

ART. XIX.—*A Plea for the Old Names. Part II.* By Miss POWLEY, Langwathby.

Read at Penrith, July 10th, 1879.

SINCE the former portion of this paper was read, a year ago, the importance of a collection of field-names throughout the kingdom has been urged by writers in "*Notes and Queries.*" Without further observation it may be said that to no Society could there be greater facilities for a collection or notice, locally, than to this. Its members by residence or ownership often in almost every parish in the two counties, are acquainted with the fields, their names, soils, and traditions. Others, as the clergy, living in the country and interested in all its aspects; all have the advantage of a knowledge of the dialect, and its power in forming names, and opportunity of observation as to their fitness to the places named, in situation, or to circumstances in the past, and also of influence in their preservation for the future. And to no district could such recognition and influence be more beneficial than to this, undergoing many changes, and threatened with more; in which, unnoticed, may soon be obliterated those records of the past which are still legible on the common fields and wastes, to those who care to read them with these local advantages, for the want of which learned strangers either misinterpret, or fail to notice them.

The word *carr*, which we find in so many parishes, and always expressive of the same character of land, seems to have been unfortunate in this respect. Halliwell has *car* the name of a remarkable floating island in the north; quoting from Horne Tooke's *Diversions of Purley*. In that work it is pronounced as connected with "car, cart, chariot," and referred to Latin, *carrus*. But the description

tion is excellent, and shows its real belongings:—"Adjoining Esthwaite Water, near Hawkshead, there is a lake or small tarn called Priestpot, upon which there is an island containing about a rood of land, and mostly covered by willows, some of them eighteen or twenty feet high, known by the name of the *car*. At the breaking up of the severe frost of 1795, a boy ran into the house of the proprietor of the island and told him 'that his *car* was coming up the tarn.' The owner and his family looked, and beheld with astonishment, 'not Birnam Wood coming to Dunsinane,' but the woody island approaching them, with a slow and majestic motion. It rested, however, before it reached the edge of the tarn, and afterwards frequently changed its place as the wind shifted, being sometimes at one side, sometimes in the centre. It is conjectured to have been long separated from the bed of the lake, and only fastened by the roots of some of the trees, which were probably broken by the extraordinary rise of the waters on the breaking of the ice." The last sentence reads like a translation of Molbech's definition of Old Norse, *kiörr*, a marsh, submerged tract, or growth of bogs. There is a close of land called High *Carr*, near Hawkshead, as I often read, and many others in the same county, stationary enough to have interfered with Mr. Tooke's definition. Whether there is now any trace of this island, which seems to have attained a degree of firmness and durability unknown in others of the same formation here, I have not heard, nor when it first appeared. If it was the same which Wordsworth mentions in his *Guide to the Lakes*, 1835:—"In one of the pools near the lake of Esthwaite may sometimes be seen a mossy islet, with trees upon it, shifting about before the wind,"—these dates show a duration of more than forty years.* To that we have heard of in Derwentwater, which has often appeared for a season, as a

* 1822 is the date of the map, and possibly of the first edition. The Derwentwater island is also mentioned as sometimes seen.

green

green swamp and sunk again, we are too late to hear the same name given; the word, save where it was fixed on the land, has died out of living speech with us, though it has not yet done so with our neighbours of Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, and Norfolk. See *The Field*.

Mr. Sullivan, who lived some years in Penrith, and with great zeal and industry gathered all that he could find in books, and among the town's people to illustrate his account of Cumberland and Westmorland, their people and dialect, probably never heard of *Carr* as a name. He cites that of Crewe in Lancashire, as, in conjunction with the situation, suggesting an equivalent to the Celtic *corrach*, a marsh, but his book has no mention of any nearer equivalent. Our *Carrs* are not extensive enough, or their names have not become prominent as railway stations, or as race-courses, as in some other counties. To local people, however, whose attention is awakened, there are significant if not very prominent facts not to be overlooked; and as time brings coincidences and analogies from other districts, these become more valuable. In this parish *Cardale* is a hollow field, which in winter usually has a stagnant pool, and the field above it is called and written *Carronhead*, and there are two others near of the same character, low, level fields, named, as if for variety, *Caravacre*, the *v* apparently for euphony between the *Cara* and *acre*, and these and other variations are found in the names of fields in neighbouring parishes. The vowel is sometimes changed, I believe. A poem, by Professor Shairp, on "The Good Lord James at St. Andrew's"* has

"Beneath the Lomond's lofty base,
Up the low *Carse* for high Torwood, across
The *Carron* water lay his path,
Through mile on mile of weary moor and moss,
Till past remote *Carnwath*."

Showing that in Scotland the very same variations of

* In *Good Words*—about 1875.

name

name are used for places near each other of the same character, except that, instead of *carr*, *carse* is the common designation of those extensive and once submerged tracts, series of *carrs*, perhaps, which for ages past have yielded up such spoil to archæologists, as the *Carse* of Stirling and the *Carse* of Gowrie. The newest Scottish Dictionary (Ogilvie's Imperial) after the general meaning of *carse*, says, cautiously, "derivation uncertain."

Apart from names merely descriptive, there are many of deep and varied interest in and about the fields. Some keep the names of ancient council hills, and places of assemblage of races and ages long past away. Some are connected with legend and history. When we read that "the site of Tarn Wadling, a lake of 100 acres, in the parish of Hesket-in-the-Forest, is now covered with excellent grass, and cattle and sheep pasturing thereon,"* it is in hope that its name and place are locally recorded. As a link in the chain of Arthurian legend, and progress northwards, no record can equal the interest of Mayborough of kindred fame, visible still in its undisturbed gloom and mysterious beauty. But the preservation of all existing knowledge of such remarkable places under changes of aspect, seems to ensure their receiving due attention and respect, and perhaps having additional light thrown upon them in time to come. It is known that to Mr. Machell we are indebted, as for much beside, for the mention of a field near Appleby called "Douglas Ing." It was the scene of a battle with a Scottish marauding party, under a Douglas, at some forgotten date, (for these affairs were so numerous that but for the field and this record of its name, this would never have been taken into history). As it is, the name is now carefully and proudly preserved, and from time to time relics are found confirming its story. In many parishes a field-name points out a scene of the judicial executions of

* Whellan's History of Cumberland.

feudal

feudal times; and the ground set apart for archery practice at the Butts, which was compulsory on all young and able men, when the bow and arrow were England's weapons. Some fields hold in remembrance names of old possessors, which otherwise have been silent for ages in the district, and of which history has small mention; as Powys' Close, Washington Ings, and Rookby Scarth, are yet distinctions from other men's fields of the same description, thereabouts. Some have reference to accidents, "and dim unhappy far-off things," as Barker Scar, and Dead Men's Slack; and Wallaway, a farm house whose name is "an old English exclamation of sorrow."* It is said to be connected with a raid of the Scots, but whether uttered by the visitors or the visited, who can tell? Some retain the name of ancient establishments, some of obsolete parochial offices, and almost forgotten customs. Some throw light on natural history, in the haunts of birds and beasts; some on homes of plants, and many fields still bear names of crops to which they were first set apart, and the contrast is curious with the present. In short, though all are not equally valuable, there is so much which is precious to archæology, that our field-names may well be said to constitute a part of national history, a record of social progress, and it is impossible to estimate the loss to the future if instead of them the ruthless classifications of surveyors, as "Lot 1, 2, or 3," as "so many acres of meadow and grassings," should become general, or thoughtless people should succeed in changing the old for new names of a more fashionable sound.

* Morris. "*Waly, waly*," of old ballads, and *away*—alas.