

## **‘The value to social history of the female perspective’: Letters from Lady Grace Campbell to Her Husband John Campbell, Lord Stonefield (1750s)**

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This article discusses the letters of Lady Grace Campbell recently found in The Argyll Papers at Inveraray Castle. The 38 letters written in the 1750s (along with one from Lady Grace’s sister) came to light in a bundle marked ‘miscellaneous’ and had been overlooked as unimportant. However, the contents of the letters, this article suggests, are of great value in terms of the social history of the mid-eighteenth century, giving a female perspective (albeit a privileged one) to an era regarded as male-dominated. In a separate bundle, two linked letters written by Lady Grace’s husband, the advocate John Campbell, later Lord Stonefield, to the Duke of Argyll regarding the military service of their son, may have been met by a negative response from the Duke, but suggest that Lord Stonefield did the bidding of his wife. Marian Pallister outlines the content of the letters and discusses the insights the letters offer into the role women of this status played in the home and in Scottish society.

In 1750, Lady Grace Stuart, a daughter of James, second Earl of Bute and Lady Anne (herself a daughter of Archibald, first Duke of Argyll, and Elizabeth Tollemache), married John Campbell, an advocate who would later become one of Scotland’s most eminent law lords. Her brother, the third Earl of Bute, was a close friend of the Prince of Wales, and would become the first Scottish Prime Minister to serve at Westminster. Lady Grace Campbell clearly moved in the most aristocratic circles in Scotland and must have enjoyed the status her family connections offered. However, 38 of her letters which offer a wealth of insights into the domestic and social life of the 1750s were, until their discovery in 2018, catalogued under a ‘miscellaneous’ label in The Argyll Papers at Inveraray Castle. Archivists of previous generations had not acknowledged the importance of such documents, effectively silencing a female overview of a fragment of eighteenth-century life. Lady Grace Campbell’s letters, found in Bundles 610 and 611 (The Argyll Papers at Inveraray Castle), have now been transcribed

<sup>1</sup> My thanks to Alison Diamond, Archivist, The Argyll Papers at Inveraray Castle, for encouraging the transcribing and cataloguing of Lady Grace Campbell’s letters, and to researcher Duncan Beaton for his most valuable assistance in helping to put Lady Grace’s family into context.

and re-catalogued (SF/01).<sup>2</sup> They present a vivid picture of contemporary life and important contemporary childcare information.

The 38 letters (and one to Lady Grace from her sister) in SF/01 were written in the 1750s by Lady Grace Stuart (usually 'Stewart', according to Lady Grace's individualistic spelling), to her husband John Campbell of Stonefield, then an advocate and Sheriff Depute of Forfarshire. Lady Grace was the youngest daughter of James, second Earl of Bute, one of the sixteen peers for North Britain in the two parliaments of George I. Born in 1722, seven years after the 1715 Jacobite Uprising, Grace was only months old when her father died in January 1723. Her brother John succeeded to the Bute title and her brother James Stuart-McKenzie succeeded to the estate of Rosshaugh in Inverness-shire. Born in 1717, James would become Lord Privy Seal for Scotland, and a Member of Parliament for Bute-shire from 1747 to 1754 and for Ross-shire from 1761 to 1780. In 1749 he married Lady Betty Campbell, one of the daughters and co-heirs of John, second Duke of Argyll, who had died in 1743. Lady Grace also had three sisters: Lady Mary, who married Sir Robert Menzies of Weem; Lady Anne, who married James, Lord Ruthven; and Lady Jane, who married William Courtney.

As a young adult, Lady Grace would stay with those siblings nearer to her own age and their spouses, and in a confident letter to John Campbell of Stonefield dated 22 August 1749, the year before their marriage, and written to him in 'the care of Mr Hugh Grame [*sic*], writer at Edinburgh' from Ruthven House, she tells him:

Lady Ruthven and I go to Lady Catties this day, but we return again on Saturday, so that I shall hope to find a letter from you when we get home; Lady Ruthven regrets vastly that you are not to be of our party. (SF/01/02)

A portrait of Lady Grace's mother, Anne, Countess of Bute, painted by Michael Dahl in 1715, shows a handsome fair-haired woman. A portrait of the second Earl by an unknown artist held at Bute Museum presents him, too, as a striking figure, suggesting Lady Grace would have been an attractive young woman. The widowed Countess married her second husband, Alexander Fraser, Lord Strichen, on 19 September 1731. The couple had one son, also Alexander. Lady Grace was nine years old at the time of this second marriage and just fourteen years old when her mother died on 20 October 1736 at Strichen in Aberdeenshire. Lady Grace's relationship with Lord Strichen continued, however, into adulthood and she would not only pass on his advice to her husband, but clearly enjoyed her stepfather's relationship with her children. One letter to her husband records that their sons Archie and Jack (Archibald and John) had become boisterous during a teatime visit by Lord Strichen: 'Jack

<sup>2</sup> Online catalogue details for these letters are available at <http://www.argyll-papers.com/campbell-of-stonefield-papers>.

and him [Archie] were so noisy we were forced in an obliging manner to dismiss them to the N. Wing' (SF/01/35).

John Campbell was born into a 'legal' family. The son of Archibald Campbell, second of Stonefield, a practising advocate and Sheriff-Depute of Argyllshire, and Jane Frend of Ballyreehy, County Offaly, he was admitted to the Faculty of Advocates in 1748. By the next year the celebrated Scottish artist Allan Ramsay had painted his portrait, confirming his status in the legal and social world. In 1750 he married Lady Grace. He was appointed a Scottish Law Lord in 1763, when he took the judicial title Lord Stonefield. John's sister Elizabeth married Colin Campbell of Carwhin in 1758 (their son John became the first Marquis of Breadalbane) and his other sister, Jane, married John Campbell, fifth of Airds in 1764. Lady Grace refers to members of her husband's family in her letters, and it is clear from the datelines and the addresses to which she sent her letters, that both she and John led peripatetic lives, even when their family grew rapidly throughout the 1750s. They would have at least six sons and possibly a daughter.

Early in their marriage, John Campbell and Lady Grace made their home at his father's property, Levenside House, near Bonhill in Dunbartonshire. An 1824 travel guide – *An Account of the Pleasure Tours in Scotland* published by John Thomson – describes the house as being beside the road that 'winds along the [River] Leven' and standing 'in the midst of an extensive lawn, surrounded by wood'.<sup>3</sup> The couple seem to have been together there infrequently in the early years of their marriage. Some of Lady Grace's letters are addressed to 'Mr John Campbell, Advocate, at Levenside', some to 'his house in Cowgate, Edinburgh', some to 'John Campbell Esq, Sheriff Depute of Forfarshire, at Forfar'. The first letter in the bundle, sent before their marriage, was addressed: 'To John Campbell Esq, To be left at the Right Honourable The Lord Banff's Lodgings In Mills Square, Edinburgh' (SF/01/01). John's half-brother (his mother had been widowed after a first marriage) was Alexander Ogilvy, seventh Lord Banff. Lady Grace frequently asks that her compliments be given to 'the Banffs', and asks after the health of Lady Banff, who also was increasing the size of her family during this period. Other letters are sent to 'John Campbell Esq, Sheriff Depute of Angus Shire, At Perth'. Occasionally, the letters are directed to him at Inveraray, and one is sent to him in 'the care of Mr Menzies Of Coutteratters at Newtile In Angus' (SF/01/04).

The issues that Lady Grace ranges over in her letters include childcare, haymaking, organisation of provisions, the presence of vermin in the house and worries about her husband drinking too much. She gives a description of a Masons' parade, opines on where the family should live, shows knowledge of the theatre and shares family gossip. In perhaps one of the most important letters in a historical sense, she asks her husband to arrange for the vaccination of their children (SF/01/18). This request was made in the mid-1750s, probably influenced by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (the mother-in-law of her elder

<sup>3</sup> *An Account of the Pleasure Tours in Scotland*, 3rd edn (Edinburgh, 1824), 111.

brother, the third Earl of Bute), who brought smallpox inoculation back from Turkey.<sup>4</sup> This was four decades before Edward Jenner is credited with introducing smallpox vaccine in 1796.<sup>5</sup> In the Cullen medical consultation letters there are instructions written by Edinburgh physician, Dr William Cullen, to Michael Gardiner to inoculate a younger Campbell of Stonefield child, William ‘Willie’ Campbell, in 1771, suggesting that Lady Grace was committed to inoculation.<sup>6</sup>

Lady Grace was, however, a paradox of modern thinking and ancient superstition. Her brother’s mother-in-law had persuaded her peers to use the techniques she saw peasant women performing in the Ottoman Empire in 1717 when her husband was British Ambassador to Turkey, inoculating her own children against smallpox in 1721, and Lady Grace was determined to proceed with this still-revolutionary process. Yet in this undated letter from the 1750s addressed to her husband at Levenside, Dunbartonshire, Lady Grace shows conflicting emotions:

don’t delay my dearest talking to Doctor Gordon about inoculating the Children, for if he thinks it proper I believe I should be happy it was set about; that nasty dream I had yesterday about my dr [dear] archies having died of them, has made some impression upon me; because I happen’d to have the same dream once before, & then dreaming it upon the very day he was born to me seems a kind of confirmation of it, however I hope this will wear off, but in your absence my most Darling Moitié every thing wears the worst appearance. (SF/01/18)

Lady Grace was not, of course, unique in her letter writing. In her volume *Elite Women and Polite Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland*,<sup>7</sup> Katherine Glover quotes from the letters of nineteen ‘elite women’. However, Glover cites a suggestion made by the editors of the *Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*, that while women have not been ignored by Scottish historians, they ‘do not often emerge from recent historical writing as complex individuals’. These editors, Glover notes, have called for the Scottish landscape to be repopled ‘with more women than the few famous figures of whom everyone has heard’.<sup>8</sup> This author would argue that Lady Grace Campbell shows herself to be a ‘complex individual’, revealing herself to be independent, opinionated, caring, forward thinking and not afraid to share her emotions. Her letters show that, like her contemporaries, she would have been taught as a girl to structure letters to include inquiries

<sup>4</sup> R. Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity from Antiquity to the Present* (London, 1999), 39.

<sup>5</sup> The Jenner Institute, *About Edward Jenner*, <http://www.jenner.ac.uk/edward-jenner>.

<sup>6</sup> The Cullen Project, *The Consultation Letters of Dr William Cullen (1710–1790)* at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, <http://www.cullenproject.ac.uk/search-display/?pid=c441&q=inoculation>.

<sup>7</sup> K. Glover, *Elite Women and Polite Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Woodbridge, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

after the recipients' health, news and compliments to all who would see or hear them,<sup>9</sup> but despite the rote-learned niceties, her letters are character revealing.

Glover suggests that while letters from men are often preserved because they contained business matters as well as family issues, responses from female family members were often destroyed because of the amount of private information they contained. Glover suggests most letters would have been destroyed as 'irrelevant', although some letter writers would have asked for them to be destroyed for privacy reasons.<sup>10</sup> Lady Grace suggests in a postscript to one letter that she hopes her husband will destroy her letters: 'Do my dr burn all my letters the minute you read them' (SF/01/06). Perhaps he often did, leaving only this bundle from the 1750s. However, the wide-ranging contents do provide a valuable insight into her life and the mechanics of contemporary society.

A daughter may have been the couple's first child as Lady Grace was pregnant in mid-1851. The couple's first son Archibald was born 2 November 1752 and baptised at St Cuthbert's in Edinburgh. John (Jack) was born 7 December 1753, and grew up to be a military hero in 1783, dying at the age of 31. Alexander seems to have been next in line and Robert was born on 1 November 1756. Colin, born in 1761, was another son who joined the military, and there are the medical records cited above for 'Willie' (William was born in 1762). Some records suggest that there were seven sons, all of whom died before their father, but the content of some of Lady Grace's letters suggest the first child was a girl. Because the children were baptised in different places, it is difficult to trace them all.

Lady Grace seems to have had an intimate relationship with her children, although nursemaids are mentioned. Undated except for 'September 12th', a concerned letter to her husband reads:

your dreams of Sandy has not been altogether without reason for he has been in vast pain getting out an under tooth next the two first that came out; he has thank God been free of looseness or vomiting, but I never saw a child in greater pain, he has been several nights without shutting his eyes, or doing anything but screaming out like one in the greatest anguish, but he is now easier, tho' very fretful still however he has recovered his looks which were much altered. Archie's looseness has been at a greater height these two or three days than ever it was, I was afraid as it had lingered so long for the consequences of it & sent to let the doctor know how he was, who came yesterday and saw him, he has ordered him chalk and water to drink, & every morning a tea spoonful of rhubarb & if he is no better tomorrow he thinks a vomit will be necessary, he is still very hearty but his stomach is not very good, and he has a great thirst. (SF/01/28)

In another letter dated 2 October (no year), she tells John:

Archies illness is in his Stomach which makes a vomit & Rhubarb the best thing he can get, he is taking Rhubarb every third day just now which I think is the

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 19.

thing agrees best of any with him, his food is all solids, but till these few days he eat nothing, & had very bad digestion, but both I hope are mending fast. The rest are very well. (SF/01/31)

Archibald continued to give cause for concern. In a letter simply dated ‘Tuesday’, Lady Grace tells his father that:

Archie got his Physick yesterday & is very merry and hearty tho indeed his couler [*sic*] & thinness makes me uneasy the heat in his hands & sourness of the tongue is the same as yet; I don’t know what affects the mercury and rhubarb may have after this. (SF/01/26)

Despite the drastic prescription of mercury and rhubarb, Archibald (Archie) survived to become an advocate like his father. Sir John Clerk (writing in 1740) was one of a number of advocates of concoctions containing mercury, opium, soap and vinegar for stomach upsets,<sup>11</sup> so Lady Grace would not have questioned what to 21st-century minds seems a dire medication.

Very few of Lady Grace’s letters offer more information on date than a day and month. Some are simply dated ‘Friday’ or ‘Tuesday’ (further research has been able to match dates and days to appropriate years in the 1750s). One letter, however, is dated from the early days of their marriage, 1 August 1751, and is written from Halkhead in Renfrewshire, the home of George Ross, 13th Lord Ross of Halkhead, who in 1751 was a Commissioner of Customs and Salt, and whose daughters Jane and Elizabeth were contemporaries of Lady Grace. The couple seem to have been house-hunting and Lady Grace shows herself to be very aware of having to live within the means available to them at a time when the birth of their first child was imminent. Her husband seems to have offered three possible houses to choose from, and Lady Grace prefers one identified as ‘Fineston’. She explains that of the other choices, Dalkeith (to the south-east of Edinburgh) was ‘much too Near that little Town’ and that Caroline Park (in today’s Granton area of Edinburgh) was ‘too far from a market’. John Campbell practised in Forfar for some time, and today there is a Finnieston Farm to the east of Forfar, which may be the site of the ‘Fineston’ property. If this were to have been one of the choices offered to Lady Grace, it would certainly have brought the couple together more frequently than letters suggest was the case. Lady Grace tells her husband in this same letter that:

three hundred a year may always keep us out of any friends reverence, many a good family has no more for themselves or their Children after them, that live very easy & comfortably upon it; & provided we regulate our expences [*sic*] accordingly, so may we. (SF/01/04)

Lady Grace had her own ideas of where the couple should live. Melville Castle at Lasswade in Midlothian had been in the family of Ross of Halkhead since

<sup>11</sup> V. G. Hatfield, ‘Domestic Medicine in Eighteenth Century Scotland’ (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1980), 11, <http://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/8360>.

the fourteenth century, and would be for another decade after Lady Grace wrote the letter. She must have discussed the accommodation situation with Lord Ross during her stay at Halkhead and she tells her husband:

Lord Rosse's [*sic*] House at Melvill [*sic*] we may have from year to year; as to the rent & conditions we shall talk over at meeting, & you'll then judge of it; I wish it was possible for one in your way of business to do as Lord Rosse did, in regard of his; for he went every day to Town for seven years & return'd again to dinner to Melvill so that my Lady had so much of his company as if he had being staying close at Home. (SF/01/04)

That Lady Grace was able to open up independent discussions with Lord Ross about the possible renting of his property, and to tell her husband (rather than ask) that they would talk about terms of renting Melville Castle when they met perhaps interrogates Jane Rendall's discussion in *Women in Eighteenth-Century Scotland*<sup>12</sup> of Margaret Cullen's *Home: A Novel* (1802) in which there is a call for reform to property rights for women within families. Rendall suggests that the family and women's intimate lives were shaped and created by the public world in which they existed.<sup>13</sup> There was evident need for reform, but Lady Grace's correspondence implies that some women had a degree of independence of thought, even although she was reliant on her husband providing household expenses. The importance of discovering a wider range of testimonies from mid-eighteenth-century women, such as those provided by Lady Grace's letters, is thus evident.

Katie Barclay's contribution to *Women in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* offers an exploration of contemporary understandings of love as an emotion across social groups.<sup>14</sup> It is therefore interesting to read a number of Lady Grace's letters that suggest both she and John Campbell were flirtatious with each other (certainly in the early days of their relationship) and corresponded in a way that implies a romantic love in our modern sense. Lady Grace's terms of endearment for her husband, their references to the contemporary romantic character 'Orsames', and comments such as this from Lady Grace: 'I have always noticed, that where parties are indifferent, or love by halves, those matches go on most swimmingly, however, these difficulties we have met with, I persuade my self will make us yet more happy hereafter' (SF/01/01), indicate that theirs was more than a contractual match. The importance of correspondence such as these letters from The Argyll Papers at Inveraray Castle is in the exploration of every facet of a woman's life, in this instance within the span of a decade.

<sup>12</sup> J. Rendall, 'Family, Politics and Reform in Margaret Cullen's *Home: A Novel* (1802)', in (ed.) K. Barclay and D. Simonton, *Women in Eighteenth-Century Scotland: Intimate, Intellectual and Public Lives* (Abingdon, 2013), 75–96.

<sup>13</sup> C. Macleod, review of *Women in Eighteenth-Century Scotland: Intimate Intellectual and Public Lives*, in *Reviews in History* (review no. 1633), doi:10.14296/RiH/2014/1633.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. See K. Barclay, 'Love and Courtship in Eighteenth-Century Scotland', in (ed.) Barclay and Simonton, *Women in Eighteenth-Century Scotland*, 37–54.

Absence from home was a bone of contention in all of Lady Grace's letters. In an August 1751 letter, we learn that Lady Grace was in her ninth month of pregnancy and afraid that she would give birth without her husband being there. She told him that his absence 'robs me of the principal happiness I am able to enjoy in this Life' (SF/01/04). Desperate for his presence, she nonetheless warned him in this letter both to ride safely and to avoid the fever that was rampant in the country at the time, which in her belief could be brought on by 'hard ridding' [*sic*]. This holds some logic, but in his paper 'Remarks on the Epidemic Fever of Scotland During 1863–64–65', Dr James Stark, Superintendent of Medical Statistics, Scotland, suggested that the fever was famine-related. He noted:

A virulent epidemic of fever, attending a famine, prevailed in Scotland during the years 1740–41–42; again manifested itself in 1746–47; and again in 1751. How long it continued on these latter outbreaks was not ascertained. A virulent epidemic of fever next appeared towards the close of 1753, and continued till the spring of 1756, or for a period of about three years.<sup>15</sup>

During this pregnancy and while Lady Grace was at her husband's Cowgate apartment in Edinburgh, she received a letter from one of her sisters, Lady Ruthven, written from Struthers, Fife. Her sister tells her she is glad Lady Grace agrees with her 'moving about, since I am persuaded 'twill do you good, & make you less unwieldy, as you increase in bulk' (SF/01/03). This advice to take exercise during pregnancy seems quite advanced at a time when a lying-in period of a month was still recommended by midwives and doctors.

An expert gossip, Lady Ruthven refers to one lady in London with 'her shining greasy spouse' and another's imminent marriage being 'confidently talked about'. The main point of this letter, however, was to ask Lady Grace to:

write a nice card, to the Ladies of Tweedale, who excell [*sic*] so much in breeding canary's [*sic*] at least, & beg the favour of them to give me a she Canary, which I'll take, as a singular favour. (SF/01/03)

Lady Grace's letters reveal a life that combines leisure and frivolity with domestic cares. Although clearly a competent woman in many spheres, bathing a child seems beyond her expertise. She wrote to her 'Dearest Life' that all hands were 'at the Hay' (SF/01/05) but confesses in the same letter that despite John's instructions to have Archibald ('Archie', born in November 1752), bathed, Lady Grace had failed to get the troublesome child into the tub:

our Dear little Archie is very well but now after I bespoke a Tub for bathing him in, I can't tell how to use it, for he has got such an antipathy to water, that tho' he is only set in to such a Tub as Jenny has, not up to mid Leg, he cries & sobs &

<sup>15</sup> J. Stark, 'Remarks on the Epidemic Fever of Scotland During 1863–64–65; and on the Epidemics of Fever Which Have Prevalled in Scotland During the Past Century and a Quarter', *Transactions of the Epidemiological Society of London*, 2, no. 2 (1867), 304–16, 304, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5523428/>.



trembles to that degree that you'd think he never had felt cold water, which indeed is quite owing to the way they had of only washing him in a little bason [*sic*] when he could not set his feet in hardly; so my Dear I hope you will excuse My not dipping him since this is the case.

Her competence in organising her larder, however, could not be faulted. The estates of their many relatives were a source not only of convenient accommodation, but also of food supplies. John Campbell's half-brother, Lord Banff, seems to have been a provider of hams, and Lady Grace asks in this busy family-oriented letter that half a dozen be sent to her, revealing much about the transport of food and the family's cooking and eating arrangements:

if Lord Banff would be so good to commission half a dozen Hams for us from the North, 'twould be a great favour, but I wish they may escape in the Ship, for the last was all eat by Rats or some such animal: there is one hangs up in the Kitchen, if it be fresh James might give it to the Tavern as they'd boil it better there, & 'twould eat well cold of a night with bread & butter. (SF/01/05)

Venison and beef also came from the estates of friends and relatives, but not without difficulties and disputes. A letter dated 7 September (no year) reads:

I believe I wrote you My Dearest in my last that Lady Dalkeith had given orders for a Buck [venison] for us, but I declined taking it till I heard from Levenside what was the best way of sending some there, as last year Mrs Campbell I think said it might have got there fresh enough, when I was regretting she had not partook of some of it; however Miss Jenny writes me that it is not possible to transport it their length before it spoil, so I had not send it; & as for the calf (which being a quay [heifer] one I thought would have been very acceptable there) she says it is not worth bringing up now so late in the year, so that my good intentions are all rejected with disdain however I shall certainly give the calf to some body who will value it for tis pity one of 10 good a kind should be sold. (SF/01/25)

While most letters note with regret the couple's separation because John Campbell's work as an advocate took him away from home to the assize courts, Lady Grace herself was also often away from home. In one letter she writes that she has just come 'from being a spectator of the Masons procession; every body in Town was at the windows of any fashion; & all the rest upon the street. I never saw such a multitude' (SF/01/39). This took place in June (no year is given) in Edinburgh and having walked from her husband's lodging in Cowgate, the day was spent in a whirl of social activity. The Grand Lodge of Scotland had been founded in 1736 and as Masonry became an elite institution in the 1750s, 'No major public event in Edinburgh was complete without the Masons taking part', according to musician Jack Campin.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> J. Campin, 'To Brotherhood Great Powers Belong', *Embryo, Embryo*, <http://www.campin.me.uk/Embryo/Webrelease/Embryo/12clubs/12clubs.htm>.

Frugally, Lady Grace declined an invitation while in Edinburgh to drink the Duke of Buccleuch's health:

Thursday I was invited out to drink the Duke of Buchlues [*sic*] health at Caroline Park [Granton], but sent my apology not having any Body that would leave Town to day to go in the Chaise, & I thought the cost without a sharer was too much for me adieu My Dearest Life. (SF/01/39)

Although she kept an eye on family finances, Lady Grace clearly enjoyed the social life offered in Edinburgh that, according to Glover, proliferated in the capital:

men and women were encouraged to socialise together in an urban context, specifically in a series of social spaces like theatres, assembly rooms, concert halls, and around the tea-tables which were the centrepiece of every drawing room.<sup>17</sup>

Such social life was not always available and while Lady Grace's letters are always affectionate, often there are not only complaints regarding a lack of letters and her husband's absence, but also about not having stimulating company. A letter dated 2 October (no year) says:

I cant but think my dearest the peoples who press yr going to Inverary [*sic*] must either be very thoughtless or very selfish to ask you at a time when you have been so long from home, the folks here abouts on the contrary wonder that you stay so long away (as tis not look'd upon at all as necessary) when I am living without a Soul to speak to except infants & Servants, those who are used to this way of Life may think it comfortable, but to me who have always lived in a large Family tis really something new. (SF/01/31)

Lady Grace suggests that this isolation is also unacceptable to her house guests. Seemingly confident in many contexts, she appears fragile in the face of implied criticism. We learn, for example, that Miss Peggie Campbell had stayed several nights with Lady Grace, who then wrote to her husband saying that because this lady was 'used to so good a society at Home, [she] did not admire living here so I have not seen her since' (SF/01/31). However, Lady Grace did by all accounts usually enjoy a range of visitors to her own home and the company of fellow guests at the houses of others. From them, she gleaned information to pass on to the man she wrote to as her 'Dearest and most aimiable Moitié', her 'Dearest Life', her 'Dearest Jewel'. When her husband travelled to Perthshire, for example, she was able to advise: 'the Queens Ferry road will detain you less time than 'tother, but if you go by Kingorn [*sic*] I beg you'll remember to have the boat well man'd, as they say their hands have been much complain'd of, of late' (SF/01/10). She also warned that 'Lord Strichen tells me the Dundee ferry is very unsafe on account of the drunken boat men' (SF/01/25).

<sup>17</sup> Glover, *Elite Women and Polite Society*, 4.

Lady Grace relied on her husband for funds, as did most of her contemporaries. A number of the letters, however, suggest that John Campbell was forgetful of household expenses. Several letters refer to money that Lady Grace expects but has not received. A typical reminder reads: 'As to the monie [*sic*], Mr Stewart has got no order upon the Bank so thinks you have forgot it' (SF/01/33). In another letter, she writes: 'I beg my dr [dear] you'll send the order on the bank, both for Cash to me and payment of yr sister's acct [account] to Mrs Seton' (SF/01/27); and in a letter written on 18 July (no year) from Levenside House to 'Mr John Campbell Advocate, At his House in the Cowgate, Edinburgh', Lady Grace writes: 'The Monie [*sic*] I wanted I've got from Mr Colin, five Pounds in case of emmergencies [*sic*]' (SF/01/13).

As more children arrived, Lady Grace became more embroiled in their care, although nurses and nursery-maids were interviewed and hired at regular intervals. There is a remarkable amount of detail in the information she writes to her husband, suggesting that John Campbell took a very close interest in the children. In one letter she says:

Archie however since Tuesday the day I wrote last has had these heats & colds as before with a foulness in his tongue but he is very [?] & eats well enough, I thought indeed as he had been a week free of any complaints & lookd so well that all his disorder was removed, he is now paler again as he used to be; the Doctor saw him yesterday & is to give him the second doze of the Rhu: [rhubarb] & Mercury, & thinks that with the [?] & goats milk, will restore him quite; the sops is left off for a little; poor little Jackie has been drooping there two or three days, he has one tooth yet not quite out, if its that, or a slow fever, or measles I don't know, but there is something hangs about him, the other two are quite well & we think it only teeth ails Jack. (SF/01/27)

As the children grew, Lady Grace sometimes used them to chide her husband for his absences. Archie, she writes, points to his father's picture regularly and says 'Papa', and comes into his mother's bedroom in the morning looking for his father. However, she suggests that 'Archie will quite forget Papa if you stay so long away' (SF/01/10). Confined indoors because of heavy snow, one of Lady Grace's letters includes a poignant little note in very childish handwriting that reads: 'Come home soon Papa & bring me another fiddle stick. Yr little son Archie' (SF/01/35).

The progress of the other boys is positive (although the rare mention of 'Jamie' suggests this was a child who didn't survive), but sometimes the descriptions given suggest Lady Grace is bringing her husband up to date after a particularly long absence:

The children are all vastly well. Sandy is always going about the room holding by the chairs and wall, which is his great delight, Jamie is as broad as he is long, but has a little Round head which makes him appear little tho he has great arms and legs; he is ... very observant, always laughing & crowing; Jack is now quite himself a most diverting little rogue & says Papa calls him a fine little fellow. (SF/01/34)

In one letter, she asks for toys for the children: ‘some noisy plaything to Archie and a little baby for Jenny’ (SF/01/11) but they were not always in favour and there is a suggestion that the peripatetic lifestyle did not suit the children:

Archie, I’m really afraid, is born without any natural affection, as he is the only Child I ever saw that seem’d to carry a dislike to their Mother. I assure you it both vexes and angers me that one come of one should have a disposition so opposite to my own but when I take him home I hope to see better things of him. (SF/01/32)

There are reports of births, marriages and deaths, and everyday occurrences. The gardener fails to weed properly; rain prevents a hay harvest. Both Grace and her husband seem to have been responsible for household affairs, as can be ascertained from this letter written on 23 July (no year):

I hope my Dear Life you have remembered to fill the cellar with coals; if there be a cat in Lady Charles’s I wish she would allow it to hunt in our House, for we shall be quite overrun with mice especially in the pantry, which is a vast inconvenience. (SF/01/14)

There are no responses from John Campbell in the archives to his wife’s letters, but it could be imagined that Lady Grace’s ‘Dear Life’ paid for the cellar to be filled with coals, rather than carrying out that particular chore in person.

Although criticism of his apparently intermittent correspondence suggests a thoughtless husband, in later years it was the then Lord Stonefield who engaged with the Duke of Argyll on his wife’s behalf to ask if their son Colin could be given a commission in a regiment at home. This correspondence, from Bundle: National Records of Scotland (hereafter NRS) 1209/165 (also SF/01 The Argyll Papers at Inveraray Castle), clearly embarrassed Lord Stonefield, yet he was willing to risk that embarrassment for Lady Grace’s peace of mind. On 1 July 1776, during the American War of Independence, Lord Stonefield assured the Duke that he understood the ‘impropriety of confining him [Colin] to a regiment at home’ (SF/01/40), and hoped he hadn’t seemed to ask for priority in assigning Colin to any other regiment. Later that month the somewhat deferential correspondence continues. The Duke has evidently sanctioned a commission for Colin and in thanking him, Lord Stonefield writes:

Nothing would have made me prefer a Regiment at home for him to one abroad but his mother’s great aversion to his serving in America ... I have long ago got over it; and I hope Lady Grace will soon do so too. (SF/01/42)

Just four years later, Lady Grace’s physician, Dr Alexander Stevenson, and Dr William Cullen,<sup>18</sup> noted her deteriorating mental and physical health. Lady Grace’s 1750s letters allow us to see an interesting, bold and vibrant woman.

<sup>18</sup> Letter from Dr Stevenson to Dr Cullen concerning Lady G. Campbell, October 1780, The Cullen Project, <http://www.cullenproject.ac.uk/search-display/?pid=c1937&q=Lady+Grace+>.

There is no further correspondence in The Argyll Papers at Inveraray Castle, however, and when Lord Stonefield corresponded with the Duke of Argyll, Lady Grace was already in her late 50s. Her many pregnancies may have taken their toll, as they did on so many women in the eighteenth century. She would die in 1783 aged 61 (some 20 years longer than the average life expectancy in the eighteenth century). Her husband, who became a Senator of the College of Justice in 1763, married again in 1791 and died in 1801.

Lady Grace Campbell was far from unique as a female letter writer of the mid-eighteenth century. While hers remained very private (indeed, hidden away), her brother's mother-in-law, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, published her *Embassy Letters* in 1763.<sup>19</sup> Also in the public arena were a number of women travel writers who were prolific in the second half of the eighteenth century and, of course, there were women beginning to succeed in the world of fiction at the time that Lady Grace was nurturing her family. Sarah Fielding and Jane Collier published *The Cry: A New Dramatic Fable*<sup>20</sup> in 1754 – an allegorical and satirical novel. Lady Grace, who enjoyed the theatre, flirtatiously from their courtship days called John Campbell 'Orsames' (a character from the Sir John Suckling play *Aglaura*, first published in 1638). She would have assumed that this affectionate name would have remained private, along with her letters. There is no doubt, however, that the wealth of detail in letters such as hers illuminates hitherto dark corners in the everyday lives of women living in the mid-eighteenth century.

<sup>19</sup> (eds.) T. Heffernan and D. O'Quinn, *The Turkish Embassy Letters: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (Peterborough, Ont., 2012).

<sup>20</sup> S. Fielding and J. Collier, *The Cry: A New Dramatic Fable* (Whitefish, MT, 2004).