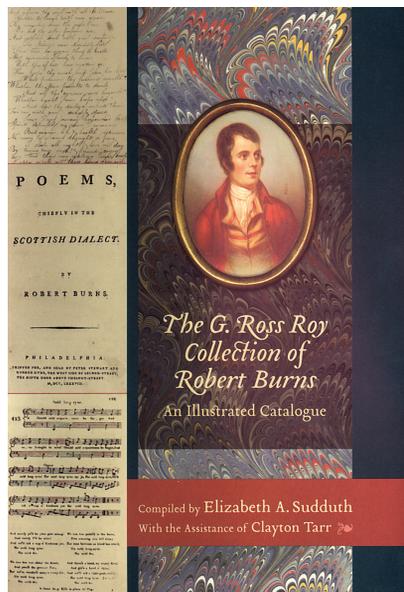


## Burns Buffs Rejoice!



O, soon to me may summer's sun  
 The mair light up the morn;  
 The mair to me the Autumn winds  
 Have o'er the yellow corn,  
 And in the narrow house of Death,  
 Let Winter round me rave,  
 And the next flowers that deck the spring,  
 Bloom o'er the my peaceful grave.

Robert Burns

Seventh stanza of *Lament of Mary, Queen of Scots*, written and signed by Robert Burns.

**SUDDUTH, Elizabeth A. (compiler).** *The G. Ross Roy Collection of Robert Burns: An Illustrated Catalogue.* Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2009. Small 4to. Clothbound, dust jacket. xx, 456pp. Illustrations. \$59.95.

**FUNNY HOW A CHOICE NEW TITLE** for autograph collectors should cross my desk just when Robert Burns has been on my mind. I'd recently been surprised to discover an achingly sad and sweet "new" arrangement of "Auld Lang Syne"—turns out what I assumed was a daring new melody for this moldie oldie was the *original* melody to which it was sung.

In this catalogue, G. Ross Roy, the supposedly retired academician and Burns collector extraordinaire, introduces his 5,000 plus item collection. (Said collection was donated to University of South Carolina's Thomas Cooper Library—lucky them!) It's a remarkable testament to one collector's devotion to gathering the manuscripts, books, sheet music and memorabilia of Scotland's beloved national poet (1759-96). Roy began when he inherited his grandfather's collection in 1958, then selling off its 200 duplicate titles to a university and reinvesting the proceeds in more Burnsiana—and so began the snowball. In 1964, with an exhaustive Burns bibliography just published, "I was able to check on which editions I had and, more important, which I did not have. For more

than four decades, I have been on a chase to obtain a copy of every volume listed..."

As I've harped before in this column, the publication of a first-rate author bibliography or specific collection catalogues, should be an event worth the notice of autograph collectors. Any bibliography or collection catalogue is primarily an organized list and detailed description of books and printed material—but any *great* one invariably includes a share of autograph material. Roy's is certainly no exception. "While I did not set out to collect Burns manuscripts," he admits, "fate has determined that a few have ended up in my possession.... I had inherited some excise lines in Burns' hand from my grandfather, but the first manuscripts

I bought were the two Sylvander letters to Clarinda, including the one with the famous teardrop statement."

The "Manuscripts and Typescripts" section that opens *The G. Ross Roy Collection of Robert Burns* is modest but impressive, and precedes the large section of books, printed material and sheet music that form the bulk of this volume. A number of fine Burns letters and holograph poems appear, several illustrated. There are also letters from Burns contemporaries or with good Burns content, from Burns' day up through the 1970s. Here too are several volumes from Burns' personal library with his ownership signature or gift inscriptions.

What ensues are 223 pages of primary Burns books. These range from a first edition of the 1786 *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, Burns' first book, to the 2007 Alfred A. Knopf edition of *Burns: Poems*—with plenty of entries for just about each of the 221 years between these. A full bibliographical description for each is included.

If a lovely new reference volume such as *The G. Ross Roy Collection of Robert Burns* can't transform some Burns buffs into Burns collectors—convincing autograph folks to branch out into rare Burns first editions or bibliophiles to consider the more costly autograph material—nothing can. 🚫

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