the Burnet family. Their difficulties were resolved by Jane Innes who inherited his estate. Gilbert had purchased stock in the Royal Bank of Scotland and in the Honourable the East Indian Company on behalf of each of his daughters but had not left any settlement or deed of provision in their favour. In place of previous arrangements, on 9 May 1832 Jane Innes settled £20,000 in trust on Jane, Anne, Euphemia and Elizabeth. On the death of Gilbert Innes, Robert Wallas owed him business debts of £30, 640 7s 2d, the madeira wine trade having declined in the 1820s. Miss Innes wrote off the debt. She also seems to have dealt with financial problems relating to Dr Wood who had been ill for some time before Marion's death. Janet Cummin wrote from Glasgow on 26 September 1832 that she had 'never heard of anything like your unparaled generosity to George Wood it was certainly the greatest thing of the kind that was ever done'.<sup>304</sup> Wood's son, Alexander, later Lord Wood of the College of Justice, expressed his thanks to Miss Innes for relieving him 'of great difficulties and a load of anxiety' about his father's affairs.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> GD113/5/106C/4, undated.

<sup>304</sup> GD113/5/80A/14.

<sup>305</sup> GD113/5114C/6, 9 October 1833.

The date of Jane Wallas' arrival in Edinburgh is not recorded in the Innes Archive but she wrote to Miss Innes on 16 July 1832 from 25 Inverleith Row – 'It is with deep regret I inform you of the death of my beloved sister Mrs Wood this morning a few moments before 5 o'clock'.<sup>306</sup> Marion was interred in the south east side of the Wood family tomb in the Restalrig churchyard on 20 July 1832. Jane did not return to Madeira for several weeks during which time she received a letter from her husband 'the reading of which has overwhelmed me as I am now aware how heavy the debt is which my husband owes'.<sup>307</sup> She told Miss Innes that her 'very deeply lamented father' could not have foreseen the day 'which would wring from me a wish that he had served us with a far less liberal hand'.<sup>308</sup> Following his wife's return to Madeira, Robert Wallas himself visited Edinburgh via London and then steam vessel to Leith. He wrote to Miss Innes on 18 December to thank her for her:

munificence and magnanimity to Mrs Wallas, to our children and to myself not only in releasing me from a large sum standing at my debit but also making the handsome provision for my wife and our family by a gift not only more generously bestowed but superior in amount to what has ever been given by any individual.<sup>309</sup>

Both Anne and Elizabeth assisted in the assessment of moveable goods belonging to their father. Anne sent Miss Innes an inventory of the silver plate adding 'there are still a few more Articles of Plate in this House which I shall faithfully deliver to you before we leave'.<sup>310</sup> Elizabeth's list of Articles of the late Mr Innes in her charge for some years included cameos, miniatures, a bronze medallion of George IV as Regent in 1814 and a pebble brooch. Anne in 1834 made a journey to Italy regarding money which stood in the name of George Burnet as his affairs appear to have been wound up at this time. Miss Innes had applied to the Barons of the Scottish Exchequer in 1832 for a gift of the Funds and effects of the deceased George Burnet 'fallen to the Crown by reason of bastardy'.<sup>311</sup>

Following the death of his father, Alexander Wood had the task of dealing with matters which George had been unable to tackle. Alexander had kept Miss Innes informed of Wood's health, telling her that he seemed to be suffering little. On 29 September 1833 he wrote:

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<sup>306</sup> GD113/5/92/5.

<sup>307</sup> GD113/5/92/6, Jane Wallas to Miss Innes, 28 August 1832.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> GD113/5/92/8.

<sup>310</sup> GD113/5/106A/4, undated.

<sup>311</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, 19 April 1832.

I begged Dr Smith to request Miss Burnet to be the channel of the first instance communicating to you the death of my father thinking that might be the best way of doing so. But believing that you might wish to know some of the circumstances allow me to mention that his decline latterly has been very gradual – that to my infinite comfort he must from all appearances have suffered comparatively little for some days and at the close nothing could possibly be more peaceful and tranquil.<sup>312</sup>

Alexander Wood subsequently sent her the Bible 'given to Mrs Wood by her Father and much valued as having belonged to his elder sister long since deceased'.<sup>313</sup> He also discovered in his father's repositories two parcels, one marked 'jewels Mr Mrs Wood' and the other 'Trinkets worn in ordinary by Mrs Wood'.<sup>314</sup> One of the parcels contained a note dictated by George Wood but signed by him, directing a diamond star and a pair of diamond hoop earrings to be given to Miss Wallas as desired by Mrs Wood. Before, however, inviting Marion's sisters to choose some items as memorials of her, Alexander sent them to Jane Innes to select what she would like as a remembrance and as 'there may be among them, family jewels for which, on that account you might naturally have a value'.<sup>315</sup>

Robert Wallas wrote from Madeira to Miss Innes on 12 December 1833, saying that they had received the package of jewellery from Alexander Wood and the information that his father had:

some months after the death of his lamented wife written on a scrap of paper his recollection of a wish he had heard her express that her name child our second daughter should get a diamond ornament she had as also a French watch. Mrs Wood's harp he bequeaths to my wife and to our dear daughter Mary he leaves her Aunt's diamond earrings as a mark of his affection for her.<sup>316</sup>

In the same letter Wallas expressed gratitude for still having Miss Innes after they had lost her brother. On many occasions he thought:

of the goodness of Providence in preserving you after being pleased to take away our good and great Friend Mr Innes. It certainly was the greatest blessing that could have happened to his family that You remained to their Benefactor, had it been otherwise, although the best and wisest of Fathers, from his procrastination they would have been in a most friendless and miserable situation, a situation severe indeed to bear and which they never could have contemplated, as Mr Innes unceasing kindness during his life had naturally led them to believe that his ever to be lamented death could not have brought such affliction upon them.<sup>317</sup>

Jane Wallas kept in contact with Jane Innes giving her accounts of the children and their educational sojourns in England – 'in face Marion often reminds me of your

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<sup>312</sup> GD113/5/108A/ 101, Alexander Wood to Miss Innes.

<sup>313</sup> GD113/5/108A/100.

<sup>314</sup> GD113/114C/6, A. Wood to Miss Innes, 9 October 1833.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> GD113/5/92/12.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

worthy sister'.<sup>318</sup> Son Gilbert had expressed a wish to follow law as a profession which pleased his father. On 25 May 1839 Mrs Wallas wrote of the engagement of her daughter Mary to Mr William Hinton son of an eminent London merchant and she kept Miss Innes abreast of the marriage arrangements. Jane Wallas' last letter in the Innes Archive came from London in September 1839 and gave details of the marriage settlement and the wedding date of 3 October after which she intended visiting Edinburgh.

There seems to have been regular contact between the Menzies family in Dean Terrace and Miss Innes with an interchange of food gifts, recipes and ephemera. One present appears to have been 'handed on'. Mary Stuart Menzies wrote to Miss Innes on 10 April 1833 on behalf of herself and her brothers and sisters to offer:

our best thanks for the pretty present you were so kind as to send us yesterday. – Today the whole five fishes are quite lively and happy looking<sup>319</sup>

A few weeks earlier a Glasgow manufacturer named Gilbert Innes in whom Miss Innes took an interest, had sent her a few gold fishes:

They are originally natives of China. I got three in September 1831 to put in one of our warm water ponds. We are under the necessity of cooling our warm water, in water courses and ponds to save expense of water for the supply of our steam engines. In these ponds I have bred from the three some hundreds and they are considered a great curiosity.<sup>320</sup>

In an undated letter written from 74 Great King Street, Mary Menzies regretted that she would be unable to see Miss Innes before she went away due to her (Mary's) illness but:

I was much obliged by the kind wishes you expressed to Mama for my happiness and also return you my best Thanks for the beautiful brooch you were so kind as send me by her and which I shall ever keep for the sake of the donor.<sup>321</sup>

On 3 April 1839 Mary Stuart Menzies married George Duncan Robertson, late of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Royal Highlanders and chief of the clan Donnochie. They had no children and he died on the Isle of Wight in 1864 at the age of 47.

Notwithstanding her frequent complaints over the years of not being well, Jane Innes survived to see her 91<sup>st</sup> birthday on 13 August before dying in her house in Picardy Place on 2 December 1839. The *Scotsman* described her as an 'opulent lady' having inherited from her brother a fortune of not less than one million

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<sup>318</sup> GD113/5/92/12/13.

<sup>319</sup> GD113/5/106C/7.

<sup>320</sup> GD113/5/106D/1, 6 March 1833.

<sup>321</sup> GD123/5/106C/8.



sterling.<sup>322</sup> She had, however, made scarcely any change in her habits and way of life and 'continued to associate with the humblest of her friends on the same easy terms as before'; and also enlarged the numerous scale of her charities.<sup>323</sup> The *Scotsman* report was subsequently widely repeated in newspapers ranging from the *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette* to the *Inverness Courier*. The *Birmingham Journal* of 28 December alleged that Miss Innes had on a dark evening, gone upstairs without a candle, slipped down and broken a leg which ultimately caused her death. The newspaper also put her age as nearly 80 and stated that she had left £2,000,000 to be divided among all her relations who could be found. Jane Innes, like her brother, died without making a will and the investigations and claims relating to the estate discovered that Gilbert Innes had fathered 67 illegitimate children. Ultimately the Innes estate passed to Jane's nephew William Mitchell, cashier of The Royal Bank of Scotland from 1816-25. He changed his name to William Mitchell-Innes.

At the time of Miss Innes' death, Jane, Anne, Euphemia and Elizabeth remained the surviving members of the Burnet family of Euphan Burnet and Gilbert Innes. Anne appears in the *Scottish Post Office Directory* for 1834-5 as living at 5 Heriot Row but thereafter is not listed. After her marriage Elizabeth's home became 24 Drummond Place until 1836, followed by 4 Gloucester Place 1836-1838 and then 52 Great King Street until her husband's death. After this she moved to 5 York Place then possibly to 140 Princes Street in 1858 where a Mrs J. Dewar is listed in the *Directory* until 1865. Elizabeth had three sons – John Forrest Dewar (3 May 1834-1877), Gilbert Innes Dewar (22 July 1835-26 September 1879) and James Dewar (26 September 1837-14 June 1917). James became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1878 and he lived at Drylaw House, Davidson's Mains.

Major Menzies is listed as residing at 74 Great King Street in the Post Office Directories for 1836-1841, at 3 Fettes Row from 1841-1844 and at 54 Great King Street in 1844-1845. However he later lived at Avondale Stirling where he died on 11 July 1854. Euphemia, 'relict of Major Archibald Menzies of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Royal Highlanders' died in Edinburgh on 8 December 1860.<sup>324</sup> Both of Euphemia's sons followed their father in their choice of profession. Gilbert Innes Menzies became an Ensign in the 42<sup>nd</sup> Royal Highlanders on 18 April 1842; being promoted to Lieutenant

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<sup>322</sup> *Scotsman*, 7 December 1839.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>324</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, 11 December 1860, *Stirling Observer*, 13 December 1860, *Army and Navy Gazette*, 13 December 1860, *Inverness Courier*, 15 December 1860.

in 1846. His brother Captain Robert Menzies of the 1<sup>st</sup> Madras Fusiliers died at Bangalore on 14 September 1860 at the age of 30.

Gilbert Innes Wallas did not follow a legal career as he had originally intended. Educated at Shrewsbury School then Trinity College Cambridge, he was ordained as a priest at Durham in 1848. After serving as a curate and then as a vicar, he became rector of Shobrooke in Devon in 1878. He married Frances Talbot Peacock in 1851, fathered nine children and died in Shobrooke in 1891. His three sisters all married, Mary being the first in 1839. Marion Wallas married John Odiame Luxford in Madeira on 29 June 1843. Formerly an officer in the Royal Dragoons, his family home was Higham Sussex. Marion and John had three children. Jane Wallas also married in Madeira at the British Consulate on 6 June 1849, her husband being James Wilson Rimington-Wilson of Broomhead Hall, Sheffield, a noted amateur chess-player. Wilson (1822-1877) and Jane had three children. The eldest child Harriet Mary was born on 18 May 1850 in Edinburgh. After a visit to Madeira the family took up residence in Broomhead Hall, a spacious mansion demolished in 1980.



*Broomhead Hall, < [www.picturesheffield.com](http://www.picturesheffield.com)>*