

IV.

NOTES ON EDINBURGH,—ITS NAME, AND NAME-WORD. BY PETER MILLER, F.S.A. Scot.

There has been much difference of opinion among antiquaries respecting the origin and derivation of the name-word Edinburgh. The common belief, resting chiefly on the authority of Maitland and Chalmers, is, that it derives its origin from Edwin, a king of Northumberland, who reigned over that territory from the year 616 to 632, and who, during his kingship, appears to have overrun and held in subjection for a short period that portion of North Britain now known as Scotland. The legend gives him credit for either having first built the castle of Edinburgh, or repaired it. Maitland, in his *History of Edinburgh*, and Chalmers, in his *Caledonia*, are the two chief authorities who give anything like arguments for their contention. How far these are of any value may be stated shortly. The former of these writers rests his chief argument on the meaning he gives to the prefix *Edin*. He says that the Gaelic word Edin means the face of a hill, and with the word *Dun* it should be in English, either *Hill Castle* or *Face Castle*, and that is an absurd meaning to be given to the word, and therefore it must be Edwin. Unfortunately for this dogmatic, if not ridiculous mode of argument, the prefix Edin has various meanings. It also means the top or brow of a hill; and, according to Gaelic scholars, is derived from Eudan. In Lhuyd's *Archæologia Britannica*, there are older forms of the word. Under the Latin word *facies*, he gives as the equivalent in old Scottish *ydyn*, and in the old Hibernian *yd*. Joyce, in his *Irish Names of Places*, says the forehead is denoted in Irish by the word *eudan* (edan), which is used topographically to signify a hill-brow. There is a small town in King's County, another in Antrim, and half-a-dozen townlands in several counties, called Edenderry; all of which are from the Irish *Eudan-doire*, the hill-brow of the oak-wood. This word Eden, always with the same meaning, is much used in the northern and north-western counties in local nomenclature, and it forms the beginning of more than one hundred other names of places.

But the actual meaning of the word Edin has really little to do with the argument, for the question is not what the interpretation of the word is—that is of secondary importance in the argument. It is the question of fact as to the form and existence of the word itself, before and after a specific period of time, that is the primary question that requires to be determined, the meaning comes afterwards.

Chalmers, in his *Caledonia*, readily adopts Maitland's dogmatism, and rests his case on a reference to Saville's *Fasti*, annexed to his *Scriptores Post Bedam*, which merely shows the fact that Edwin reigned as king at a certain epoch in the kingdom of Northumbria. This really means nothing as an argument, and no more shows that he built Edinburgh Castle than that he built John o' Groat's House, in the far north corner of Scotland, because he overran the north as well as the southern portions of the country. They both, however, refer to another matter of more importance as an argument, namely, that Simeon of Durham, writing about 1130, says that there was a church in Edwinesburch, in the year 854, belonging to the Bishopric of Lindisfarne. It will be more convenient, however, to deal with this statement further on, when the evidence of the Holyrood charters and that of other charters in the chartularies has been considered.

It is proposed to produce a mass of evidence from charters and other historical documents from the close of the sixth down to the thirteenth century, about which there can be no cavil or dispute as to their authenticity—most, if not all, of them using the name-word as applicable to Edinburgh, contemporaneous with the date of the incidents referred to, during the long period of six centuries. That evidence shows that the name-word of Edinburgh, although it had undergone in that long period some slight changes in its form and adaptation to the racial changes among the kings that successively ruled over Scotland, both in Pictish times as well as Saxon and Norman, still remained essentially the same, whatever its original meaning may have been. That evidence will further show that at the close of David I.'s reign, and during the short reign of his successor and grandson Malcolm IV., some one or two scribes who wrote a few of the charters during a period of twenty years, or so, made an attempt to change the spelling of the word to Edwines or

Edenes in some of the charters of the period in question,—notably the Holyrood charters about say 1145,—while in all the others, not only of the Holyrood charters, but all the other charters of the period, the old spelling of the name-word was continued, and before the death, or shortly after the death, of Malcolm IV., the old spelling, and nothing but it, was used in all subsequent charters.

Dr Skene, in an elaborate note to the Gododin poem in his edition of the *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, demonstrates that the battle or series of fights described in the Gododin and other poems were fought prior to the beginning of the seventh century. In the early text of that poem, in the Welsh language the name-word Eydden or Eidden occurs repeatedly as applicable to Edinburgh long before Edwin usurped the crown of Ida's race. Skene further says—"In a poem of the Book of Taliessin, there is the expression Rhuing Dineiddyn ac Dineiddwg, where Dineiddyn can hardly be anything but Dunedin;" that is equally clear from a poem in the *Black Book of Caermarthen*, where Edinburgh is called Mynydd Eidden. Coming down to a later period, the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, the same name-word occurs in several historical books contained in the *Myvyrian Archæology of Wales*. In the *Bonedd y Saint* and the *Bonedd Saint Ynys Priddain*, the same spelling is met with, Ddin Eiddin, dinas Eidin—odinas Eiden—Mynyddawg Eiddyn,—all meaning the Edin toun or Dun.

In the *Annals of Tighernac*, under the year 638, there is the battle of Glenmairison and the siege of Etain; and in the *Annals of Ulster*, under the same year, there is the "Bellum Glinnemureson et obsessio Etin."

In the *Pictish Chronicle* it is said Indulphus held the kingdom eight years, and in his time from 953 to 961, the city Eden was vacated, and remained to the Scots to this day.¹ This Chronicle was written about 1020. This refers to an event that took place only a few years before the statement was written, and the writer was in all likelihood cognisant of the fact, and there is no reason to suppose that the name of the town had undergone any change during the short period that had elapsed from the event itself. Edgar reigned nine years, and he died at Dunedin in

¹ Indulfus tenuit regnum viii. annis. In hujus tempore oppidum Eden vacuum est, ac relictum est Scottis usque in hodierna (*Chron. Picts and Scots*).

1107, and was buried in Dunfermline.¹ Those events, and the dates at which they took place, clearly show what the name-word of Edinburgh was at those early periods up to David I.'s time, 1124.

During Malcolm Canmore's time, and down to the close of David's reign in 1153, was eminently a transition period in our national history. Old Pictish and Celtic habits and customs, and even the Pictish language, disappeared. The Saxon and Norman courtiers and followers of Edgar and David, both of whom were brought up and educated at the Saxon or Northumberland Courts, naturally preferred their own language to the rude speech of the Gaelic races, which formed the bulk of the population of Scotland at that time. The erection and endowment of so many monasteries, during that transitionary period, when most of the monks and priests were brought from England, must have exercised great influence, not only upon the habits and manners of the people, but also upon their speech—their spoken and written language. Accordingly, during that period, the Saxon language appears to have in a great measure supplanted the Pictish and Gaelic, and in many cases the written names of places in charters and in other historical documents at that period assume the Saxon form, and notably the old name of Edinburgh, Mynydd Eidden and Dunedin, assume the Saxon form. The transposition of the prefix *dun* and the suffix Eiden or Edin of the old form is made, and up to the present time we have Eiddin, in the form of Edin, placed first in the spelling of the word, and *dun* and Mynydd translated into the Saxon *burh*, the equivalent for the Gaelic *dun*—Edinburgh being simply the Saxon equivalent for the Gaelic Dunedin. The first time that Edinburgh appears in the record is in David's reign. Dunedin does not seem to appear in any document during that king's time. The Saxon name-word Edinburgh supplants the old Celtic form, and continues down to the present time.

A close inspection of the chartularies published by the Bannatyne and Maitland Clubs, from David the First down to William and Alexander II.'s time, throws much light on this question when they are examined in detail. The analysis leaves but little doubt as to the incorrectness of

¹ Edgar, nine years. Mortuus in Dunedin et sepultus in Dunfermline (*Chronicle of the Picts and Scots*).

Maitland and Chalmers's inferences; stated shortly, that examination brings out the following results:—During nearly the whole of David's reign down to the Holyrood charter, near the close of his reign—say 1145–7—the word is spelt Edeneburg or Edensburg. In the Holyrood charter (that is, the foundation charter), Edwinesburg appears for the first and the last time, with one exception in one of Malcolm's, the fourth charter (23 Holyrood), where the name-word is written Eduinesburg, and from his death onwards Eden, Edyn, sometimes Edene, is the invariable rule, so that there is only one charter, of all the many charters of the period, in which the occurrence of the word can be used in support of the contention that Edinburgh is named from King Edwin.

In Dunfermline chartulary, one of the earliest as to the date of the erection of the monastery, the word is invariably spelt Edinburg, during David, Malcolm, William, and Alexander's reign, with one solitary exception, where it is spelt Edenes (26); and this charter without date appears to have been granted near the close of David's reign, about the time that the foundation charter of Holyrood was granted (1145).

In the Holyrood chartulary, Edwinesburg appears, as already stated, for the first and last time. In the rest of the charters contained in the volume the result may be summarised thus—Out of eight charters in David's time, from 1124 to 1153, Edwines and Edenesburg occur five times, and Edeneburg three times. During Malcolm IV.'s reign, from 1153 to 1165, it is three times Edenes, and five times Edenburg; and in William's reign, from 1165 to 1214, it is spelt six times Edenes, and fourteen times Edene, or Edenburg. Newbattle Abbey was founded by David in 1140; in this chartulary the spelling is, from that date onwards, Eden, Edene, or Edinburg, and never otherwise.

In Melrose, in William's reign, it is Edinbure.

In Kelso, Malcolm IV.'s confirmation charter it is Edinburg, 1159, and in William's reign Edinburg. In the Glasgow charters this name-word does not occur until 1201, when it is Edenebure. In Aberdeen, in Malcolm and William's time, it is Edynburch. In the Soltre charter in the Mid-Lothian chartulary, in Malcolm IV.'s time, 1153–65, it is Edynburgh.

In a confirmation charter of Robert, bishop of St Andrews, in the appendix to the Holyrood charters (p. 207) to the *Ecclesia Sancte Crucis*

de Edinburgh, it is tested by R. Janitore de Edinburgh from (1122 to 1159). It is Edinburgh twice in a charter of Galfrida de Maleville, Malcolm IV., 1153. In Scone chartulary, in 1164, the spelling is Edinburgh, in the confirmation charter of Malcolm; and in the same year by Pope Alexander III., 1164, it is Edynburch. In the Isle of May chartulary it is Edeneburg by King David, and Edenburg by Malcolm. Ecclesiastical documents about the same period appear all to spell the word in much the same manner. According to the *Statuta Ecclesiæ Scot.*, vol. i. p. 38, and Raines's *North Durham*, there is—"In plena Synoda nostra in Ecclesia Sancti Cuthberti apud Edeneburk, A.D. 1163-1178." In 1180 an assembly of the Scottish clergy was held in the Church of Holyrood, Edinburgh—"apud Edinburgh in Ecclesia Monasteriali Sanctæ Crucis." By a bull of Pope Alexander the Third, a toft in Edinburgh is confirmed to the monastery on St Colmes Island.¹

Although the foundation charter of Holyrood is placed first in the chartulary, it by no means forms the first in the series with respect to time. It has no date. It is sometimes very difficult to assign the proper date to those early charters, when the date is not given in the document itself, and that is of frequent occurrence. In the Holyrood charters that is the rule, and the date of the respective charters can in most cases be only approximately ascertained. The time of the foundation charter can only be ascertained in this manner by noting some of the witnesses who attest the deed itself. Its date is made out by observing that it was attested by David's grandson William, who was born in the year 1143, and by another person of riper years, John, bishop of Glasgow, who died in 1147; so that the charter must have been granted between those two years, 1143 and 1147. It is, therefore, certain that some of David's charters in that chartulary must have been granted prior to this date, for he began to reign in 1124. The spelling of the name-word for Edinburgh is altogether different in the foundation charter from the others in his reign, some having Edeneburg and others Edenesburc. Notably the variations in the spelling of the word are mostly confined to the Holyrood chartulary.

Reference has been made to a statement of Simeon of Durham's in

¹ Ross's *Aberdour and Inchcolm*, p. 64.

his *History of the Kings*, where he says that there belonged to the See of Lindisfarne in 854, so many churches and manses, among others he names "Mailros et Tigbrethingham et Eoriercorn ad occidentalem partem Edwinesburch et Pefferham," &c. He is writing nearly three centuries after the date he refers to. Was he giving the name actually applied to the locality in 854, or was he merely rehearsing a tradition of his own time? No other author before or after him applies the same name-word to Edinburgh. Curiously enough, the name he writes before Edwinesburch, Eoriercorn, he misspells. No one ever spells Bede's Abercornig in the same way as Simeon, or one of his interpolators does. The most likely explanation of the use of this name-word is, that he was simply retailing some Northumberland tradition that was current in his time three centuries after the date referred to.

We have undoubted contemporaneous notices of Edinburgh and its name-word in the *Chronicles of the Picts*, written about 1020. When it states that the oppidum Eden was given up to Indulphus, who reigned between 953 and 961; and again, when in the *Chronicles of the Picts and Scots*, Edgar is said to have reigned nine years, died in Dunedin, and was buried in Dunfermline, this event being assigned to 1107. It is only in, say 1145, the date of the Holyrood charter, where Edwinesburg is for the first and last time used. The change in the spelling in some of David and Malcolm's charters to Edenesburg only obscures the question to a trifling extent. Some of these exceptions are, however, explainable on other grounds than on the theory of an actual change in the name-word. But, after the evidence of the charters, there is another and perhaps the most important question of all in the argument. Did Simeon of Durham actually write, in the *History of the Kings*, the statement in question? It appears from a very learned and exhaustive disquisition prefixed to Simeon's *History of the Kings*, published in 1885, in the Government series of Historical Books, that the so-called *History of the Kings* is a mere piece of historical "patchwork," written by different persons, including Simeon himself, "and it is not to be considered as an original work, in the sense in which the History of the Church of Durham is." In short, the *History of the Kings* is an historical document of no value on which to base real history, being only a compilation of different

hands, at different times, with interpolations by whom we know not. It is also certain from Simeon of Durham's commentators that this passage respecting the churches and manses said to belong to Lindisfarne in 854, including the so-called Edwinesburg, is one of the interpolated passages. This passage is not given in any of the texts of the book. The Rev. Joseph Stevenson, in his English version of Simeon of Durham's works, places it among the other portions of the history that are known as mere additions to Simeon's history; and in the *Monumenta Historica Britannica* the legend is discredited in a similar manner. Nothing more need be said on this mode of making history.

Fifteen years after the death of Simeon of Durham, the scribe who wrote the Holyrood charter used the word Edwinesburch in that document, but never used it again in any other charter. In a few other Holyrood charters, Edenesbure is used, but in the larger number of them it is either Edenbure or Edenebure down to near the close of Malcolm IV.'s reign, in all not more than twenty years. This practice was confined to a few charters, and never once appeared in others where the word Edinburgh occurs. It is always Eden or Edene, clearly demonstrating the fact that the altered spelling never was accepted as the name of the burgh or town. Its sudden disuse at the close of Malcolm's reign, 1165, and the return to the old form, Edyn or Eden, by all the writers of the original charters and other historical documents of that time, is something like positive proof that the essay to change the former name of the town and castle proved abortive in the twelfth century.

In our own time a belief in the truth of the old tradition of some of Simeon of Durham's interpolators has met with some attention from a few of our learned antiquaries, from overlooking the remarkable fact that the word Edwinesburch occurs only in one charter—the foundation charter of Holyrood, about the year 1145. The name-word for Edinburgh was spelt variously in a few charters for some twenty years, but at the close of Malcolm IV.'s reign, 1165, these irregularities of spelling come abruptly to an end, and from that time to the present, a period of seven centuries, the normal form has been Edyn—Eden—Edinburgh.

The historical documents which have been cited bear on their face the

broad fact, in opposition to all preconceived theories as to the meaning of the word Edin or its fanciful derivation from King Edwin, that at the close of the sixth century, long before Edwin was king of Northumbria, Edinburgh was known as Eiden—Dineiden; and before David the First's time as Dunedin; and during his reign the Celtic form of the name-word was changed into Edinburch, the Saxon form, and from his grandson's death, Malcolm IV., it remains so.

The question, looked at from other points of view and treated either as an historical or philological one, demands some consideration, and so treated it shows the utter untenableness of Maitland's and Chalmers's contention. Had the prefix Edin of the old name been a solitary instance of the use of the Celtic word as applied to Edinburgh, some ground for dubiety as to its origin might possibly have arisen, but the wide geographical use of the term Edin—Eden, either as a prefix or suffix in name-words of places in Scotland, Ireland, and even in England, attests the correctness of its use as applied to old Dunedin, as well as Edinburgh.

The following list of names of places in which Edin occurs may be read with interest, as illustrative of my contention:—

Edinbelly-burn, near Mumrills, east from Falkirk.

Edinkillie, a parish in Morayshire, the name clearly of Gaelic origin, Ardin Coillie signifying the face of the wood. It is descriptive of the name of the parish, which contains two royal forests.—*Old Statistical Account.*

Edinample, a parish of Balquidder, evidently Gaelic, which means facing a pool or lake.—*Old Statistical Account.*

Edingight, the place opposite the wind, Parish of Banff.—*Old Statistical Account.*

Edinbain, Duirnish, Isle of Skye, peaked, as to its form.

Edinbellie, Balfroun.

Edinchip, in the lordship of Balquidder.—*Scottish Acts of Parliament.*

Edinbarnet, near Duntocher, the ridge of the gap.

Aucheniden, in the same locality.

The lands of Edinmore, Edinbeg.—*Scottish Acts of Parliament.*

Lands of Thainsland, otherwise called Edendunning.

Edindurno, Huntly, the hill of oaks, where oaks grow.

Barony of Edington, Barony of Cockburn.

Eddingham, in Galloway.

Edington, in Banff; also in England.

Edingeith, the windy hill brow.—Kinloss charters.

Edinbarnan, a gap.—Paisley charters.

Edinbernach, a place full of bens or peaks.—Paisley charters.

Lisaghanedan, near Ardagh in Longford, the port of the *edan*, or hill brow.

Duneden, in Roxburghshire, charter in *Dryburgh Chartulary*, p. 83; there is also Edenham and Edinton.