

Sophia Stewart of Shierglass to Duncan Robertson of Kindrochet 1

No. 1

From **SOPHIA STEWART** Shierglass 12 February 1811

To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Aldwick, Chichester

Postmarked: 'FE / W 16 A / 1811' and 'B / W FE 19 / 1811'. Price: illegible. Seal: obliterated. Addressed to: 'Capt D Robertson / 88th Regt Aldwick / near Chichester'. Annotations: 'Received at Aldwick 20th Fby / Answered 24th Feby 1811' in Duncan Robertson's hand.

Shierglass 12th? Feby 1811,

My Dear Friend, Favoured with your anxiously, not to say impatiently looked for letter, only by last post, I embraced with pleasure the earliest opportunity of acknowledging the heartfelt satisfaction I experienced from hearing from you and notwithstanding my long cherished scruples against ever entering into such a correspondence scruples I am now willing to suppose arising more from the conscious inferiority of my epistolary talents than from any reasonable objection that could be urged against the practice itself I feel that by persisting in my only half expressed resolution of not writing I should have deprived myself of perhaps the greatest happiness I can enjoy in your absence an absence which I certainly might have long ago learned to bear even with stoical patience. But I am no very apt scholar in the school of Stoicism, and am still sensible that my happiness depends in no small degree upon having your society. This I need not now conceal from you or from myself But not with more anxious care, did I conceal from others, then I endeavoured to conceal from myself, that I had allowed my affections to be irrevocably engaged long before an avowal of your sentiments authorised my forming such attachments; for this I evidently risked my own peace, and very justly suffered however mortifying to female vanity a few of the pains and penalties due to such "meanderings of the heart" However, all uneasiness on account of these important matters is now over I trust for ever and trusting in your assurances of regard I feel confident you never will undervalue a heart merely because it was freely given. A heart which, but for this one weakness a weakness which you are duty bound to be the last to condemn you will "I flatter myself" find not wholly unworthy the preference you have declared in its favour Now when I allow that I too look forward with real pleasure to the time when we shall no longer be separated till "Death do us part" I think My Dear Sir you will easily allow that your advice of not being diffident is not intirely *sic* without effect I know not by what impulse I have been led into these most unnecessary confessions unless indeed I have

been actuated by feelings of humanity towards such a miserable man as you no doubt intend I should suppose you, and as we are all more or less sensible of the power of kind commiseration and sympathy, mine I hope will have the

happiest effect I suspect I am in no small danger of being suspected of egotism if I proceed in this style, taking self for my subject But having no intention of quarrelling with you about trifles, if you are pleased to return the compliment in kind I will very easily forgive you, altho' I need not flatter you with the hope of anything better from my pen in future, the almost total seclusion in which we live affords little opportunity of having any thing new or interesting to communicate so you must forgive my not having one word of domestic intelligence to regale you with, in return for your by me most thankfully received account of your journey ?for idea of accom?panying you in your whole progress southward *paper torn* ?and I rejoice to find that you suffered no other ?ill effects from your journey than the excessive fatigue inseperable from such rapid traveling

I congratulate you with all my soul on the favourable opinion of the Medical gentleman who saw you I hope Dr Vitch? will be equally so and that a short time, with his assistance, not forgetting all due care and attention on your part, which I suppose is unnecessary for any one to urge, will restore your eyes to nearly their usual strength When I find you hinting a fear that your hand-writing will not be easily read, how am I to suppose you able to decypher my truly horrid scrawling Unaccustomed as I have ever been to letter writing except to my nearest connections, indeed chiefly to my sisters, I have been culpably negligent in this branch of female accomplishment, but as I suspect I am now rather aged to promise much amendments *sic* will without further apology beg your acceptance of the best wishes of My Dear

Friend

yours unalterably

Sophia Stewart

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No. 2 From **SOPHIA STEWART** Shierglass 11 March 1811 to **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Aldwick, near Chichester

Postmarked: 'MR / W 13 A / 1811' and '16 MA / 1811' partly unreadable Price: '8' Seal: black but obliterated Addressed to: 'Capt D Robertson / 88th Regt Aldwick / near Chichester' Annotations: 'Received at Aldwick the 17th March 1811 / Ansd 18th Do D.R.' in DRK's hand.

Shierglass 11th March 1811 If I were to write to you My Dear Friend as often as I think of you, your thrice welcome letter of the 24th Febr should not have remained so long unanswered, but a multiplicity of teasing engagements so occupied my time that I have been constantly obliged to defer writing contrary to my daily intentions and wishes Altho it is somewhat singular that I who was ever obliged to confess myself in letter writing laziest of the lazy should now dream of apologising for a silence of only ten days having however so far conquered my procrastinating habits, I expect enjoying the benefit of your example, and being under your tuition too to go on in a progressive State of improvement But suppose I must endeavour to do so in silence as I find making my complaints to you is only extorting praise to which I cannot lay the remotest claim not all the fine things you are pleased to say gave half the pleasure I derived from the very satisfactory account you give of Dr Vitch's favorable opinion of the state of your eyes you might indeed with much justice suppose that this intelligence would afford me the greatest pleasure I sincerely hope you will not have cause to doubt the accuracy of the Doctor's predictions but that a complete recovery will soon be your reward for the patience and cheerfulness with which you have so long indured *sic* a complaint equally distressing and tedious But My Dear friend I must entreat of you to beware of thinking yourself too soon well how many daily suffer by doing so Your present leave will I think soon be out, but I trust you will not then attempt taking charge of a recruiting party or any thing else till well assured by your friend and physician that it will not be attended with the smallest danger I am well aware that it may appear ridiculous in me to recommend any thing on a subject of which you are undoubtedly the best judge, but I must own myself turning quite a coward with regard to those in whose welfare I am much interested I saw Major and Mrs Alstons *sic* a few days ago, they are well and happy as usual Miss Stewart has left Urrard for a few months and gone to partake of the gaieties of Edinburgh once more Col. Stewart Fincastle was also here a night lately, he is in a state of widowhood just now his Lady having left him in order to superintend the education of her daughter, who she has accompa -anied to Perth, where they have taken lodgings, for what time I know not Miss Stewart Crossmount has likewise gone to Perth on an equally good errand namely to attend her sister Mrs Menzies who I understand has got another son, but this I believe is now an old story, as is Mrs Ferguson Donavours having presented her loving Lord with a daughter I made a number? of calls, amongst our neighbours, on the other side of the river a few days ago which will account for all this gossiping. My brother is back? quite in the old way, carrying on or planning? agricultural improvements, in one way or other? he has however been obliged to be more from home of late than usual, which leaves me much alone last time John was down the country I went to Derculich - My sister I am sorry to say has not been at all well for some time. Unless she is better I go over again in a few days We have just received a letter from my brother in India - he was quite well the 10th of Oct' poor fellow, he little knew that it pleased Heaven to put a period to the sufferings of Her to whom his letter is addressed the very day before that on which his letter is written Need I say that I will expect to hear from you soon. Yet I entreat that writing to me may never be allowed to interfere with the Mandates of the Doctor. I will rest assured of hearing from you when you can write with ease, I'm not so selfish as to wish for more Adieu My Dear Sir

Believe me ever your

Sophia Stewart

No. 3 From **SOPHIA STEWART** Shierglass 4 April 1811 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Aldwick, Chichester Postmarked: 'DUNKELD' and 'AP W 6 A 1811' Price: '4/5' Seal: obliterated Addressed to: 'Capt D Robertson 88th Regt Aldwick near Chichester' Annotations: 'Received 10th Apl Ansd 11th Do' in Duncan Robertson's hand.

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Shierglass 4th Apr 1811 I was favoured My Dear Friend, with your thrice welcome letter a few hours after my arrival from Derculich where I had been since the day after I last had the pleasure of addressing you I rejoice to find that the benediction<sup>sic</sup> of your goddess arrived so opportunely to relieve you from a situation so irksome, as that in which her long silence had placed you But as the unreasonableness of that anxiety is with so much candour avowed by yourself, I need not point out the folly of allowing our peace of mind to be so much at the mercy of circum-stances entirely out of the power of any of us to direct to any change of sentiment I feel confident you will never do me the injustice to attribute any apparent neglect, even tho it should ever happen and who can answer for delays and departures of post &c &c Indeed I have given too decided a proof of my preference to suppose it ever can be doubted by its object, so much in return for the wondrous change you describe in such lively colours this said attachment to have wrought in your mind But Ah! My friend instead of your Goddess permit me for a few moments to assume the more useful character of Monitress and begin with advising you to beware of flattering her who looks for nothing but reciprocal sincerity And is it possible you give me credit for vanity enough to believe my power over the heart of a gay young officer to be so great as to render him insensible to the fascinating society of the "fairest and most bewitching" of our sex, or make him behold a fine woman with the same indifference he would an elegant piece of Mechanism forbid it all ye powers of beauty and good taste No No, this is too much, I do not expect impossibilities But at the same time I candidly own that it gives me too sincere a pleasure to believe that it is not in the power of absence to weaken our mutual regard, not to give implicit credit to that part of your epistle I did myself the pleasure, last week, of paying my long intended visit to Grenich, spent two days very happily there, but could not prevail with any of your sisters to accompany me home the family were all in good health and spirits except Ann who still looks delicate She is really a sweet girl and will I sincerely hope soon be restored to her usual health My sister I find meets with the same sympathy from you, she does from most of her acquaintances, for which I would most cordially assist her in "puling thier ears"<sup>sic</sup> or in inflicting any other punishment due to thiers<sup>sic</sup> demerits, for such unfounded insinuations She has suffered severely with rhuematisms<sup>sic</sup>, which I believe there would be some difficulty in convincing her was an illness in any degree preferable to health She is considerably better within these few days You would probably observe James Stewart Crossmount's name in the list of the slightly ? paper torn wounded in this Brilliamt affair, of G?eneral<sup>paper torn</sup> Grahams I was happy to hear that the anxiety of paper torn his family was relieved by a letter from him a few days ago his wound which is in the arm is quite slight I attempted writing you Monday last but was interrupted by the very unlooked for arrival of the lively widows Robertson and McDonald from Rannoch I was glad to commit my unfinished epistle to the flames, and have never been able to resume my pen till to night Your "Day lights" are indeed infinitely<sup>sic</sup> better if you can read this "epistle lucubratory" with every good wish I am My Dear Sir ever your Sophia Stewart

No. 4 From **SOPHIA STEWART** Shierglass 27 April 1811 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Aldwick, near Chichester Postmarked: 'DUNKELD / ?355 / E', '2 MY 2 / 1811' and 'AP. / W 29 A / 1811' Price: '? 1/2' Seal: black obliterated Addressed to: 'Capt D Robertson / 88th Regt Aldwick / near Chichester' Annotations: 'Received 3rd May / Answd 5th Do' in Duncan Robertson's hand.

Shierglass 27th April 1811 Dear Friend Instead of another admonitory lecture which, in the true spirit of lordly Man, you express no objection to listen to, provided the topic be perfectly agreeable I now by way of variety give you great praise and still greater thanks for your last most welcome letter. The style delights me and its adoption, in preference to the forgive me altho I insist on it rather too impassioned language of your former epistle, is to me a most flattering proof of your attention to my wishes far, very far be it from me to suspect you of insincerity. Such a piece of injustice, would I assure you bring along with it, its own punishment but without the smallest reason for being taxed with affectation, I think I would have no difficulty in convincing you on peruzal of your letter that it contained more than one "single expression" which could be construed into no other thing than flattery this I really wished you to correct and am charmed to find how well I have succeeded. So you would advise me to have recourse to the unwearied curiosity and fertile imaginations of our friends the Miss Betties? to help you to a long gossip but I must be excused from again asking news from that quarter their gossiping is rather too personal to be easily relished, but indeed if you should happen to be in any doubts about your future plans of life your partner in it of course is fixed by them long ago so is now your time for leaving the Army, your inducements for so doing, and they

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have in the true spirit of friendship and good will chosen a farm for you, in which you are to spend the remainder of your life !!! Pray how do you like their plan you must at any rate feel grateful for the interest taken in your concerns and I make no doubt if it meets with your approbation you may be abundantly supplied with such useful information from time to time I do very well remember having heard of your predictions regarding one of the fair inhabitants of Drumchary, but at that time you know, we alledged the same fair one had inspired you with feelings, which never fails of giving a more than ordinary share of quicksightedness to those who are under its dominion but be that so or not I must hope for poor Clemy's sake you are not an unerring prophet, indeed if Janet Stewart's good fortune in this instance depends upon his good behaviour I blievesic the Lady is in no danger of being made miserable by such a companion he has left Drumchary about a month ago and left it I understand in disgrace. After giving too many proofs of incorrigibleness, he chose to decamp without leave aledging that he saw very well Garth was getting tired of him he afterwards went to Perth, and is now in his father's house altho rather incognito I blievesic, being concealed by one half of the family in one of the attics, while his father and more rigid Sister refuse to see him till he gives more unequivocal proofs of reformation than he has yet been enabled to do So much for the poor Prodigal, he is certainly an unfortunate creature, and perhaps not very judiciously treated, but for the honor of the young ladys paper torn happy to say they were the means of bringing their Brother into the house and still attend him 1 If the report current is true you will rejoice on your friend's account to hear any thing to their advantage, as I am credibly informed that Capt Duncan Campble is one of the most highly favored candidates for the heart and hand of the fair Ann of Blackhill I think it no small proof of his judgement, choosing Ann, from among the dashing inhabitants of Cluny House from whence your friend is not supposed to have escap -ed quite "heart whole" as you imagined some time ago I most sincerely rejoice in the good accounts **page 4** you are still enabled to give of the improved state of your eyes But I hope altho they do get on as you expect and that you are fit for any service in Britain in a short time, your services out of it will not soon be required. I must not yet congratulate you or myself on the probability of your being in Scotland this summer that I fancy must be very uncertain But whether sent there or elsewhere the assurance that you are well and happy must ever give heartfelt pleasure to

My Dear Friend

yours very sincerely

Sophia Stewart

#### NOTES

1 We do not yet know the identity of the principal actor in this story of the man who made himself unwelcome at Drumchary, of whom Robert Stewart of Garth got tired and who ends up hiding in the attics of his father's house in Perth. And there are many other details which remain puzzling; the Lady is presumably Clemy and Clemy is presumably Clementina Stewart, daughter of Robert Stewart of Garth.

No. 5 From **SOPHIA STEWART** Shierglass 14 May 1811 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Aldwick, Sussex Postmarked: 'DUNKELD', 'MY W 15 A 1811' and 'G 18 MY 18 1811' Price: illegible Seal: black obliterated Addressed to: 'Capt D Robertson 88th Regt Aldwick near Chichester' Annotations: 'Aldwick 20th May 1811', 'Received 20th May Answd 25th Do' in Duncan Robertson's handwriting.

Shierglass 14th May 1811 Many thanks My Dear friend for your thrice welcome letter with which I am only this instant favored. I am quite at a loss to imagine by what chance or mistake it has been so unusually long in finding its way to Shierglass not I am sure because it was less anxiously looked for than usual, for as you are certainly the best of all good correspondents, I never dread a disappointment when the wished for post day arrives and own I felt a something betwixt surprise and disapointmentsic when on Saturday No Letters was audibly announced I am now happy to find the delay did not originate with you indeed I never supposed it did but whatever was the cause I regret the effect for tho I lose not a moment in writing I fear owing to our post days my epistle will not leave Athole till the 16th and perhaps be May choisest?sic Blessings attend the friendly hand who under Providence has been the means of restoring to you the best of Blessings, and should you again be permitted to spend a few months amongst your native mountains, it would no doubt have great effect in strengthening your eyes The weather here has been uncommonly cold and wet, but is now delightful the country is beginning to look quite beautiful, and every body is busily employed at their rural occupations our Local Heros are hurrying on to be prepared for their appearance in Perth on the 10th? of

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June. Some of them I believe *sic* are not very enthusiastic in the cause and would have no objections to a good excuse for giving in their resignations You will probably have heard of your friend and Clan'sman Capt Robertson Allean *sic* being appoint -ed to the factorship of your Chief's estate, I think he has got a most enviable situation he is already quite over head and ears in business they say he is to have the farm of Carie and to go there immediately. I cant say how the Capt will fill a factors place but he will certainly be a great acquisition as a companion to Col. Robertson My friends at Derculich have still their Southerensic excursion in contemplation but from your present prospects it is not unlikely they may have the pleasure of meeting you in Edin' in place of London the post is waiting on Isla *sic* I need not say I write in a hurry your request that I should write immedi--ately is my only apology I hope I shall hear from you soon and Blievesic me  
My Dearest Friend ever yours Sophia Stewart

No. 6 From **SOPHIA STEWART** Benchill 5 June 1811 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Edinburgh  
Postmarked: 'JUN 6 A 1811' and 'PERTH JUN' part obliterated. Price: '6'. Seal: obliterated red. Addressed to: 'Capt D Robertson 88th Regt Edinburgh'. Annotations: 'Received the 9th June Answd 10th Do D.R'.  
Benchill 5th June 1811 Your ever welcome letters, my kind and attentive

friend, are now doubly acceptable in this my Solitude and will be quite a charity while I am obliged to remain here 1 Your last which I received from Shierglass a few days ago gave me you may be assured most heartfelt pleasure, notwithstanding the heavy charge you are pleased to bring against me, a charge to which I suspect I must in some degree plead guilty and own I allowed myself to feel the folly of undue anxiety however I must certainly endeavour to be more consistent in future not forgetingsic at the same time that self controulsic is not infrequently a lesson much more easily taught than practicedsic But I must in self defence also to prevent all erroneous conclusions upon the subject say that I possibly might have been much less impatient at that time had I not been in the daily dread of being obliged to leave home for an uncertain but probably a considerable length of time and certainly wished if possible to have some idea of your destination before I began my pilgrimage that I now rejoice to learn that you have got matters managed agreeably to your wishes I need scarcely mention as you will easily believe *sic* that whatever is conducive to your happiness cannot fail to promote mine but to have the pleasure of so soon welcoming you back to the Land of cakes was what I very little expected when we last parted I trust you will ere this ? be safely arrived in Edinr and that we shall by and by *sic* see you and recievesic from word and look the full conviction of your complete recovery

We had a visit some days ago from that wild creature Sandy Stewart 2 who I daresaysic you remember having seen at Shierglass on his way to Balnakilsic, where I suspect the poor fellow will meet with a very cold reception if his information could be depended upon I am afraid you are too late to procure many men from the Perthshire Malitiasic, as he mentioned that all the Volunteers from that Regt were made sure of in a very short time, but I hope you will be successful with some of the other Malitiassic if only to save the credit of your representations to your Major who perhaps will not otherwise easily forgive your giving him the slip I give you joy of the good news from Portugal, every one here seems quite elated 3 Such heroic atchievementssic will make us suppose? paper torn our Brave Soldiers quite invincible. But if paper torn so much talked of but surely dear bought victory had the happy effect of putting an end even to these "Glorious deeds of War" I would be much more inclined sincerely to rejoice at them A few days after I last wrote you I was obliged tho very reluctantly to leave my Brother alone and come here to attend Mrs Stewart for some weeks but I am not a little disappointedsic to find I shall be detained much longer than I expected, as Mrs S. is still on foot I had a letter from John yesterday, he says he had the pleasure of seeing your friends at Grenich who were all well a few days before I hope he will be in Perth next week with the Locals The good people at Derculich have quite changed their plans for the summer, and in place of going to Bath will content themselves with passing some weeks at St Andrews for the benefit of sea bathing, I believe *sic* they also go to Edinburgh for a short time I had promised to accompany my Sister in this trip while my Brother was in Perth but being kept here will I fear oblige me to give up all thought of it to in doing so I certainly sacrifice inclination to duty, but we idle members of Society are very often expected to be found so doing 4. As there is little chance of my leaving this place for some time I hope I will hear from you I ever am  
yours  
Sophia Stewart

My Dear friend  
Sincerely

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**NOTES**

**1** Benchill was the property tenanted by Sophia's brother Captain Charles Stewart. She seems to have been required to go there while her sister-in-law was delivered of a child and it is clear she was a very reluctant visitor who found herself compelled to stay much longer than she had anticipated. Sophia does not mention the arrival of the child or its name or sex. We may assume that the delivery of the child was safely accomplished or else she would surely have mentioned it. This may be important since David Stewart of Garth, when writing to Duncan Robertson in 1814, says that Charles Stewart, Shierglass, was then unmarried. **2** It is not impossible that Sandy Stewart was Alexander Stewart, illegitimate son of Robert Stewart of Garth, born in 1789 and later known to his relatives as 'Captain Sandy'. After service in the Connaught Rangers he emigrated to Canada where he died in 1858. **3** The good news probably refers to the defeat of Massena by Wellington at the Battle of Fuentes de Onoro on 3-5 May 1811. **4** As the following letter, dated 3 July, shows, she did in fact join her sister Jean and her brother-in-law Alexander Stewart of Derculich on their holiday at St Andrews.

No. **7** From **SOPHIA STEWART** St Andrews **3 July 1811** To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Edinburgh  
Postmarked: 'JY B 4 A 1811'. Price: '7'. Seal: obliterated black. Addressed to: 'Capt D Robertson 88th Regt Edinburgh'. Annotations: 'J.P. try No 1 James Square' & 'HB'. 'Received 9th July 1811 Answd same day' in Duncan Robertson's handwriting. St Andrews 3d July 1811 address me at Miss Jarvis Market Street St Andrews My Dearest Friend You will I make no doubt be somewhat surprised to find me addressing you from this place knowing as you did my "firm resolve" of returning home with my Brother but I daresay you also know that the firm resolutions of Ladyssic are sometimes as the "morning cloud" that passeth quickly away such in this instance was mine indeed my sister was so anxious that I should join her here tho only for two or three weeks that I was prevailed with to accompany her lord on his return to this ancient seat of learning where we arrived on Wednesday last and found Jean in good health and spirits could I have obeyed the dictates of my heart I would, notwithstanding my threats of being lazy, have done myself the pleasure of writing you the day after my arrival but as I cannot consider my time just now as entirely at my own disposal have been obliged day after day to forego a pleasure which ever occupied the first place in my thoughts Yes My Dear Friend I may with sincerity say I think of you daily, oftener indeed than a reasonable creature ought who should certainly rather endeavour to be content with the persons and things around them than wishing for those beyond their reach The agreeable surprise of seeing you in Perth and the pleasure of seeing you so well, was scarcely over, when again obliged to part and left to my own cogitations I could not help regrettingsic your visit had not been delayed a few days longer I then deferedsic despatching my epistle to you till I should learn when ~~deleted~~ the day of inspection, when I hoped you wd be able to come over, and I then intended spending a few days in Perth, but I found I was literalysic a post too late - however I trust our next meeting and parting will be less abrupt I suppose I must forever give up all pretensionssic to taste when I say I do not very much admire our present place of abode my sister is enthusiastically fond of it, and Mr Stewart prefers it to any place out of Strathtay to literary geniuses St Andrews has certainly many attractions, the society is good and the Liberarysic excellent indeed from the great celebrity it once possessed, no one can behold the ruins of its once magnificent Buildings and the general air of decay that spreads its gloom over the whole place, with indifference This tribute paid I must lay aside all claims to be ranked amongst the admirers of St Andrews!! however the Baths are excellent we avail ourselves of them daily and expect to return to Athole with renov--ated health and spirits Mr and Mrs Stewart having gone out to ride this forenoon I promisedsic myself at least one leisure hour, but have been so teased with calls from people to whom I am almost a perfect stranger that I hardly know what I write nor can you I am sure read a scrawl written in haste with a pen and ink that would try the patience of Job As I shall probably remain here eight or ten days yet, will expect to hear from you if other engagements doessic not prevent your writing to her who is with every good wish my Dear Friend  
yours very sincerely  
Sophia Stewart

No. **8** From **SOPHIA STEWART** Cupar **10 July 1811** To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Edinburgh  
Postmarked: 'JY P 12 A 1811' and partly illegible 'PERTH JUL 11 438 '. Price: '6'. Seal: obliterated red.

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Addressed to: 'Capt D Robertson 88th Regt No 1 St James Square Edinburgh'. Annotations: 'Received the 12th Jul Answd 13th Do'.

Cupar 10th July 1811 My Dear Friend

I did myself the pleasure of writing you about a week ago, without exactly knowing your address and, from not hearing from you before I left St Andrews where contrary to my arrangements when I saw you I have been this fortnight past, I concluded my epistle had not reached the place of its destination As I know nothing more disagreeable than the idea of ones letters falling into any hands but those they are intended for, I entreat you will forthwith enquire after its fate, and accept this as an apology for so soon resuming my pen, which I trust your complaisance or if you will a tender motive will incline you to forgive I owe you many thanks for your favour of the 26th June which I only received Saturday last, from Shierglass you will easily believe *sic* that our short and most unlooked for interview in Perth was in some respects no less tantalizing to me than to yourself, indeed many circumstances concurred to make it much more so but it is unnecessary to dwell on the disagreeables of a circumstance which upon the whole afford--ed me sincere pleasure You ask me to give you my opinion on a subject which you must allow requires too much consideration to be done hastily. Most willingly My Dear Friend would I give you my sentiments without disguise and even without diffidence but to say how I will act, till you can assure me how your plans are to be arranged I mean whether you are to be stationed in Scotland or England is what I confess myself inadequate to determine upon certainly, after what I have already owned "by word and writ", it might appear too like an affectation I detest to wish unnecessarily to postpone an union with him who alone possesses the best affections of my heart, but as I never have even in idea fixed any period for changing my situation I suspect we must be content to remain for several months yet in Status quo My anxiety to return to my peaceful home and to the best and dearest of Brothers made me leave St Andrews even before my leave was expired if Mr and Mrs Stewart do not again change their minds they also leave it *paper torn* week, when they will probably see you tho I believe *sic* thiers *sic* stay in Edinr will be very short I have pen'd this truly elegant epistle at the Inn here 1 while the horses were resting. I understand they are now ready to proceed on thiers *sic* journey so must conclude As I hope to be at Shierglass almost as soon as this reaches you, will expect to hear from *you* very soon I believe *sic* I am rather unreasonable in my demands upon my correspondent but do you only write when perfectly agreeable and believe *sic* me ever your Sophia Stewart

From **SOPHIA STEWART** Shierglass **1 August 1811** To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Edinburgh

Postmarked: 'AU B 3 A 1811' and partly illegible 'DUNKELD E'. Price: '7'. Seal: red but obliterated.

Addressed to: 'Capt D Robertson No 1 St James's Square Edinburgh'. Annotations: 'Received the 3rd Augt Ansd 6th Augt' and an unfinished calculation '2 - 10 - 1 - 10'.

Shierglass 1st August 1811

Your last letter My Dear Friend relieved me from some anxiety that I could not shake off respecting the fate of my former scrawl for however trifling *sic* and uninteresting to others its contents must have been, the idea of its falling into any other hands than yours made me feel a little uneasy Your letters addressed to St Andrews likewise reached me in perfect safety, tho not quite in course As you still express a wish to hear frequently from me, I certainly had every inclination to gratify that wish, but however paradoxical it may appear to you who naturally suppose I will have abundance of idle time to dispose of I really had not time. Another powerful reason was that I did not well know what to write, for tho generally em--ployed there is that sameness in my life here that "every day is still but as the first" seeing very few people and in the literal sense of the word hearing nothing affords little opportunity of communicating any thing new. I must therefore revert to the old story, upon which I trust our sentiments will still perfectly coincide I am happy that you are satisfied with the reply I made to the point you entreated my opinion of Your motives for making such a request I never entertained any doubt about and the proof of your inclination to terminate what you are pleased to call this state of suspense is surely early enough offered Much earlier per--haps Sapience would say than the dictates of prudence would authorize Grateful as I must be for your attention to my feelings supposing, as you probably did the proposal you have made, to have been looked for at this time, I must assure you that so far from being looked for I had given my Brother the most positive assurances that he was not in the smallest danger of losing his housekeeper this has for a long time been a prohibited subject between John and I, but I believe *sic* our very accidental meeting put him in mind

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that "such things were" But altho I would beware of giving him the smallest reason to suppose that I do not place that confidence in him which his indulgence and unremitting attention merit from me, certainly after having proceeded so far as I have done, it might be deemed inconsistency on what my soul most abhors affectation to say that I now startle at the nearer prospect of trusting my future happiness even to you Indissoluble Union is a very serious *matter* even altho as you observe it has been *paper torn* considered of but I will drop this subject till we meet, as I understand you still intend coming to the Country Your visit will be a copious subject of conversation to some of the fair ladies whom you dignify with the appellation of Able hands, tho however they may in the present instance merit it some of them would not easily forgive being placed on the gossip list We had the pleasure of seeing your father and sisters at Blair Sunday last, being the Sacrament day all the Country were as usual assembled, my Brother had the felicity of escorting no fewer than nine young ladies to the Church door but unfortunately they all deserted him there I understand my sister and Mr Stewart have returned home but have not yet seen them Adieu write to me as often as you will, and to encourage you I shall write as seldom as if you did not *Blievesic* me My Dear Friend  
ever yours Sophia Stewart

No. 10 From **SOPHIA STEWART** Shierglass 12 October 1811 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Edinburgh 'Foolscap' 15 9 sheet of paper watermarked: 'J WHATMAN 1808'. Postmarked: with circular black 'DUNKELD 453 ?' and with circular red 'OC B 15 A 1811'. Price: '7'. Seal: red obliterated. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson 88th Regt No 4 North St Davids Street Edinr'. Annotations: 'Received the 15th Octr Ansd 17th - Do'.

Shierglass 12th Oct 1811 My Dear Sir Your much esteemed favor I had the pleasure of receiving Saturday but your expectation of an answer Wednesday or Thursday was positively too unreasonable to be complied with could you possibly flatter yourself that I notwithstanding my avowed dislike to the labours of the pen should immediately upon receipt acknowledge an epistle for which I was kept in anxious expectation a whole week A long week too, of solitude and bad weather circumstances which would if possible have rendered a letter from you doubly acceptable to me, whether with or without any additional information relative to you future movements - that indeed I could not reasonably expect - the time so short since we parted, but when any thing does occur I need not remind you that few things can be more interesting to me - for tho I do not perhaps so "ardently pray for a speedy termination to this state", as you say you do, your happiness is I candidly own, the most earnest wish of my heart - but this truth I have so frequently repeated that you must be conscious how painful it would be to me seriously to say any thing disagreeable to you, far less any thing grievous that I felt and expressed scruples, with regard to the period you allude to, is most certain but at that you cannot be surprised. Would they not be felt and perhaps more strongly expressed by almost any one so circumstanced - most assuredly they would - however to dismiss the subject I promise that neither scruples nor hesitations shall any more annoy you, but shall for the future be confined to my own breast where indeed they ought ever to have remained for with regard to you at least they have always been too evanescent to merit much attention We have not seen our friend Donald Stewart since the last time you called here, his unusual love of sitting still, that morning, was rather Mal Apropos for even the spirit of contradiction has seldom power to keep him so long in one place, but he thought it an excellent joke to keep his station in spite of my frowns which he saw and understood very well, I told him it was a pity his complaisance should be less even than his penetration, but he is such a good natured soul it is impossible to be angry at him I was much pleased with our visit to Foss, even though I did suffer a little from Mrs Stewarts raillery, but as she spares nobody I did'ntsic mind it much, tho certainly Mrs S M's remarks and queries have sometimes a freedom in them almost approaching to rudeness, 1 which puts one to the disagreeable necessity of sacrificing their veracity or telling what she has no right to know, indeed I think her manner altogether has rather too much of the "ease - which marks security to please" but notwithstanding all this I am very fond of Lady Foss, and have ever found her most attentive and friendly, we must not therefore quarrel altho for the present she is pleased to play off a few



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livelinesses at our expense (paper torn) I had a long letter from Maggy Dowally (paper torn) a few days ago, but even her lively ladyship (paper torn) has no news, a strong proof that there is none to be had in the Country, she says they are quite in dudgeon with you at Kinnaird for not seeing them when in Athole, but I daresay you will have the pleasure of hearing that and a great deal more from herself very soon if you are fortunate enough to see her in Edinr on her way to Mr Sheppards We have the most dreadful weather here that has been seen for many years, it is indeed a "sad harvest" in Athole, and a very sad prospect for its poor inhabitants the rain has been incessant this fortnight, and the rivers in general so high that we can have little communication with the other side which may deprive you a few days longer of the dull epistle of your Sophia Stewart

## NOTES

1 The two women who subjected Sophia to inquisitive teasing were almost certainly Mrs Stewart of Foss and her daughter-in-law Mrs Stewart-Menzies. The former was Jane, daughter of Gilbert Stewart of Fincastle and his second wife Cecilia Stewart, and widow of John Stewart of Foss; her son was Joseph Stewart of Foss 1768-1835. The daughter-in-law was his wife, whom he married in 1800 and who died in 1813; she was Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of Alexander Menzies of Chesthill, in the light of which she and her children bore the surname Stewart-Menzies. It is characteristic of the close knit nature of kinship ties in Atholl that Alexander Robertson Irvine 1806-1867 married in 1833 as his first wife Margaret Stewart-Menzies died 1836, fifth daughter of Joseph Stewart of Foss and his wife Elizabeth Stewart-Menzies and that he married in 1844 as his second wife Sophia Stewart Robertson died 1856, only child of Duncan Robertson of Kindrochet and his wife Sophia Stewart, writer of this letter, youngest daughter of Donald Stewart of Shierglass died 1781 and his wife Sophia, daughter of John Stewart of Bonskeid.

2 'Maggy' is not yet identified; she is also referred to as being a lively correspondent on page 4 of Sophia's letter to Duncan Robertson dated 30 April 1812 QV. Dowally is on the east bank of the River Tay, about mid way between Ballinluig and Dunkeld. There is a Kinnaird House on the west bank of the River Tay, about two miles upstream from Dowally, and about one mile south of the junction of the Tay with the River Tummel. There is another Kinnaird House about two miles north-east of Pitlochry, near Moulin and Balnakeilly,

No. 11 From **SOPHIA STEWART** Shierglass 24 October 1811 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON**

Edinburgh Postmarked: '?DUNKELD' barely readable and 'NO. / B 6 A / 1811'. Price: '7'. Seal: obliterated.

Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson / 88th Regt / No 4 North St Davids Street / Edinburgh'. Annotations: 'Received the 6th Novr 1811 / Ansd 9th Do / D.R.' in Duncan Robertson's handwriting.

Shierglass 24th Oct 1811 Need I say My Dear Friend that your agreeable letter afforded me the greatest satisfaction Nor had I to complain like you that the Garysic or any other cause withheld that happiness from me a moment longer than could be wished Your opinion and my own, believe me, perfectly coincide with regard to unreserved confidence in a litterarysic conversation, indeed, without the most open and sincere inter- = change of sentiments and opinions, I would feel as little pleasure in the letters as in the society of my friends - to know that those we are attached to has not a thought or wish that would not be communicated to us with candour is in my opinion the very soul of friendship, and without a conviction of this being the case I certainly think that a mutual attachment cannot long subsist Now that you see of what vast importance I consider mutual confidence, you will I hope be in little danger of seriously entertaining any suspicions of my neglect of it, on any subject that materially concerns our present or future happiness Have you yet received an answer to your application for a removal from your present station? - by the bye such an application is I think no small proof of your sober mindedness to leave the gay scenes of Edinr at this season of the year for the more retired situation of so small a town as Banff would I suspect by many be considered, too great a sacrifice to be made even for the good of His Majestys Service, however I hope if you do go you will be successful there, and make no doubt but that the pleasure you will enjoy in the society of your friend Genl Duff 1 will amply compensate for the loss of gayer amusements but Banff I am told is a delightful summer residence. Novr 2d I was interrupted a week ago when writing you by the arrival of our friends from Derculich who remained several days with us, and I have never since been able to resume my pen I trust My Dear Friend

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will yet allow that I have written soon tho not so soon as I wished or intended The day my Sister left us I was obliged to go to Foss, where my Brother and I were engaged to join a Hallow'een party John was too lazy or as he says too much engaged with a most deplorable harvest, not yet finished, to leave home, and indeed all the Beaux expected to this long invited party chose to be otherwise engaged, as none of them made their appearance except Colin Menzies and Capt Robertson however we contrived to spend the evening very agreeably - indeed if kindness and attention could make people happy, we had every reason to be so at Foss The Fincastle Misses and I staid next day and am only this moment arrived at home I had the pleasure of being a night at Grenich for which Lady Foss says I am turned perfectly (paper torn) impudent and barefaced, I believe she (paper torn) in the night knowing as I do that every trifling (paper torn) circumstance will again be laid hold of as "confirmation strong" of a report, the truth of which has been much debated betwixt some of our too busy neighbours since you left the Country, but my anxiety to get your sister Betsy home with me induced me not to sacrifice too much to Mere punctilio, I am now most happy, as Betsy was good enough to come with me and I hope will be prevailed with to stay for some time I need not say your Sister sends you her love, but I may with truth say she could not with greater sincerity than does, My Dear Friend your Sophia Stewart

#### NOTES

1 'General Duff' was Alexander Duff, described in *Burke's Peerage & Baronetage* see FIFE, D as "a general in the army, col.37th foot, G.C.H., of Delgaty Castle, co.Aberdeen, lieut. and sheriff-principal of Elginshire"; he was born about 1778 and died in 1851. His wife was Anne, youngest daughter of James Stein of Kilbogie; they married in 1812 and had two sons and two daughters. General Sir Alexander Duff, as he became, was the second son of Alexander, 3rd Earl Fife and only brother of James, 4th Earl Fife, who died without issue in 1857. The general's elder son James, born 1814, then succeeded his uncle as 5th Earl and died in 1879 when he was succeeded as 6th Earl by his only son, Alexander William George, born in 1849; in 1889 he was created Duke of Fife two days after marrying H.R.H.Princess Louise Victoria Alexandra Dagmar, eldest daughter of the then Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII.

No. 12 From **SOPHIA STEWART** Shierglass 14 November 1811 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Edinburgh Postmarked: 'NO / B 16 A / 1811'. Price: '7'. Seal: obliterated. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson / 88th Regt / No 4 North St Davids Street / Edinburgh'. Annotations: 'Received 16th Novr 1811 / Answrd 18th Do' in DR's handwriting.

Shierglass 14th Novr 1811 I am very Sensible My Dear Friend of the repeated favours of your kind letters, and will ever most chearfullysic embrace an early opportunity of acknowledging the heartfelt pleasure they afford me &c &c &c &c &c The remainder of the first page of this letter, and most of the second page, consist of a tedious and characteristic self-justifying complaint about letter-writing which is not worth transcribing. She then changes her pen and her tone and continues near the bottom of page 2 as follows

I hope you spent a pleasant Halloween with the Mayo family; I am told they are very agreeable and were I in any danger of suffering from the "Green eyed Monster" I am not sure that the reason you give for my not being "alarmed" would be a very satisfactory one, on the contrary, from what I hear of Mr Keays Maiden Sisters, your having seen them long ago, and often, would be very much in their favour, they are not old - I am told they are very amiable, and though no beauties, I must in justice to your sincerity believe sic that that would not much influence your choice however I have a twofold reason for wishing you not to make yourself too agree=able in that quarter, having a positive plat 1 on one of these young ladies for a sister-in-law though you must know I never saw either of them and whenever I can gain influence enough over my obstinate brother to make him spend a Winter in Edinr I will certainly endeavour to turn Match Maker and persuade him to Marry and be happy with one of the fair ladies in question I would ask you to forward my plan by speaking a good word for him now, but I suspect you paper torn would be rather a dangerous deputy in such an ?affair paper torn You may suppose from this I have lost all hope of succeeding with Miss Stewart Urrard by the bye, we ought to have been there Monday last, the 11th of Novr, being the anniversary of their happy day, the Major still delights to honor it by collecting as many of his friends as he can, but unfortunately the day was unfavourable, and in place of the expected Gala were obliged to content themselves with apologies from Balnakilysic, Derculich &c

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&c &c Betsy and I were as lazy as the rest, and considered more inexcusable, being somewhat nearer. Mr Stewart Strathgroy and my Brother were the only two that attended, and two very sponsable witnesses they are, of the continued felicity of the Major and his amiable lady I am very glad you called for = on Mrs Adam Stewart, poor Lady, she has seen better days and sets a higher illegible word on any attention paid her, and her daughter, than many who are much less deserving of it Will you take the trouble of letting me know their address as I had a letter from Margaret some time ago, which I am anxious to answer, but I do not know even what street they live in has Margaret McLaren come in to town yet? She is another most amiable sensible girl and one of my greatest favoritessic but I can send no message or commission by you to any Lady, this saves? you some trouble at all events What with the hardness? of my pen and ink and the coldness of my fingers I foresee you will not be able to decypher one half of this epistle Betsy is quite well she does not surely suspect that I write you, whatever else she may guess, but she has so often heard me reprobate the custom of Misses corresponding with their swains that I should feel a little ashamed were my own practice known to differ so much from my favoritesic theory It is you that must answer for at least one half of the inconsistencies of My Dear Friend your Sophie Stewart

**NOTES 1** 'Plat' is an obsolete word for 'scheme' or 'plan'.

No. 13 From **SOPHIA STEWART** Shierglass 5 December 1811 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Edinburgh Postmarked: in red 'DE / B 7 A / 1811' and only partly legible in black 'DUNKELD E'. Price: '7'. Seal: obliterated. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson / 88th Regt / No 4 North St David's Street / Edinburgh'. Annotations: 'Received the 7th Decr / Ansd the 9th Do' in DR's hand.

Shierglass 5th Decr 1811 I recieved with much pleasure My Dearest Friends grateful acknowledgements for my prompt reply to his former letter. And am perfectly willing to believe in the full extent of the effects of my own complaisance - Yet considering our general love of variety, I expect at least equally grateful acknowledgments for my present delay, and did I not even hold ingratitude to be a much greater crime than dulness, I might possibly for want of any thing worth communicating indulge my old procrastinating humour longer - the misfortune is too, when I dont write, I dont hear from you which being an evil not to be born under existing circumstances - I am obliged of two evils to choose the least tho neither "quieters" on any thing else will ever make the pen my chosen amusement I often wish I was in possession of the fabled cap of Fortunatessic when in place of addressing you at this distance I could so easily, now and then take a peep in at St Davids Street, see how you are coming on, hear all the occurrences of the day, and in return make you acquainted with all the nothings that occupy the attention of the good people of Athole who now that they have finished a most deplorable harvest, endeavour to comfort themselves by enjoying the society of each other when the weather will permit, which indeed is not often We were favoured a few days ago with a visit from Miss Betty Orchil, who was as usual most particular in her enquiries for you She was kind enough to introduce to us a very agreeable young lady, a Miss Sweedland, a connection of Mrs McDuffs of whom you may perhaps have heard Miss S. is very lively and very accomplished but the airs and graces of a high bred Londoner were so intirelysic novel to us natives that they have afforded ample subject of conversation ever since, especially to Betsy, whose good humour and lively remarks are a constant fund of entertainment I am sorry to say she talks of leaving me, but I shall part with her most unwillingly What do you think of Trinafour leaving the Country, without once looking in upon us? Was he not very unkind indeed? Betsy I alledgesic is quite inconsolable and I you may suppose not a little mortified at such a falling off I have not seen our friends at Derculich this long time, they are both well, but will not I fear be prevailed upon to cross the Boat of Tummel again this winter they made a narrow escape in going home from here, some time ago, by the temporary Bridge across the Mill lead at Logiratesic giving way under their Gig providentially niethersic ?Mr paper damaged or Mrs Stewart had got into it after crossing the Ferry, and the servant and horse were got out without material injury My Brother and I go over to spend the Christmas holidays at Derculich I wish you could join our party thiersic, tho the wish I must own is rather selfish I hope your next will inform me where your Winter quarters are likely to be tho since not sooner removed I think you may be thankful to remain in Edinr travelling northwards too would be very bad indeed with such stormy weather, but I always forget how widely different your ideas and mine are on these subjects Mrs Alstensic has got an increase to her family - another girl on Monday last Miss Stewart says she is to go to Edinr as soon as she can leave her Sister pray do you

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think she will add to the "Blaze of Beauty" with which the eyes of some people are feasted remember however if you are a sufferer by her charms either personal or mental it is not without timely notice given of her threatnings against you for you cannot have forgotten that she intended you the honors of setting her cap at you I hear not the smallest hint of any of our Batchelor Lairds being moved with any Spirit far less a matrimonial one, if there is any thing of that kind in agitation amongst them I can only say none of them mention it to me Betsy is perfectly well, I think her considerably stouter than last year I often hear her complain of not hearing from you, With every good wish I ever am My Dear friend Most sincerely your  
Sophia Stewart

No. 14 From **SOPHIA STEWART** Shierglass c15 January 1812 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Banff  
Postmarked: 'DUNKELD' partly illegible. Price: '9'. Seal: Black but obliterated. Addressed to: 'Capt D Robertson 88th Regt Banff'. Annotations: 'Received 21st Janry 1812 Ansd 22nd Do' in DR's hand.

Shierglass Janry 1812 My Dear friend If indeed by that title I ought still to address you, after such a silence to me no less painful than unaccount--able Aware as you are of my ignorance of your address ? Nay even of your arrival at Banff I am well assured you cannot attribute my present silence to neglect any more than my non-compliance with your request of writing to Perth merits such an accusation, however appearances may speak against me, I am conscious your disapointment at that time could not be greater than mine Your last Epistle did not reach me till it was entirely beyond my power to let you have an answer to it, had you only remained in Perth for the short time you intended You know our post days As I happened to be from home Wednesday we unfortunately did not send for our letters till Sunday morning, the consequence was that a letter from here could not be depatched till Tuesday and you ere then would be on your way to B where I must take it for granted you arrived in safety, and are pleased with your new quarters Much, and agreeably engaged no doubt when you could not spare one half hour to an absent friend. Indeed to be candid were it not the wish I feel to remove even the appearance of inattention to your request I certainly would not risk the chance of my letter remaining a second time for days at a post office un--claimed for want of a proper address!!! however I hope this little inconvenience will be easily accounted for in your next by letting me know that this happy season of the year was much more pleasantly spent than in letter writing and you will perhaps in your turn expect to hear how we passed the time in this part of the world not in gaitysic I own for between some entering on the stage of life and others making thiersic exit, visiting was in a great part precluded in Strathtay while we were there, but notwithstanding we contrived to spend *a paper torn* very happy week at Derculich the *paper torn* of Capt Adam disappointed us of the society of the Killchassiesic ladies and the Birth of a fair one at Ballechin gave the family there a better apology for staying at home Mr Stewart and my sister spent the Old holy days with us and only left us to day Betsy has also gone home, to my very great disapointment, I expected she would have passed the dreary winter with us I will be very seriously uneasy if you dont write soon - and that you My Dear Friend may see many many happy New Years is the earnest wish of your  
Sophia Stewart

No. 15 From **SOPHIA STEWART** Shierglass 30 January 1812 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Banff  
Postmark: none. Price: '9'. Seal: obliterated. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson 88th Regt Banff'. Annotations: 'Received the 2nd Feby / Answd the 5th Do' in DR's handwriting.

Sheerglassic 30th Jany 1811 Your thrice welcome letters My Dearest friend both of which I had the happiness of receiving only by Saterday's post relieved me from no inconsiderable degree of suspense. Yours of the 17th I ought to have had several days sooner and could it in any degree partake of the anxiety with which it was expected it certainly would have traveledsic more expeditiously this epistle being two for one a mode of exchange by the bye which you do not seem fond of encouraging I find is to be considered as an extra condescension and I am to be thankful accordingly Well I am so indeed I am but nothing was further from my expectations than being able to establish a practice to which you seemed so averse. Altho I must still plead for the practice of it while there is such an unvarying Monotony in my life and such perpetual variety in yours however I am very sensible of and grateful for the kind alacrity with which you acknowledged my last, and entreat you will forgive the petulance that dictated any one "severe insinuation" it contained - indeed I meant it

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not tho I must not deny the possibility of a part of the impatience I so foolishly felt having found its way to my pen could I have imagined you imme--diately upon your arrival in what I considered a strange land introduced at once into a circle of acquaintances so gay and so agreeable I would have been more easily reconciled to your silence and happy in the idea of your time being so pleasantly occupied but that I own was the only possible circumstance that did not occur to me and ignorance you know is often too apt to torment itself with groundless fears and vain imaginations. But it is high time to drop the subject - and congratulate you, which I do very sincerely, on being so happily situ--ated I have frequently heard the Northern Gentry remarked for hospitality, urbanity and that frankness of Manners so taking to Strangers, and am happy that you have experienced so much of it It will of course make you feel less regret at leaving Edinr at this season tho I daresay Genl Duffs absence will now make a very great blank in the social circle how much his kindness and attention to you delight me had he remained at Banff I fancy he would very soon have become as much a favoritesic with me as with your--self or any of the good people in his neighbourhood Indeed it is so truly gratifying to meet a friend so disinterested and steady one naturally rejoices to hear of it, even where less interested thensic in the present instance I earnestly hope the Genl may be fortunate enough to get a situation that will place him for some time in the "Land of his Fathers" which I make no doubt would contribute no less to his own happiness thensic to the Satisfaction of those around him I had a letter yesterday from my Sister by Donald Stewart my cousin who came to take leave previous to his departure for India, at least for the Isle of Wight, where he will probably remain some time Poor fellow he has just left us - and with how many many chances against our ever again meeting in this transitory scene I really do not know any thing more depressing thensic parting with friends - even with those for whom one is unconscious of having any extraordinary value - to be ever liable to this severe trial of ones fortitude at command is certainly one of the greatest disadvantages that attends a Military life but this is a subject that absolutely sickens my very soul I always shrink from it, with fear and trembling The good folks in Strathtay are all quite full of that odd creature Tom Blackhill's marriage which he says is to take place immediately, but to vouch for the truth of it is more than any person can in reason *?pretend illegible - paper torn* to, as they have only his own authority for it - *?the illegible - paper torn* report is - that having gone to Edinr soon after his Father's death, and inspected the Will, he found that he could not be deprived of the estate but was not to get possession of it till he was married - on which happy inteligenesic he return'd to Perth, took a post chaise, settsic out for Crossmount in violent haste, where he arrived that night - put the Question to Margt, was happily answered in the affirma--tive - return'd immediately with the joyful news and told Mrs Menzies at Weem he would be back in a fortnight with his Wife !!! Whether we are obliged to Tom's inventive genius for the Whole Story except the part of his being at Crossmount a little time must determine, but I can hardly blievesic it possible that my friend Margt should be so infatuated as voluntarily to plunge into a depth of Misery from which death alone can free her Yet, if almost any person could tolerate a life with such a confirmed ne'er-do-well as the Laird of Cluny unfortunately still is. I blievesic the Lady in question may her very Moderate share of sensibility and uncommon sweetness of temper will certainly make her suffer less than most others would in the same circumstances but I fear there is no great hopes of his reformation, with a person who is in general inanity itself, unless being Lady Cluny will make her exert her energies a little The Blackhill Ladys are said to have £3000 portions each; the old gentleman was tolerably liberal of which I daresay the Misses will very soon feel the good effects in the increased number of thiersic admirers In pity to your patience I will have done scribbling and beg My Dear friend you will blievesic me ever your

Sophia Stewart

No. 16 From **SOPHIA STEWART** Shierglass 20 February 1812 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Banff Postmarked: 'DUNKELD' partly illegible. Price: '9'. Seal: red but obliterated. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson 88th Regt Banff'. Annotations: 'Received the 25th Feby / Ansd 27th Do' in DR's handwriting. Shierglass 20th Febr 1812 My Dearest freind 1 With the most unfeigned pleasure did I recieve 1 your last kind letter and beg you will accept of my warmest thanks for the entertain--ment it afforded me Your valued partiality so kindly expressed could not fail of flattering. Altho conscious that the praises bestowed were more owing to your willingness to be pleased than to the merits of her to whom they were addressed Yet even that consciousness cannot wholly deprive me of the satisfaction they afforded, since few things on earth are more

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gratifying than the approbation of those we love Your account of the continued gaiety of Banff quite surprise me there certainly must be something very exhilarating in the pure air of the North that inclines its inhabitants to such incessant festivity You may well say, you "carry it on in Stile" A stile indeed of which I in my limited notions had not the smallest idea I was equally incorrect in my ideas of the extent of your society, for your private partys of upwards of 60 people actually sent me to the Gazetteer not doubting that at least the half of the inhabitants of the town had assembled on the occasion, but in this I was happily mistaken and glad to find there might still be a few sage persons who were lovers of home So these troublesome censors the Matchmakers are busy amongst you - Well they are a pestiferous Set certainly but I make no doubt all these Public Balls and private partys will afford some room for observation, for it is not very probable that in "times of such gaiety" they only will "attach his particular Belle to almost every Beau" the Belles generally allowed to be so attractive too indeed if I mistake not there was a day when yourself coulddeletel felt pretty conscious proof of the irresistable power of a Banff or an Aberdeen Beauty however I hope none of them will now contrive to give you a Caper tacha ?sic 2 and congratulate myself on your saying only Almost every Beau as every one concerned may make the exception in their own favor, for altho I do not imagine Absence or gaiety with all its fascinations to be in general a friend to constancy, I have not the smallest intention of doing you or myself the injustice of suspect=ing yours I am happy your friend Genl Duff intends returning so soon tho you have hardly time to feel the want of his society you would not probably hear any thing further of his success in getting the Aberdeen District since your last I earnestly wish the General may succeed in getting it - being on his staff would undoubtedly be to you a most desirable situation You talk too of coming home in the event of that information Most happy will your friends be to see you in Athole and none of them you will easily blieve will feel greater pleasure in seeing you again than your humble servant I hear little more of Margt Crossmounts marriage but as the day said to be appointed for the happy event is past without any appearance of Bridegroom or Bride I suspect it will turn out like the ? rest paper torn of Tommy Captains storys The old ladys word missing paper torn Balfractssic are in a sad dilemma just now, for which to be sure they have too great cause Sandy McDonald would perhaps mention to you the law suit commenced at the instance of the late Balfrachssic nephew, in order to invalidate his uncles settlement the ladys, I understand, and their steady friend Mr McLaurin, treat all attempts to reduce the sale of the Estate, as absurd and impossible, and express no doubt as to the final result of the plea - many others are by no means so san=guine And in the mean time it places the Misses Menzies in a very disagreeable predicament What a real misfortune to poor Mrs McDonald too, if a reduction of the sale should take place but I trust it is not possible You have frequently My Dear friend remarked that I never could be at loss for subject when writing you, as every incident that occurs in this country cannot fail of interesting you - but pray consider what incidents either trivial or important are likely to arise in the confined circle in which I of necessity move especially while the weather is such that we feel little inclination to leave our own fireside, and every body else seems equally fond of theirs the Alstenssic see nobody this winter - Mrs Alsten and her sister having both been seriously, indeed for some time dangerously, ill they are now in a state of convalescence, indeed Mrs A. is quite recovered but Miss Stewart is still far from well 3 I dined lately with the Miss Stewarts Fincastle when I had the felicity of being one of Seven Misses with only Charles McDermid for our Beau, he seems a very pleasant young Man, his Lady don't you sigh now was expected but did not honorsic the sister=hood with her presence 4 Doctor Stewart spent a few days at Bonskeid last week where he made an attempt to collect all the gentlemen in the Country, those that were not afraid of a Bachelors feast attended and seemed much pleased with their entertainment, but as Ladys were wholly excluded from his Party I cant tell how they contrived to amuse themselves there Mr Menzies Weem was of the party, indeed I believe the Gala was in compliment to him 5 My Brother has gone down the Country and will probably remain a week in Perth and its neighbourhood, but as I have unfortunately no great taste for absolute solitude this moping alone makes me as splneticsic 6 as a cat - another powerful reason for the little amusement this epistle can afford you but as I see with much pleasure your letter written in a style that shews you in good health and in the midst of diversions I have no scruple in making you do penance for a few minutes - however I will not add to the length of this epistle by any more apologies for its dullness but conclude by soliciting the interference of this same "little advocate" which you convince me is so much my friend and which I trust shall never be addressed in vain by My Dear D your ever affectionate Sophia Stewart

**NOTE 1** This failure to observe the "'i' before 'e' except after 'c'" rule is one of Sophia's repeated mistakes. Others include her habitual spelling of "their" as "thier", "believe" as "blieve" and "then" for "than". Sometimes,

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as in this instance, she spells that important word "friend" as "freind". There are other minor aberrations of spelling and, occasionally, of syntax. Most of these idiosyncrasies are annotated in the text with a "[sic]"; this is done to assure the reader that the mistakes are Sophia's and not mine.

2 I do not know what these words mean; perhaps they are "kitchen Gaelic"

3 Mrs Alston not Alsten was Charlotte Stewart, born about 1780; she married Major James Alston of Achnard and had numerous children. She and the unmarried Miss Stewart were sisters of John Stewart of Urrard, who died unmarried in 1818; see Index.

4 These remarks about the 'Lady' of Charles McDermid may relate to the events described by Sophia in her letter to Duncan dated 27 April 1811; see pp.13-14 above.

5 Doctor Alexander Stewart, then aged 59, and his second wife May Oliphant, then aged 50, had married in 1799; she was a daughter of Laurence Oliphant of Gask and, through her mother, a Robertson of Struan cousin. They had an only child Margaret, born in 1803. The Doctor's first wife, who died in 1795, was Jane, only daughter of Thomas Bisset, the commissary in Dunkeld; none of their three children survived infancy. Doctor Stewart and his second wife moved into Bonskeid in 1811, but did not use it as their main home. They carried out various improvements, however, including building the farmhouse named Mains of Bonskeid. Doctor Stewart, who had formerly practised in Dunkeld, continued in practice in Perth after taking over Bonskeid. His sister Isabel had married James Stewart of Fincastle. Complicated financial problems, involving both brothers-in-law, led after many years to the present 1994 position in which the descendants of the Doctor's daughter Margaret live in Fincastle and in Mains of Bonskeid.

6 Splenetic, meaning peevish, was formerly pronounced *spleen*'i-tik rather than, as now, *splin-et*'ik; uncertainty about the word's pronunciation may account for Sophia's spelling mistake.

No. 17 From **SOPHIA STEWART** Shierglass 12 March 1812 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Banff  
Postmarked: 'DUNKELD' otherwise difficult to read. Price: '9'. Seal: obliterated. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson / 88th Regt / Banff'. Annotations: 'Received the 16th March / Answd the 22 & 23' in DR's hand. Shierglass 12th March 1812 Your letter My Dear Friend reached me several posts ago and I trust you will do me the justice to believe I have not so long voluntarily delayed acknowledging it for altho I could have much more easily imagined that, to a person in your situation, every week would appear a day than the reverse, I certainly intended writing before you could even begin to long a second time but was prevented by being from home almost ever since I had the pleasure of receiving yours. I accompanied my Brother to Derculich, on his way to poor Crossmount's funeral, and only returned last night Your predictions of his near approach to that "bourne from whence no traveller returns" were but too soon realized, altho from what I can learn the event was very unlooked for by his nearest friends, indeed his having gone to Perth, accompanied by Mrs Stewart and Jane, a few days only before his death, shewed that no immediate danger was apprehended, which certainly rendered the shock to his family doubly severe to them I agree with you that his loss is indeed an irreparable one Yet much depends on James's future conduct in softening thiersic grief If his dispositions are good he certainly has much in his power by excercising *sic* them in kind and affectionate behaviour towards his Mother and Sisters, and their future comfot depends I understand in a considerable degree upon James's kindness in consequence of Crossmount's sudden Death I spent some days very happily with Jean and her Goodman they are both as well as ever I saw them Mr Stewart is, as usual, busied every hour of the day carrying on some little improvement or other, which fortunately for him affords a never failing source of amusement, their time seems to pass so much to both their satisfactions that I trust they will long continue to see the folly of wandering from peoples home in search of happiness and comfort, tho this Mania seems to be still spreading over the Country and I would not be surprised that in a few years there would be as few residing proprietors in Strathtay as there is in this already nearly forsaken Strath. You would hear that Balechinsic has resolved upon leaving his beautiful residence and it is currently reported that Mr Izett wishes to let his house and return to the South, but from the very high value he puts upon it, it is not improbable he will be allowed to inhabit it himself five hundred a year would be paying pretty high even for the beauties of Kinnaird So your friend the General is about to resign his liberty 1 Am I to suppose, when you tell me "he had no idea of his fair enslaver when he left Banff" that she was an entire stranger to him at that time or only that he did not then think of her as a Wife - from *?the paper torn* opinion you entertain of him I am ena *?abled paper torn* to draw the

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latter conclusion for so very precipitate a choice of a companion for life does not by any means meet my idea of the good sense which I attribute to your friend not even the attractions, powerful as they are allowed to be, of beauty or fortune, or of both combined, would reconcile a person of any reflection to overlook the more essential requisites of Sense and Temper, and of these surely a few weeks acquaintance could not render either party a competent judge You will perhaps laugh at my old fashioned notions of these matters and tell me they have been obsolete this many a day well be that as it may I gladly claim your promise of letting me know your opinion of the Lady when she makes her appearance and join with you in wishing she may contribute to the General's happiness as she will most probably do to your gaiety which it appears does not yet know any cessation and which certainly does not require any addition, for I am well convinced the one half of your gay society are like yourself "fatigued almost to death" "running the giddy round" and foolishly making a toil of a pleasure I began writing in the forenoon but was interrupted *sic* by the arrival of Mrs Stewart from the Manse and Margaret Stewart Dalchalach who has been there this fortnight past in the evening Peter Stewart from Perth came in and has been entertaining us all night with his favorites *sic* Bon Mots and anecdotes from Clunie House which he does not fail to embellish with all that's ridiculous all this you will observe is intended as an apology for this "epistle Lucubratory" scribbled as usual after supper good night My Dear Friend Blieves *sic* me ever your Sophia Stewart

### NOTES

1 Alexander Duff c1778-1851 married Anne, youngest daughter of James Stein of Kilbogie, on 16 March 1812, four days after this letter was written.

No. 18 From **SOPHIA STEWART** Shierglass 2 April 1812 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Banff  
Postmarked: 'DUNKELD E' difficult to read. Price: '9'. Seal: black obliterated. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson 88th Regt Banff'. Annotations: 'Received the 7th April / Ansd the 10th Do' in DR's hand.  
Shierglass 2d April 1812 A thousand thanks My Dear Friend for your acceptable and entertaining epistle with much pleasure do I comply with your request of answering it by the earliest opportunity and assuring you that the animated and interesting description you give of your friend's fair partner 1 makes ample amends for the few days longer than usual your letter was withheld I really must without compliment confess that you are gifted with the descriptive powers in a more eminent degree than many I have met with But what is more capable of inspiring a Soldier with eloquence than Beauty and Friendship when presented to him, as in the present instance, in so superlative a degree Whatever a few fastidious people may say of a trifling disparity of rank or want of fortune it will be impossible for anyone not to admire this new acquaintance of yours. Let me consider now if ever I met with such an assemblage of good qualities in the limited circle in which I have moved Amiable, intelligent, unaffected and affable, Beautiful in person, Graceful and interesting in Manners All these, combined in one lovely object, forms I must own a Being of a very superior order to those we generally meet with in the common walk of life and, when bestowed as "Heaven's best gift" on any favored Mortal, cannot fail of contributing largely to their happiness. From your account of Mrs Duff, I think the Genl bids fair for enjoying Much Domestic happiness could he only contrive it so as to remain at home. I am sorry that the firm adherence of him or his friends to any party should be the means of thwarting his views, yet it is most likely that little is to be expected while they are out of power My regret on this account is probably not wholly disinterested, yet it is with much pleasure I observe from your letters the many proofs of General Duffs friendship for you, and would not be at all surprised altho the marked attention you experience from him should draw upon you the envy of those who are less fortunate, but I agree with him that the opinion of such people is quite unworthy of the least notice, and would be certainly giving them too much consequence if they could make you forego for one day the pleasure of your friends society I had just begun scribbling yesterday, when I was obliged to lay aside my pen, and lost one past day by the interruptions *sic* but I hope this epistle may not yet be too late to reach you at Banff, even tho your plan of going ? *to paper torn* Edinr should be approved of, which I hope ? *will paper torn* be the case, as you were if I remember well very successful with the Perthshire before. I am glad you think of seeing your friends in Athole tho your visit can only be a flying one, we shall then hear all your plans and if you think of changing our quarters to be much longer there without the prospect of greater success in recruiting would perhaps be unpleasant or rather inexpedient, for I think you must sacrifice inclination to duty whatever time you leave that hospitable place. The Storm you complain of in the



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North has I believe been very general nor has this part of the world been exempted from its full share, at least of excessive cold which I am sorry to say still continues and the Country still much covered with snow wears a very unpromising aspect General Robertson 2 has been in the Country for some days past, I have not seen him but understand he is in good health and spirits Need I say I will expect to hear from you if we are not to have the pleasure of seeing you soon I own I need not, you are too attentive a correspon=dent to require being reminded how anxiously your letters are looked for by My Dear Friend your ever affectionate  
Sophia Stewart

**NOTE1** However fatuous and fawning Duncan Robertson's description of his friend's bride may have been, these two pages are the most sarcastic, and among the most revealing about herself, written by Sophia and included in this collection. There may have been others just as bad which have not survived.

No. 19 From **SOPHIA STEWART** Shierglass 30 April 1812 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Edinburgh re-directed from Banff Postmarked: 'DUNKELD' part illegible, 'BANFF 573 E', Crown emblem and 'MAY W 7 A 1812'. Price: '9' deleted and '17'. Seal: obliterated. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson 88th Regt Banff' with 'Banff' deleted and replaced by 'Shaw's Hotel Princes Street Edinr'. Annotations: 'Received at Edinr' in DR's hand.

Shierglass 30th April 1812 My Dear Friend That I have not exactly followed the "Golden Rule" in allowing a letter of yours to remain too long unacknowledged I very readily admit. I own also that I might have written sooner having thought of you every post day on that account and I believe almost every other day on some account or other, and had I imagined your stay at Banff would have been pronlonged*sic* till now not even the power of indolence itself should have prevented my writing. But altho your last letter certainly did not authorise any such supposition I could not help flattering myself these ten days past with the daily expectation of seeing or hearing of your arrival in Athole So apt are we to imagine what we anxiously wish that I quite forgot the uncertainty of your coming at all, nor will I yet anticipate evil but unless you have "tasted Lotus in the North" will still look for the pleasure of seeing you some of these days, as it is most probable you have received certain information of your destination by this time I know not My Dear Friend what the feelings of a Soldier may be on receiving such accounts as the last from Spain, but surely we may be allowed to esteem them fortunate, most fortunate, who are permitted to remain in a Land of peace compared to the dreadful state of many of their brave comrades left in Portugal and Spain Your predictions of what would happen ere Badajos 1 fell was but too just the Victory was indeed dear bought I have been looking over all the names but could not discover one acquaintance near relative thank God I have not there amongst the sufferers with you it must be very different but Ah how many sad hearts will bleed long after they poor fellows are insensible of pain such inteligencesic as yesterday's paper brought makes me shudder to the soul. How dreadful the idea that one's nearest and dearest friend should be liable to be exposed to such scenes You will think me a perfect croker 2 -a sad sad coward I certainly am grown We had letters from my brother Alexr some time after the taking of Java, he was pretty well when he wrote but had a severe fever after his arrival there from which he was only recovering when Mr John Stewart Findynate left the Island I trust Alexr has returned to Madras ere now; his letters were dated 3d Oct and he did not expect to remain above three months longer at Batavia You would of course have heard of your cousin Findynate's being at ? *home paper torn* for some time past My sister speaks ? *very paper torn* highly of him indeed, but we have not yet had the pleasure of seeing him No letter from you could have overtaken General Robertson in this part of the Country as he only staid a few days at Blair Most of his time was spent with his political friends at Taymouth and Balechin, indeed Mac an Righ and him were quite inseparable -their opinions perfectly coincide, on one subject at any rate that is, in opposition to the "Brave" whether right or wrong I intend going to Crossmount next week if possible, as laziness and the excessive coldness of the weather has hitherto prevented our seeing them, I cant tell whether they have had letters from James since his Father's death or not I rather think not, tho Lady Auchleeks who occassionally favor*sic* me with the Rannoch news, ordinary and extra= ordinary says he is expected home very soon poor Margaret's courtship is at rest just now, and I hope for her sake will continue to be so, at least till her swain shows himself more worthy of her, but I am sorry to hear he has as yet given few proofs of amendment I had a long letter from Maggy Dowally lately, written in her usual high spirits, she expected to spend some weeks in Edinr about this time, along with her aunt Miss Haggart, if you are lucky enough to meet

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them there you may expect to have your risible faculties kept in pretty constant exercise It is not without hesitation I dispatch this epistle, tho I need be under no great apprehension of any one's needing it With best wishes I ever am My Dr Friend your S. Stewart

**NOTES1** Many British troops were lost in Wellington's siege of Badajoz, which was stormed on 6 April 1812.  
**2** 'Croker' is a mis-spelling of the obsolescent 'croaker', a grumbler or one who habitually forbode evil.

No. **20** From **SOPHIA STEWART** Shierglass **15 June 1812** To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Banff.  
Postmarked: probably 'DUNKELD 453 E' but hard to read. Price: '9'. Seal: black but obliterated. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson 88th Regt Banff'. Annotations: 'Received the 18th June Ansd the 19th Do-'.  
Shierglass 15th June 1812 My Dear Friend Your letter as you justly calculated reached me Saterdaysic evingsic and I hasten to give you my ideas of its contents "without reserve" or delay for it is needless now to say much of the disapointment your sudden departure to Banff occasionedsic me - our feelings I fancy were very similar on that as well~~deleted~~ occasion as well as the present, and however painfully embarrassing the consequence of this very unlooked for order may be to us both, I will endeavour to give you my opinion with frankness and candour on the line of conduct we ought to adopt the two plans which you suggest one of which as you observe must be fixed upon has been attentively consider=~~ed~~ by me, in every light which my mind is at present capable of; and were I to consult my own feelings alone would most undoubtedly determine on the latter, as being the most deliberate, consequently most congenial to my ideas of propriety in taking so important a step -yet on the other hand when I reflect that this strict adherence to ettiquetesic would expose you to the extreme inconvenience in a few months of travelling such a distance in returning to Scotland for me, and at a season so unpleasant, I banish it as utterly impracticable and therefore firmly declare my resolution of not permitting you, on my account, to take such a journey blievesic me I feel most grateful for your ready acquiescence in giving up your own inclination to mine, yet at the same time that I look upon the plan of coming down in Novr as a very inexpedient one for you and productive of so much inconvenience that I cannot think of it without the greatest uneasiness; if you, from a desire of expedition or any other cause find it more agreeable to go to England alone just now, far, very far, be it from me to impose a present trouble in order to avoid a future with regard to any supposed disrespect offered to those who have our interest at heart by so hurried a conclusion to this affair, all I can say is, that you are best aware of what light your friends might take it in, and certainly ought to adopt these measures that would be most agreeablesic to them, but for my friends I am very sensible that those of them it would be necessary to consult upon the subject will easily distinguish between a voluntary disrespect and an action dictated by unforeseensic circumstances perhaps I have not succeeded in expressing my sentiments so clearly on this subject as might be wished, but I refer you to my Brother who will be in Perth when you pass he you will find thinks ? withpaper torn me that, if your time and other circumstan=~~ces~~ do not admit of your coming to Shierglass, my meeting you in Perth would be very unpleasant, and indeed out of the question should this too much talked of union now take place, I am happy you mentioned it to your father, whose approbation of what he terms your choice cannot fail of being gratifying to me, and I sincerely hope that his good wishes or favorable opinion shall never be forfeited by me I am not at all surprised that he would consider it more eligible for you to remain as you are for some years longer and if your opinions coincide remember My Dear Friend that you are still at full liberty to act as your judgment directs, and I most solemnly entreat that no consideration whatever may in the present instance induce you to act in opposition to it I regretted not having it in my power to write by Sundays post, but I hope this will yet find you at Banff and if you think a letter from you can reach me here before you arrive at Perth I will expect to hear from you immediately upon receipt of this My Sister and I have given up all thought of Pitcaithly for the present but will I blieve at all events go to Perth before our Heros return from our newspapers account of the new Ministry I fear your friend the General will be disapointed in his expectations Believe me My Dear Friend ever your Sophia Stewart

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No. 21 From **SOPHIA STEWART** Shierglass 29 July 1812 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Exeter, Devon Postmarked: 'AUG / W 1 A / 1812'. Price: '14'. Seal: red obliterated. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson / 88th Regt / Exeter / Devon'. Annotations: 'Received 8th August 1812 / Answered 10th Do' in DR's handwriting. Shierglass 29th July 1812 My Dear Friend I have your two letters before me and now that I am settled at home after an absence of nearly four weeks I resume my pen once more to answer them. That your letter from Perth wounded my feelings most severely it would be affectation in me to deny for laying aside affection certainly the necessity of your hastening away in the manner you did, after the communication made to your father from Banff, has thrown me into a situation which no mind possessed of the smallest degree of delicacy can support without pain and uneasiness. Had you reflected on this for a moment my opinion is too high of your sentiments to believe that you would have written to your family while a shadow of doubt existed in your own mind of the possibility of the arrangements proposed taking place and certainly the immediate prospect which you mentioned to John in Perth, of joining your *Regiment* in Portugal, was an obstacle which could not be got over. My Brother acted at least advised upon your information as any person interested in the welfare of either party would have done; and your obliging and ready acquies--cence to his opinion demand my most grateful thanks. I consider it as the highest compliment you could pay me You must not judge of the satisfaction your last letter gave me by my apparent delay in answering it. Its contents reliev--ed me from a state of most distressing anxiety, but as I only received the welcome intelligence the day before we left Edin' I had it not in my power to acknowledge it I was happy to hear of your safe arrival in London, after so very short and delightful a passage, going by sea is certainly the most pleasant at this Season, but I thought the uncertainty of it would have prevented your going, when so much expedition was necessary, as the reports which reached your ear made you imagine to be the case however I most sincerely rejoice that when you did enquire into the origin of the hint, probability, and even possibility, which made your immediate presence indispen--sable in England, that you found you could best them, even altho the dazzling prospect of gaining Laurels in the "Spanish War" should give place to the more humble tho not less estimable blessing of health and safety *at home*, and I make no doubt your friends in this quarter of the Globe consider it a matter of real gratulation that the "complicated arrangement" you mention was not thought of by those who had it *in* their power to make it that your present prospect of still remaining in England, at least for some time, may be realised is my most earnest wish, but indeed My Dear Friend my now addressing you at this distance is too impressive a proof that the vicissitudes of life are far beyond our calculation to admit of looking with much confidence to the future I had scarcely begun writing when I was interrupted by a message from my sister requesting that I would go over to Derculich to meet some old acquaintances from Dundee. I began to think there was a spell against my writing you again, but being determined to break it if possible I have at any rate succeeded in blotings*ic* a sheet of paper I must conclude by assuring you that I still am My Dear Friend Yours most sincerely Sophia Stewart

No. 22 From **SOPHIA STEWART** Shierglass 5 September 1812 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Exeter Postmarked: 'SEP W 6 A 1812'. Price: uncertain. Seal: illegible. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson 88th Regt Exeter Devon'. Annotations: 'Received the 11th Sept Ansd 17 Sept' in DR's handwriting. Shierglass 5th Sept 1812 Many thanks My Dear and still attentive friend for your last welcome letter, with which I was favoured nearly three weeks ago I hope I have not again trespassed on your patience by my delay in acknowledging the pleasure it afforded me, tho I fancy you are now too much acquainted with my lazy habits to feel much surprise at my occasional indulgence of them But indeed circumstanced as we now are I think a kind of meaning system ought to be adopted in carrying on a correspondence which in all probability cannot be maintained much longer, at least so frequently Do not my dear friend imagine from this, that I am yet incredulous, or unreason--able enough, still to entertain any "erroneous idea" with respect to the strict propriety of your conduct No not a "shadow of doubt now exists in my mind" and I do therefore most "fully and honourably acquit you" tho I fear I cannot so easily acquit myself of a want of candour in having ever for a moment impeached your integrity upon such slight grounds my only defence now is that there are some subjects upon which we are often too feelingly alive to be able "duly to consider all circumstances" and upon which even a shadow of doubt is insufferable Indeed it never was so much the dread of any thing wrong on your part as the certainty of

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having done wrong myself that made me so acutely feel the excessive awkwardness of the situation in which I was placed But what my friend must your worthy Father, and every one of his family, think of the thoughtless precipitancy of one who did not appear to hesitate at becoming one of them, without waiting for thiersic approbation and almost without thiersic knowledge I am now too well aware of the very unfavourable impression such conduct must have given But why dwell upon a circumstance to which I never can look back without a degree of self reproach and consequent mortification which I am convinced nothing but a sense of guilt could aggravate and which time alone can obliterate I sometimes suspect myself of a degree of weakness on this topic inconsistent with the precept and example I had so long the happiness and advantage of enjoying but tho from you I do not attempt to conceal even my faults, I hope I dont indulge them I wonder how I omitted in my last giving you some account of our trip to Pitcaithly with which I was so much delighted, the Society we found there was most agreeable and Mr Stewart, my sister and I spent a fortnight there very pleasantly indeed, we then proceeded to Edin' which at that season had little to amuse tho certainly the Metropolis can at no season appear dull to a native from the Braes of *Atholl paper torn* however one week heartily tired us of it, *?and* we hailed the view of our Native Mountains with no small degree of complacency on our return Derculich seems to have given up all thought of visiting England, at least for this season the Fincastle Misses and I only returned two days ago from a very pleasant excursion to Strathtay and Taymouth I will not say who our Beaus were, but they were, to do them justice, most attentive ones and of course added much to the pleasure of the visit I have scarce left room to subscribe myself my Dr friend your  
Sophia Stewart

No. 23 From **SOPHIA STEWART** or **ROBERTSON** Derculich 9th May 1817

To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Kindrochet No Postmark delivered by hand. Seal: Black obliterated.

Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson Kindrochet'. Annotations: none.

Derculich *Friday* 9th May 1817 My Dear Duncan The enclosed has this moment come by post and altho I fear it does not contain the wished for intellegencesic of the Regts safe arrival in Edinr of which we have seen no account in the news papers since you left us my sister has forwarded it, in case the contents may be of importance to you, as the hand writing appears to be Duncan Stewarts I hope it will be in your power to be at home tomorrow in time to accompany us to Eastertyre to dinner, having ingagedsic ourselves there in hopes of your being with us to night 1 or early Saturday, you must not then, My Dear disapointsic us of seeing you, or Mrs McGlashan of her party which she gives us to understand is quite on our account I hope all friends at Grennich are well, Mr S and my sister unite with me in offer of kindest wishes to all. Accept My Dearest Duncan of my best love and Blievesic me most affectionately your Sophia Robertson **page 3**

P S All friends at Findynate are well, John dined here yesterday after visiting his patient the young wife at Edradynate who has been obliged to undergo the teriblesic operation of having a tooth drawn already which has fortunately relieved her for the present My hurry to send of Robert S S ? *paper torn* makes me outdo myself in scrawling

**NOTE 1** By the time this letter was written Sophia and Duncan had been married for about twelve months. The previous last surviving letter from Sophia dates from 5 September 1812, almost five years before. On this occasion she was writing to him from Derculich to Kindrochet, an unusually short distance for most of their communications. When she mentions 'to night' she was referring to the Friday, when the note was written; they were to dine at Eastertyre on the following Saturday evening. The dinner was said to be 'on our account', no doubt as a relatively newly married couple.

No. 24 From **SOPHIA STEWART** or **ROBERTSON** Derculich 17 November 1817 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Aberdeen Postmarked: 'DUNKELD - 53' partly illegible. Price: '9'. Seal: red wax device of hexagonal frame containing the name 'Sophia'. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson 88th Regiment Aberdeen'.

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Annotations: 'Recvd 20th Novr Ansd 22 Do' in DR's hand, and the following 1 which is possibly in another's hand: 'Callum Campbell Excise Office Belmont St Pensioner? Genl? Panton'.

Derculich 17th Novr 1817 Your thrice welcome letter My Dearest Duncan reached me as usual, thanks to your kind attention on Saterdaysic and relieved me from con--siderable uneasiness on your account I was much afraid the journey to Perth would have increased the pain in your back and make travelingsic the rest of your way most painful to you however I am most thankful to find that altho your journey was rather a dull one you felt no bad effects from it I am glad to find from your account of the Aberdeen Barracks that we have prospect of being more comfortably accom--modated during the winter thensic we expected, altho I fear that you my better, and God knows My Dearer half, are in the mean time any thing but comfortable however I trust the time will be short and will anxiously look for your next letter, in hopes it will bring us the happy intelidencesic of your having got leave, and of course returning to us as soon as possible tho to tell the truth, the frequency of our petit dis--appointmentsic, joined to my natural tendency to crokingsic, makes me indulge hope with fear and trembling however I will not anticipate disapointmentsic on this head your sisters went to Findynate the day you left us, they returned to us Wednesday and remained till yester--day, when they again went to Findynate and propose returning home tomorrow if possible, but the weather is so dreadfully rainy nobody can stir out of doors, scarcely a single fair day since you left us, it is a dreadful prospect for the poor people who have not yet got in thiersic crops How is it in Aberdeenshire? Not so dismal as here I hope I think you told me Delgaty 2 was a good way from Aberdeen, but I hope you will have it in your ?power (word omitted) to see General (paper torn) Duff now, as he will probably go into town before you return from this country We have all been absolutely in common I blievesic with every one else in low spirits this week past for the much lamented and unlooked for fate of the Princess Charlotte!! 3 it is certainly a most afflictive dispensation of Providence, and must come home to every heart as a most severe and painful proof of the instability of every Earthly good Oh May the Almighty My Dearest Duncan enable us earnestly to seek our portion in that Better Country where it will not be taken away from us I must conclude as I did not write yesterday I am afraid of missing the post Our sisters all join me in every good wish and in hopes of soon hearing good accounts from you I ever am My Dear Dear Duncan your own Sophia R

**NOTES 1** This annotation remains a mystery. It is almost certainly not in the handwriting of either Duncan Robertson or Sophia Stewart, and it is probably unimportant.

**2** Delgaty was then the home of General Duff and his family, for whom see Note on page 39 ante.

**3** Princess Charlotte of Wales, born 7 January 1796, was the only child of the Prince Regent later George IV; she died in childbirth on 6 November 1817, having married on 2 May 1816 Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, afterwards King of the Belgians, uncle of Queen Victoria and of her husband Albert the Prince Consort, both of whom were born in 1819.

No. **25** From **SOPHIA STEWART** or **ROBERTSON** Derculich **26 November 1817** To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Aberdeen Postmarked: 'DUNKELD'. Price: '9'. Seal: red wax hexagon with thistle flower and the words 'DINNA FORGET'. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson / 88th Regt / Aberdeen'. Annotations: 'Receivd 28th Nov' partly obscured. My Dearest Duncan A mistake at the Post office sent your much wished for letter of Saturday last up to Blair Athole and occasioned me as you will easily believe a most serious disapointmentsic and continued anxiety since Monday which I thank God the arrival of this day's post has removed, and, altho' the delay in receiving yours makes it doubtful to me whether this epistle will reach you in Aberdeen or not, I cannot deny myself the indulgence of reminding you of your absent baddy, who fears she will be deprived of her better half longer than she expected at parting - The reason you give for not having received an immediate answer to your applicationsic for leave is certainly a most probable one but I trust the delay will be of short duration in the mean time I rejoice to find that my Dearest Duncan passes the time so agreeably and has met with so many pleasing acquaintances indeed you are generally rather a fortunate person in the way of meeting with and making friends. I hope when I join, again, you will let me into the secret of making myself agreeable too tho alas I fear it is one of the many good things I shall never be able to acquire the knowledge or practice of never, never, can I feel at home with strangers. I am very happy you paid your visit at Delgaty and found your friends there so pleasant, but for once in my life I did not regret being "absent

Sophia Stewart of Sheirglass to Duncan Robertson of Kindrochet 22

from my Deary" you see what an owlet your YF *sic* 2 is I need not say I have no news from the quiet quarter, we neither see nor are seen, since you left us, consequently the Public papers give us all the information we receive and that is by no means cheering Mr Stewart has gone over to Athole two days ago but without great hopes of doing much business after going?: *paper torn* we expect him home to-day paper torn Miss Jean McGlachan is here, she begs to join my madcap sister in kindest wishes to you, tho they have both kept chattering and teasing in such a provoking manner ever since I began writing that it is quite impossible to get on beside them I have made my escape and hope I am not yet too late for the post I hope Saturday's post will let me know what day I am to have the happiness of expecting you by the by *sic*, you cannot receive this in time to answer it Saturday well I hope I shall hear as soon as possible at any rate your Sisters got a fine day to cross the Hill Wednesday last. They are all well at Findynots *sic* tho the Doctor is too busy to look in upon such healthy folks as we are in this house tho I believe there will be occasion for his assistance here too to no less a personage than the heir apparent, who came here a week ago and has unfortunately taken that most disagreeable looking complaint the jaundice which really makes the poor creature no very pleasing inmate 1 I must conclude My Dearest Duncan with every good wish believe me ever Most affectionately your own Sophia Robertson

**NOTES. 1** The identity of the "heir apparent" is uncertain. It seems most improbable that he was James Stewart, born 1783, son of James Stewart of Derculich died 1806 and his wife Margaret, daughter of Duncan Robertson of Edradynate. That James Stewart added his mother's surname Robertson to his patronymic and in 1817, as James Stewart Robertson, married his cousin Dorothea, daughter of Adam Stewart of Blackhill, Cluny &c. They are said by *Burke LG* only to have had one son, also named James Stewart Robertson; he is said to have been born in 1823 and later to have inherited Edradynate; he died in 1896. It is not impossible that the "heir apparent" mentioned by Sophia was a baby note the words 'the poor creature' and that he was an earlier probably the first male child of James Stewart Robertson and his wife, who was born in 1817 but died in infancy and whose name was therefore not recorded in *Burke*.

**2** Whether this rather tedious jokey spelling of "wife", which may also be found on page 92, was then a generally accepted witticism among the literate classes, or was a special invention of the Duncan Robertsons, is not known. See also page 97 below.

No. **26** From **SOPHIA STEWART** or **ROBERTSON** Kindrochet **27 June 1818** To **DUNCAN**

**ROBERTSON** Aberdeen Postmarked: 'BLAIR ATHOLE' partly illegible. Price: '10'. Seal: black device with name 'Sophia' within a hexagonal frame. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson 88th Regt Aberdeen'. Annotations: 'Recivd 30th June Ansd 2d July' in Duncan Robertson's handwriting.

Kindrochet 27th June 1818 Most gratefully My Dearest Duncan do I acknowledge the receipt of your Short but welcome letter from Perth, which reached me last night, and tho I could not help regretting *sic* the lateness of the hour at which you were obliged to write I own I would have been most greivously *sic* disapointed *sic* had you not found time to favors *sic* me with a "kind memento" before you proceeded on your journey It gives me the greatest satisfaction to find that the Meeting I so much dreaded has been so well got over, the fear of its being a very unpleasant one haunted me awake and asleep ever since you left me, and I cannot express my thankfulness on learning that nothing particular *sic* disagreeable occurred, for tho your want of time obliged you to be brief in your account of the proceedings the assurance that it ended well has set my mind at rest and enables me to wait with patience for any further perticulars *sic* you may afterwards com--municate Sandy Robertson has not come up yet but I understand he is expected at the Porte 1 tomorrow and will probably be here Monday morning I have not yet seen Charles my Brother nor did he announce any intention of calling for= on me to your Father who saw him yesterday at the Bridge of Tilt Market neither have I heard from my Sister, who by the bye I am much afraid will suffer for her jaunt to Perth in such weather. What a dreadful day too you got after leaving us, and indeed every day since has been as dreary as our--selves, tho we all do our best too, to be chearful *sic* and generally succeed as well as your absence and the rainy weather will admit of tho I confess they are two evils which I would very willingly be exempted from, while in the country, at least, I would beg to bargain for only one of them at a time, but you are not to infer from this that I am more dull 2 here than I would be elswheres *sic*, very far from it I would be ungrateful indeed were I insensible to the kindness of

Sophia Stewart of Sheirglass to Duncan Robertson of Kindrochet 23

every individual of the family. Poor Betsy has been very unwell this week, greatly owing I believe *sic* to the sudden change of the weather from the excessive heat we had a wonderful *paper torn* degree of cold, we prevailed with her to keep to *paper torn* her bed and room ever since you left us till last night she is considerably better to day and I trust with a little care will soon get well. As you have long My Dear Duncan had melancholy proof of the sterility of the pericranium from which this epistle proceeds I need make no apology for its dulness, besides you desire I would write, and as obedience is said to be the duty of a good wife I may follow my inclination by doing so whether I have any thing to say or not, and I trust you will not forget my anxiety and my constant wish to hear from you Altho I believe *sic* you to be too old a soldier to require the aid of a YF *sic* 3 to make you comfortable I cannot be satisfied without knowing how and in what manner you are so let me know all, then My Dear Duncan that I may be as much with you as I can *sic* I delivered your Message to your Father who did not seem quite to recolect *sic* the purport of it at the time, but I could not assist his Memory not knowing the business I also told him of the Harness which Peter has sent for to day rejoicing and with abundant promises of "redoubled deligences *sic* at every turn and many thanks to the Capt for being so mindful" Your Father and Sisters join me in every good wish, accept my affectionate love My Dearest Duncan and Believe *sic* me ever your  
Sophia Robertson

**NOTES 1** The Porte, formerly occupied by Robertsons, is on the north bank of Loch Tummel. It is now the Port-an-Eilan Hotel.

**2** The word "dull" then had the additional meaning of "cheerless", as in this instance.

No. **27** From **SOPHIA STEWART** or **ROBERTSON** Kindrochet **2 July 1818**

To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Aberdeen Postmarked: 'BLAIR ATHOLE'. Price: '10'. Seal: black wax device of rectangular frame surrounding a stylised sunflower under a sun in the sky with on either side the words 'TIBI' and 'SOLI'. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson / 88th Regt / Aberdeen'. Annotations: 'Receivd 10th July 1818' 'Ansd'.

Kindrochet 2d July 1818 1 Notwithstanding your kind attention My Dearest Duncan in writing me so soon after your arrival in Aberdeen, I had not the happiness of receiving your eagerly anticipated letter till Thursday when most welcome to me was its appearance we all rejoiced to find that you got safe and well to your journey's end, and I envy you for having it over for it must be taken, I expected there might be some idea before now when that Lazy General would take his round *sic* and let us know what we have to hope for, with regard to your leave which lately as you have left us seems to be the subject ever upermost *sic* with us, tho for my own part, not being very sanguine in my hopes of your getting it for any length of time, I have already made up my mind to follow you, in a very short time, and as a preparatory step to this move I intend going over to Derculich next week. Mr Stewart as well as my sister are very pressing that Betsy would accompany me over, and as I am happy to say she is keeping better all this week I hope by Thursday next she will be able to undertake the journey and I am confident she will derive great benefit from the change of air and scene, slight as as the change is they propose sending for us Thursday we have not yet seen Sandy Robertson, but your nephew James, who has been in the Country all this week, says Robertson was positively to be here early next week and I trust he will not disapoint *sic* us, tho he certainly is rather delatory *sic* I read with much interest your account of the Meeting of the Executors for I cannot call them friends at Perth and most earnestly do I wish it was the last ever to be held on the subject 2 the more I hear of Mr Stewart's conduct I am the more at a loss to account for that inveterate spirit of opposition and annoyance which he seems re -solved to show at every step of their proceedings and I almost wonder how you could gratify him so far as to say you would make no further claim except as a Legatee or promise any discharge till Mr Clerk's opinion upon every thing that remains un -decided should be known, and indeed had there been any possibility of bringing the proceedings of the Arbitrers *sic* under his eye I certainly would have insisted upon it even tho there was no appeal from it, their injustice and partiality deserved to be exposed at the same time My Dear Duncan I have every confidence in the propriety of your Motives for acting as you have done, tho I fear had I been in your place a spirit of recri -mination would have had influenced me more than it did you I have not heard a word upon this subject from Derculich, I fancy he is too much dissatisfied with himself and with all concerned to say much about it A letter

Sophia Stewart of Shierglass to Duncan Robertson of Kindrochet 24

addressed to you came here by post after being at Aberdeen the day after I last wrote, I mistook the handwriting for Christies and took the liberty of opening it when

I found it was from "Peter Wallace" I think the officer of Artillery *sic* at Woolwich who you had written to some time ago As the postage is already pretty high I think it better to transcribe the epistle than send it to you again which I fancy will answer the same purpose Copy: "In the expectation of again seeing Major Dancey *sic* that I "might comply with your wishes respecting the £3.0.0" "you were so good as to advance Gunner Forbes of my Company" "I have deferred writing until *sic* I learned from his Brother" "that he had joined his Regiment, I have therefore left things" "as they were and if you please to authorize your Agent" "or any other person to receive the Money it will be" "paid to your order I am very sorry it so happened" "and I assure you that I made many attempts to meet" "with the Major in London but without success" Dated 17th June and signed Peter Wallace this is the sum total of the epistle which I fear makes the recovery of your £3 . . rather troublesome We had a visit last week from Trinafour and his nephew Donald, who told me he was to set out next day for Edinr on a visit to the Connaughts Poor Peter was also going to Perth and perhaps to Edin' about their unhappy Law Suit, a much less pleasing errand I have not seen any of my old acquaintances in this Country except two of the Porte and two of the Dalchalich Misses who spent a day here. Anne and I spent an afternoon at the Manse too in return for Mrs Stewart's visit, and deleted the Good people chose to be so unusually pressing that we should all dine there Tuesday first that we had no alternative but to promise that some of us would tho I believe very few of us will go. The weather has undergone a wonderful change since you was in the Country but notwithstanding the cold every thing continues looking well, your Father has got home the turfs and is to begin loading the peats next week if the weather keeps dry the men have gone to Rannoch to day for a drive ? of Wood I wrote you last week and Blieves *sic* I ought to have delayed this for some days as our letters will be always passing each other by the way I regret so many of our acquaintances being out of town, it will be excessively dull for you but I hope you will have it in your power to pay some visits in the Country while you are alone, surely General Duff has come to Delgaty before now if he intends coming at all this summer Remember me to Mrs Gibb poor body I blieves *sic* she does not like Aberdeen much better than other people, have they no word of coming in to Barracks yet? When next you write, which I trust will be very soon, Direct to me at Derculich All here join me in every good wish and Blieves *sic* me ever My Dearest Duncan your truly affectionate

Sophia Robertson

**NOTES 1** From what she says in the next letter, dated Kindrochet 13 July 1818, it is clear that Sophia in fact wrote this letter on or about 5 July, not on 2 July.

**2** This was a meeting of the executors of the will of John Stewart of Shierglass, Sophia's eldest brother, regarding which there were various disputes, especially regarding the debts of her next eldest brother Charles Stewart and regarding the marriage portion of her sister Jean, whose husband Alexander Stewart of Derculich showed what Sophia describes in this letter as "that inveterate spirit of opposition and annoyance which he seems resolved to show at every step of the proceedings".

No. **28** From **SOPHIA STEWART** or **ROBERTSON** Kindrochet **13 July 1818**

To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Aberdeen Postmark: partly illegible rectangular black stamp 'BLAIR ATHOLE 475'. Price: '10'. Seal: black wax rectangular frame enclosing stylised sun and sunflower with opposite one another the words 'TIBI' and 'SOLI', on a sheet of paper 14 by 9 inches embossed with a Royal Crown and the word 'BATH' within a rectangle and watermarked 'VALLEYFIELD 1816'. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson 88th Regt Aberdeen'. Annotations: 'Receivd 16th July Ansd same day' in DR's hand.

Kindrochet July 13th 1818 My Dearest Duncan I had the happiness of receiving yours of the 2d the very day I last wrote you, altho from my mistaking the day 1 of the Month you might suppose I had written three days sooner, and I fear I have deprived myself of my last weekly benediction from you by announcing rather prematurely, our intention of going last week to Derculich, but this visit I am grieved to say we were obliged to postpone from a cause which I need hardly say no one can more deeply regret than I do poor Betsy was so happy and elated in the hopes of being able to go over the Hill, and having her health restored or at least much improved by the little change of air and society that she flattered herself, and indeed so did we all, that she was much better than she really was, but two days after I wrote you she was taken so ill with violent pains through



Sophia Stewart of Sheirglass to Duncan Robertson of Kindrochet 25

her whole body, and the pain in her side increasing to such a height that we were obliged to send Tuesday morning to Blair for the Doctor who bled her whenever he came which relieved her considerably but we still thought her so little better that I sent over Wednesday to countermand the Gig and beg of my Sister to see John Stewart and send him over immediately, he accordingly came Thursday morning, very fortunately, as poor Betsy got very ill indeed that day he likewise Bled her which gave almost immediate relief, and tho she is still weak and languid, the pain has not been so violent ever since, and we now trust that it will please the Almighty to spare her to us, altho from the nature of her complaint we must not expect that her recovery will be rapid. Both Doctors 2 now agree that her liver is affected, considerably, they both say they suspected it for some time past, but unfortunately neither of them were sufficiently decided in that opinion to prescribe the proper and I fancy the only remedy, they have now begun to give her a slight course of mercury from which they anticipate the happiest effects as it seems already to have arrested the progress of the disease as the pains in her side and stomach are much abated within these two or three days It is most painful to me My Dear Duncan to be obliged to give you such distressing accounts of our Dear Betsy but she insisted on my informing you very particularly *sic* how she was I have done so but trust by and bye to be able to give you better accounts of her I am happy to say that your Father and both Sisters 3 tho anxious certainly are in perfect health Is there yet any hope My Dear Duncan of your coming to see us by and bye? If not I fear I cannot now go to you so soon as wished and intended when I last wrote you Sandy Robertson from Dunkeld has made his appearance at last, he came to day, and has just left us, I understand his part of the bussiness *sic* is now finished, but of this I suppose he will inform you himself soon, and better then *sic* I can Duncan at Miltown and your Sister are also here, 4 they are after giving me a long message which I promised to mention to you to save their writing as they intended I cannot pretend to be half so particular *sic* as either of them but I know the purport of it was that they have been much more fortunate in the sale of their cattle, sheep and wool then *sic* they expected, which has been a very great relief to them and enabled them to pay the greatest part of their rent at which they both seem very happy and blievings *sic* you would participate in their joy they wished to let you know, tho I wish I may have been able to make you understand but I have been so much interrupted *sic* to day I scarce know what I write the Ministers wife has just come in I must conclude and attend her I will write again in a few days, and hope to be able to say that Betsy is keeping better She and all the family join me in every good wish and Blieves *sic* me ever My Dearest Duncan most affectionately your Sophia Stewart R - 5

**NOTES 1** Her previous letter had been dated 2 July in error.

**2** John Stewart of Findynate was one of the two doctors and was a cousin of the patient. We do not yet know the name of the Doctor from Blair Atholl.

**3** Betsy, Helen and Ann were Duncan's unmarried sisters who lived at Kindrochet with their father, James Robertson.

**4** This was Duncan's married sister Margaret and her husband, another Duncan Robertson, who was the tenant of Milton of Invervack.

**5** It is of passing interest to note that, in her haste to attend the Minister's wife, Sophia wrote her surname as 'Stewart' and then deleted it and added 'R - ' since there was no room to write 'Robertson' in full. This was after two years of marriage to Duncan Robertson.

No. **29** From **SOPHIA STEWART** or **ROBERTSON** Derculich **29 July 1818**

To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Aberdeen Postmarked: 'PERTH ?29 - 1818 E' partly illegible. Price: '9'. Seal: black device with name 'Sophia' enclosed within a hexagonal frame. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson 88th Regt Aberdeen'. Annotations: 'Receivd 1st Augst Ansd - Same day' in Duncan Robertson's handwriting.

Derculich 29th July 1818 My Dearest Duncan - I have now to acknowledge the receipt of your two welcome letters of the 16th and 25th I was most happy to learn from John Findynate who brought me your letter from Kindrochet a few days ago that Betsy was considerably better then *sic* when I last wrote you 1 and by a note I had from Helen last night I am much gratified to find she still continues easier, and I trust, upon the whole, mending tho very slowly; I intended returning to Kindrochet the later end of last week - for indeed My Dear

Sophia Stewart of Sheirglass to Duncan Robertson of Kindrochet 26

Duncan however much "more comfortable" you may suppose I feel here or however happy I might in other circumstances be for a little while with my sister, the idea of having left your sister in so very precarious a state of health was so great and constant an alloy to any enjoyment I might otherwise have that I resolved on returning to her when these more favourable accounts induced me to defer going, I knew too the house would be quite full enough without me, last Sunday being the Sacrament day at Blair, when your friends from Dalchaloch, and some of the family from Findynate were there I now think I shall remain here till the Logierait Sacrament which is to be on the 9th of August and attend there along with my Sister If your application for leave is granted I trust you will be with us by that time if not I will then go over to see Betsy and afterwards take the first opportunity of going to Perth, and joining you in Aberdeen, indeed I would almost regret your taking leave for the short period of one Month anxious as we all were to have you with us especially as from Coll JKs?? procrastinating way, a week or more of the time may be elapsed before you can leave Aberdeen, and I fancy there will be no hope of a prolongation of it at present. Unless your coming to Perth may be useful, in endeavouring once more to have that truly teasing bussiness*sic*, which has already given you so much trouble, settled, and I fear whatever chance there is of its being settled when you are present, there is none at all of its being done in your absence, I shall be anxious to know the result of your correspondence with Dun: Stewart 2 Did you apply to him for a draught of such a Discharge as it would be proper for you to sign I should think that would be your safest plan since Menzies chose to send you the kind of one he did - after all that so lately passed at Perth tho I can hardly think yet that if application was made for it, they could refuse taking your Separate Discharge for the Portion, if they do I think they give pretty strong proof of their consciousness that something more is due when they are so much afraid of claims being made upon them I hope you had a pleasant excursion to Col. Wood, if ?paper torn you do not get your leave you must endeavour to make out all your other visits near and afar before I join you, for I do not think I will be much inclined to jaunt about 3 we have been very quiet here since I came till a few days ago, when we had a visit from Col. Robertson and all his family from Duneaves, they came to dinner Monday and staid*sic* all night on thier way to Strathgroy, the Col. really makes a most Patriarcheal*sic* appearance trudging along beside his covered cart containing his wife, his three children, and two servants!!! Capt Campbles*sic* Borland, Jean McGlashin, and two of the Findynate girls spent the day here yesterday. Capt C was scarcely away when Margaret McLaren from Edinr with the whole tribe of young Menzies's came in and prevented my writing till I find I am too late for the post which I regret much knowing your anxiety about poor Betsy, however I hope Helen would find time to write you some of these days Mr and Mrs Stewart join me in kindest wishes and in hopes of seeing you soon and hearing from you still sooner I ever am My Dearest Duncan Most affectionately yours Sophia Robertson

**NOTES 1** Doctor John Stewart, Findynate, had visited Betsy professionally and acted as postal delivery man in bringing over with him to Strath Tay the letter from Duncan which had been addressed to Sophia at Kindrochet.

**2** Duncan Stewart, writer in Edinburgh, was a lawyer cousin who was trying to disentangle the affairs at Shierglass following the death of Sophia's eldest brother John in 1816.

**3** This remark suggests that Sophia may have been pregnant at this time.

No. **30**From **SOPHIA STEWART** or **ROBERTSON** ?Kindrochet undated ?**September 1818** This memorandum is on a small 6 inches by 4 inches piece of paper in the hand of SOPHIA STEWART or ROBERTSON; it seems clear from the wording that it was originally prepared to help her husband DUNCAN ROBERTSON but addressed to her at Kindrochet as 'Mrs Capt Robertson / Kindrochet' *in what is probably the hand of a servant.* 1 Memorandum of Articles to be sent in my trunk from Aberdeen. My riding habit A pair of stays four white wrappers 2 slips A bundle of new muslin which is in the large trunk All the loose pieces of flannel in the large trunk and 2 flannel peticoats*sic* to be found in some of the other trunks. All the white worsted yarn either in hanks or clues 2 I think it is in my smallest trunk or your brown one All the flannel and other small things you took away before The Band Box as it is, and a parcel of my Shoes and Boots which is in the trunk to be sent here A Black Satin peticoats*sic* and gown with short sleeves If these things do not nearly fill the trunk you can put in the finest piece of new flannel you will find in the bottom of the large trunk in the end next the window.

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**NOTES1** This list of the contents of a trunk may well refer to the trunk which arrived on or about 3 October 1818 and is referred to in Sophia Robertson's letter of that date.

No. 31 From **SOPHIA STEWART** or **ROBERTSON** Kindrochet **14 September 1818** To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Aberdeen Postmarked: 'BLAIR ATHOLE' and 'MONTROSE' partly illegible. Price: '10'. Seal: black wax device of hexagonal frame containing the name 'Sophia' on a sheet of paper 14 by 9 inches embossed with a Royal Crown and the word 'BATH' within a rectangle with rounded corners: watermarked 'LONDON 1817'. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson 88th Regt Aberdeen'. Annotations: 'Receivd 18th Sept 1818 / Ansd 22d Do' in Duncan Robertson's hand plus a few scribbles and headed in finest copperplate 'Missent to Montrose'.

Kindrochet 14th Sept 1818 Once more My Dearest Duncan are we condemned to this limited mode of intercourse and obliged to have recourse to the pen, which I wished and hoped the last time I wrote you I might renounce almost for ever; such, Alas is the fallacy of many of our dearest hopes, and being my only consolation is, that having thus sacrificed my inclination to what I considered my duty, and again remained behind you, Providence may in Mercy enable us to meet again with increased happiness, in the mean time hearing, as often as you can spare time, from you is a comfort sought and will be thankful for - I had the pleasure of receiving your letter of the 8th on Saterdaysic forenoon and had the paper before me to thank you for it by return of post, when I was interuptedsic by the arrival of Cousin Duncan and that Idler, Sandy Robertson Dunkeld every useful person in the house was busily employed that day, spreading the lint, and making the hay stack, so that I was obliged very reluctantly to take post beside the Strangers, who thought fit to remain till the evening and consequently prevented my writing you - We were all happy to hear of your safe arrival at Aberdeen, though I regretedsic that the worn out Hack prevented your paying a visit to the worthy family at Auchtergaven? Your Father had a letter from William Saterdaysic dated the 15th? July he is well but very feelingly deplored the loss we have all sustained by the death of your worthy Mother which your letter of April informed him of your Brother is like yourself a Widower at present, he says his eldest girl Eliza unfortunately sprained her anclesic some time ago in a manner that still gives her considerable uneasiness, the constant swelling and pain occasioned a breaking out and sore about the heel, which with the effect of the long confinery?? upon the childs health induced him to send her to the Sea Bathing, Mrs Robertson naturally anxious about her girl would not part with her and has also taken the two young ones with them to place called Soamaraska?? about 27 miles from Montreal where they were to remain till the begginingsic of Sept, it is a teriblesic journey, and must be attended with much inconvenience but I pray it will have the happy effect of restoring the poor young invalid to health and strength, indeed your Brother says he had already when he wrote good accounts of her returning health, tho the foot had not yet got much better Your sister Betsy is not at all worse thensic when you left, indeed I hope she is rather gaining a very little - She has had no relapse whatever since, has been frequently down stairs for a little while and several times out, she was able yesterday to walk nearly to Strowan without feeling any bad effects from it, and I hope while the weather paper torn continues at all favourable she will be able to go out? paper torn a little every day for Myself My Dear Duncan I am still much the same as you left me likewise duller certainly in Body and Mind thensic I would wish but I daily strive to be or to imagine myself to be what I ought, knowing that our lives are at all times in the hands of a Gracious God, we may with confidence "cast our care upon Him trusting that He careth for us" - and endeavour in patience to possess our souls My own health is perfectly good You could not have time to write My Brother Alexr by young Riedsic - I wrote him a very long letter but I did not venture to send him copies of the papers we talked of sending, however I let him know as perlicu--larly as I could the State of affairs between all parties, and certainly did not conceal my opinion of the very partial conduct of the Executors between Charles and all other parties concerned, nor of Charles's own conduct towards Derculich as well as towards ourselves I also mentioned your intention of writing him very soon and that you would then explain to him better than I could all your Military hopes views and intentions I hope you will by and bye find time to write him tho I suspect you will have more engagements for this month thensic you can well attend to, I am glad of it as it will occupy your time and amuse you, and to know that you My Dearest Duncan are well and happy is the

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greatest happiness my heart can know Your Father desires me to say that he received your note from Perth, with all its contents or accompaniments quite safe, and that everything will be settled according to your directions Donald Robertson Bruar has come in since I begun writing, and your Father has just come up to tell me that the poor fellow has given him £10 which I fancy nearly settles his concern We got all the things you bought in Perth by last week's carrier quite safe I am in no hurry for my trunk till you are perfectly at leisure but if the many items already mentioned will not fill it will you cause Nelly look over the old sheets of which there are three pair and send me one or two pair of the finest of them, the Shoes mentioned in the Memorandum need not be sent as I was obliged to send to Perth for a pair already - do not forget the keys of the Book chest I blievesic you disaprovedsic of sending the salted fish I wanted but I still wish for it notwithstanding, Barny Nieuman ? will be a good judge of it if you would make him buy three or four good ones and bind them on the top of the trunk, they will be safer and cheaper than if in a separate package make him cut off their heads as they are of no use and add to the weight in pity to you My Dear Duncan I will have done with kindest love from all here and fervent prayers for Heaven's best Blessing I ever am your truly affectionate  
Sophia Robertson

No. 32

From **SOPHIA STEWART** or **ROBERTSON** Kindrochet **23 September 1818**

To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Aberdeen Postmarked: 'BLAIR ATHOLE' partly illegible. Price: '10'. Seal: black wax device of hexagonal frame containing the name 'Sophia' on a sheet of paper embossed with a Royal Crown and the word 'BATH' within a rectangle with rounded corners: watermarked 'LONDON 1817'.

Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson 88th Regt Aberdeen'. Annotations: 'Receivd 26th Sept 1818 / Ansd with parcel 28 Do Do' in Duncan Robertson's handwriting.

Kindrochet 23d Sept 1818 Although I trust your anxiety, my Dearest Duncan, about those you left behind is completely removed by the receipt of my last letter before now which certainly ought to have reached you before the 17th I do not lose a day in again addressing you and acknowledging your last, which having been Missent to Shierglass and perhaps remaining a day at Blair I only had the pleasure of recievingsic last night I regret your disapointmentsic at not hearing from home, and consequent anxiety, excessively indeed the difficulty in procuring a person at this busy season to go to Blair as often as we could wish, with various other causes, may sometimes occassionsic a disapointmentsic of a day or two in hearing from each other but I trust My Dearest Duncan there is not now any great cause for anxiety, as I thank God we are all doing tolerablysic well, altho not quite so gay as you and the good Aberdonians are Betsy I am happy to say has had an easy comfort--able week since I last wrote you and altho the pain in her shoulder still reminds her that she must yet continue the use of her Medicine, she is able to walk as far as Strouansic every day that the weather will permit, and I trust we may now safely indulge the hope of her restoration to health and strength the greatest evil that I have now to complain of is My Dear Duncan the want of your own Society but that I can assure you is to me a very serious one and for such a length of time too, could I only flatter myself with any degree of certainty that you could return to us in Novr I would submit with much patience but this even I fear I dare not hope for however I must not already begin to Bother you upon this subject but trust that "whatever is is best" and console myself with the certainty that you will use every effort to obtain leave as early as possible If you have had as much rain in Aberdeen as we had here for these ten days past it must have annoyed the Great and the Gay folks in their amusements nearly as much as it has retarded us in our more humble but more useful occupations there is still a good deal of the corn to cut down here, indeed it is not yet all ripe, but a few days would finish the harvest in general through the Country The Barn is finished and the Man is busy thatching the other house when not prevented by the rain I have sent word to Old McDonald to come and receive his money to day the note fortunately arrived in safety notwithstanding your letter being on its travels You will be surprised to hear of poor Johnysic Urrards Death, he has been ill these ten days past and died Monday Morning his death will be a great loss to Miss Stewart and Mrs Alston **page 4** As I cannot suppose that my last letter has not reached you before, I will not now detain the Boy by repeating any thing I then mentioned, for fear I may be late for the post but with kindest love from all here remain My Dearest Duncan  
your ever affectionate Sophia R

No. 33 From **SOPHIA STEWART** or **ROBERTSON** Kindrochet 3 October 1818 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Aberdeen Postmarked: 'BLAIR ATHOLE'. Price: '10'. Seal: black wax with an octagon containing the name 'Sophia'. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson / 88th Regt / Aberdeen'. Annotations: 'Recd 6th Oct / Ansd 8 Do' in DR's handwriting.

Kindrochet 3d Octr 1818 My dearest Duncan Altho your truly welcome letter of 22d Sept has remained a few days longer unacknowledged than I intended, I trust my last letter has completely prevented any anxiety an occasional silence of a few days from this quarter might give you As few I blievesic My Dear Duncan are more sensible of the uneasiness and painful anxiety occasioned by a State of Suspense than myself, so none certainly ought to be more attentive in removing it from others. Heaven only knows how long and how often my heart has laboured under it when unavoidably at a distance from the object of my most tender affection and now I cannot help fretting *?sic* against myself for allowing, perhaps an imaginary evil to separate us. Twenty times a day am I obliged to repeat to myself the hope that you will soon return to us, and at all events, that we acted for the best, but I must confess my heart is often, very often as wayward as a child's. Yet I have great reason to thank God, My health is at present perfectly good. 1 Betsy I am happy to say also continues to recover. She is now down stairs and out every day, in short we are all so stout that Helen and I paid a visit in Glenerrochty, from whence we only returned last night after spending two days at Dalchalech 2 very pleasantly by the bye your Uncle says he was in a terrible passion with you very lately and desired me to let you know that he had yet a "crow to pluck" with you for sending him an "April errand" to Fincastle where he went eight or ten days ago to receive the Money as he expected for repairing the Strouansic Road and Bridge, but it seems our information here was incorrect, as Col. Stewart 3 had never got the Money and could not even assure your Uncle that it was granted as he had heard nothing of it since the day he presented the petition however Mr Stewart staid dinner with the Col. and the Girls alledge he came home in very good humour notwithstanding his disappointment he has since seen Mr Condie on his way from Rannoch and beg'd him to make enquiry at Mr Patons 4 office about the said Money, so that there is still some hope that it may be forthcoming in time partly to repair the Bridge and road before Winter We had a visit from My Friend Derculich last week, he came here from his House Heart'ssic poor Johnie Urrard funeral on Saturday last, and remained all night. 5 My sister and he are well, they intend going to Perth next week but I believe they are both too sober-minded to think of partaking of the Gaieties of the Hunt or Races, even should her Majesty live long enough *to* allow them to go on 6 they have little chance of being so Brilliant as your Aberdeen Races and Balls, I really never heard of anything like it. Much as I prefer retirement in general, I almost wished to have seen such an assemblage of Beauty and Fashion I envy'd you of the Marquis of Huntly's ball but I cannot allow you to compare his iniquitous old Dad to our worthy Good Duke 7 some of Athole family are almost every day visiting their new purchase opposite to us I understand they admire it very much The continuous rains still retard the harvest very much Your Father has a good deal of oats to cut yet, and has only been able to get in a very few cart loads however it is still early in the season and a very few good days will finish the whole The thatching is not yet finished but will be in three or four days The Masons also came a few days ago to build the Shade, 8 so that loading the heather, the distance they are obliged to go for it, and driving horses for the Masons, keeps the Men and horses as busy as possible but be assured the wood from Rannoch will not be neglected as soon as they can go for it Your Father desires me to mention to you that all the business you wrote from Perth about is settled according to your wish but he is, I understand uneasy about a Bill in Cargills hands and anxious to know if you made any arrangement with him when you went down Will you mention to me in your next if you did or write to your Father himself about it After writing this far in the forenoon I found there was not a creature to be had that could go to Blair in time for the post I am now glad I did not get it sent, as I have just received your truly welcome letter along with my trunk. 9 Accept My Dearest Duncan my grateful thanks for your attention to all my wants and wishes, in the midst of your bustle, I put you to a great deal of trouble, and I fear to more expencesic than I intended for my dried fish which I thought were always cheap in Aberdeen, however they seem admirable fish if you paid high for them 10 I got the keys and every thing quite safe, the contents of the Book chest will be a great relief to us now that the evenings are getting long Your Father and Sisters join in kindest

Sophia Stewart of Sheirglass to Duncan Robertson of Kindrochet 30

wishes to you. Accept my most affectionate love and Blievesic me ever Dearest Duncan  
own Sophia Robertson

your

## NOTES

- 1 These sentences suggest that Sophia may have been in the early stages of what turned out to be an unsuccessful pregnancy.
- 2 Dalchalech, now Dalcalloch, was then the home of William Stewart, uncle to Duncan Robertson the brother of his mother Jean Stewart, who died in 1818. Their father was William Stewart, tacksman of the Miln at Blair Athole.
- 3 Colonel Stewart of Fincastle was possibly Gilbert Stewart of Fincastle or more probably one of his sons Robert or James
- 4 Condie was the Robertson of Kindrochet's lawyer in Perth. It is possible that Mr Paton was in charge of the Excise Office in Perth.
- 5 'Johnie Urrard' was John Stewart, 9th Laird of Urrard, who died unmarried in September 1818.
- 6 This reference to 'her Majesty' is to Queen Charlotte, consort of George III, who died a few weeks after this letter was written.
- 7 In October 1818 the courtesy title Marquis of Huntly was borne by George Gordon 1770-1836, GCB, a general in the army, colonel of the Scots fusiliers and sometime governor of Edinburgh Castle; he was the elder and only surviving son of Alexander, 4th Duke of Gordon 1743-1827; he was therefore an almost exact contemporary of Robert Stewart of Garth 1742-1820 and a near contemporary of John, 4th Duke of Atholl 1755-1830. His portrait in oil on canvas was painted by Pompeo Batoni in 1764, when he was aged 21. The painting has recently been acquired by the National Gallery of Scotland and shows very well the fashionable dress of a rich young aristocrat in Scotland at that time. The 4th Duke married Jane Maxwell as his 1st wife in 1767; she bore him two sons and five daughters and died in 1812. He married in July 1820, as his 2nd wife, Jane Christie, by whom who died 1824 he had no issue; perhaps this was a mésalliance, preceded by other relationships with women, which led Sophia to describe him as an 'iniquitous old Dad'. He died in 1827 and was succeeded as 5th and last Duke of Gordon by his son George, who married but had no children; at the latter's death in 1836 the Dukedom of Gordon became extinct. The Marquessate of Huntly devolved upon his kinsman George Gordon 1761-1853, 5th Earl of Aboyne.  
The 4th Duke of Atholl also married twice, in 1774 and 1794, and had two children only, both of whom died in infancy, by his second wife. This may have been the basis of Duncan's comparison.
- 8 'Shade' is a northern and Scotch spelling presumably reflecting the pronunciation of 'Shed'

No. **34** From **SOPHIA STEWART** or **ROBERTSON** Derculich **5 July 1821**

To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** London Postmarked: 'DUNKELD' & 'B / 10 JY 10 / 1821'. Price: '12' & ". Seal: black: oval frame enclosing sprig of Myositis surrounded by the words 'Forget me not'. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson / 88th Regt / Care of Messrs McDonald Campbell & Co / Regent Street / London'. Annotations: 'Mrs R 5th July 1821' and 'Recd 11th July / Ansd 18th Do' by Duncan Robertson.

Derculich July 5th 1821 I have now My Dearest Duncan to acknow--ledge your much wished for letters from London, the last came to Kindrochet after I left which made me several days longer in receiving it but I suspect this will still be time enough to find you, in that vortex where, having once got in, you will find it no easy matter to extricate yourself. It is certainly very teasing to be kept so long waiting the Great Man's leisure but if his Lordship is pleased to return a favourable answer at last it is well worth waiting for, at all events it is certainly better that you remain even for a few weeks more in London than be obliged to return there again. You will easily believe that I have many a wish for your success there, tho' my hopes are not now so sanguine as they have been, but should we be disapointedsic of the Pension I would regret it certainly but not as I once would have done and if the Brevet would fortunately reach you it would soften the disapointmentsic very much I fear you will regret leaving the Metropolis before the Corronationsic when it is so near but I very sincerely wish you out of it before the dreadful confusion and bustle of that Grand day takes place, the very idea of the tremendous crowds of people where anything is expected to be seen makes me perfectly nervous, altho' I know that these things have nothing so appalling to you, it will make me very happy to find by your next letter

Sophia Stewart of Sheirglass to Duncan Robertson of Kindrochet 31

that you are again safely arrived in Liverpool and if you can then My Dear Duncan give me some idea when you can come part of the way to meet me your letter will be doubly welcome at the same time I must say that travelling with my little darling is a charge greater than I ever had, and what I would avoid if possible but I fancy there would not be any chance of your getting Leave this winter, even tho' I should return to Kindrochet again indeed I suppose you could not with propriety ask it; but your Father and Sisters were so unwilling to part with the little one, and so anxious to have you with them, that on leaving home last week I promised to return if you could give any hope of getting home during the winter. Will you say if you think there is any chance of it Betsy came over with me last week and is still with us, our young traveller bore the journey well and is I thank God healthy and lively, altho her teeth have already begun to be troublesome, she has already got one and another is cutting the gum poor little thing this is the begginingsic of her trials but I have great reason to be thankful that it has been made so easy to her as yet Will you take the trouble of finding out if Mrs Docherty has joined her husband yet, and if not, where she is to be found, she must have left the place she was in before I wrote as I had no answer from her, and the girl I have, altho attentive enough to the Child is so ignorant and Country looking, I cannot be reconciled to taking her with me, if I could get any other. My Sister and Mr Stewart intends going to Rothsaysic about the begginingsic of August as they were prevented going sooner If you do not mean to come down this season it will be a good opportu--nity for me to go so far on my way with them. My Sister rides out every day and seems considerably better than she was. I hope the mild air of Rothsay and the warm baths will be of great use to her Charles has gone to the Sea Bathing, he complains much of Rheumatism, his daughter is much better and has gone with him Have you found out Trinafour and his young wife yet? His Sister Mrs Campbell was safely delivered of a fine Boy a few days before I came over, they were doing well to the great joy of all about them this is a lucky year to the Trinafours, with Births and Marriages they are as happy as possible Poor Robert Mackglashan is still in a very melancholy way and I grieve to hear with very little prospect of recovery, at least he is rather getting worse than better as yet theresic greatest enemy might pity his poor Mother and Sisters, they are in the greatest misery The Balechinsic were all here a few days ago, they were enquiring very particularly for you. Balechin seems quite a New Man on having got back to the Land of his fathers again but the Lady is at heart a Southron and will continue so The crops look much better on this side of the Hill than in Athole, tho even here they will be very short, but there they are very much burnt up indeed, such a long tract of dry weather has destroyed the hay and pasture lands irrecoverably I fear this season I will My Dear Duncan be looking anxiously for your next letter, which you will address to me here, as I mean to stay with my sister till she goes from home she and Mr Stewart with Betsy join in kindest wishes to you and that the Almighty may Bless and preserve you My Dearest Duncan is the most earnest wish and prayer of your ever affectionate Sophia Robertson

**35 From SOPHIA STEWART or ROBERTSON Derculich 1 August 1821 To DUNCAN ROBERTSON**  
Manchester. Postmarked: 'AUG B 2 A 1821' with circular red stamp, 'STOCKPORT 179' and 'DUNKELD 3' both in black and partly obliterated. Price: '16' and '12'. Seal: red wax device of rectangular frame surrounding a stylised sunflower under a sun in the sky with on either side the words 'TIBI' and 'SOLI'. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson 88th Regt Stockport Manchester Cheshire' of which the words 'Stockport' and 'Cheshire' have been deleted. Annotations: 'Mrs R Augt 1st 1821' and 'Recd 7th Augt Ansd same day', plus a number of scribbled money calculations in DR's hand.

Derculich August 1st 1821 My Dearest Duncan Altho I have scarcely an hour before the post passes I sit down to acknowledge however hurriedly your welcome letter which reached me last night My wish to join you is I see at rather an inconvenient season but as you are moving now you may be tolerably well settled in your new quarters before we arrive as I may remain a week or two with our friends at Rothsay, Helensburgh or the Isle of Man, as they cannot yet resolve which of the three places they will stop at, as it is only the warm Bath my Sister can use and we have no means of acertainingsic till they get to Glasbowsic if there are any at Rothsay I had the idea that you would be again Detachedsic Do you prefer it at this time or how does it happen? however as it is so I should think it would do away any chance you would otherwise have had of Leave for any length of time this season But My Dear Duncan, if upon seeing our new quarters, or the fear of

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this reported reduc--tion which by the bye is groundless I hope or from any other Cause you think it better that I should remain in the Country some time longer I shall still have time to hear from you here, if you write immedi--ately upon receipt of this, Say So, and I will return to Kindrochet for a month or two by which time I fancy our fate will be known, it is a serious look out for us as well as many others I wish we had the coveted Barrack Mastership !!! I am disapointed at not getting Mrs Dogherty Mrs Graham is always before hand but the girl I have may perhaps answer as well She is not very deficient in any of the qualifications you mention, and seeing the world will brush her up, her want of beauty is perhaps no fault she will have the better chance of being left with me Will you mention if you know what days the Steam Boats sail from Grenocksic to Liverpool, as that would determine us what day to leave this 'place' implied that we might not be detained there Doctor Stewart Findynate has I am very sorry to say been very ill these ten days past with a violent sore throat, attended with a great degree of fever he was better yesterday but still far from well, Mrs Stewart and Helen have been at Kirkcaldy for sea Bathing these some weeks past, your Aunt is much the better and means to remain some time yet I will expect to hear from you once more, before I leave this place, either to join you or go to Kindrochet could you join us I would prefer the latter for a month or two yet certainly but if not I own My Dear Duncan I feel this long seperationsic a great hardship, even tho we did seperatesic by mutual consent you will forget your little puss altogether if you do not see her soon pray is the Doctor Bartlett to be with you or with Tryons Detachment, I would like to have some Medico with us now however little we might require his aid I thank God my little Darling is lively and well all here join me in best wishes to you if I do go South I will write you as soon as we cast Anchor any where, in the mean time I will expect a letter from you about this day week and I am My Dearest Duncan in Much haste your ever affectionate Sophia Robertson

No. 36 From **SOPHIA STEWART** or **ROBERTSON** Kindrochet 20 August 1821 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Manchester. Postmarked: 'AUG B 22 A 1821' with circular red stamp and 'BLAIR ATHOL 473 E' in black. Price: '11'. Seal: red wax device of rectangular frame surrounding a stylised sunflower under a sun in the sky with on either side the words 'TIBI' and 'SOLI'. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson 88th Regt Manchester'. Annotations: 'Mrs R. 20th Augst 1821' and 'Recvd 24th Augst Ansd 25 Do'. Kindrochet 20th August 1821 From my delay in writing you My Dear Duncan I daresaysic you are by this time in daily expectation of our disturbing your Bachelor life, and popingsic in upon you "Bag and Baggage" But no such danger threatens you at present, for here we are again settled as safely as you could wish and you are still secure from any molestation from that hum drum thing called a wife Your letter reached me at Derculich in time to prevent my setingsic out to join you but my trunks were in Perth and myself prepared to follow in two days for I had given up all hopes of your getting Leave My Sister remonstrated warmly against my remaining any longer in the Country and protested against my absenting myself longer from my Goodman as a positive breach of Duty I say Nay while I have my Goodmans aprobationsic but she still insists that we are both positively in the Wrong had I followed my inclination only I certainly would not have required any persuasion from her or any one else, to join you as soon as possible but I trust she is mistaken in her opinion and still think it much better that you My Dear Duncan should come to us as soon as you can than that I should go to you immediately and deprive your Father and Sisters of the happiness they would enjoy from your being with them for some time. I need not say how very much gratified they all are in the prospect of your obtaining some months Leave Heaven forbid that any unforeseensic circumstance should occur to disapointsic us, I would then indeed find myself in the Wrong, but will not think of it Charles sent his gig to meet us at Balinluig the day we left Derculich and I remained some days at Shierglass, Sophy has got much better and is I hope out of all danger at this time. Derculich was to leave home the day after I came away, but whether for Rothsay or St Andrews, he was not determined, and my Sister was too indifferent where they went to fix I hope in God she may derive benefit from the Bath wherever they take it her health is very precarious indeed this Season I blievesic we have seldom parted with more regret but I trust she will be much stouter when we meet again I came here Friday last and found the family all well and ready to recievesic myself and little one with a welcome warm and kind as usual Oh My Dear Duncan could you know how very much I long to place my little pet in your arms, I often fear you forget her altogether, but when you see her, she is so completely your own, you "cannot choose but love her", such a lively interesting little thing, but I must not raise your expectations too



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much for she is neither very stout not very pretty, but you will easily believe *sic* that I am very partial and that I wish to bespeak your partiality likewise Lady Edra? *i.e. Edradynate?* had another Daughter two days before I left Strathtay She fully expected the young Laird this time, but people ought not to be too secure on these occasions John Findynate is quite well again but looks Miserably ill John Robertson Milton had a letter from your Brother William very lately, he has another Son added to his family since we heard from him, Sophia Jane and he are within a day of the same age Your Brothers family are all well except poor Eliza who he says is obliged to be carried about like a child for some time past poor thing What an affliction to herself and her parents The Crop here looks better than could be expected from the long continued drought but I must say it is very far from good generally in this part of the Country; the potatoes here are excellent and they have got a great quantity of fuel home in great order Did I ever mention to you that Lude was sold? Mr McInroy is the purchaser £58000 the price it is feared there will be a considerable deficiency for paying the Debts fifteen shillings in the pound is talked of which with the loss of interest for these three years past in a serious loss to the creditors, however they are all glad it is sold that they may get something McInroy has the House furnished till Martinmas and part of his family are already there Helen says she wrote you lately and will be happy to hear from you as soon as convenient you will be so much engaged preparing for your Inspection you will have little time to spare for letter writing but when you have leisure remember me, you may believe *sic* I will be counting the days for six perhaps eight weeks to come I do not My Dear Duncan at all like the idea of your being in these, so very new, Barracks, they must be excessively damp, you certainly ought to have fire in your room during the day, and take care not to place your Bed near the wall, I trust you will *not consider* these precautions unworthy of your notice, we know well there is nothing more dangerous than this damp of New Buildings will you give my Best Wishes to Mrs Nickles, I wish she would write me when she comes to Edinr but I fear she thinks me a bad correspondent does the Major come down with her? All here join me in kindest wishes to you Accept My Dear Duncan of my affectionate love and Believe *sic* me ever your  
Sophia Robertson

No. 37 From **SOPHIA STEWART** or **ROBERTSON** Kindrochet **3 September 1821** To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Dublin Postmarked: 'SEP D 5 A 1821' with circular red stamp and 'BLAIR ATHOL 473 E' in black. Price: '21'. Seal: red wax device of rectangular frame surrounding a stylised sunflower under a sun in the sky with on either side the words 'TIBI' and 'SOLI'. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson 88th Regt Dublin' and marked 'To remain at the Post Office till called for'. Annotations: 'Mrs R. 3 Sept 1821' and 'Recvd 4th Sept 1821 Ansd 14th Do' in DR's handwriting.

Kindrochet 3 Sept 1821 I was favoured with yours My Dearest Duncan a few days ago but the happiness I felt at hearing from you sooner even than I expected was soon succeeded by a degree of astonishment and dismay, You may more easily conceive than I can describe when I found the truly unlooked for change about to take place in your Destination. To be sent to Ireland was so totally unexpected, and ordered off too, and me at such a distance from you, was quite overpowering, and I could not help bitterly upbraiding myself for not joining you in place of coming home as I did After reading and re-reading your letter, my first impulse was to write immediately and implore you to take advantage of the liberty at present given take whatever you could get for the exchange and go on half-pay but a little reflection reminded me that with us there is so much against as well as something in favour of this step that I cannot venture to recommend it Pray have you thought of it at all yourself? Or are you resolved My Dear Duncan to remain as you are, for surely all hopes of promotion are at an end for the present So Tryon has done the comfortable thing and become his own Master; in his case it was surely the most sensible thing he could do, but I wish that Napier had got his Company what has become of Knight Col Tryons servant I wish you could secure him, but I daresay if he is kept in the Regt the Col would secure so good a servant for himself Col. David Stewart calld *sic* here yesterday on his way from Athole House he says the Second Majors are still to go, positively, but you have no doubt all the information on the subject he has he has become the most successful farmer in all these Countrys Miss Flemmings *sic* not excepted, for even this season while others *sic* peoples crops are scarcely worth cutting his is as heavy as can grow this is no rhodomontade for the Crop has been sold at an enormous price the Strathgroy crop also sold very high, I was most anxious that your Father would get a small lot to purchase somewhere near us for I do not think

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thiersic is hay or straw in this part of the Country to keep the cattle alive one half of the winter, unless it is a very favourable one indeed, the harvest will be in general tolerably early I heard from my Sister a few days ago from Rothsay, they tried both Helensburgh and Rothsay but are much disapointed in both as Bathing Quarters, and mean to return home this week. Betsy and I were two nights at Dalchaloch since I came home, the Trinafours and I had a meeting of our three young ones there to the great delight of all concerned, but the Cripple Doctor's son and hiersic so completely Distanced us all, he certainly is the most wonderfully fine child of his age I ever saw Your Uncle has taken another lease of his farm and I am glad of it even at the high rent he pays he will get few such places in this Country The 19th of this month is the day fixed for the Sale of Auchleeks it is now to be sold by public sale, his friends expect Doctor Robertson will be the purchaser but he does not say much about it, William Stewart at Tullochs Brother John is talked of as a very determined offerer for Auchleeks, but I hope no such plebeansic will succeed the respectable family that so long possessed it. I endeavour to forget while writing you My Dearest Duncan the distance you are removed to, indeed I cannysic bear to think of the teriblesic Barrier that is now between us, Please God this is the last time I shall ever remain behind if you do continue soldiering nothing but the most positive necessity shall again prevent my accompanying you I need not ask you to write in the first leisure moment you have, I shall be most anxious till I hear of your safe arrival, all here join me in every good wish and that the Almighty may preserve and Bless you is My Dearest Duncan the earnest prayer of your affectionate Sophia Robertson

Kindrochet 11th April 1821 My Dearest Duncan You will I dare say be surprised to find me writing you so soon but the mental and bodily pain I felt when you were leaving us made me suspect this morning I might have omitted putting up some of your things, and on inspection I was sorry to find your Pussie Aniesic Cap was left behind, likeways your Dictionary, both of which I think you will regret the want of, in thiersic time and place, and as they can easily overtake you in Edinr I have forwarded them and hope you will not think me "penny wise" in doing so as you could, no doubt, have readily supplied their place with new ones at all events, I was not sorry for an apology for addressing you, even thus briefly while I can suppose you rather more within reach than you will be in a few days hence. I should be sorry to think that you My Dearest Duncan felt as acutely as I have done for some time in the idea of our being again separated and with little probability of meeting for a considerable time, but I will not conceal from you that the idea of your not feeling at all what distressed me so much, formed no small part of my uneasiness and gave it a poignancy which nothing else in this world could do Indifference or neglect from any friend is painful certainly but from you My Dear Duncan, who for so many of the best years of my life has been more than all the world besides to me, it would really make life a burden painful to be borne and would throw a gloom over every circumstance of it which no paper torn earthly consideration could cheer. I have slid into this topic without intending it, but I will not further annoy you, I know expostulation on these delicate subjects seldom does good even where there is great cause for it but out of the "fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh" and my pen will write you must forgive me My Dearest Duncan if I do you injustice for in whatever else I am to blame God knows I ever was am, and will be most truly and affectionately your Sophia Robertson PS as I mean to go over the Hill in eight or ten days you will better address your first letter from Ireland which I trust will be as soon as possible after your arrival there to Derculich God grant this fine calm weather may last during your journey and give you a safe and pleasant passage across poor Jean McNaughtensic will be disapointedsic if she does not see you I am sure Mrs Shaw knows where she is to be found Sophy has just got up and gives me a kiss to send Papa her first enquiry in the morning was for you that the Almighty may bless and preserve you My Dear Duncan is the earnest prayer of your S R

No. 39 From **SOPHIA STEWART** or **ROBERTSON** Derculich **12 May 1823** To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Claremorris, Mayo, Ireland. Postmarked: 'GLASGOW 405 G A 15 MAY 1823' circular black stamp and 'C 19 MY 19 1823' circular red stamp. Price: '23'. Seal: red wax device of rectangular frame surrounding a stylised sunflower under a stylised sun in the sky with on opposite sides the words 'TIBI' and 'SOLI'. Addressed to:

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'Capt Robertson 88th Regt Claremorris Mayo Ireland'. Annotations: 'Mrs R 12th May 1823' and 'Received 20th May 1823' in DR's hand plus some scribbles which are probably nib-testing. Note the very unusual absence of any note of the date of DR's reply.

Derculich 12th May 1823

My Dearest Duncan Your much wished for, and most gratefully received *sic* letter reached me nearly a week ago, and tho I am truly thankful to find you have got safe and well to your journey's end, I still feel so much depressed at remaining behind you and being again obliged to commence a correspondence which I had so often wished and prayed I might not again have to do at such a distance from you, that I really have scarcely spirits left to do anything We left Kindrochet about a fortnight after you did and, after staying a few days at Shierglass, came over here. Our little pet I am happy to say enjoyed the drive here much, and was not a bit the worse of it. She seemed perfectly at home the moment she came in and appeared to recognise every person and thing she saw Our friends from Shierglass came here a few days after I did, the Ladies stayed ten days, Miss Stewart Crossmount was also here, and before they left us the Blair Manse girls came, who, with Cathrine *sic* Stewart from Perth, are still with us, all these young folks with Sophy make a little more noise than is quite agreeable sometimes, and make me wish I had deferred *sic* my visit a little longer, but as the weather generally admits of her being out she does not upon the whole give much annoyance and is as lively and restless as ever you saw her and often asking when Papa is coming back with a Coachy and cock robins for his "Darling Doff" I am sorry to find you have not benefitted by your change of quarters, tho it is probable you will not remain long in them even if they had been good I regret much what you have heard of Dansy ?? *sic* I fear it will be a death blow to our hopes, and dread as you do that there may be a bustle about going abroad, which will leave you only one alternative, I mean that of retiring, however should that occur we must endeavour to be thankful that we have a last resort, if nothing better can be had, and of this I fear there is indeed but slender hopes John at Milton was here last week, he says Robert is getting on as well as possible at Kindrochet, so is Campble *sic* with the Dyke but he said the Mason was not making equally good progress with the house building, Auchleeks and the New Inn occupy all the good hands, and make it difficult for him to get any, so that he has no assistance whatever as yet I understand he is troublesome too in asking more money in advance than *sic* the Schoolmaster is willing to give him however he will inform you of all these things better than *sic* I can who only have them at second hand the Drovers people were as usual very much inclined to be restive, they did not and said they would not take the wood grass this season unless they got at thiers *sic* offer, which was certainly scarce worth taking, but if no one offers more will it not be better to take it than *sic* have nothing for it? The Mason and them are also differing about the time allowed him to remove the stones of the old houses in Airdrie, they say he interferes with on two small parts of address side the seed time, therefore they will have nothing ados *sic* with it I do not know if they have settled it amicably, but there is not much of that to be expect--ed from them, and I was averse to give an opinion or interfere with any thing as I did not know what you had said or meant to do before you went away I now regret very much I did not, for tho you made an agreement for every thing that could be thought of they are so ready to take advantage of your absence that a person who knew your intentions and could and would enforce them would be of great use I had your letters from Perth and Edinr before I left Kindrochet, I gave the £5 you sent to the Dominie, the other sum I will have no use for while here and will not draw it till we see whether I go to you or you come to me, the later *sic* I think not improbable at present Our news papers represent the South of Ireland in a most distressing state again, the Regt will not be sent there please God The Nickles are as fond of getting home as ourselves I think but I did not think they would get leave at this season I fancy the Major will leave his Lady in Edinr Sophy has interrupted me fifty times and is again come to write a letter to Papa She really occupys *sic* too much of my time and there is no way of getting quit of her here as at home with her Aunts I hope you will have satisfaction of your new servant but I fear he will not get much assistance from poor Nelly, however if she would answer at all, I always considered her more honest than any I met with, I fancy you did not hear of any hand maid for me in Edinr or you would of course have mentioned it niethers *sic* have I yet been able to procure one worth having I was sorry to find the key of the small Black canteen after you went away so if you want any thing out of it the lock must be picked Your sisters and I went to Auchleeks roup, the things did not sell high, but they were not at all so good as I thought, we did not purchase many things what we got were good bargains, the Trinafour people it seems had no intention of taking the furniture for the new house and bought very little only some beds which they got for half price I must conclude My Dear Duncan I trust you will

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continue to write me frequently and fully, Mr and Mrs Stewart and all the young Ladies desire to be kindly remembered to you and with every good wish and kind remembrance I ever am My Dearest Duncan your truly affectionate Sophia Robertson

No. 40 From SOPHIA STEWART or ROBERTSON Derculich 13 June 1823

To DUNCAN ROBERTSON Claremorris, Mayo, Ireland. Postmarked: 'GLASGOW 405 G A 15 JUN 1823' circular black stamp and '17 JU 17 1823' circular red stamp. Price: '23'. Seal: red wax rectangular frame enclosing a stylised sun and sunflower with on opposite sides the words 'TIBI' and 'SOLI'. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson 88th Regt Claremorris Mayo Ireland'. Annotations: 'Mrs R 13th Jun 1823' & 'Recd 18th June Ansd 21st' plus scribbled calculations in DR's hand.

Derculich 13th June 1823 I fear My Dearest Duncan you will again accuse me of tardiness in acknowledging your much valued letter which reached me ten days ago I do not know how it happens but with the best possible intentions I find myself invariably behind hand in writing which certainly ought not to be the case, for there is no one more anxious I may say impatient to hear from thier absent friends than I am, and your being so good a correspondent as never to disapointsic me, is the greatest consolation I have at present, it is a consolation too with which I suspect I must be satisfied for a considerable time I am disapointed<sup>sic</sup> to find that altho the Inspection is past there is still no word of your moving tho it is most probable you will do so some time during the Summer God grant you may move to a better quarter and one somewhat nearer the right side of the Island, at least the right side to me if ever I am again to visit the "Emerald Isle" a circumstance which, by the bye, I do not think very likely at present the changes likely to take place in this ? Regt will certainly place you in a very unpleasant dalemmas<sup>sic</sup> since you cannot well purchase the Majority yourself most earnestly do I wish you could, for I am convinced My Dear Duncan it would be your own wish if it could be done without a great sacrifice, but that I think would be extremely imprudent however I fear your doing so any way is entirely out of the question and therefore need not be mentioned You will perhaps before now have heard more of Major Nickles affair but whether this negotiations<sup>sic</sup> succeeds with him or not I am convinced they will use every effort to effect some exchanges that will keep them at home. Any home would be bad indeed that would not be preferable to carrying about such a family as they may soon have, but in my opinion Dancy's determination is of most consequence to you, whether he would remain as he is, quit or purchase, in either of the latter cases I think the sooner you would be out of the list of 88 Captains the better, but if he remains as he is might not you do so too, perticular<sup>sic</sup> if the Regt goes abroad A Junior Officer's getting the Majority even, would then be of less importance, at least as far as it concerned a person's feelings, and certainly My Dearest Duncan notwithstanding your very decided partiality for the "Braes of Athole", the Depot if it could be had, would, for us, be a "consec--reations<sup>sic</sup> devoutly to be wished" however I know well you are quite as well aware of this as I am, and will act accordingly and however anxious we may both be on these points, we must wait with patience for what a little time will bring forth Our friends here say little of when or where they mean to go for Sea Bathing this summer, indeed the weather ~~deleted~~ indeed the weather is still much too cold to think of it he Gordons from Aberdeenshire have intimated a visit of two or three weeks in the month of July, which if they make it out will prevent our getting away before the beginning of August but if the weather was at all favourable I would wish much to let Sophy have the benifits<sup>sic</sup> of Bathing before that time, as I think she still continues less vigorous and more liable to catch cold than before she took that Illness in winter tho she is still as lively as ever Our neighbours at Edradynate had thiers<sup>sic</sup> hopes and wishes realised since I last wrote you by the Birth of a Son and Hiers<sup>sic</sup> to all thier Estates and honours<sup>sic</sup>, he is doing well and was christened yesterday, James for Old Derculich Niel Stewart Perth has returned from Maderas<sup>sic</sup> some weeks ago, his Father says he is rather better than when he left home but still very weak, I am sorry to find they are still very aprehensives<sup>sic</sup> and uneasy about him Charles McDermid is at last roused from his lethargy and determined to do something for his family, he has taken the farm of Pitienie ? which John Menzies had, it is a great concern for a person so long accustomed to perfect idleness, however it is not thought high rented and he can purchase both his live and dead stock at a very easy rate he has not come to it yet, his Mother is not expected to live many weeks and he does not wish to leave her in that state I heard from Betsy yesterday and am glad to find they are all well at Kindrochet Sim comes over here almost every week and gives me regular accounts of the progress they make Sim is so partial to his own plan that he torments me about the roof and the windows, which he

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insists will never look or answer so well as them he recommended, however I am glad to hear they are making good work, and his looking at them occasionally is a great advantage he says your Father is quite taken up with the house and is in constant attendance every day Pray was it the beginning of July or August that they engaged to have it ready however it does not signify which for they can scarcely have it done now either the one or the other Your friends at Findynate are all well Mrs Stewart was in Athole last week, we never see the Doctor he is so constantly engaged, the Country is still uncommonly sickly I am sorry to find your hint from Perth about Charles confirmed by others, and we have great reason to fear it is too true, but this is a circumstance My Dear Duncan which tho we must all deeply regret we cannot help, he has been too long in the habit of acting very imprudently to be advised by us to follow a different course, indeed I fancy most of his difficulties now must be in consequence of former transactions, at least we hear of nothing now in his conduct that would lead to great expense or loss tho his farm altogether must in these bad times be a losing concern to him and there is still little prospect of improvement in that way he still means to send Sophy to England and proposes going with her next month Your little Doff is still as noisy and active as ever tho I am sorry to say she is as averse to any sort of discipline as ever her Aunt indulges her more thensic I do both she and Mr Stewart join me in kindest wishes to you and I ever am My Dearest Duncan your affectionate Sophie Robertson

No. 41 From **SOPHIA STEWART** or **ROBERTSON** Derculich 3 July 1823 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Claremorris, Mayo, Ireland. Postmarked: 'GLASGOW / 6 JUL 1823 / 405' and 'C / 9 JY 9 / 1823'. Price: '22'. Seal: red wax and device of octagon surrounding the name 'Sophia'. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson / 88th Regiment / Claremorris / Mayo / Ireland'. Annotations: 'Mrs R 3d July 1823' and 'Recieved 10th July 1823 / Ansd 17 do' plus jotted money calculations and memoranda.

Derculich 3d July 1823 My Dearest Duncan I had the happiness of finding your most welcome letter waiting me here on my return from Shierglass Monday. Charles wished me to spend a few days there before he sent Sophia from home which he now means to do in a week or two. Miss Johnston is to remain during her absence, the plan is certainly not a good one, but as we had no better to propose it was needless to find fault, Miss J is certainly very prudent but I fear that even will not save her from many censorious remarks and there was certainly a want of delicacy that she is not aware of in her offering to remain at Shierglass which had she not done Charles never would have thought of asking her. However I trust it will not be to the disadvantage of either party We went to Kindrochet, but Mr Stewart with his usual restlessness would not stay all night. I staid two days and was glad to see them all well except poor Betsy who has been complaining very much since I came over here. The Crop looks tolerably well but was begginingsic to suffer by the drought, particularlysic the grass, but the heavy rain which fell while I was there will I hope help it forward a little. I need say little of the work doing there, Helen and the Schoolmaster givessic you more information than I can from my short stay. The walls of your Father's house was to be finished as this day, and I beg'd of them to lose no time in harling it while the weather was so good. I see the garret windows are allinedsic from the gable to the front, as in the original plan, it seems Simsic? said they could not conveniently be placed in the Gable owing to the two chimneys Campblesic will soon have the Dykes finished, they tell me it measures nearly a third more than you thought the upright paling which you recommend and which I also wished for is I find upon enquiry so very expensive that I hope you will have no objection to altering it I would be sorry My Dear Duncan to have anything done that would not last or answer the purpose from an injudicious love of saving, but when I am told the line paling is just as good a fence and is put up at about half the expense of wood and workmanship that the other is, I certainly would prefer it, indeed William Campblesic says the Line paling is invariably used about the planting at Dunkeld except near the pleasure ground. Where greater neatness is required you will mention when you write home what you will wish to have done they have not yet been able to get Christie to cut the wood but he promised to have it done this week Mr Stewart had another letter from his friend Gordon last week delaying their visit on account of the illness of some of their children but as they still propose coming in August Mr Stewart has resolved on going to the Sea Bathing immediately, some business in Edin<sup>r</sup> has made them fix on going either to Porto Bello or New Haven, very disagreeable places both but I believe their stay will be short How I am to dispose of myself when they return home is what I am much at a loss about, I cannot

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think of returning to the Country at least while there is the smallest probability of your remaining in Ireland besides that I really am so tired and really *deleted* ashamed of being so long an inmate in the houses even of our nearest friends that I would sooner live any where than return to it again, not that I have experienced any want of kindness, very far from it, but the dread of trespassing upon any person's hospitality is a feeling to *sic* uncomfortable as to take away all enjoyment of life with me the unsettled state of the Country you are in is certainly a great Bar to my joining you but if you do remain in it for any time I certainly cannot stay here at least not very willingly tho at the same time I trust My Dear Duncan you will easily believe *sic* that I would be extremely sorry to add to the uneasiness you already feel by any complaint of my own Situation at present. No, for I most sincerely and constantly regret the unsettled and perplexed state of mind you are kept in, both with regard to your situation in the Regiment and your interests at home, any thing is preferable to having one's mind so distracted and divided as yours I may well say ours has been for a considerable time had your place been tolerably Let, and in good hands, I certainly think it would be better to abide by the *Regiment* till you were ordered Abroad, provided you could then leave it, and if you once had the Depot don't you think that the State of your Eyes, or your health would be a strong plea for your continuing in it, even tho any change should take place amongst your senior officers. But my Dear Duncan I am quite aware that it is wrong in me to express any sentiments or hazard any opinion upon a subject I know so imperfectly as this, you are the best and the only judge both of what is most for your interest and what accords most with your wishes; I would entreat of you then to act as far as circumstances will permit entirely according to your own Judgement, or I may say according to your inclinations, for in the present uncertain and changeable state of the Regiment, I believe it is impossible to say what is best to be done I shall be more anxious even than usual to hear from you at this time, not that I expect you will be able to decide immediately upon how you are to act, but I assure you the 12th of July gives me as much anxiety as it does to many that are nearer the Scene of Action God Grant it may pass over in peace with you all I am surprised you take no notice of our excellent friend Christie's Death tho I think you must have heard of it, poor Man, I suppose bad health obliged him to return to his native Aberdeen where I saw by the papers he died on the 8th of June !! John Menzies *Pitnacree* *sic*? is gone too he was seized with Apoplexy about a fortnight ago and died Sunday last poor Robert McGlashan 1 had also a violent attack of the same kind about a month ago which deprived him of all Sense and Motion, but to the great surprise of Doctor Stewart and all who saw him, he still lingers on in a State of perfect insensibility; I never saw a family in a more pitiable state than they are poor people Your little Darling Daff *sic* is I am thankful to say in the best possible health at present. She had another bad cold just about the time I last wrote you, but she got perfectly the better of it, indeed I never saw her more vigorous and lively than she is at present, I almost regret changing her quarters even for the benefit of Seabathing, however I hope it will confirm her good health I would have begun fresh water bathing had she not taken that cold, and indeed the weather tho very dry was in general uncommonly cold this season and till this week the nights almost always frosty, one of the nights we were in Athole last week the frost was so severe as very seriously to injure the potatoes all over the Country in the flat ground. There is scarce a vestige of the stems to be seen they are equally bad on this side of the Hill, people say they will still recover but a good crop is not to be expected I shall probably see the Nickles in Edinr, they will have so many questions to ask about our plans that I shall be at a loss to answer them, if there is any thing particular to be said or withheld, give me a hint when you write you can address your letter to Shaws Hotel, till I write again Mr and Mrs Stewart join me in kindest wishes to you, Sophy desires me to tell "Papa that she is a very good girl, and wishes very much to see Papa" in which wish I most sincerely join her and ever am My Dearest Duncan your truly affectionate Sophia Robertson **postscript** I regret losing another post or I would destroy this epistle for having said *anything* that indicated a wish for your staying away, I am quite passive 2 and your coming home would turn the scale and make me most happy SR

**NOTES1** see the earlier reference to Robert McGlashan's illness in Sophia's letter of 5 July 1821

**2** it is clear from the context that in her postscript Sophia was using the word 'passive' in it's now obsolete meaning of 'suffering'.

No. 42 From **SOPHIA STEWART** or **ROBERTSON** Porto Bello **30 July 1823** To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Claremorris, Mayo, Ireland. Postmarked: 'AUG T 1 N 1823' and '4 AU 4 1823' both circular

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red stamps. Price: '23'. Seal: red obliterated. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson 88th Regt Claremorris Mayo Ireland'. Annotations: 'Mrs R 30th July 1823' and 'Recvd 5th Augst Ansd 11th & 12th Do' in DR's hand. Porto Bello 30th July 1823 Your much wished for and most welcome letter My Dearest Duncan reached Edinr the same day we did that is, this day week and tho the bustle of getting Lodgings here, of Bathing our little refractory Lady, and one thing or other of that kind prevented my writing for some days longer thensic I wished you may easily blievesic that the contents of your letter occupied no small share of my thoughts, and I trust My Dear Duncan I may now congratulate you and myself on the resolution you have taken; I at anyratesic will I hope derive one comfort from it, which of itself will make up for many disadvantages I mean that of being more constantly with you and putting an end to these to me distressing separations so destructive to our happiness and peace I hope there is no fear of your being able to procure an exchange in the way you wish and since you have resolved upon it certainly the sooner you set about it the better, and I most sincerely pray "God Speed" your negociationssic and enable you to return to us before the Season is so far advan=ced as to make travelling either dangerous or disagreeable tho we must own My Dear Duncan there are many things more pleasing than the prospect of another winter in Glenearachysic: ?Glenerrochty, yet I see we have no alterna=ative; at least nothing that is better, and I trust if Providence is pleased to spare us and the health of our dear little Body it will be less trying to us thensic it has been. My mind has most unfortunately got a most unconquerable hankering after some thing, some place or appointment that would place us a few degrees farther South thensic the Braes of Athole but the value of all the loaves and the fishes is so well known now and so much sought after that I fear there is little chance for us You would see by the Papers that Major Nairn along with a few others are to be restored to their Ancient dignity, I do not know if the situation he holds will be compatible with the Dignity of a Peer of the realm, however I fear it is too good a place for us to look after, and I understand he means to keep it if he can, but will probably require a Deputy to do the duty which I understand is no great task and would be a pleasure, if a Moderate Share of the Income went along dont you think it worth keeping sight of? Or is it only building Castles in the air, to think of such a thing I see Lord Fife has lost his cause? in the House of Peers, it will be a severe disappoint=mentsic to him, and will I fancy reduce his Lordships influence as well as his fortune tho I suppose it will be much in favour of the General or of his family at least I think I saw him pass to the races yesterday in a very handsome Barouchsic and four, with as large a party of Ladyssic this seems a very gay week here but I need scarce say we take no share in any thing that is going on Charles and his daughter have been here these two days on their way South they mean to stay till the middle of next week when my Sister is to accompany them to Houghton and see Sophia settled there I am sorry to find the Duke will force Charles into a Law Suit about his Shealing which whether he wins or loses will lead him into a very inconvenient expencesic, it is a very great hardship certainly I was surprised to find when we came through Perth that Trinafour and his English Lady had gone up to the Highlands Peter Stewart says she is a most intolerable Cockney and very unfit for a place like Trinafour in its best state, and in its present state I think she can hardly suppose it fit for her, it was certainly inconseder=atesic in the Laird to expose himself so much to the rediculesic of his Lady, a compliment I understand she is rather ready to bestow upon him without so much cause as he has now given her John Stewart Garth has come home in bad health poor Man in consequence they say of his disapointmentsic at losing the fair Elenorasic the effects of a bad climate is a more likely cause however he means to go out again as soon as he is able he has brought one of his Black Pets home to leave with his Sister Col. David was expected in Edinburgh this week, but I have not been able to learn whether he came or not, his acquaintances say he has been unsuccessful in his suit with Miss Bruce, and also in his applicationsic for the Governorship of some of the West India Islands, which Doctor Stewart Bonskiedsic told us he was making all the Interest he could find and which at his time of life I really wonder he would take altho it was offered to him We saw Duncan Stewart for a few minutes but he left Edinr the morning after we arrived his family have been some time at Avon Bank I was not able to see James your nephew but left a message for him and hope he will be down here to see us I am much disappoint=edsic to find the Bathing does not agree so well with Sophia this year as it did last, at least it is such a fight to put her in the Water and she frets so much for fear of it that I really blievesic I shall be obliged to give it up, it is extraordinary the dislike she has to it. I have not been able to fix yet what I shall do with myself when we leave this 'place' implied, had it agreed as well with Sophy as I expected I would have remained another month here but the weather is so cold and wet we are all getting tired of it already, it is likely Kindrochet will bring me up, as usual, if you preferredsic my going there I certainly would not hesitate, but if you My Dear Duncan will not

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say you do I must e'er act according to circumstances You will be at a loss what to do with all the Trumpery we have got with the Regt, the half of it is not worth paying carriage for, the price of the Stone Ware and cookery things except your case of kettles would not pay thiersic carriage home so I fancy you must try and dispose of them some way or other I wish you could get some of those who have none to take the Bed chest too it is such a ponderous article the contents of the old canteen are of little use too I wish it *itrepeated* could be emptied and fitted up for Glass, that is good tumblers and wine glasses if it would be safe to bring them from Ireland I am quietsic ashamed My Dear Duncan of writing you in the hurried way I have done, but we are in a constant confusion the McLarens are here and have introduced several of thiersic acquaintances, so that we never have an hour to ourselves As we propose being here three week yet perhaps I may have time to heresic from you if you write immediately. It will be as well still to address to me at Shaws Hotel I did not see Mrs Nickle when we came through Edinr but will go up when our friends leave us they all join me in kindest wishes and with best love I ever am My Dearest Duncan your truly affect Sophia Robertson

**NOTES** Major Nairn was William Murray Nairne, restored to the honours of his family as LORD NAIRNE by act of parliament 17 June 1824. Born in 1757, by 1823 he was elderly still to be on full pay in the army; his job, described by Sophia as "no great task", was Inspector-General of Barracks in Scotland. He died in 1830, leaving one son William whose mother was Caroline, daughter of Laurence Oliphant of Gask and therefore one of the sisters of the wife of Dr Alexander Stewart of Bonskeid, who is mentioned elsewhere in this letter as a source of information about the doings of Colonel David Stewart of Garth.

In 1823 LORD FIFE was a childless widower aged 47 whose peerage was Irish. He may have been trying to get restored to him the Barony of the United Kingdom held by his uncle; in this he did not succeed until 1827. Sophia was correct in assuming that this was likely to benefit his brother General Sir Alexander Duff and his family, who seem to have been friendly with Duncan Robertson but were possibly disliked by Sophia see her letter dated 26 November 1817.

Charles Stewart's failure to win his Law Suit with the Duke of Atholl over some unimportant grazing rights finally settled the hash of the Stewarts of Shierglass.

It is clear that by 1823 it was well-known and generally accepted that John Stewart of Garth had a number of black bastard offspring in the West Indies. Sophia does not seem surprised that he brought one of them probably Ann Stewart home with him to Drumcharry. Whether the existence of these black children played a part in John Stewart "losing the fair Elenora" may depend on finding out who she was and what losing her meant.

We do not yet know who the "Miss Bruce" was who turned down what was presumably a proposal of marriage from Colonel David Stewart. He did, of course, succeed in getting his Governorship at St Lucia but it did not do him much good.

No. 43 From **SOPHIA STEWART** or **ROBERTSON** Porto Bello 21 August 1823 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Claremorris, Mayo, Ireland. Postmarked: 'AUG T 21 N 1823' and 'C 25 AU 25 1823' both circular red stamps and partly illegible rectangular black stamp 'PORTOBELLO'. Price: '24'. Seal: red wax rectangular frame enclosing a stylised sun and sunflower with on opposite sides the words 'TIBI' and 'SOLI'. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson 88th Regt Claremorris Mayo Ireland'. Annotations: 'Mrs R 21st Augt' and 'Recd 27th Augt' in DR's hand.

Porto Bello 21st August 1823 My Dear Duncan I was amply compensated for my walk to Edinr two days ago by finding your truly acceptable letter at Shaws, I need scarcely say how very sincerely I rejoice in the hope of seeing you so soon, the prospect of that alone must remove any feeling of regret or disapointmentsic that the Idea of your long Services being likely to meet with no other remuneration but the liberty of retiring, might perhaps occassionsic I certainly cannot help thinking it a hardship, but as you seem convinced that it is the only thing that can be done I most earnestly hope that Sir H Taylor will give such an answer to Col.

Fergusson's letter as will satisfy you, and enable you to get on smoothly and rapidly with your arrangements When I expected to go on from here to join you in Ireland I was told there was a new Steam Boat call'd the "Emerald Isle" going direct betwixt Grenock and Dublin, when I found I was not going I ommittedsic making any further enquiry about it, however I'm sure there is such a thing and altho you would not perhaps prefer it for



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your own conveyance, as you must of course be so much longer at sea I think it would be the best way of sending the Baggage particularly *sic* as there is a Canal from Dublin in the direction you are in for a considerable part of the way indeed I fear you will have more trouble and expense with the luggage then *sic* it is worth If you cannot get the Bed disposed of, I think you could get the small Bed made for Sophia into the Bed chest along with the other by putting the curtains and hearth rug into the Carpet bag I think too that my large trunk was not well packed, nor quite full, when I packed it last if you thought it worth while doing it, I am pretty sure that all our Blue Stone Ware could be packed in among the cloathes *sic* in the large Brown Chest and my trunk however My Dear Duncan I know you will think these triffls *sic* not worth mentioning they are so had I been with you I might have done them of course, but they are of little consequence My Sister and Mr Stewart left this '*place*' *implied* yesterday morning My remaining behind them was a very sudden thought for I had taken out my ticket in the Coach but the McLarens took such an unusually kind fit that unless I absolutely cut with them I could not be off staying a few weeks tho I mean to make my stay very short, as I have been obliged to give up all attempt at Bathing my little refractory Miss, I am quite tired of the place, indeed none of us derived much benefit from Bathing this year My Sister was more the worse then *sic* the better of it and was far from well when she went away She did not go to Houghton with Charles and his daughter, which I was very glad of as her strength was very unfit for the journey My Brother made a short stay with us on his return, but I was glad to find he left Sophia quite pleased with her new situation I saw Mrs Nickle last day I was in town, I call'd twice before but never found them at home Mrs N- was very wise on my staying so much at home while you were away but I had not then got your last letter and did not give her a hint of the reason for my returning home again, when I see her next she will probably know it from the Major I thought Mrs Dallas very shy and distant which I cannot account for, however it might be fancy, so I shall not let the old Ladys formality prevent me calling again for = 'on' Mrs Nickle tho my acquaintance with her is probably near as close. I have not heard from Kindrochet since I came here but James your nephew was here the other day and tell= 'told' me he heard they were all well and the Crops looking remarkably well but late I wrote Helen by my Sister and begged if it were possible that Robert would try and get home some Coals before harvest I sent her £5 that the needful might not be wanting if it was found convenient to send for them, I dread the winter, for I don't think there will be a possibility of getting the Peats this Season John McNicol was here too, he says his Father meant to pay Kindrochet a visit last week We were grieved to hear from Peter Stewart last week that poor Niel is getting worse, his Mother went up to Drumachary with *him* the week after we came here but he got worse there and was obliged to return almost immediately, poor Peter seems to have lost all hope. As I do not know exactly when I shall leave this place I blieve it will be best if you address your next to the care of Peter Stewart in Perth who will forward it to Kindrochet if it is not in time for my getting it there for I mean to stay a few days in Perth on my way I do not think your Fathers house can be dry enough for them this season, indeed My Dear Duncan I wish we had another home for the winter, it will be painful in the extreme for all partys our being in the house when they leave it whatever time it happens it is so like turning people out that the idea is quite distressing, and I really wish it could be avoided it would be no great expense taking a small lodging in Perth for the winter tell me what you think upon this Subject and I will remain in Perth or here till I hear from you I will be counting the days now till I see you again My Dear Duncan. Sophy desires me ?to send a kiss and a curl of her hair for a ring to Papa. She is I thank God in perfect health but as wild as a roe Write me as soon as you can and Blieve me ever My Dear Duncan your truly affectionate  
Sophia Robertson PS We have no ladies in the house at present except a Miss Lane who has been a few years in India but was obliged to come with a sister who got into bad health there and died on her passage home She has another sister married to Mr Serjeant my brother's friend, and her brother Mr Lane was also a particular friend of Alexr I merely mention this as you will probably meet her here  
S R

**NOTES** 'Sir H Taylor' was Lieutenant-General Sir Herbert Taylor 1775-1839, in 1823 Secretary to the Duke of York, who in 1828 became Adjutant-General to the forces. 'Col. Fergusson' has not yet been identified; he may have been Duncan Robertson's commanding officer.

'Mrs Nickle' was Elizabeth Anne Dallas, the wife of Robert NICKLE 1786-1855, who when these letters were written seems to have been a Major in the 88th Regiment. She was the daughter of William Dallas WS of Edinburgh, who died in 1852; his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Robert Carr, was presumably the 'Mrs Dallas' mentioned on the next page of this letter as being "very shy and distant". Major Nickle later became Major-General Sir Robert Nickle KH; he died at Melbourne, having in 1853 been appointed commander of the

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Australian forces. The Nickles had two daughters, the second of whom, also named Elizabeth Anne, married in 1850 Sir Charles Rhoderic McGRIGOR 2nd Bart 1811-1890, by whom she had four sons and three daughters; she died in 1874.

At the time of that marriage the bridegroom's father, Sir James M'GRIGOR 1st Bart 1771-1858 KCB MA MD FRS FRCP had been Director-General of the Army Medical Department since 1815, from which appointment he retired in 1851; having entered the medical department of the army in 1793 as surgeon in the 88th Connaught Rangers, with which he served in Holland, Flanders, the West Indies and India before becoming Superintending Surgeon in Egypt in 1801, he must have been well known to many of those whose names are mentioned in these letters, not least to the Nickles and to Duncan Robertson himself, not to mention David Stewart of Garth who must have known that this M'Grigor family originally came from Roro, in Glen Lyon.

The second son of the McGRIGOR-NICKLES marriage, born in 1860, was to become Major-General Charles Rhoderick Robert McGrigor CB CMG late 60th Rifles KRRC; he married Ada Rosamund, daughter of Robert Hartley BOWER of Wetham, Yorks, by whom he had an only son who joined the Royal Navy and became Admiral of the Fleet Sir Rhoderick Robert McGrigor 1893-1959, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff 1951-1955.

No. 44 From **SOPHIA STEWART** or **ROBERTSON** Kindrochet 1 September 1823 To **DUNCAN ROBERTSON** Claremorris, Mayo, Ireland Postmarked: 'BLAIR ATHOLE 473 E' and 'SUNDAY / 7 SE 7 / 1823'. Price: '24'. Seal: black wax, octagonal device enclosing the name 'Sophia'. Addressed to: 'Capt Robertson / 88th Regt Claremorris / Mayo / Ireland'. Annotations: 'Mrs R. 1st Sept 1823', 'Recd 9th Sept / Ansd 10 Do', with various other scribbled notes, including money calculations.

Kindrochet 1st Sept 1823 My Dearest Duncan You will before this reaches you have received the Mournful tidings of the Death of your affectionate and worthy Parent, an event which, when I last wrote, I little imagined was so near us and which, however long delayed must when it comes bring pain and grief to the hearts of an affectionate family, yet My Dear Duncan we have all great cause of thankfulness that your Father's sufferings were so short and his transition from this world to the next so easy Your Sisters I am thankful to say are as well as you could possibly expect to see them I left Porto Bello as soon as I possibly could after receiving the first accounts from here, but as I was obliged to stay a day in Perth, I did not arrive here till Friday. The Interment took place Saturday, and it will be gratifying to you to know that everything was conducted with the greatest regularity and propriety every person asked attended, except two or three, the day was good and all was got over in good time, John Robertson Milton) signed the funeral letters and your excell<sup>y</sup>sic worthy cousin John Findynate officiated for you at Dinner, indeed his considerate and kind attentions on this occasion can never be forgot, tho certainly My Dearest Duncan no other person could make up to us for your absence, he did all he could, and much more than any other person would think of, to supply your place I left Sophy at Shierglass on my way up, till the bustle was over here I understand she was quite happy there and she has now come home in perfect health, her liveliness will help to cheer and amuse your sisters, or I would have left her another week with Miss Johnston, who could perhaps break her in a little I was so hurried at leaving Porto Bello I had not time to write you but beg<sup>d</sup>edsic your nephew James to do it I was afraid you might think of hurrying home before your business with the Regt was finally arranged, and perhaps be obliged to go away again, which I could not bear to think of particularly at this late Season of the year I trust all your arrangements will soon be made and that, as you know, we will be anxiously counting the days till we see you, so you will not unnecessarily lose time till you come to us. Helen had your two *paper torn* letters of the 15th and 23d August, the Money was *paper torn* drawn as you directed for the Schoolmaster and she says there is nothing else, but what she men tioned to you in her last I was afraid Money might be wanted here and took £20 from the Bank when I came up, but it is not required and will be here waiting you The continued wet weather retards every thing here very much and will give us a woefully late harvest and scarce a peat in, in the whole country, however we must hope the best, every thing is done that can be done, but there is no conquering the elements. I hope there are letters from you on the way to us, remember My Dear Duncan they are our greatest comfort till you come to us your Sisters unite with me in every good wish Sophy sends a kiss to Papa and with

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