

NOTICES OF ROBERT RIDDELL, OF GLENRIDDELL, Esq., AND OF SOME
OF HIS MANUSCRIPTS AND BOOKS. BY JAMES IRVINE, Esq., F.S.A.
Scot.

Robert Riddell, Esq., resided at Friars' Carse, in Nithsdale. In "The Land of Burns," by Professor Wilson and Robert Chambers, vol. ii. p. 15, they say:—

"When Burns took up his abode at Ellisland, his nearest neighbour to the west was Mr Riddell of Glenriddell. Friars' Carse, the residence of this gentleman, is about a mile from Burns' farm-house, being, like it, situated immediately beside the Nith. Riddell was an antiquary of some note, and an agreeable friend; and Burns no sooner came to settle at Ellisland, than he was welcomed to Friars' Carse. He says somewhere of the worthy captain and his lady, '*At their fireside I have enjoyed more pleasant evenings than at all the houses of fashionable people in this country put together.*' For the anniversary of the union of this couple, he wrote his song, 'The Seventh of November,' the music of which is said to have been by Mr Riddell himself. With reference to a hermitage in the woods, near the house, Burns likewise wrote his fine English verses:—

" 'Thou whom chance may hither lead,
Be thou clad in russet weed,' &c. &c.

"In the mansion, on the 16th of October 1790, took place a bacchanalian contest, which makes a conspicuous figure in the poems of Burns, the object being the possession of a certain ebony whistle, which had been introduced into Scotland by a Dane, who came over in the train of Anne, the consort of James VI. Sir Robert Lawrie of Maxwellton had gained the whistle from its original owner by overcoming him in drinking; but it was lost by his son to the ancestor of Mr Riddell. On the present occasion, Mr Riddell, Sir Robert Lawrie of Maxwellton, and Mr Fergusson of Craighdarroch (father of the late R. C. Fergusson, Esq., M.P. for Kirkcudbright) contended for it, and

"A bard was selected to witness the fray,
And tell future ages the feats of the day."

"It is scarcely necessary to particularise, that 'when six bottles a-piece had well worn out the night,' Glenriddell retired, and Sir Robert fell from the table, so that Mr Fergusson became the victor. The whistle is still in the possession of his family."

Among the "Original Letters" of Burns, published by Cadell and Davies in 1814, the 37th letter is that which Burns addressed to Mr Riddell on the day on which "the Whistle" was contended for, and including the lines—

"Here are we met, three merry boys,
Three merry boys I trow are we," &c. &c.

In the Ballad which Burns wrote on "The Whistle," beginning—

"I sing of a whistle, a whistle of worth,"

he speaks of Mr Riddell as "a high ruling elder."

In the eighth volume of Mr Riddell's manuscripts, beginning at page 132, is an account of his journey from Friars' Carse to Edinburgh, whither he went "as elder from the Presbytery of Dumfries to attend the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland." In this journey, and on several of his antiquarian excursions, he was accompanied by Captain Francis Grose, author of the "Antiquities of England and Wales," &c.

In the "Land of Burns," vol. ii. p. 28, there is a picture of Francis Grose, accompanied by a brief account of him. The authors say—"It was in 1789, while travelling in Scotland, for the purpose of drawing

and chronicling the antiquities of that country, that he met with Burns at the hospitable table of Mr Riddell, in the mansion of Friars' Carse. The figure of the man, which was justly said to be the very title-page to a joke—his numberless droll remarks and stories—and, in perhaps a less degree, his great learning and shrewd penetrating sense—made a great impression on the poet; and, to use the words quoted on the occasion by Mr Gilbert Burns, the two became 'unco pack and thick thegither.'" The intimacy was a memorable one for the admirers of Burns, for it led, as is well known, to the composition of "Tam o' Shanter," which first appeared in "The Antiquities of Scotland," published next year. The verses in which Burns sketched off the figure, character, and habits of the antiquary, are those beginning:—

" A fine fat fodgeg wight,
 * * * *
 By some auld, houlet-haunted biggin',
 * * * *
 He has a fouth of old nick-nackets," &c.

and four other verses.

Among Burns' poems is that "On the late Captain Grose's Peregrinations through Scotland," the first verse of which is so often quoted:—

"Hear, land o' cakes, and brither Scots,
 Frae Maiden Kirk to Johnny Groats;
 If there's a hole in a' your coats,
 I rede you tent it;
 A chield's amang you taking notes,
 And, faith, he'll prent it."

The manuscript volumes in the following catalogue contain a great many original drawings by Francis Grose:—

Burns left on record his esteem and gratitude in his "Sonnet on the Death of Robert Riddell, Esq.;" and in the lines "On Robert Riddell:"—

"To Riddell, much-lamented man,
 This ivied cot was dear;
 Reader, dost value matchless worth?
 The ivied cot revere."

Burns also wrote an "Impromptu on Mrs Riddell's Birth-Day," beginning—

"Old winter, with his frosty beard," &c.

Mr Riddell's manuscripts appear to have been all written at Friars's Carse. Vol. VII. contains three different views of the house (at pages 2, 50, and 204), with some account of the house, and the persons by whom different parts of it were erected.

Vol. VIII. was "finished at Friars' Carse, June 2, 1790," see page 298. This was only four years before Mr Riddell's death.

"The mansion of Friars' Carse is placed on the site of a religious building, which was a dependency of the Abbey of Melrose. In a lake hard by there is a small island, formed on wooden piles, in which the religious kept their valuables in times of peril. Friars' Carse now belongs to Mrs Crichton, the widow of a gentleman who has made his name for ever memorable in Dumfriesshire, by leaving a hundred thousand pounds to be applied to charitable purposes in the county—out of which fund an asylum for the mentally infirm has recently been erected, on a magnificent scale, at Dumfries.

"The room in which the whistle was contended for is still an object of interest with strangers."—"The Land of Burns," vol. ii. p. 17.)

CATALOGUE—*Manuscripts.*

No. 1. "A Collection of Scottish Antiquities, selected by Robert Riddell." Vol. III. 1786. Folio. Containing—Account of the Succession to the Barony of Kendal. Genealogy of Curwens, &c. A Glossary of Antiquated Words, English and Scottish, collected by R. Riddell. Extracts referring to Border History. The Royal Treasury Accounts for 1474, &c. Excerpts from the Register of the Abbey of Holmcultram, in Cumberland, 67 pages, chiefly Charters, with Index. "Historical and Genealogical Collections, selected by R. Riddell." Containing—"Extract from the Council Book of Pittenween" (1651). Notices of castles, with pictures. Claims for certain Offices (Regality, &c.), made by John Campbell of Calder, the Duke of Argyll, the Duke of Queensberry, Sir Andrew Agnew, the Earl of Eglintoun, the Marquis of Annandale, Robert Riddell, and others. Account of Saxon and Roman Antiquities,

with illustrations. At page 64 of this volume is a drawing and description of a very curious carved stone, found at west side in Eskdale Muir. At page 67, Charter by Robert II., anno 1373, of lands in Annandale to Nigel Ewart, &c. At page 256, a copy of a curious inscription on the outside of a church near Warrington—"To the memory of Oswald, a Saxon King of Northumberland, slain in battle by Penda, the Mercian King, August 5, 642;" the copy made for Mr Riddell, by Thomas Barrett of Manchester, January 30, 1787.

No. 2. "Scottish Antiquities." Vol. VII. This volume is illustrated by many original water-colour drawings, chiefly by Francis Grose and Thomas Cocking. The volume contains—"An Account of the Ancient Lordship of Galloway, from the most early period to the year 1455, when it was annexed to the Scottish Crown; many charters," &c. "A Tour in Nithsdale;" and "Letters of Correspondence between Charles I. and the Earl of Nithsdale." "An Excursion, by Dr Clapperton, to Lough Urr;" and "An Old Scottish Ballad, called the Bedesman of Nithsdale." This volume contains twenty-one coloured drawings, by Francis Grose and others; sixteen etchings, by Adam de Cardonnel; fifteen engravings; and, at page 210, a drawing by Cardonnel, of the head of the effigy of John de Sacro Bosco, &c.

No. 3. "Scottish Antiquities." Vol. VIII. Containing—The Historical Genealogies of the ancient and noble House of Seton, written by Sir Richard Maitland of Leadington (in 1545), copied from a MS. written by Viscount Kingstone; with two pictures of Seton House. List of Pictures relating to the Topography of Scotland. The Memoirs of Mr W. Vetch, Minister of the Gospel at Dumfries. Journal of a Tour in Scotland in 1789, by Captain Grose and Mr Riddell. Journal of an Excursion from Dumfries to Edinburgh in 1790, with Francis Grose. Notes, critical and historical, on Macbeth. Eight water-colour drawings, by F. Grose and others; sixteen etchings, by A. de Cardonnel; forty-six engravings.

No. 4. Vol. IX. "Scottish Antiquities." Containing—Continuation of Accounts of Scottish Castles. List of eighty-six castles, of which pictures and MSS. accounts are given in the work. On Carved Stone Monuments in Scotland. A collection of twenty-one water-colour drawings, by Francis Grose and his servant (Thomas Cocking); and numerous

drawing of antiquities, &c., in Indian ink; and thirty-two engravings inserted.

No. 5. Vol. XI. "Scottish Antiquities (1791)." Containing—A Collection of Old Scottish Ballads, with Notes—88 pages. Mr Riddell says—"None of them are to be met with except in a *very few manuscript collections.*" Facts relating to Locker River and Moss. History of Dumfries (130 pages), with illustrations. Four drawings and twenty engravings inserted.

No. 6. "Scottish Heraldry" (on back). Inside, "Glenriddell's Collections of MSS. No. 24. RR." This volume contains three printed works, with MS. notes, viz.,—1. "Observations upon the Laws and Customs of Nations as to Precedency. By Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh. Edinburgh, 1680." 2. "Scotland's Herauldrie: the Science of Heraldry, treated as part of the Civil Law, and Law of Nations. By Sir George Mackenzie, 1680." 3. "Various Pieces of Antiquity, communicated to the Society of Antiquaries of London. By Robert Riddell, Esq. of Friars' Carse, near Dumfries. 1791. Large plates." Then follow 105 pages of MS. relating to Heraldry, with many engravings and etchings, copies of seals, coats of arms, inscriptions, &c.

No. 7. "Fragments." One vol. 4to. MS. Containing—Extracts in Prose and Poetry.

No. 8. "Scottish Topography." A quarto volume, interleaved throughout; with this MS. title inside, "Additions made to the Scottish part of Mr Gough's British Topography. By Robert Riddell, Esq. of Glenriddell, at Friars' Carse. Anno 1791." These "Additions" were written by Mr Riddell with a view to a new edition of Mr Gough's work being published. The volume contains various references to Mr Riddell's MS. volumes; and at page 663, a list of drawings, etchings, &c., contained in his MS. volumes.

(The preceding List of Mr Riddell's MS. collections is followed by a list of printed books and pamphlets. Some of these, such as Pennant's Tour in Scotland, 3 vols., are described as containing MS. notes; but the list is not of sufficient importance to be subjoined.)