

CHARACTERISTICS OF PLACES AND THEIR INHABITANTS.

THE COUNTRY AT LARGE.

The Land o' Cakes.

FROM an affectionate remembrance of the oaten fare of the bulk of the people, Scotland is often toasted at public and private meetings, at home and abroad, as *The Land of Cakes*. There is reason, from the following passage in a book written a century ago, to believe that the appellation is not of ancient date. 'It [the province of Buchan] so abounds with oats at this day, though not of the richest kind, that it is sometimes called proverbially *The Granary of Scotland*, and at other times *The Land of Cakes*.'—*View of the Diocese of Aberdeen*.

MERSE—(*Berwickshire*).

Perhaps owing in part to alliteration, and partly to a consideration of their robust and warlike character, the grown male population of Southern Berwickshire are characterised from old time as—

The Men o' the Merse.

DUNSE.

Dunse dings a'.

That is, beats or surpasses all other places; but in what respect, it would be difficult to imagine. It may be mentioned that this is only the opinion which the people of Dunse entertain of the town, as their neighbours, in general, scout the idea with great indignation. The *Lads o' Dunse* are celebrated by a lively Scotch tune bearing their name.

Æ—(*Dumfriesshire*).

The Lads of Æ.

'Æ is a river in Dumfriesshire, having of course a glen, called Glenæ, the male inhabitants of which were long famed for broils, battles, and feats of activity, whence called "The *Lads of Æ*"—a phrase in some measure expressive of their wild and daring character. At every fair and wedding, in those days, it was customary to have a fight; and the Lads of Æ were ever foremost in the fray.

'Before carts were used, or roads made in the country, and yet *within the memory of man*, the goods of merchants were all conveyed from one place to another on the backs of horses; and the farmers of Æ, who were almost all employed in this business, often transported merchandise in this manner from Glasgow to Carlisle, Manchester, and various other towns in England. Wherever they went, through England or Scotland, their names were famous for cudgel-playing, boxing, and similar exercises.

'A number of the Lads of Æ, under one of the Dalziels of Glenæ, fought at the famous battle of Dryfe Sands, where almost all were killed; and not a man of them, it is said, would have escaped, had not young Kirkpatrick of Closeburn (who was to have been married to Dalziel's daughter) come to their assistance. A little after this instance of heroism, Kirkpatrick himself fell, greatly lamented.'—*Note to 'The Battle of Dryfe Sands,' by William M'Vitie. Dumfries: 1815.*

AYR.

Auld Ayr.

'Auld Ayr! wham ne'er a toun surpasses
For honest men and bonnie lasses.'—BURNS.

INHABITANTS OF GLASGOW, GREENOCK, AND PAISLEY.

Glasgow people, Greenock folk, and Paisley bodies.

These words are understood to convey the popular sense of the comparative social importance of the inhabitants of the three great towns of the west: the inhabitants of Glasgow being called *people*, on account of their wealth and citizenly dignity: the Greenockians *folk*, as expressive of their homely respectability: while the Paisley bodies (how far deservedly, would admit of much question) are at the bottom of the scale. Some years ago, when a public dinner was given to Professor Wilson of Edinburgh in Paisley, which is his native place, on his speaking of it as a town containing such and such a number of *souls*, his friend Thomas Campbell, who sat by his side, whispered—' *Bodies*, you mean.'

GLASGOW, LINLITHGOW, AND FALKIRK.

Glasgow for bells,
Lithgow for wells,
Falkirk for beans and pease.

The numerous churches of Glasgow account for its share in this old rhyme. Linlithgow, lying in a hollow beside slopes which abound in springs, has several copious public fountains in the principal street, particularly one near the East Port, with a figure of St Michael, the patron saint of the town, over it, and the inscription, 'St Michael is kind to strangers;' having evidently been designed for the refreshment of weary travellers. Another is of very complicated and rather elegant architecture, with many quaint figures carved in stone—being the substitute and facsimile of a previous structure built in 1620. Falkirk, situated close beside the rich alluvial lands called the Carse of Stirling, was from early times noted as a market for beans and pease.

MUSSELBURGH.

The honest toun o' Musselburgh.

The motto to the armorial bearings of Musselburgh is 'Honesty.' In the *New Statistical Account of Scotland*,

Mr D. M. Moir, a native of the burgh, who has acquired celebrity by his writings, gives the following note upon the subject :—

‘After a life of chivalry, heroism, and devotion to all the best interests of his native land, it was here that the renowned Randolph, Earl of Murray, the regent of Scotland, died on the 20th July, 1332. In consequence of preparations by the English to invade Scotland, he had assembled an army, and advanced to Colbrandspath, on the frontier of Berwickshire, when news of a naval armament from the south obliged him to return homewards, and provide for the defence of the capital. The tradition of the district says that he had got the length of Walliford, on the eastern confines of the parish, when intelligence was brought to the magistrates that he was dangerously ill. They immediately took such measures as they best could to provide for his accommodation, and had him removed on a litter to the nearest house, within the east port of the burgh. Relays of citizens are said to have watched over the great man until he died ; and every luxury that the place could supply is said to have been gratefully offered by them. In gratitude for their kind attentions, his nephew and successor, the Earl of Mar, suggested that they should make some request regarding the extension of their municipal privileges, which he would be proud to be the means of extending. Whereupon they told him that “they wished nothing ; and were happy to have had an opportunity of doing what they considered their duty.” The earl is reported to have here added, “Sure you are a set of very honest people.” The request of adopting “Honesty” as the motto of the burgh is said then to have been made, and it is retained to this day. Be this as it may, the Earl of Mar granted or obtained for the magistrates of Musselburgh the first charter, which conferred upon them a variety of local privileges, in 1340.’

EDINBURGH.

The guid toun of Edinburgh.

Edinburgh is *not* called *the good town* in the decret-arbital pronounced in 1583 by King James, in confirmation of its mode of burgal government, nor even in an act of council

dated 1658; but in an act of council dated 1678 it is so termed.

One of the senses of 'guid,' given by Dr Jamieson, is, that it expresses rank, and means *honourable*. Thus, 'guidman' meant *laird*. The 'Guidman of North Berwick' (*Melville's Memoirs*, p. 122) is the same person who had been designed 'Alexander Hume of North Berwick,' at p. 93, where he is mentioned in common with 'divers other barons and gentlemen.' It is easy to see how a burgh, advanced to privilege by the royal fiat, would come to be styled 'guid,' or honourable; and that Edinburgh, as at length the chief of them, would be so styled eminently.

It is worthy of notice that the keeper of the prison of Edinburgh was, during the seventeenth century, called 'the Guidman of the Tolbooth.'*

LINLITHGOW.

The faithful town of Linlithgow.

A tree appears in the coat armorial of Linlithgow, with the motto, 'My fruit is fidelity to God and the king.' Probably both epithet and motto relate to some good service rendered by the worthy burghers to one of the kings of Scotland, so long resident amongst them.

KIPPEN.

Out of the world, and into Kippen.

A proverb meant to show the seclusion and singularity of this district of Stirlingshire, of which the feudal lord was formerly styled King of Kippen.

DUMBLANE.

Drunken Dumblane.

This proverbial phrase perhaps arose from the alliteration, like other similar expressions; but probably the only injustice of it is in its selecting Dumblane for a stigma which

* By *tolbooth* we now understand, in Scotland, a prison; but the word in reality means a custom-house, or place for the collection of a tax. 'He saw Matheu sittynge in a tolbothe.'—*Wickliffe's Translation of the Bible*. The cause of the change of meaning is, that prisons became generally attached to the municipal court-houses, and in time formed the most conspicuous portion of such buildings.

might be as deservedly borne by many other towns of similar size.

FORFAR.

Brosie Forfar.

Brosie implies the plethoric appearance arising from excess of meat and drink. The legal gentlemen of this burgh, who, from its being a county town, are remarkably numerous in proportion to the population, are characterised as the 'drunken writers of Forfar.' The town is a good deal annoyed with a lake in its neighbourhood, which the inhabitants have long had it in contemplation to drain, and which would have been drained long ago, but for the expensiveness of such an undertaking. At a public meeting held some years ago for the discussion of this measure, the late Earl of Strathmore said that he believed the cheapest method of draining the lake would be to throw a few hogs-heads of good whisky into the water, and set the *drunken writers* of Forfar to drink it up!

FALKLAND.

The inhabitants of Falkland, in Fife, from their neighbourhood to a royal palace, must have had manners considerably different from those of other districts. This is testified, even in our own days, when all traces of the refinement or viciousness of a court have passed away as if they had never been, by a common expression in Fife—

Ye're queer folk, no to be Falkland folk.

KIRKCALDY.

The lang toun o' Kirkcaldy.

Kirkcaldy, a thriving manufacturing and commercial town in Fife, chances to be built along a narrow stripe of ground beside the sea, and to have villages continuing it at each end; so that a group of inhabitants not exceeding ten thousand are stretched over about three miles of space. 'Kirkcaldy the sel' o't,' says honest Andrew Fairservice, 'is as lang as ony toun in a' England;' which is not far from the fact.

DUNDEE.

Bonny Dundee.

This appellation must date at least from the early part of

the seventeenth century, as it appears as the title of the air which still bears the same name in Skene's Manuscript, *circa* 1628.

PEOPLE OF THE MEARNS.

The merry men o' the Mearns.

The *Men o' the Mearns* is a common phrase, probably from alliteration. There is a saying in Aberdeenshire—'I can dae fat I dow [do what I can]: the men o' the Mearns can dae nae mair.'

ABERDEEN.

The brave town of Aberdeen.

'Panmure with all his men did come;
The provost of *braif* *Aberdene*,
Wi' trumpets and wi' touke of drum,
Came schortly in their armour schene.'

—*The Battle of Harlaw.*

Spalding, the annalist, speaks often of the 'brave town' of Aberdeen.

THE HIGHLANDS.

Tir nan gleaun, 's nam beann, 's nam breacan!

That is—

The land of glens, of hills, and of plaids.

SLEAT, IN THE ISLE OF SKYE.

This district was famed for the beauty of its female population, as expressed in the following Gaelic distich—

Sleibhte riabhach
Nam ban boidheach.

In English—

Russet Sleat of beauteous women.

POPULAR REPROACHES.

THERE is a nationality in districts as well as in countries; nay, the people living on different sides of a streamlet, or of the same hill, sometimes entertain prejudices against each other not less virulent than those of the inhabitants