

## IV.

NOTES OF THE "VISITATION OF THE PESTILENCE," FROM THE PARISH RECORDS OF SOUTH LEITH, A.D. 1645, IN CONNEXION WITH THE EXCAVATIONS OF LARGE MASSES OF HUMAN REMAINS DURING THE DRAINAGE OPERATIONS AT WELLINGTON PLACE, LEITH LINKS, A.D. 1861-2. BY D. H. ROBERTSON, M.D., F.S.A. Scot.

During the recent drainage operation in the vicinity of Wellington Place, Leith Links, large quantities of human remains have been brought to light; and as what I believe to be an erroneous impression exists, that these are the remains of the assailants who fell during the siege of Leith in 1559-60 (by the Lords of the Congregation against Mary of Lorraine and her French auxiliaries), I shall give my reasons for coming to another conclusion:—

In the first place, they occur in such numbers as to preclude the possibility of supposing that, in proportion to the numbers engaged, so many should have fallen.

2. The existence of female crania and juvenile bones (examples of which are now produced), is at variance with this supposition.

3. Their existence here is accounted for on other grounds more reasonably and satisfactorily.

In the session records of South Leith parish we find recorded at length an account of the "pest" which visited the town in 1645. In that year the Register of South Leith gives a copious journal, from its appearance in April till December; and the following Act of Parliament, sufficiently curious in itself, explains the extent to which the disease had reached:—

*"The Act of Parliament given at Pearth the 2<sup>nd</sup> Aug<sup>t</sup> 1645 for reliefe of the distressit town of Leith the tyme of the great visitatioun of the plague of pestilence:—*

*"At Pearth, the second day of August, in the zeir of God 1645 zeiris. The Estaites of Parliament, now presentlie conveinit in this fourth sessione of the first triennial Parliament, by vertu of the last Act of the last Parliament holdene be his Majestie and three Estaites, anno 1641, having takin to their consideratione the desyre of ane supplicacione,*

gevin in by Jhone Aldinstone, one of the baillies of Leith, and Captain James Crawford, indweller there, for themselves and in behalf of the remanent inhabitants of the said town of Leith, bearing, That where it is not unknowne to the saids Estaites the calamitie and distress whereunder the said town doe lye for the present, being visit with the plague of pestilence in such sort that the number of the dead exceeds the number of the leiving, and amongst them it cannot be decernit quha are clean and quha are foule; and make the calamitie greater, the are visit with ane lamentibill famine, both for penurie and also for laicke of means; for which cause the saids supplicants are forced in their names to have recourse to the said Estaites, beseeching them out of the bowels of mercie to comserat their lamentabill condition, both towards them as also towards the rest of the countrie, they being now reducit to that extremitie of necessitie, rather than to perish of famine to breake throue the rest of the countrie, whereby the haill Kingdom sall be endangerit. And therefore humblie beseeching your Lordships to grant unto them some present supplie, and to take such present course for their reliefe as the foirsaid evil may be previned, as the said supplicatione at mair length bears. Quhilk supplicatione being redde in the audience of Parliament, and the just merits thereof being dylie weighted and considered, the saids Estaits of Parliament be thir presentis, gives and grants full power and warrand to the present magistrates of the toune of Leith, or their commissioners and servandis having their warrand, to meddle and intromett with the number of ane quantitie of five hundreth bolls of eat meill, and that out of anie sellar or sellars in Leith, wherebe they may have it for meddling and intrometting wherewith, and (if need bees) making open doores for that effect. The saids Estaites declares thir presentis to be to the said magistrates and their servandis the comissi<sup>rs</sup> ane sufficient warrand; and the said Estaites hes allowed, and be thir presentis, grants full libertie to the said magistrates of the toune of Leith, or anie having their warrand, to passe throwe all the sherriffdoms of this kingdom, or any of them, as they think fitt, be south the water of Tay, to crave the helpe and supplie of ane voluntarie and charitable contribution for payment of the foirsaid victual, and furnishing of such things as may be useful to the said town of Leith, now in such ane extremitie.—  
*Extractum de libris Actorum, per me, Alexandrum Gibsone, Cl. Registri.*

*Note*—This is a just copie of the authentic in our register be Mr David Aldinstone our sessione clerk.

“ Note of defuncts the tyme of the visitatioun, *ut sequitur*, February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1646. In quihilk day (eftir incalling upone God) Mr David Aldinstone, reader, reportit that he had gone to everie elder in particular, and receavit the number of the defuncts who died of the infection in anno 1645, and the number is as follows:—

Sand Quarter—James Gibsone, 069; Alex. Ruddoch, 044; James Downie, 114—227.

Hill Quarter—Francis Wilkie, 068; John Gray, baxter, 136; Andro Archibald, 186—390.

Tolbuith Quarter—Robert Murro, 203; Jhone Bewie, 273; Alex. Balfour, 133—609.

Lees Quarter—Johne Makay, 165; Js. Crawford, 263; Jhone Kelloe, 167; James Steinsone, 170; Robt. Mathisone, 207; Wm. Comrie, 223—1195.

“ So the whole No. in Leith is 2421; in Restalrig, their died to the number of 160; in the Craigend (Calton) there died 155: the number of defuncts in the whole parioch will be 2736.”

The greater portion of these were probably buried in the Links, and the foundations of Wellington Place have exposed an immense quantity of their remains. Many curious entries of the time might be given, although they throw little light on the nature of the disease:—

“ 19<sup>th</sup> May 1645.—The pest break out in our new hospital, called King James his hospital, in a woman’s school y<sup>r</sup>; y<sup>r</sup>upon sundrie houses were closit up; also our reider, Mr David Aldinstone, was desyred to keip his house because he had prayed for ane Marg<sup>t</sup> Gilmuir, who was suspect to have died of the pest; so the said Mr David was inclosit from the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 1645 to 15<sup>th</sup> June the said year, during quihilk tyme he could not get certaine notice what was done in the sessioun, y<sup>r</sup>foir he left this blank.” Here follows four folios blank.

“ 17<sup>th</sup> June.—The eftir day being Tuesday, eftir incalling upo the Lord, ordainit that everie elder and deakin in their several quarters sould give in ane rolle of eneuch men to help them in this p<sup>re</sup>nt [present] visitatioun, and that thei meit with the bailzie the morne in the Tolbuith

. . . . Ordaine to visit a place in a blockhouse, wherein will be most fitting for burying the corpses of the personnis who died of the pest."

"12th Julij 1645.—Intreated the bailzie to speak the Counsell of Edin. that we may have our impost of the wine, that it may be employed for the use of the publick in this p<sup>nt</sup> visitatioun."

David Aldinstone, who was thus incarcerated for the period of a month, is frequently referred to, the record being his compilation.

The Stone-Hammer, which I now present to the Society, was found in the adjoining street (Laurie Street) fully 10 feet beneath the surface. About 18 inches beneath the causeway was a layer of 18 inches of marine shells, specimens of which I now produce. And about 6 feet beneath this layer, in loose sand, the hammer was found, and I have no doubt it reached this lower level by the vibration from carts on the causeway. Some of the crania, filled with sand and pebbles, were exhumed about the same distance below the other bones, showing that their position had also materially changed from their first level.

Mr JOHN STUART, in reference to the preceding Communication, alluded to the strange social arrangements to which our forefathers were driven in the times of the plague, of which he gave some illustrations from the ancient records of the burgh of Aberdeen.

A letter was read from Mr Leslie, younger of Balquhain, calling attention to the recent destruction of part of the walls of the old church of Turriff, in Aberdeenshire, and suggesting that the Society should use its influence with the view of preventing its further demolition. Mr Stuart explained that steps had already been taken which would probably secure the end contemplated by Mr Leslie.

MONDAY, 10th February 1862.

DAVID LAING, Esq., Vice-President, in the Chair.

On a ballot, WILLIAM BARRIE, Esq., Dalkeith, was elected a Fellow of the Society.

The following Donations were laid on the Table, and thanks voted to the donors :—

Three Stone Celts ; one  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches long by 3 inches across the face, with its surface roughly chipped over ; another, 6 inches long,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches across the face, with its surface rubbed smooth ; and the third, 3 inches long and 2 inches across the face ; also a

Bronze Socketed Celt,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches long, 2 inches across the face ; loop at the side, and ornamented by four longitudinal lines on each side. Stated to have been found, along with the three stone Celts, in the parish of Southend, Cantire ;

Three Bronze Broad Daggers or Sword Blades, with rivet-holes at their broad extremities for fastening the blades to the handles ; they are from 10 inches to  $13\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length, and three inches in breadth at the base or widest part next the handle. One of them is much corroded. Found along with two others in the parish of Kingarth, Bute ;

Two Small Bronze Three-Legged Pots. One with angular loops on each side of the mouth, 8 inches high, and the diameter of mouth  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Two projecting lines run round the widest part of the pot. The other pot is 9 inches high, and 6 inches in diameter across the mouth, with a nearly straight handle 6 inches long, projecting from one side of the neck of the vessel. Found at Hunterhouse Moss, parish of Lockmaben, Dumfriesshire ;

Bronze Three-Legged Pot, with angular loops at each side of the mouth or neck, measuring 14 inches in height, and 11 inches across the mouth. Three parallel projecting lines encircle the greatest diameter of the vessel. It was found in the parish of Langholm, Dumfriesshire ;

Bronze Spoon with circular mouth and straight handle terminating in an ornamented knob; Buckles and Ornaments, probably for horse trappings; Iron Key, much corroded, &c. Found in digging the foundation of the monument to the late Joseph Hume, Esq., M.P., in the High Street, Montrose;

Various Dies from the Scottish Mint, 128 in number, including duplicates and defaced dies, of the coinages of Charles II. and James II.; consisting of Dollars, Half and Quarter Dollars, Bawbees, &c. &c.;

Ancient British Gold Coin. Found at Birkhill, near Dumfries, on 27th November 1861. This coin has sometimes, but without any just ground, been attributed to Boadicea, Queen of the Iceni. *Obv.*—BOOVOC, in large letters. *Rev.*—A disjointed three-tailed horse to the right; above, two ring ornaments and a crescent; below, a wheel; behind, a pellet; in the field, three small pointed crosses. These coins usually weigh from 83 to 84 grains, but this coin being rather worn, weighs scarcely 81 grains;

Alexander III. Penny. *Rev.*—REX SCOTORUM. Common type;

John Baliol Penny. *Rev.*—REX SCOTORUM;

John II., Sterling, Count of Hainault, 1280–1304. *Obv.*—I. COMES HANONIE; full faced bust. Mint mark, a cross. *Rev.*—VALENCHENENS; cross and pellets. Struck at Valenciennes;

Another, with similar obverse; struck at Mons. *Rev.*—MONETA MONTES.

Robert III., Count of Flanders, Sterling, 1305–1322. Struck at Alost. *Obv.*—R. COMES FLANDRIE. *Rev.*—MONETA ALOTEN. All found at Netherfield, Dumfriesshire;

The following Coins were found at Dunse in 1859, in taking down an old house:—

Elizabeth Hammered Shilling, of the usual type; and

Hammered Sixpence; date 1601;

Twenty Shillings of Charles I., with varied portraits, all bearing the legend, CHRISTO AUSPICE REGNO, and with the following mint marks:—Tun, harp, sun, triangle, anchor, sceptre, fleur-de-lis, crown, portcullis, (P.), (R.), star, bell, triangle in a circle, and full-blown rose;

Small Brass Crucifix, with the letters I. N. R. I over the figure. Found in digging in a street in Dumfermline;

Neck and Mouth of a Roman Amphora. Found in digging a deep grave in the churchyard, Linlithgow;

Prick Spur of Bronze ornamented with engraving, of the thirteenth century (see the annexed woodcut);



Bronze Buckles, Iron Spurs, Stirrups, various Iron Implements, &c. &c.;

Fragments of Glazed Pottery, Glass, and portion of the Stalk of a Drinking Glass containing fluid;

Small Head of a Female, in Stone, with the hair in broad, ornamented bands, of the style of the fifteenth century;

These various articles were recently found in excavating in and near the Royal Palace of Linlithgow.

The above articles were collected as Treasure Trove, and are deposited in the Museum by the Lords of HER MAJESTY'S TREASURY, through JOHN HENDERSON, Esq., Q. and L. T. Remembrancer.

Penny of William I. (the Lion); of the Perth Mint. Obverse legend nearly gone, but traces of *LE REI WILAM* may be seen. ° Portrait to left. *Rev.*—*FOLPOLT DE PERT*. Cross with crescents and pellets. Presented by Miss ELIZA FORBES, 17 Ainslie Place.

Academic Gown, richly ornamented with braid and tassels of silk, and faced with velvet; and Doctor's Cap, worn by the celebrated Mr Alexander Henderson, one of the Ministers of Edinburgh, who was appointed Rector of the University of Edinburgh in 1641; and

Two Flat Black Bonnets, one made of cloth, the other woven in a piece, used by Doctors of the Edinburgh University in the seventeenth century.

By the SENATUS ACADEMICUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

Die, with the letters *DECVS ET TVTAMEN*, for Stamping the Edge of the Crown Piece from the Scottish Mint;

Act of Parliament for Preserving the Woollen and Silk Manufactures of Scotland, &c; printed at Edinburgh 1722;

Act of the Edinburgh Town Council against Profaneness; printed at Edinburgh 1728;

Second Report of a Geological Reconnoissance of the Middle and Southern Counties of Arkansas, made during the years 1859 and 1860, by David Dale Owen, Principal Geologist. 8vo. Philadelphia, 1860. By the GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS, U.S.A.

Plan of the Town of Leith, showing the Line of Fortifications erected in 1560. Drawn by D. H. Robertson, M.D., 1850.

By D. H. ROBERTSON, M.D., F.S.A. Scot.

Iron Knocker from the Door of an Old House in the High Street, Edinburgh. By JAMES DRUMMOND, Esq., R.S.A., F.S.A. Scot.

Two Stone Balls, one 3 inches in diameter, the other 2 inches. Found with a number of others in excavating at Dirleton Castle, Haddingtonshire. By Mr Tod, Dirleton.

Impressions in Bronze from the Dies of a Medal of Francis II., now preserved at the Hôtel des Monnaies, Paris. It was struck on the occasion of the Treaty of Edinburgh, which was signed on July the 6th, 1560. By this treaty the right of Elizabeth to the crowns of England and Ireland was fully recognised; the ambassadors of Francis and Mary assented that they should cease to assume the arms and title of sovereigns of those kingdoms. *Obv.*—Laureated Bust of Francis II. to left, in armour. *Leg.*—FRANCISC. II. D. G. FRANC. ET. SCOT. REX. *Rev.*—The initial F. surmounted with an arched crown, between two cornucopiæ, from which issue small busts, *capita adversa*, possibly typifying Francis and Mary. *Leg.*—ABUNDANTIA PVBLICA GALLIAR. *Exergue*, 1560. PAX. CVM. ANGLIS. Diameter, 2 $\frac{1}{8}$  inches. By ALBERT WAX, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

Three-sided Swivel Seal, of Cairngorm or rock crystal, with silver mounting, which formerly belonged to the Princess Amelia, sister of George III., who died in 1786. On one side is the royal arms of England on a lozenge-shaped shield with supporters, with the royal crown above. On another side is the crest a lion passant, over which is the royal crown; and on the third side the monogram of the letters A P repeated, over which is the royal crown;

Steel Key of Gunningburgh Park, ornamented with engraved flowers, &c., with the name PRINCESS AMELIA on the stalk, and the initials G. R. below a crown; and

Ovidii Epistolæ, cum Comment. Lugduni, 1528, folio.

By Miss TURNER, Prestonpans through James MELLIS, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.



Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge. Vol. XII. 4to. Washington, 1860;

Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution for 1859. 8vo. Washington, 1860;

By the SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, Washington, United States of America.

Monumenta de Insula Manniæ, or a Collection of National Documents relating to the Isle of Man. Translated and edited by J. R. Oliver, M.D. Vol. II. 8vo. Douglas, 1861;

Bibliotheca Monensis: a Bibliographical Account of Works relating to the Isle of Man. By William Harrison. 8vo. Douglas, 1861.

By the COUNCIL OF THE MANX SOCIETY.

Lectures on the Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History, delivered at the Catholic University of Ireland during the Sessions 1855 and 1856. 8vo. Dublin, 1861. By EUGENE O'CURRY, Esq., M.R.I.A., Cor. Mem. S.A. Scot., the Author.

Transactions of the Ossianic Society for the Year 1858. Vol. VI., containing the Second Series of Fenian Poems. Edited by John O'Daly. 8vo. Dublin, 1861. By the SOCIETY.

The following Communications were read:—