

There are still standing a number of old houses that once were marked places, and occupied by what may be called the aristocracy of the village, a few of which we have obtained sketches of, especially those having dates upon them, and regarding the history of which there is something to be related.

The sketch *Old Inn at head of Horse Brae* is an old house, partly standing, on the north side of Castlebank Street, opposite what is termed the Horse Brae, which runs immediately east of Mr. Walker's works. We have not been able to ascertain the date of its erection, but tradition always referred to it as being the



Mar. 1872

SOUTH VIEW OF OLD HOUSES, ON CASTLE HILL, BYRES, AND WITCH PLANTAIN.

many retired to it. The keeper of this inn, Mrs. Purdon,—better known by her own name, Anne Scott—was a rattling outspoken woman, who generally kept the kitchen in a constant roar by her remarks. She was, like most of the villagers, very superstitious, and these feelings were always active on the night the Freemasons held their meeting. On this night Anne had heard the beauty of Mary spoken of by her several customers; so, after her customers had departed, and the town was all quiet, she threw her *duffle* over her head, and went out to have a look at the bonny picture. It was close upon twelve o'clock, the night was dark and gusty, and Anne had just turned the head of the Knowe and come within sight of the window when a gust of wind loosened the fastenings of the transparency, and St. Mary lighted on the street within a few yards of where Anne was, with a noise like a drum. Anne roared out, "Lord, preserve me!" and took to her heels down the Knowe, convinced from the sounds that Mary was after her. She reached her house breathless and trembling with fear, and from that day till her death nothing could prevail on Anne to go near a Lodge on a meeting night. As illustrative of Anne's entire thoughtlessness upon some religious exercises, we may narrate the following fact:—When a boy, we lived above the "Cross Keys," and at that time Mrs. Colquhoun, better known as old Nancy Colquhoun, then upwards of eighty, lived next door alone by herself. One Sunday evening Anne was in our house (she was a near relative of the family), when Nancy's trembling voice singing her evening psalm was heard. Anne listened for a little in evident surprise, and then said "What's tat?" On being told, she held up her hand with



D. MacKinnon

MANSION HOUSE. BYRES.



D. New Blacky 1846

FIRST BAKER'S SHOP, ESTABLISHED 1820.

surprise, saying, "I wonder an old body like her can be bothered wi' things like that." Yet withal she had many good qualities about her. No poor person had to seek her aid twice, and aid was often given without seeking; her sympathies were strong, but her manner unpleasant. "With the bite she gave the buffet."

The sketch *Mansion-House* represents another house, with two smaller houses on each side, that in its day must have been of some pretension, which we think is of the same date. Towards the end of last century the large house was the country mansion of a Glasgow banker, Broady Wylie, who held possession of a large piece of land in connection with his house. He was one of the liberal subscribers to the village school. We cannot give any history of these houses. The date over the door of the house to the right of the two-story house is 1680. This house was long occupied by a family of Colquhouns, the immediate descendants of old Nancy. It was in our young days a popular resort during the holidays at New-Year's-Day for hot mutton pies—a great rarity in a village where there was no baker; however, in 1820 Alexander Campbell opened a baker's shop where the Catholic Chapel now stands. He was the first baker in the village. The sketch *First Baker's Shop* shows his house when he was in it. He did not live long, and John Wilson took up the business in the same place, and succeeded well. Hot mutton pies were soon after this announced weekly by the drummer, who was hired by a rival of Wilson's on the Dumbarton Road.

We give three sketches of houses north of Colquhoun's house, which once formed a gentle quarter of the Byres;

and which must soon be removed. There is no date on the small slated house, but over the door of the one next it is 1722. There is one thing connected with this locality noticed in the sketch. The rising ground on which they are built, and that immediately south, is called in the titles the Castle Hill. That name, so far as we have been able to ascertain, has no connection with the Old Castle, but with a unique square house that stood on the ground, called *The Castle*.

The sketch *Old Police Office* is a two-story thatched house at foot of Goat, fronting Castlebank Street. There is no date on this house, but it has evidently been a house of considerable importance in its day. The lower flat we remember being occupied as a smithy, and was then known as the Police Office, a place of public gathering for gossip.

At page 63 we have referred to two old houses—Thomas Craig's and the Ark. See sketches *View from Kelvin looking North*, and *Foot of Knowe looking East*. The house seen in front on first sketch is the Ark; it was of old a public inn. About a century ago the keeper of this inn was James Lapsley, who is noticed in the titles of the old school as having left £10 for educational purposes. James was long held in remembrance in Partick for his romancing propensities, and his wife for confirming them by, "It's a gude's truth, James Lapsley." One of these stories, as related to several Glasgow gentlemen concerning a favourite dog, was familiar to all the old inhabitants of the village. "When that dog was whelped I cast it into Kelvin; there was a spate and the whelp was soon carried away. Some time after I took my rod, and had not long fished



Li Moy Kistay 1841

FOOT OF KNOWE, LOOKING EAST.



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OLD POLICE OFFICE, FOOT OF GOAT.

until I caught a salmon, and cutting it up, after getting home, in its stomach was the whelp. It knew me, and began to bark and wag its tail; I put it back to its mother—and that's the dog, for the truth of which I refer to my wife," who at this part of the story entered the kitchen. "It's a gude's truth, James Lapsley; but what was you speaking about?"

Opposite to the above house, on the entrance to the Knowe from Old Dumbarton Road, is the *Old Bridge Inn*, worth a passing notice from its being fifty years ago the most popular house in the village. Certainly no house in Partick was better known to Glasgow merchants, who were in the habit of coming to the country on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon in search of a good dinner and a quiet glass of toddy. It was then occupied by Mrs. Craig, a stout old lady, who prided herself on the quality of her liquors, as well as in the style in which she could get up a dinner or supper for a large party, and her house was a model of cleanliness. Nothing could be more enticing on a winter evening than to look in through the window (not filled with bottles) and see the bright blazing fire in the kitchen, and the wall covered with shining metal measures and meat-covers, reflecting the light over the whole apartment, the stone floor whitened over, and the deal table scoured to a whiteness one might take their meat off without cover. The late Dr. Strang, in his "Glasgow Clubs," gives an account of the Partick Duck Club. That Club held its meetings and dinners in the Bun-house Inn. What he says in reference to that Club is equally applicable to the many duck feasts held in the Old Bridge Inn. In the summer the Kelvin

was literally swarming with ducks, and in the evening a perfect stream of these bipeds would be seen waddling along the street to Mrs. Craig's, and, had they been at all observant creatures, they would have quaked with fear as Friday came round, for there were few Saturday afternoons but a company of Glasgow gentlemen had a dinner of ducks and green peas in Mrs. Craig's, and, also, often on the Sabbath afternoons. Whether big M'Tear, spoken of by Dr. Strang, was ever there, or whether the frequenters of the Old Bridge Inn formed themselves into a club we cannot say; but one thing we know, that they did not always leave for home in the same condition as they came. After the death of Widow Craig the house was kept by her son; but whether from change in the management, or from the gradual dropping off of the old frequenters, we cannot say, but the *prestige* of the house slowly declined. At the time we are speaking of the Old Bridge Inn was patronized by the village as well as by Glasgow people for parties. There were more weddings, balls, and dinner parties held in this house than were held in all the other public-houses put together.

Quakers' Burying-Ground.—This ground is situated on the west side of Kelvin Street (Goat). It is a small square plot of ground, surrounded by a stone wall. We have endeavoured to obtain a detailed history of this ground from some members of the Society of Friends, but have failed. The tradition, as narrated to us by several old people—and this was the common tradition in our young days—was that one of the old proprietors of the ground, named Purdon, married a Quakeress—that very strong prejudices existed everywhere against

their burying their dead in any ordinary churchyard—that this Mr. Purdon granted to the Society of Friends in Glasgow this piece of ground, in perpetuity, as a burying-place. The first person buried in these grounds was the said Mrs. Purdon, who was traditionally remembered by the villagers as *Quaker Meg*—*Meg* not being an epithet of reproach, but the common synonyme of Margaret. I have, through the kindness of a friend, obtained the date and particular name of the donor, in a letter as follows:—

“EDINBURGH, 3rd Month, 4th, 1872.

“RESPECTED FRIEND,—I find on examination of the titles of the burying-ground at Partick belonging to the Society of Friends, that the Friends obtained an infetment to the ground in 1733, executed by William Purdon, Portioner in Partick, eldest son of the deceased John Purdon, *alias* Straine, in favour of John Woodrow and the Society of Friends. This may probably be all the information, and I trust will be sufficient for thy purpose.

“Thy friend, very truly,

(Signed) “WILLIAM MILLER.”

Such a gift at that time does honour to the memory of William Purdon, and says something for the liberal spirit then existing in the village, as the feeling against this body of Christians was then very strong. Those who have perused Peden's prophecies, and other books of that time and character, will remember the sayings of these good but mistaken men in reference to Quakerism; and we give the following to show the feeling existing in Glasgow and other towns very shortly before the

time of the gift of this burying-ground, taken from Chambers' "Domestic Annals," which throws great light on the habits of our forefathers:—

"In 1683 it was represented to the Privy Council by the Bishop of Aberdeen that the Quakers in his diocese were now proceeding to such insolency as to erect meeting-houses for their worship, and schools for training up their children in their godless and heretical opinions, providing funds for the support of their establishments, and in some instances adding burial-grounds for their own special use. The Council issued orders to have proper investigation made amongst the leading Quakers concerned and the proprietors of the ground on which these meeting-houses and schools had been built.

"In Glasgow, in 1691, the Quakers were very fiercely persecuted. They petitioned the Privy Council against such usage, saying their usage had been liker French Dragoons' usage and furious rabbling than anything that dare own the name of Christianity. Even they could endure the beating, stoning, dragging they got from the populace, were it not that the magistrates connived at and homologated their persecutions, and their continued silence seemed to justify such doings.

"In November of that year, while they were met in their own hired house for worship, a company of Presbyterian Church elders attended, with the rabble of the town, and hailed them before James Sloss, Bailie, who sent them to prison for meeting together for worship, and bail was refused except they would give it under their hand that they should never meet again there. At the same time the meeting house was plundered of forms. The only redress they got was that the magistrates were ordered to restore their forms that were taken away. There were no bounds to the horrors

with which sincere Presbyterians regarded Quakerism at that period."

We could multiply instances of this persecuting spirit at the time referred to; so that when such things were done in Glasgow, with the apparent sanction of the Magistrates and the Church, it says something for the village of Partick that no opposition was made at the time to having a burying-ground for the Quakers in their midst. The villagers, however, were not above certain prejudices respecting the Society of Friends. We could never learn anything of the character of Mrs. Purdon when alive, but her ghost was a constant source of terror to the villagers. In passing the grounds after nightfall, old as well as young quickened their steps; and children were often puzzled by being assured that if they went to Meg's grave exactly at twelve at night, and said, "What did you get to your supper to-night, Meg?" and then put their ear to the ground, they would hear her say, "Naething." Burials were made in Partick at long intervals up to 1855, when they were discontinued, and we are bound to say that within our remembrance the conduct of the public at one of these burials was anything but flattering to the good sense and feeling of the inhabitants. A Quaker's funeral would have collected mostly all the village to witness and the church walls were crowded with children and women. Their remarks during the solemn services at the funeral were a thing but pleasant. These remarks, when they were said, say, were not made in whispers, but were said with laughter, intensified the solemnity, and leness did much to necessitate the



D. MacKissey 1911

OLD POLICE OFFICE, FOOT OF COAT.



VIEW OF VILLAGE FROM THE CASTLE GROUND.

occasions. The late Robert Hill told us that when a boy he attended his grandfather's funeral, which went down through Meadowside. The Clyde being frozen over, but the ice not being of sufficient strength to bear the whole funeral procession, the coffin was laid upon the ice, and a rope attached to it. The people went over separately, and then drew the coffin across. We would not approve of maintaining a right-of-way which had ceased to be required by the public, if it interfered with the progress of the town or public works; but we think the proprietors who take possession of these paths should give an equivalent for the public good. The roads and commons that have been taken up, if paid for at their value, would go a good way to buy a public park.

There was many a spirited struggle to maintain the right-of-way over the steps at the foot of the Castle Brae. The steps were generally much displaced by the floods in winter. The proprietor of the Slit Mills objected to any stones being used for steps but the common boulders found in the bed of the river, which were insufficient. Early in summer measures were taken by the villagers to procure stones and work them into form, and on an appointed day, immediately after daybreak, the stones were taken to the place, and the whole steps were set and arranged for easy passage before the opposing party had time to obtain an interdict. These were periods of considerable excitement to the youth of the village, and often attended with risk, as several times physical force was tried to prevent the laying of the steps. We are glad now to see in the place of the steps a substantial bridge, and

we sincerely trust that, the public having given up their right not only to steps but to a broad pathway along the Kelvin (ground which is of great value to the party who received it), no attempt will be made to close the new and short pathway given in lieu of this, and that the town will maintain the bridge in proper repair as their own property.

If we except Byres Well in Dowanvale, with the road into it, Partick has no common ground left but that piece at the head of Kelvin Street, called the School Green. Formerly this common extended a good way up the Coarse Loan (Hyndland Street). The making of the new Dumbarton Road divided the common, and we have already stated how the northern portion was absorbed into Dowanhill. Several attempts have also been made to take in the School Green. The last determined effort was made about thirty years ago. We were in London at the time, but were informed of the transaction in a letter from a Partick friend, an eye-witness of the clearing away of the enclosure. The following extract from the letter tells its own story:—

“ We have just passed through one of those little excitements which used to fire up the Radical spirit of the natives, an account of which, I know, will warm you up, as of old. Your old friends, B. and C., took it into their heads to erect a Coal Ree in the village, for the benefit of the villagers, and to do this on the cheap was of the utmost importance. They applied to Mr. T. M., who, they heard, claimed a sort of right to the School Green, who gave them liberty to enclose it for a mere nominal rent during seven years, which I am told would have taken away the prescriptive right of the public. At all events, the work of enclosing the green was

begun and carried on so rapidly that it was nearly finished before many of the villagers knew anything about it. However, *Wee Hilly*, Baker Wilson, and a few others sent through the drum, calling a public meeting of the inhabitants upon the School Green in the evening. The meeting was held within the enclosure. The speeches on the occasion were few but pithy, and at the close, in less time than I have taken to write this letter, not a stick was left standing, and the ground cleared, after which they gave three hearty cheers and retired. The partners were there taking down names, and holding out threats, but after inquiry they found nothing could be done. The wood was all removed during the night, and thus ended another attempt to rob us of our common.

(Signed) A. C."

We have repeatedly heard old people belonging to the village say that part of the Kilbrae was also a common at one time, but had been gradually taken possession of by a neighbouring laird. The term *Kil* applied to this place has no reference to a church, as the term generally denotes, but to a kiln either for lime or malt, which once existed there. If this had been a public kiln for the common use of the villagers, which is probable, it may have been the origin of the ground being used as a common.

Probably the best method of conveying a true idea of the social and domestic condition of the village sixty years ago will be to describe the manners and customs of that date. For example, any person passing through the village at nine o'clock, either morning or evening, of a Sabbath-day would never be out of hearing of the psalm-singing of the different families at family worship. So

that, speaking of the villagers generally, they were, like the ancient Athenians, in all things very religious, but mixed up with it all was a survival of old beliefs and practices which influenced the whole social life of the people. This will be made more apparent by briefly detailing some of those beliefs and observances which had woven themselves into the customs of the people sixty years back, and most of which were common throughout Scotland. We will, in the first place, give the practices observed at the three great periods of birth, marriage, and death; but in describing these we do not mean to affirm that every family practised every item. There were often circumstances that prevented their entire observance, and also some would put into practice one thing which he believed in, and laugh at his neighbour for doing another, both being in our view equally superstitious. We give the complete forms believed in and practised by the inhabitants as a whole, and will occasionally add suggestions as to the probable origin of some of these practices.

Birth.—When a baby was born there was put into the first water it was washed in a spoonful of salt, and, before washing, the child was made to taste this water *three times*. This was done to preserve the child from evil influences. Salt, in ancient times, was an emblem of friendship and fidelity, and was used in all sacrifices. Through time it came to be regarded as a charm against evil fascinations, and was looked upon as such by Greeks, Romans, and Jews, as well as by our grandmothers sixty years ago. However, this was not held efficient against all future evil, for while there was much joy in the family, as was natural, there was also much anxiety, especially on

the part of the mother. She was afraid to let the baby out of her sight, or at all events out of the room, except under the protection of near relations, fearful that any evil-disposed person should see it before it was baptized. Neither was the child to be called by any name before that event. If asked by a neighbour what the name of this one was to be, the answer was, "It has not been out yet," meaning it was not baptized, or, "We do not like to be sae foresighted, as we do not know what may happen." The fear that the child would die "a wee unchristened bairn," caused the rite of baptism to be administered as close upon the birth as possible. We have known children born upon Saturday taken out to the church next day, rather than risk the danger of waiting till the following Sunday. It may be asked, "Were the people in Partick so ignorant of the nature of this rite sixty years ago?" We are certain there were few, if any, parents who could not repeat the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and even the whole of the Shorter Catechism, with its requirements and reasons annexed, so as to have satisfied the most fastidious elder of the present day; but underneath this book-knowledge there was a deeper rooted faith. The grandmothers of the newly-born babies had, in their younger days, on calm nights, among the trees and dells in the neighbourhood, heard a faint and melancholy moaning, believed to be the spirits of unchristened bairns bewailing their sad fate. This belief in the non-salvation of unbaptized infants gives the superstition an apparently Christian origin, and it no doubt dates from a very early period of the British Christian Church. We think, however, it

sprang from some heathen rite, which the Church replaced by baptism. At the time we are speaking of, there was another belief existing among a few in the village, viz., that pretty babies—and what mother does not think her's pretty—were often before baptism spirited away by elves or fairies, who left in their place a mere semblance of the true baby, which soon sickened and pined away. We have heard old women affirm that they knew families in which this had taken place, and we have been told of one case where the fact of the change was not discovered until after the apparent death and burial of the false baby. Suspicion having been excited as to the cause of death, the grave was opened, and in the coffin was found a wooden figure like a large doll. The Rev. Mr. Rust says, in his "Druidism Exhumed," that this superstition prevails throughout the North of Scotland, and states that it is also believed that when the theft is discovered before the death of the changeling, there are means of propitiating the fairies, and having the real baby restored. These fairies are supposed to haunt certain localities, where peculiar *soughing* sounds are heard, such as cairns, stone circles, and groves. The parents and friends of the baby that has been spirited away, taking with them certain offerings, such as bread, butter, milk, eggs, cheese, and flesh of fowls, visit, after the sun sets, the haunted place, and repeating certain incantations lay down the gifts. The substituted baby is then placed at the haunted spot, and the friends retire to a distance and wait. After a considerable time they again approach, and if the offerings have disappeared it is a proof that the human child is returned. Mr. Rust

states that he knew a woman who, when a baby, was subjected to this ordeal.

As a rule, the first Sabbath after birth was the christening day. In these days there were no such things as cabs used to take the baby to church. It was carried either to Anderston or Govan, generally by a young woman, who was accompanied by another young woman whose duty it was to assist in removing the haps that were on the baby, and put them on again after the ceremony was over. She who carried the child took with her a piece of bread and cheese, which was handed to the first person they met after leaving the house. This person, if the rule was understood, turned and walked back a short distance with the *banquet*, as it was termed, and tasted the gift. If the person met was a stranger, notice was taken of his or her appearance, colour of hair, and such like, as these were indications of luck or the opposite. If the person belonged to the village, these qualities were well known. Great uneasiness was created in the mind of relatives when any one known to be unlucky got the bread and cheese. There is no doubt, we think, that in this presenting of the bread and cheese to the first person met, there is a survival of the ancient oriental system of making friends by bestowing a gift. The giver, in this instance, is the baby, and its acceptance in the way referred to was simply a declaration of friendship and good-will. To meet a friend with a gift is as old as history. And this gift-giving was practised by the neighbours when the baby was taken for the first time into any house. The first thing the neighbour did was to put into the baby's mouth a morsel of sugar—in older times, I am informed,

it was a little salt. Omission of this reception on the part of a neighbour or relative would bring moisture to the eyes of a sensitive mother. And when such ceremonies were done with proper feelings, there was in them much that was good. A morsel of sugar given in this way was equivalent to saying, "Peace be with you."

There was another superstition connected with the baptism which was of considerable importance. Children of both sexes were baptized at the same time. If a baby girl was baptized before a boy, the girl, if it was spared to be a woman, would have a beard, and the boy have none. It was thus a serious consideration either way. How little do some of our beardless youths consider that their feminine appearance may have resulted from the carelessness of a beadle in arranging the order of the baptism, or probably from the parents not being liberal enough in the christening gifts to that functionary, and thus the sin of the parents is made manifest to the world in their offspring's upper lip.

Notwithstanding the potency ascribed to baptism, the parents' anxieties for the preservation of their children from evil influences did not cease with the proper performance of that rite. It was fully believed that certain malicious persons had the power of casting an evil eye upon children, as well as upon cattle, and causing the child to become peevish and fretful, to refuse nourishment, or cause the food taken to be productive of no good, the child gradually dwindling away to a skeleton, and if the evil influence could not be removed by some counter-charm, ending in death. It was not necessary that the person exercising this power over the child should have even seen the child. It was sufficient if

they had got at any time into their possession anything that once belonged to the child, such as some of its hair, parings of its nails, or even a portion of its clothes. There were instances in the village in which, when the child was suspected to be labouring under this dire influence, the whole of its clothes have been taken off and burned, believing that, as nothing but fire could remove the evil power, the burning of the whole would frustrate the power exercised by the possession of a part. After cutting a child's hair, the cuttings were all carefully collected, and even the floor swept, all being put into the fire. And while a baby's hair was being cut the door was locked. Dr. Livingstone, in his book on the Zambeze, refers to a similar practice among some African tribes:—"They carefully collect, and afterwards either burn or bury the hair, lest any of it fall into the hands of a witch." Also, Mr. Muster, speaking of the Patagonians, refers to a similar custom among them:—

"The usual morning toilette is simple; after the plunge in the river, which is almost always the first thing, except, of course, when circumstances prevent it, indulged in by both sexes, who bathe scrupulously apart, and generally before daylight. The men's hair is dressed by their wives, daughters, or sweethearts, who take the greatest care to burn any hairs that may be brushed out, as they fully believe that spells may be wrought by evil intentioned persons who can obtain a piece of their hair. From the same idea, after cutting their nails, the parings are carefully committed to the flames."

The custom in Partick was to throw the parings of the nails behind the fire, amongst the ashes at the back; it

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was unlucky to put them into the red of the fire. To pare nails on a Sabbath was a great offence—equal to the sin of whistling on that day, considered very heinous.