

I.

THE CELTIC NUMERALS OF STRATHCLYDE.

BY DAVID MACRITCHIE, F.S.A. Scot.

At the present day the term "Strathclyde" is generally understood to denote the region drained by the river Clyde and its tributaries; and this, indeed, must be the oldest application of the name. In his map of "Scotland with the Ancient Divisions of the Land,"¹ Skene gives a slightly wider interpretation, for he indicates that the districts of Cunningham and Kyle, as well as the whole of the modern counties of Renfrew and Lanark, came within the bounds of Strathclyde. At one period, however, the country belonging to the Britons of Strathclyde, otherwise known as the Strathclyde Welshmen, or the Cumbrians, was of much greater extent, and constituted an important kingdom. In the beginning of the seventh century, according to Skene, the sway of the Strathclyde Welsh extended as far north as Glen Falloch, taking in a considerable slice of western Stirlingshire and the whole of the Lennox—that is to say, the country lying between Tarbet, Arrochar, Loch Long, and the Clyde. Loch Lomond was, therefore, almost entirely under the dominion of the Strathclyde Welsh in the seventh century. From Loch Long their territory stretched due south through the modern counties of Dumbarton, Renfrew, and Ayr as far as, or nearly as far as, Loch Ryan. The boundary then turned eastward, skirting the northern frontiers of Wigtown and Kirkcudbright, until it reached the Nith, after which it crossed the Solway and took in a great part of the country lying on the west side of the Pennine Range. Its eastern limit was the borders of Northumbria, or Bernicia, following a fairly straight line northward to the Moorfoots and Pentlands, and then slanting north-westward into Stirlingshire.

Such is the information supplied by Skene's coloured map, showing the boundaries of the four kingdoms of Scotland in the beginning of the seventh century.² Skene's written description does not quite tally with his map, for he says³ that the Strathclyde kingdom "extended from the river Derwent in Cumberland in the south to the Firth of Clyde in the north." Thus he limits the northern frontier to the Firth of Clyde, whereas his map pushes that frontier as far as Arrochar and Ardlui. Skene's verbal account is, however, of much interest and value, and it has such a distinct bearing upon the question of language

¹ Prefixed to vol. iii. of *Celtic Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1880.

² Opposite p. 228 of vol. i. of *Celtic Scotland*.

³ *Celtic Scotland*, i. 235.

that it seems very desirable to quote it here at length. The kingdom of the Strathclyde Welsh in the seventh century, Skene informs us, "comprehended Cumberland and Westmoreland, with the exception of the baronies of Allerdale or Copeland in the former and Kendal in the latter, and the counties of Dumfries, Ayr, Renfrew, Lanark, and Peebles, in Scotland. On the east the great forest of Ettrick separated them from the Angles, and here the ancient rampart of the Catrail, which runs from the south-east corner of Peeblesshire, near Galashiels, through the county of Selkirk to the Peel Hill [Fell] on the south side of Liddesdale, probably marked the boundary between them. The population of this kingdom [Greater Strathclyde] seems to have belonged to the two varieties of the British race--the southern half, including Dumfriesshire, being Cymric or Welsh, and the northern half having been occupied by the Damnonii, who belonged to the Cornish variety. The capital of the kingdom was the strongly fortified position on the rock on the right bank of the Clyde, termed by the Britons Alcluith, and by the Gadhelic people Dunbreatan, or the fort of the Britons, now Dumbarton; but the ancient town called *Caer Luel* or *Carlisle* in the southern part must always have been an important position. The kingdom of the Britons had at this time no territorial designation, but its monarchs were termed kings of Alcluith, and belonged to that party among the Britons who bore the peculiar name of Romans, and claimed descent from the ancient Roman rulers in Britain. The law of succession seems to have been one of purely male descent."¹

In the beginning of the seventh century, therefore, the people who ruled this dominion of Strathclyde, or Cumbria, were the "Strathclyde Welsh," a name by which they were known in the ninth century, if not earlier. This appears from the following reference: "Simeon of Durham tells us that in 875 the host of the Danes who had ravaged the east coast of Britain . . . destroyed the Picts and the people of Strathclyde. . . . The people here called of Strathclyde are in the Saxon Chronicle, in recording the same event, termed *Stræcled Wealas*, and this name is rendered by Ethelwerd into the Latin *Cumbri*, which is the first appearance of the term of *Cumbri* or *Cumbrians* as applied to the Britons of Strathclyde."²

Although undergoing certain vicissitudes,³ this kingdom of the Strathclyde Welsh maintained its national character for fully four hundred years. Under their king Owen, son of Domnall [otherwise Eugenius the Bald], an army of these Strathclyde Welsh co-operated

¹ *Celtic Scotland*, i. 235-236.

² *Celtic Scotland*, i. 325-326.

³ The "destruction" by the Danes in 875 had been preceded by temporary conquests by the Angles of Northumbria in the eighth century. See *Celtic Scotland*, i. 267, 295-296, 325.

with the army of Malcolm II., King of Scotia, in his invasion of Northumbria in 1018, and aided Malcolm in his great victory at Carham-on-Tweed, which resulted in the cession to Scotia of all the territory between the Tweed and the Forth. Owen's death in the same year ended the direct line of the kings of Strathclyde, and that kingship thereupon reverted to Malcolm II. as nearest heir. Malcolm afterwards made his grandson Duncan "King of the Cumbrians," a title subsequently borne by Malcolm Canmore. It is stated by Sir John Rhys¹ that Strathclyde "was still more closely joined to the Scottish crown when David became king in 1124; but its people, who formed a distinct battalion of Cumbrians and Teviotdale men in the Scottish army at the Battle of the Standard in 1130, preserved their Kymric characteristics long afterwards."

Of these Kymric characteristics one of the most notable was their language, and with regard to it Sir John Rhys further observes (*loc. cit.*): "How late the Welsh language lingered between the Mersey and the Clyde we have, however, no means of discovering, but, to judge from a passage in the Welsh Triads, it may be surmised to have been spoken as late as the fourteenth century in the district of Carnoban, wherever between Leeds and Dumbarton that may turn out to have been."

A discussion by Sir John Rhys of this passage in the Welsh Triads would be of much interest, and it may yet be forthcoming. In the meantime it is enough to note that he sees reason to believe that a Cymric speech survived in some region of Strathclyde in the fourteenth century. Languages generally die a lingering death, and the Cymric of Cornwall was still a spoken language in the eighteenth century, although it was then only known to a few. What is more to the point, however, is that a series of Cymric numerals, from 1 to 20, is still in use in various districts of Strathclyde even at the present day.

This series was first brought under the notice of modern scholars in 1866 by Dr Alexander J. Ellis, Vice-President of the Philological Society. He then referred to it as "a method of 'scoring sheep,' as used in the dales of Yorkshire, written down from the dictation of two Yorkshire ladies." These two versions he reprinted in the *Transactions of the Philological Society* for 1870; and, continuing to accumulate variants, he was able to submit no less than twenty-five of these to the same Society on 6th February 1874. These had been obtained from Yorkshire, Durham, Northumberland, Westmorland, Roxburghshire, and—in three instances—from North America, obviously importations from Great Britain. By 1878 he had increased his stock to fifty-three versions, and at a still

¹ *Celtic Britain*, p. 149.

later date he had collected over sixty. On the 7th of December 1877, using as a basis the forty-five versions which he then possessed, he read a long and elaborate paper on this subject before the Philological Society, duly printed thereafter in that Society's *Transactions*,¹ extending to fifty-seven pages.

The information furnished by Ellis, at one time or another, naturally aroused a widespread interest in this question, of which one outcome was the appearance of several communications in the *Athenæum* of 1877 (part ii.) by Canon Isaac Taylor, Dr Bradley, and others. Evidence from many quarters proved that this Cymric system of enumeration was regularly used by the shepherds of Yorkshire, Westmorland, and Cumberland, in telling off their sheep by scores, and that it was also in use, in the same region, among old women when counting the stitches of their knitting. The conclusion generally arrived at was that this was the remains of an ancient British speech, substantially the same as modern Welsh, although differing from that form of Cymric in certain details. With great reason Canon Taylor pronounced this ancient speech to be that of the Britons of Strathclyde or Cumbria, by which designation he understood the territory stretching from the Firth of Clyde southward through Cumberland and Westmorland to a southern frontier somewhere in Yorkshire.

Writing to the *Athenæum* in 1877, with regard to the Cymric numerals obtained in the north-west of England, Canon Taylor remarks:—

“By collating the numerous lists which are now before me, I have been able to obtain a sort of standard text, tolerably free from the philological difficulties which beset my first imperfect list. I now place this revised edition of the Cumbrian numerals side by side with the oldest known Kymric forms, bracketing important variants, and italicizing certain letters which seem to be due only to the jingling assonances which have crept into all the versions.”

Taylor's lists of Old Cymric and Anglo-Cumbrian are here reproduced; with the omission of several variants in the latter list, and of the italicized letters to which he refers. These omissions are made partly because the variants are not necessary on the present occasion, and partly because I do not accept all the inferences implied by Taylor's italics. With these modifications, Taylor's lists are as follows:—

<i>Old Cymric.</i>	<i>Anglo-Cumbrian.</i>	<i>Old Cymric.</i>	<i>Anglo-Cumbrian.</i>
1. Un	Ain.	4. Peteir	Pethera.
2. Dui	Tee.	5. Pimp	Pimp.
3. Teir	Tethera.	6. Chwech	Sethera.

¹ Vol. 1877-8-9, London, 1879, pp. 316-372.

<i>Old Cymric.</i>	<i>Anglo-Cumbrian.</i>	<i>Old Cymric.</i>	<i>Anglo-Cumbrian.</i>
7. Seith	Lethera.	14. Peteir-ar-dec	Pether-a-dik.
8. Oith	Hovera.	15. Bymthec	Bumfit.
9. Nau	Dovera.	16. Un-ar-bymthec	Ain-a-bumfit.
10. Dec	Dik.	17. Dui-ar-bymthec	Tain-a-bumfit.
11. Un-ar-dec	Ain-a-dik.	18. Teir-ar-bymthec	Tether-a-bumfit.
12. Dou-dec	Tain-a-dik.	19. Peteir-ar-bymthec	Pether-a-bumfit.
13. Teir-ar-dec	Tether-a-dik.	20. Ucent	Iggan.

On comparing these two lists with each other and with Modern Welsh, one realizes that all are practically one system of numerals, presenting merely minor differences. Old Cymric and Anglo-Cumbrian are, however, more akin to each other than to Modern Welsh, although the points of difference are very slight. It is of interest, also, to compare Old Cymric and Anglo-Cumbrian (otherwise Strathclyde Cymric) with the now obsolete Cymric numerals of Cornwall, and with those of modern Brittany and Wales. These three varieties of Cymric are as follows:—

<i>Cornish.</i>	<i>Breton.</i>	<i>Modern Welsh.</i>
1. un <i>or</i> ðnen	unan	un.
2. dew	deu	dau.
3. trý <i>or</i> tyr	tri <i>or</i> tair	tri <i>or</i> tair.
4. peswar <i>or</i> peder	puar <i>or</i> pedair	pedwar <i>or</i> pedair.
5. pymp	puemb	pump.
6. wheh	huéh	chwech.
7. seyth	seih	saith.
8. eyth	eih	wyth.
9. now	nàu	naw.
10. deg <i>or</i> dek	déc <i>or</i> deu	deg <i>or</i> deng.
11. idnak	uinéc	un-ar-ddeg.
12. dawdhak <i>or</i> dewthak	deuzéc	deuddeg.
13. tórdhak	trizéc	tri-ar-ddeg.
14. peswórdhak	puarzéc	pedwar-ar-ddeg.
15. pempthek	puembzéc	pymtheg.
16. whedhak	huéhzéc	un-ar-bymtheg.
17. seydhak	seitêc	{ dau-ar-bymtheg. deg-a-saith.
18. eydhak	trihuéh	{ deunaw. tri-ar-bymtheg.
19. rownjak	nandéc	pedwar-ar-bymtheg.
20. igans	uiguënd	ugain.

Of the many examples on which Ellis bases his paper of 1877-1878, only two are derived from Scotland. One of these he describes as "communicated by Henry Muirhead, Esq., M.D., of Bushy Hill, Cambuslang, Lanarkshire, as a rhyming formula which half a century ago [say 1827] himself

and the children in Pollokshawes, three miles south of Glasgow, a part of old Cambria, were in the habit of employing for 'counting out,' viz. :—

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|---------------|-------------|--|
| 1. zaindie. | 6. a seater | } "These are evidently
transposed" [Ellis]. |
| 2. taindie. | 7. a heater | |
| 3. tether. | 8. a hover. | |
| 4. a methier. | 9. dover. | |
| 5. a bamf. | 10. deckit. | |

Side by side with this list may be placed that supplied to me by the late David Patrick, LL.D., who stated that he and his comrades used it in their games about the year 1860, in the Kyle district of Ayrshire. It goes thus:—

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|-------------|--------------------------|
| 1. zinty. | 6. aleeter [or leetera]. |
| 2. tinty. | 7. aseeter [or seetera]. |
| 3. tetheri. | 8. over. |
| 4. metheri. | 9. dover. |
| 5. bamf. | 10. dik. |

The other example which Ellis obtained from Scotland was supplied by Sir James A. H. Murray, who was born at Denholm, near Hawick, in 1837. It is recorded by Ellis thus:—

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|---------------|--------------|
| 1. zeen'di. | 6. heet'uri. |
| 2. teen'di. | 7. zeet'uri. |
| 3. taedh'eri. | 8. ao'ver. |
| 4. muudh'eri. | 9. dao'ver. |
| 5. baom'be. | 10. dek. |

With this may be compared the version furnished to me by the Rev. William Hume Elliot, who states that about the year 1850 (when Sir James Murray was 13 years old) the boys of Teviotdale employed the same numerals as those of Ayrshire in their counting-out games. "I should think they must be in use about Hawick still," he observes, writing in 1905; and he adds: "At the time to which I refer [1850] they held unquestioned sway there among the young Teries, of whom I was one." He gives the following numerals:—

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|-------------|--|
| 1. zeendy. | } This list, by a Hawick
contemporary of Sir
James Murray's, coin-
cides exactly with
Murray's list. |
| 2. teendy. | |
| 3. tethery. | |
| 4. methery. | |
| 5. bumba. | |
| 6. | |
| 7. zeetery. | |
| 8. over. | |
| 9. dover. | |
| 10. dik. | |

I have here cited four Scottish specimens, two from Renfrewshire and Ayrshire, and two from the neighbourhood of Hawick. To these may be added the variant which the late Bruce J. Home, who was born in 1830, used in his boyhood in Edinburgh. The first ten figures go thus:—

1. eenty, <i>sometimes</i> zeenty.	6. eetful.
2. teenty.	7.
3. tethery.	8. over.
4. methery.	9. dover.
5. banful.	10. din.

To Mr William D. Peace, Kirkwall, I am indebted for the two following variants, which are current in Kirkwall and a neighbouring parish:—

1. zid zitery.	6. flid <i>or</i> lid leetery.
2. did ditery.	7.
3.	8. hove hovey.
4.	9. dove dovery.
5. pam <i>or</i> pamf pamfery.	10. dik dik.

The occurrence of this Cymric score so far north as Orkney, not to speak of its existence in Edinburgh, raises at once the question of transmission or importation. It is manifest that the stronghold of these numerals, in modern times, is the territory of ancient Strathclyde, notably its English area. Where the score exists outside of the British Isles, as in North America, the explanation is that it was carried there by emigrants from the Mother Country. But there is more room for doubt when it is found in Connaught, in Orkney, in Mid-Lothian, in County Durham, in Lincolnshire, and in Essex. In all these instances the so-called Anglo-Cymric score may have been introduced by modern settlers from the north-west of England and the south-west of Scotland; just as it has been carried into lands beyond the seas. On the other hand, it may be argued that the language of which this is a remnant was once spoken by people living as far north as Orkney and as far south as Essex, and that it has lived on in these localities just as it has lived on in Strathclyde. This is a very interesting hypothesis.

In the course of a long and valuable letter contributed to the *Athenæum* in 1877 (part ii. p. 338), Canon Taylor expresses his conviction that the Cymric numerals used by old women in Craven, Yorkshire, while counting the stitches in their knitting, were "not derived from the Welsh [that is to say, the language of Wales], but that they belonged to a lost language of the Kymric class." In a later number of the *Athenæum* (p. 433) he decides that this "lost language" was the speech of Strathclyde. More recent writers, such as Sir John Rhys, take the same view.

But, of course, there have been dissentient voices from 1866 onwards.

The idea of a Celtic speech lingering on among people whose present language is non-Celtic is repugnant to those who regard language and race as identical. Thus, in support of a theory that the North of England shepherds learned this score from Scotch people, Chancellor Ferguson of Carlisle remarks (*Athenæum*, 1877, part ii. pp. 469-470) that "many persons recollect the Highland drovers as habitually using one or other of the various versions of these numerals." Now, these Highland drovers, who came chiefly from the Central Highlands, spoke Gaelic, not Welsh. Macky, in his *Journey through Scotland* (London, 1723, p. 194), particularly states that those whom he saw at the Fair of Crieff "spake all Irish, an unintelligible language to the English." That these men used a Welsh score, and taught it to the people of Northern England, is an idea that can scarcely be entertained. If they taught any score at all to the English, it would be Gaelic, there is hardly room for doubting. And there is no evidence at all of the use of Gaelic numerals in the northern counties of England.

On the whole, the transmission theory is a weak one. Farmers and shepherds might borrow the score from drovers out of Ayrshire, or out of Wales itself, and even children might adopt it; but that old women, the most conservative of creatures, should count their stitches in a borrowed tongue is beyond reasonable belief.

The borrowing theory cannot be ignored, because Mr Ernest E. Speight, who has studied the Celtic numerals used in Upper Wharfedale, Yorkshire, has various positive statements in support of it. He gives two modern Welsh lists which he found at Grassington in Wharfedale, and with regard to these he remarks: "As far, then, as the Grassington Celtic numerals are concerned, the general theory regarding them as remnants of a language spoken in the North of England, so lately, Professor Rhys surmises, as the fourteenth century, is evidently incorrect. And I think that the same statement may be made respecting the similar sets of numerals found in other districts of the North of England, and that it will be possible ultimately to trace all variants to outside origin."¹

I have quoted this passage for the sake of the second sentence. The first sentence undoubtedly proves the introduction of a Celtic score, but as that score is Modern Welsh it is outside of the question. The second sentence, however, distinctly expresses the writer's belief that all the versions current in the North of England, some sixty or seventy in number, are capable of being traced to outside origin. The place of origin which he evidently favours is Scotland. He states that "the majority of the older inhabitants of Upper Wharfedale and of its

¹ *The Antiquary* (Elliot Stock, London), July-December 1893, vol. xxviii. pp. 204-205.

continuation, Langstrothdale, either do not recognise the numerals when quoted, or else refer to them as Scotch. . . . Occasionally a man is met with who has heard them used in the counting of sheep by Scotch drovers."

But even if all the North of England variants could be traced back to Scotland, that would not solve the problem. Scotch drovers, in the present and in the recent past, speak either Gaelic or the Lowland form of English. Now, the numerals in question are Cymric. We have therefore still to explain how it happens that people whose present language is Gaelic or English should employ Cymric numerals in counting; not the score current in Modern Wales, but a score which in some details is alien to Modern or even to Mediæval Wales. The simplest solution appears to me to be that the numerals used in Southern Scotland and Northern England have been inherited from ancestors who spoke a Cymric form of speech. The labours of the compilers of the *English Dialect Dictionary* have revealed the fact that the people living to the north of the river Trent at the present day have many traces in their speech of Celtic idiom and intonation, and occasionally they make use of Celtic words. The inference is that their forefathers, or perhaps one branch of their forefathers, spoke a form of Celtic. The rapid decay of Gaelic in our own time, without any displacement of population, shows how a mother-tongue may be abandoned in favour of one that is more popular and more widely known. A similar change may have taken place between the Clyde and the Trent, and these numerals may be the only remnant of the older language.

In these remarks I have adhered absolutely to one system of numerals. But Ellis, in 1877, shows that the list furnished to him by Sir James Murray shows the intrusion of another system in the numerals 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15. The same intrusive numerals appear in the Edinburgh list obtained by me from Bruce Home, and they appear again in a Nova Scotia list published by Carrington Bolton in his *Counting-Out Rhymes* (p. 103). To discuss this and other systems would enlarge the question indefinitely. And it would be quite outside of my present scope to consider the numerous children's rhymes which, although starting from actual numerals (in many cases, if not invariably), have developed into mere nonsense verses. The value of the Strathclyde numerals consists in the undoubted fact that they belong to a distinct form of Cymric speech.

[After the reading of this paper, Professor W. J. Watson, LL.D., F.S.A. Scot., mentioned that school children in Easter Ross are acquainted with this Cymric score; but it is not known in those communities whose only language is Gaelic.]

REFERENCES.

Alexander J. Ellis, F.R.S., in a paper on "Palæotype," read before the Philological Society, London, on 7th December 1866, and printed in that Society's *Transactions* in 1867, gives two versions, from 1 to 20, obtained in the Yorkshire dales. On 7th December 1877 Ellis read a paper before the same Society, entitled "The Anglo-Cymric Score," which was printed, with a very full appendix, in the Society's *Transactions* for 1877-79 (London, 1879, pp. 316-372). In the *Athenæum* for 1877, part ii., there are various communications on this subject from Canon Isaac Taylor, Dr Bradley, and others. In *The Counting-Out Rhymes of Children* (London, 1888, p. 121), Henry Carrington Bolton gives several variants; and also some corrupt versions on other pages. In the *Antiquary* (London, 1893, vol. xxviii. pp. 204-205) Ernest E. Speight has a paper on "Celtic Numerals in Upper Wharfedale." In the *Scottish Review* (Edinburgh: Nelson) of 5th October 1905, pp. 277-278, there is an article on "The Cymric Score" by David MacRitchie. Lastly, the *English Dialect Dictionary* (Oxford) records the existence of words belonging to this score in several counties of England.