

ART. XXVI.— *A Plea for the Old Names. Part III.** By
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THE names of places which have no history offer a fund of interest to the observer of old words and their uses in the district, and may render acceptable a few more words of appeal for them to the Society which has the opportunity of testing their fitness. It is long since Mr. Robert Ferguson pointed out the frequency of Scandinavian proper names among those of families and places as evidence, when taken with the popular speech, of a colonization of these shores which has never been recorded. As we have here no Domesday Book, or other written authority for the older names, there may be less danger of too hasty construction in the expression of accord in these views, if experience and observation shew us such uniformity of character in names of the obscurest spots. When we find in places almost unvisited and unwritten of, save by the old settlers themselves, an old Norse word descriptive of the physical features of the spot, and another of ownership or association, consistent in chronology, we must believe the truth such names convey. And when we see how fast old names are wearing out, and those who remember them passing away, it would seem as if it might be a greater error if no one should record them, or venture a few words on their behalf, in the hearing of a larger audience. For this is a matter out of the way of strangers; it is connected with our dialect which they seldom hear, and which is not easily learnt. And, however well-established Mr. Ferguson's opinion among dialecticians may be, there seems a failure

* For Part I. see ante Vol. iv., p. 19; for Part II., *ibid*, p. 280.

in its recognition, often by the learned, in regard to the names of our own district, of our peculiar northern antiquity of speech.

There is an old Northern word *Flow*, which many must remember as giving name to unstable boggy tracts along the Scottish Border. I have seen an old map in which the word accompanied the name of almost every parish, as if each had its portion of quicksand and quagmire, to which the word probably applied, though we only have it in names, and for a very limited extent. Mr. Dickinson says *flow* is an "extensive unsheltered peat-bog," and mentions Wedholme Flow, Bowness Flow, Solway Flow, &c. But except here, and in the wild and lonely tracts of the mining fells of Alston Moor, the word seems now not to exist as a name. It is not used, as I see Scottish writers do, in composition, as the *moss-flows*; nor anywhere in poetry or prophecy as a separate word, on this side the Border, as in the hands of Scott, with such power, in the Master of Ravenswood fulfilling his doom—

"To stable his steed in the Kelpie's Flow,
And his name shall be lost for evermoe." (*sic.*)

Yet it may have been given as a name of caution in the early watery days. I see in this week's papers a caution to persons trespassing in pursuit of game on Wedholme Flow for fear of legal consequences only. In my childhood there lived in this village a weird old Scotch woman of whom it was said that her father's was one of the twenty-eight tenements which were submerged "when Solway Flow came down;" and that she and the rest of her family were rescued by the neighbours, as soon as they could be drawn up through the chimney; after which Nelly ran away to England and got hired and settled. It was probably when this catastrophe required a record in print, in 1771, that the name was changed to *Moss*, as it has since been written. But there had been a battle of *Sollom Moss* in
Henry

Henry VIII.'s time, when Sir Thomas Wharton overcame a Scottish marauding party; and each word had its own associations, and those of Solway *Flow* were widely known, and not soon forgotten.* I have heard that when the first Sir James Graham of Netherby was presented at Court, on his marriage, some years after, George III., in his usual, rapid, impulsive manner, was heard to utter—"Oh! Solway Flow, Solway Flow, Solway Flow!" The parish of Burgh is always an exception with its *Marsh*; for it became historical when Edward I. died there, and required its chronicler in modern English. The name Burgh *Marsh* in speech always seemed an alien in the county, where it does not, to my knowledge, occur again, or *did not* till these advertising days, when some adjoining parishes adopt the same. In some Yorkshire parishes it appears in form of *Marske*.

Flow is only one of the northern words descriptive of the same or nearly the same spots which seem so abundant in this region. It may be that a colonization from a different coast brought variety of terms, where they seem so thickly strewn. But the succession of swamps in the old days must have required both variation and ingenuity to avoid confusion in their sub-divisions. So we may have flow, carr, mire, moss, sump, slake, forth, and bog, often within short distance, in field names, where they have remained in the possession or management of the native people. In this parish, occupying more than three miles of the eastern border of the Eden, the repetition, yet modification and distinction, by these, other such kindred words as *holme*, which is general, and *ing*, coming in above Lazonby only, is truly remarkable—*holme* once an island, and *ing* a meadow adding to the richness of association. Ingmire, Dubmire, Bogmire, and such others occur often. Since the advertising of grazing land in local papers the preservation of

* In that part called *Solway Flow*, in the year 1771 was a memorable outburst of water, moss, gravel, sand and stone, which spread over and destroyed about 600 acres of fine level fertile ground and totally altered that part of the country. Nicolson and Burns History of Cumberland p. 473.

field

field names is privilege for which I beg to record grateful acknowledgment, and to express a hope for its continuance ; its loss to country archæological inquirers would be a discouragement only inferior to the removal of the old Parish Registers to London.

If *flow* belonged to the more liquid, or *totterbogs*, as we should say, *carr* seems usually applied to places where the deeper recesses of the old foundations have been in process of time filled up by subsidence, and from the action of rains and rivers in the deep valleys have settled down into the rich green level tract, larger or smaller, according to its surroundings, which bears the name. Every year since my advocacy of this word, in the old Norse sense only, where never one stone was found on another, I have seen an advertisement of grazing land at Botcherby. It was one of my lessons in Fieldlore. I asked a friend to visit the fields named *Old Carr*, and let me know if they were *rocky* fields ; the answer was, "Quite the reverse, like the carrs nearer home." Anthony Willows I know must be those nearest the river. Many in other such places have *Willows* and *Wythes* as their name ; and the two Piper Mires were doubtless the grazing land set apart for the Town Piper, when that office was thus privileged by the municipality of merrie Carlisle, as of many other cities. All quite consistent with the geology, the history, and the social arrangements of the valley and the parish (if no longer descriptive, highly suggestive.) Such marks, where larger tracts have been laid together, are too often lost in the terms *park*, *pasture*, and others of general import given by professional agents.

As the new glossaries of the English Dialect Society of the Northern Counties have *carr*, and that of Lincoln mentions many tracts bearing the name, it is to be hoped it may cease to be a stumbling block to Southrons, though it has not yet done so. We are often indebted to strangers for illustration of our own antiquities, and should be glad to communicate anything worth knowing in return. But
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for Horne Tooke's *Diversions of Purley* we should have known nothing of the Floating Island named *car* near Hawkshead, its date, 1795, and excellent description proving it to be an upburst from the bogs, though Mr. Tooke latinized its name; and to Mr. Moncure Conway, in *Harper's Monthly* I owe the fact, wanting in my last paper, that the Floating Island is still to be seen on the little lake of Priest Pot, changing from side to side with the wind, and this proves its existence for probably a hundred years. Its willows were tall in 1795.

There is an excellent paper and etching of the Stone Circle at Gunnerkeld, near Keswick, now in Vol. IV. p. 537, of our Transactions, by Mr. Dymond. It is copied by the kindness of another Society, perhaps of different associations. So that the foot note, "The name in *local parlance* means sportman's spring," may not be so foreign to our ideas as it looks. For *we* have no such word as *Gunner* for a sportsman in Cumberland. Only in Carlisle, as applied to an artillery soldier, has the word been heard. Nor was *Keld* ever known as a dialect word, in speech or writing. It is in names of the prehistoric era that we find it, and the uncertainty of its pronunciation show how little it has been understood. *Threlkeld* is called *Threlket*, and the two Salkelds, *Saffelt*, in our rustic speech. Remarking on the frequency of this word, and *klint*, in field names, I was told by a gentleman who gave me lists from many parishes, that neither word now conveyed any idea of its meaning, as a spring and a rock, O.N. Of course, since Professor Worsaaes' visit and its consequences, the people who read have learnt it. *Gunnar* is one of the distinctive Scandinavian proper names given by Mr. Ferguson.* It is a not uncommon name of the Northmen, and often associated with honour. There is also *Gunnershow*, which may be the grave-mound of the same hero, or of some of

* Northmen in Cumberland and Westmoreland, p. 131.

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his kindred. *How* is found alternately with *Raise*, as in Lodinn-How, a grave which was opened many years ago, and found to contain a skull of enormous size. The names Gunnerkeld, Gamelands, Gogleby, and other stone monuments in this district seem to have remained in their original simplicity of remote association, while those in another direction, of undoubted antiquity have had fanciful modern names bestowed on them which shed no light on the past, as Long Meg and her Daughters, and The Grey Yauds.

But these prehistoric circles must have been known for ages before firearms even in war were heard of. In Barbour's *Bruce* we are told that "guns or crakis of wer," as they called them, "and crests to helmets," were first seen by the Scottish in their skirmishes with Edward III. in Northumberland (1327). Froissart in the latter part of this reign describes them as common. "At the siege of St. Maloe the English had well four hundred gonnes with which they shot day and night into the Fortrysse, and agaynst it." (Minstrely of the Scottish Border, Vol. i., p. 335.)

The names of waterfalls bear the same impress. *Force* is the Old Norse word, in which sound and sense correspond, for waterfall. In the lake district we have Airey Force, Stock Gill Force, and Scale Force, modified, it is supposed, in the first case, by the northern word being added to the Celtic *airai* of the same meaning; in the second, by the name of the stream which supplies it, and *Scale** Force to have reference to the sheer descent from which the cloud of spray arises, equivalent to the name of the Staubbach in Switzerland. There is Aysgill Force in Yorkshire, and the High Force, a fine fall, in Northumberland, and may be others; but, except in these names, the word is not now heard. It might have been supposed

* Scale, O.N. to disperse.

obsolete

obsolete in the dialect, save for an expression used in my early days, by old persons who were very observant of weather changes; when I have recalled how they spoke with certainty of rain and change of weather, for they "heard *the high force sounding*," to indicate the south wind, I suspected a stretch of imagination, for the High Force in Teesdale must be fifty miles away. But, I find, on inquiry, that the word was probably applied to a rapid and shallow portion of the Eden, southward of our village, and the *Force-Mill* three miles lower, at Great Salkeld, is named for the same reason. It may have other localities, but not far distant. Some family names, both in composition and in pronunciation, bespeak their locality, as *Wilberforce*, most appropriate name for the north. I remember a long time ago, in the ascent of Crossfell, our guide pointed out *Wilber-nuik* (nook), and *Wilber* force was as certainly another haunt of the wild boar as *Wilbert Fell*, mentioned by Mr. Goodchild in Stanemore. *Braun* is the common and deliberate pronunciation of boar. The second name of Henry *Wadsworth* Longfellow proves his northern descent, as Ilkley is proud to testify. The family name of Wordsworth before his poetry, was pronounced exactly so here—Mr. *Wadsworth* of Sockbridge.

The wild animals once familiar to the district have left their traces in the names. The word so universal in these counties for a ladder—*stee*, seems the distinctive term of other names besides *Cat-sty-Cam*,* the wild *cat's path* to the summit, in Mr. Ferguson's opinion. Professor Skeat's reception of this, so consistent in chronology and language, would probably be extended to *Swinsty*, *Bransty*, and *Wolsty*, all West Cumberland names, which can have no other meaning than the track of the wild swine, the boar, and the wolf, each pronounced *stee*; and there is *Kid-Sty Pike*, the kid's ladder to the peak, and *Sty-barrow Crag* in the lake country, The popular name for a pigsty is *swine-hull*,

* *Catche de Cam*, probably distorted.

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and *sty* in all these names is pronounced as the name of the ladder all over these counties—*stee*. So there is Wilbercleugh, somewhere, and Wolf-cleugh, Hartshope, and a hundred others of the same character, of the meaning of which no person who knows the district can doubt.
