

“ WHY IS THE MAINLAND OF ORKNEY CALLED POMONA ? ”

“ It has been a subject of frequent wonder to me whence the mainland of Orkney, called *Hrossey*, i. e. the ‘ Isle of Horses,’ by the Norwegians, received the Latin-looking name of Pomona after its annexation to the Scottish Crown, as such a name certainly does not appear any where in the Latin authors who have mentioned the Orkney Islands. The name has, as it seems, also puzzled some of the British etymologists: Barry, for instance, derives it (page 22) from the British words *pou* (small) and *mon* (patria.) This derivation, however, not being at all satisfactory, the name has remained a riddle until this day. I think it possible, however, to explain this riddle, and moreover in a way not at all expected. Torfæus, in his *Orcades*, gives the key to it without being aware of it himself. In this work, he says, p. 5, ‘ Pomona . . . a Julio Solino polyhistore Diutina appellatur.’ Now, in looking for this appellation in the

common editions of Solinus, we find no notice of such a name. In mentioning Thule, however, Solinus says, chap. 22: 'Ab Orcadibus Thyle usque quinque dierum ac noctium navigatio est. Sed Thyle larga et diutina pomona copiosa est.' Here it is remarkable that the word *diutina* really occurs, but only as an adjective, the author's obvious intention being to say: Thule is a fertile island, and plentifully productive of long-lasting corn. The fact, however, that Torfæus, as will be seen, could read *diutina* as a proper name instead of an adjective, shews either that in his copy or MS. of Solinus the reading must have been such, or that *diutina* has been marked with an initial letter as being the name of some island. His MS. then read thus: Sed Thyle larga, et Diutina pomona copiosa est: Thule is fertile, and Diutina has plenty of corn. Now, when such a reading could be adopted in some MSS. it seems not only probable, but almost certain, that in other MSS. the words have been arranged thus: 'Sed Thyle larga et diutina, Pomona copiosa est,' or, 'Sed Thyle larga, et diutina Pomona copiosa est.' In both cases, as in that of Torfæus, the Diutina or Pomona has been construed as a name belonging to the mainland of Orkney, evidently because Thule was not believed to be productive of corn, Pytheas describing it in such unfavourable terms.

"Solinus was a great oracle in the middle ages. He is quoted by Adamus Bremensis (in the eleventh century), and even by the author of the 'Hystoria Norwegiæ,' edited by me, from the Panmure codex. It is therefore not to be wondered at that the names supposed to be used by him should be adopted by writers of the middle ages, as well as by the earlier authors of more recent times. Although Buchanan says, that 'Orcadum maxima multis veterum Pomona vocatur,' I am certain that the name is not to be found in any book previous to Fordun's Scoti-chronicon, l. ii. c. 2. where he calls the Orkneys 'insulæ Pomoniæ,' having, as is to be well remarked, quoted Solinus only two pages before (c. 9), where he speaks of the manners and languages of Scotland.

"Thus it appears to me we must regard it as evident, that the name Pomona is the fruit of a complete misunderstanding of Solinus's words, originating in a very slight literal error, and that consequently it ought henceforth to be cancelled. That it should, however—as it certainly has done—have obtained such universal acceptance as to have become established even among the common people now-a-days, is not to be wondered at, a period of 400 years being long enough for gaining proselytes to equally grave and much more important historical blunders."

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NOTE.—The explanation which Professor Munch has given of the origin of the name Pomona, as applied to the mainland of Orkney, is certainly very in-

genious. It is however to be kept in view that Solinus, in using the word, is describing the indefinite island named Thule, which, he says, was distant five days sailing from Orkney; and according to the rest of his description this would apply to Zetland rather than to any other place. As we find the name Mona assigned to other islands on the English Coast (the Isle of Anglesey and the Isle of Man), might not some coincidence be traced in the name Pomona having also been applied to the remotest of the British Islands?

But leaving such conjectures, I have taken an opportunity of examining some early manuscripts and several of the earlier editions of the old Roman geographer, in accordance with Professor Munch's desire, with the view of ascertaining the various readings of the passage in question.

In an excellent manuscript of Solinus, on vellum, of the eleventh century, in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (MS. Bodl. Auctar. T. ii. 28), purchased at the Meerman Sale in Holland, I found the words to be (discarding the contractions,) "Ab orchadibus Thylen usque quinque dierum et quinque noctium nauigatio est. Sed thyle larga et diutina pomona copiosa." (Fol. 20b.)

In the earlier printed editions the passage runs thus :—

"Ab orchadibus thylen usque v. dierum et v. noctium nauigatio est. Sed thyle larga est et diutina pomorum copiosa." (Edit. Venetiis, per Nic. Jenson, m.cccc.lxxiii, folio.)

"Ab Orcadibus Thylen usque quinque dierum ac noctium nauigatio est. Sed Thyle larga et diutina Pomona copiosa est." (Edit. Mediolani, 1474, 4to.)

"Ab Arcadibus Thilen usque quinque dierum ac noctium nauigatio est. Sed thile larga et diutina Pynoma copiosa est." (Edit. Rom. Sec. xv., circa 1474, 4to.)

"Ab arcadibus thilen usque quinque dierum ac noctium nauigatio est. Sed thile larga et diutina : pynoma copiosa est." (Edit. Venetiis, anno Domini m.cccc.lxxxxiii, die. xiii. Januariis, 4to.)

"Sed Thule larga, et diutina Pomona copiosa est." (Edit. apud Gryphium, Lugduni, 1538, 8vo.)

"Sed Thule larga, et diutina pomona copiosa est." (Basilie, 1538 and 1543, both editions in folio.)

It is unnecessary to quote the same words from later editions. In an old English translation of Solinus Polyhistor, by Arthur Golding, London 1587, 4to, we find them thus rendered :

"From the Orcades unto Thule is fyve dayes and fyve nights sayling. *But Thule is plentiful in store of fruits that will last.*"

Buchanan indeed asserts that "Orcadum maxima multis veterum Pomona vocatur, hodie continentem appellant." In Hector Boethius and Bishop Lesley,

the name *Pomonia* is likewise applied to the Mainland ; while Torfæus, in his *Orcaedes*, says : “ A Julio Solino Polyhistore *Diutina appellatur.*”

Whether it was owing to a mistake that Torfæus omitted the word *Pomona*, is uncertain ; but, in his larger work, the *Historia Rerum Norvegicarum*, vol. i., p. 12, when discussing the question regarding the Thule of the Ancients, he has quoted the words more accurately : “ Quod tamen Pytheas de Thule prædicat, licet eam larga et diutina Pomona copiosam, incolasque in hyemem arborum fructus congerere Solinus memoret.”—D. L. *September 1852.*

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POSTSCRIPT.—“ Professor Munch having seen the above Note, begs to add that he agrees with its author in wondering at Solinus’s description of Thule being referred to Orkney ; but as it is ascertained from ‘Torfæi Orcaedes’ as a fact, that the word *diutina*, in the passage regarding Thule, has—no matter how—been construed as the proper name of one of the Orkneys, the old rule : *ab esse ad posse valet consequentia* makes it quite as possible that the next word *pomona*, might be construed in the same manner, especially as the old Milan and Rome edition spells the *pomona* with an initial capital. If any one can shew another probable way of explaining how Torfæus got his “*Diutina*” he will willingly relinquish his conjecture. This, however, he believes impossible. Christiania, October 7, 1852.”