CHAPTER II.

THE "BORDER CITY"—ITS HISTORICAL RELATIONS—ITS ARCHITECTURE AND SALUBRITY—ITS HYBRID POPULATION—ITS TRADE—THE CORPORATION—THE GUILDS—HABITS AND PASTIMES OF THE CITIZENS ABOUT A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

CARLISLE, viewed in its Archaic, Roman, Mediæval, and Modern attitudes, would seem to offer a large and interesting theme to the historian. Ripe scholarship and various attainments would be essential to the elucidation of the subject, and difficulties of no common kind would surround the threshold of the inquiry. Of the migratory tribes who, tempted by the good fishing and hunting ground, settled along the banks of the river Eden, and of their nomad habits, Taranis-worship, and sacrificial rites, there is but the common conjecture that attributes all the unknown of the prehistoric era to the Druids of our earthly Pantheon—constituting a kind of British mythology, that of late years has become highly acceptable to vulgar minds. What is wanted is a sketch of Carlisle as the seat of the kings of Cumbria; its relations to the Picts and Scots; its Roman indoctrination; its Fetishisms, and the graftings thereon of Christianised formulas;

its Witenagemots; its destruction by the Danes; its restoration after a two-centuried dilapidation, and the fresh impetus it gained from Norman rule and architecture; its monastic and baronial subjections; and its final emergence from these and other crushing influences to constitutional government and civic rights.

Placed between the fires of both sides of the Borders, Carlisle at times hardly knew to whom it owed its allegiance, and notwithstanding the oft-promised blessings of Christian bondship and legitimate rule, it realised neither peace nor repose for centuries. Even with the establishment of the Tudor dynasty, that brought about a more definitive line of action in every department of the realm, a feverish anxiety reigned along the "debateable land" of the Scottish Borders, near to which was Carlisle, a garrisoned town, coveted by both parties in the struggle for supremacy. Queen Elizabeth saw the policy of making Carlisle the residence of the "Lord Warden of the Western Marches," and of strengthening its holdings and defence against the inroads of the Scotch; and this policy was maintained by her successors on the throne of England for two centuries subsequently.

In Dr. Heysham's day a broad turreted wall encircled the city of Carlisle; on the south stood the citadel with its frowning barbicans, and on the north the castle was still more prominent, with its battled towers and donjon-keep. The gates of the city—named, in accordance with the direction to which they pointed,

English, Scottish, and Irish—were shut at sunset; and armed sentinels kept watch and ward over them, as if still threatened by the Scottish foe. The military parade gave life and colouring to the otherwise passive character of the city, the denizens of which were roused from their slumbers by the call of the bugle-horn, and after the labours of the day were reminded of the hours of repose by the evening tattoo. To the traveller approaching from the south, as Heysham did a hundred years ago, what a pleasant picture of the *rus in urbe* type of a city, when "the sun" shone "fair on Carlisle wa';" and that wall had no other environs than the meadowed plain, the converging mountain streams, and the knolled and wooded eminences beyond! With increasing population the character of the city became changed. Devoid of archæological thought as well as architectural taste, persons, guided only by prospective pecuniary advantages, erected a lot of wretched buildings in close proximity to the gates, and thus marred not only the beauty of the Border City, but its well-known natural salubrity.

Another generation had sprung up in Carlisle since the ill-fated '45, and a feeling of security was being restored along the Borders. The banner of St. George, floating over the highest tower of the castle, implied civic fealty to the Hanoverian cause. Whilst, however, hundreds of middle-aged persons could recount with freshness of narrative the march of "Bonnie Prince Charlie"

into the city with his kilted clans, and dwell on his chivalrous bearing and smiling courtesies, sympathy for the fallen house of the Stuarts still lingered by other hearths than the strictly Jacobite residents of the Border City.

A rude and quaint form of domestic architecture prevailed in Carlisle a hundred years ago. Houses with gabled fronts bounded the great thoroughfares; their doorways, central or lateral, porched or projecting, were occasionally adorned with a kind of Gothic arch; the windows were few and diminutive, and quite as irregular as other parts of the tenement. The chief objects aimed at in building were warmth and security, and, above all other considerations, evasion of the odious window-tax. The doors of dwellings consisted of thick slabs of oak clumsily attached to cross oaken bars, and over their surface a series of projecting knobs in imitation of the iron rivets and studs on the gates of a mediæval fortress. Occasionally the carpenter indulged his fancy by arranging these wooden pins in geometric or grotesque figures. The same style of workmanship is still to be seen in retired country districts in the North of England.

The Town or Moot Hall occupied a central position; and near to it were the butcher's shambles and fish-shops. An open well, much frequented by the inhabitants, was under the same roof, and liable to receive part of the liquid waste percolating the subsoil from both these nuisances in the market-place. The

streets were kept tolerably wide, and garden-plots and open spaces were to be found in various parts of the city. On the other hand, narrow confined lanes, wanting both light and air, were vastly too numerous along the north-eastern wall. Irregular buildings and deficient sanitary arrangements ruled everywhere; the city had no public lights, so each citizen had to carry his own lantern on moonless nights. Hard or drinking water was got from draw-wells in the open streets, or from pumps in dirty lanes; soft water was brought from the river Eden by water-carriers, and sold at so much a pailful. The days of skin-washing and clean linen had scarcely dawned upon the Carlisle lieges, content with a summer's bath in the adjacent rivers, or an occasional dip in the Solway tide, five miles distant.

The folk of Carlisle were not without a large share of hybridity in their veins. Upon the aboriginal stem, call it Kymric or British, or whatsoever you will, had been grafted from time to time shoots of the noble Roman, of the marauding Saxon, and hardy Danish sea-rover, till the parent Cumbrian stock had lost its primordial character in an amalgamation of race elements almost beyond ethnological distinction. If the blending of blood be the right thing for developing a vigorous race, the men of Carlisle had every chance of reaping its advantages to the full; for, introduced to Cumberland from time to time, were people from the Italian Apennines, the plains of France, the banks of

the Danube, and the coasts of the North Sea. Verily a motley breed! which it pleases John Bull to designate "Anglo-Saxon"—a term that has done mighty service in penny literature and House of Commons grandiloquence, and now bids fair to find its lowest level at Cockney banquets and Fishmongers' feasts.

It is a matter of regret that Dr. Heysham, in his survey of the population in 1780, showed no interest in the ethnological characters, and took no note of the general *physique* of the people.* Before the Scottish and Irish immigrations to the city became so marked, Carlisle should have offered a chance of investigating the Saxon and Celtic relations of the North Britisher; at any rate, helped to elucidate some of the more salient features of our mixed race. Heysham was content with a simple census, or "counting the noses" of the people, regardless of the Judaic, Celtic, or Roman forms exhibited by his fellow-citizens. Of the 6299 persons living in the city and suburbs of Carlisle in 1780, and the adjacent outlying district that ranked with the urban parishes, Cumbrians and Lowland Scotch in part would constitute nine-tenths. A few Flemish,† and more Irish would make up the remain-

* In 1775, Dr. John Hunter, an Edinburgh graduate, made the "Varieties of Man" the subject of his inaugural dissertation. Heysham was then studying in Edinburgh, but does not appear to have been struck with the novelty of Hunter's thesis.

† The establishment of woollen factories in Carlisle in 1753 by a Flemish firm, accounted for the presence of these foreigners in the Border City.

der. With the growing manufactures of the city, the relative proportions became greatly altered; there was a large influx of Irish, chiefly Ulster men, who found their way across the Channel in Whitehaven coal-vessels, and also a considerable accession of industrious Scotch from Dumfriesshire.

This chapter, it should be observed, is introductory to the consideration of the Bills of Mortality, and should embrace the character of the people, their habits, pursuits, and modes of living, and not less the sanitary aspects of the city, so as to facilitate the comprehension of Dr. Heysham's great work—the tabulation of the births, marriages, and deaths, and all that pertained to the health and disease of the Carlisle population.

Speaking broadly, there were only two distinct classes in Carlisle—the industrious poor, and the well-to-do or independent folk. The shopocratic element was much less significant in those days than now; and happily there was not a single mart for the sale of drugs, where poison could be had for the stomachs, and no public print even of the ribald sort to disturb the minds of the unsophisticated lieges.

In taking the census, Dr. Heysham did not distinguish those engaged in the larger manufactories from those who laboured to supply the trade-wants of the city; or these again from the higher class, who appeared to live for the purpose of having their wants supplied. The producers and consumers were ranked together.

Heysham was a true advocate of the numerical method *per se*, and gave only the smallest possible recognition to the social potencies, such as property, character, and station; hence he made no distinction between the consumer and the producer.

The export trade of Carlisle consisted of linen, cotton, and woollen goods, bleached and dyed yarns, but chiefly calico-prints: soap, hats, whips, and fish-hooks also had a place in its commercial transactions. None of these trades were particularly injurious to health. The hours of work might be long, and there were no half-holidays to relieve the burthens of the Carlisle operatives. Wages, however, were fairly remunerative for every kind of work, and the agriculture of the district was necessarily promoted with the view of supplying the weekly markets of a thriving population.

The food of the working classes included a fair amount of beef and mutton, vegetables, cheese, milk, and beer. A coarse kind of bread was used of "seconds flour," of wheat with rye and barley-meal, also oatmeal for porridge and scones. Fish was got from the Solway and its tributaries, and sold cheaply: salmon at 1½d. and 2d. a pound! Dried fish, bacon, and "hung mutton," formed part of the winter supply of animal provisions. The Irish helped to develop the growth of the potato, whilst the Scotch created a demand for oatmeal in the district. Butcher's meat seldom reached 4d. a pound; potatoes, 1½d. a gallon; new milk, 1d. or 1½d. a quart; milk cheese, 2d. a pound; chickens and ducks, 6d.

each; and a Christmas goose could be had for 2s. Flour (wheat) was about 2s. a stone; barley, oatmeal, and rye, rather more than half the price of wheat flour. Small beer was sold at 2d. a gallon, and formed a capital beverage; whilst good home-brewed or public-house ale only cost 1s. a gallon, each pint of which was served in flowing measure. No wonder "John Barleycorn" had his votaries, when 3d. could obtain two pints of honestly brewed drink.

On comparing the wages and food prices of that period (1780) with the present time (1870), the writer is of opinion that the working men of Carlisle were as well off then as now. With the exception of cereals, provisions were only two-fifths or one-half of the present prices, whilst wages were far from being proportionally less; nay, in some instances quite as remunerative, and markedly superior in one instance, the weaving trade, once the most thriving occupation in Carlisle. The notable exceptions to this general statement are to be found in the wages of masons, joiners, painters, or the artisans whose services have risen so greatly in value to meet the growing luxuries of this age. In reference to wearing apparel, it ought to be stated, that the majority of people, whether high or low in station, spun the materials of their own clothing, so that there was but the preparation and making up of the fabric for other hands to do.

The drinking habits of a people naturally affect the rate of

mortality. Now of the temperance or intemperance of the period under discussion, it is not easy to speak with either warranty or precision. As spirituous liquors were little used, it might be inferred that the working classes were not so fiery in their cups. On the other hand, breweries paid handsome profits, and publicans throve under the auspices of the "Jolly Butcher and foaming tankard," or "Willie brew'd a peck o' maut." In no age of English history have the people shown a dislike for good malt. Beef and beer are recognised features in the national character; and as Carlisle was prosperous, and hospitality abundant, there would be heydays and hours of high jinks promoted by Bacchanalian fervour. There was some excuse for the circulation of the jovial cup, considering the few home comforts allotted to the labouring class, and the total absence of all public entertainments. If, as often happened, one room had to receive a whole family, wife and brats, and screaming babies, no wonder the artisan, after his long day's labour, sought the "Barley Mow," its clean sanded floor, its cosy fire, and cosier company, where he could have his ale served in bright pewter by a buxom landlady in smart cap and ribbons, and radiant in her glow of welcome to thirsty souls and good customers.

Had the sanitary arrangements of the city and suburbs been cared for, the bills of mortality, though highly favourable upon the whole, would have shown a different and a happier result. The

health due to the district was marred by government exactions in the shape of a window-tax, that naturally led the owners of property to shut out the light and air of heaven from the dwellings of the poor, where these life-giving elements were most needed. The narrow lanes and the confined spaces in which many of the industrial classes dwelt, seemed specially contrived to add fuel to the fire that generated fevers, and to spread the seeds of contagion through the city. The Britisher had no thought beyond his food and raiment and home-brewed. Godliness he might assume, but he seemed in profound ignorance of another cardinal virtue—cleanliness. There was also much huddling together of the Irish and Scottish people, in whom too frequently distempers originated or were greatly fostered.

Civic, military, and ecclesiastical powers exercised jurisdiction within the walls. They constituted a triune, but not an unity one and indivisible, like that expressed in the Athanasian dogma. When the co-operation of their authority was most needed, as in the Scottish rebellion in 1745, the civil and military pulled different ways, and so the enemy passed triumphantly within the gates; upon the whole, however, they worked amicably, and held strongly by the coercive method of promoting the cause of order and morals within their jurisdiction.

The Mayor and Corporation were fully endowed with the municipal attributes, so dearly cherished by the provincial mind,

and that have come down in all their unsullied characters to an admiring posterity; they were consequential and fussy to a degree —often meddling, but seldom wisely operative in any direction. The Mayor, oppressed with official dignity, never failed to be stately in order to do credit to the happy accident that raised him from the tallow and treacle cellarage to the highest seat in the city's council; he would hardly condescend to approach the Moot-Hall stairs without the insignia of the sergeant-at-arms. The gentility of those days (100 years ago) consisted in cocked hats covering powdered wigs—corporate brains, it may be stated parenthetically, belong to the abstract—blue coats, shorts, and hose, and silver-buckled shoes; but let the reader imagine the Mayor in additional and finer feathers, with white wand held aloft, and supported by tipstaffs in red facings and glaring buttons upon a blue fabric: how emphatically did the *posse comitatus* proclaim to the citizens—"Clear the way for your betters!" If this parade of the pomps and vanities did not suffice for obedience, there were the "Stocks" and "Pillory," in which incorrigibles were exposed on market-days for the edification of bucolic gazers, and the general improvement of the morals of the county.

A puritanic discipline marked the outward rule of the city, but the inner life was probably that of cathedral cities in general, and not of a kind to save either men or women from the ills of the flesh. There were no playhouses, no singing saloons, and no

public diversion for the labouring classes in the city. The last decade of the century was entered upon before a theatre was established (1792). The wrestling ring for the display of the athletic Cumbrian, and so noted now as the arena of our English Olympian games, was not formed in Carlisle till the race-meeting of 1809. How was it that under such a *regime* the city obtained the designation of "Merrie Carlisle?" Was it a lapsus of speech, or the irony of a witty historian, laughing in his sleeve at the Carlisle lieges; or, if deserved and true, was it from the too free use of "home-brewed?"—the only resource of enjoyment to minds wearied of an unvarying domestic life, and the only reviving influence to bodies exhausted by daily toil and routine. The people claimed their cakes and ale as part of their British rights, and as laudably perhaps as the Corporation would have its "Jeremiah Wherlings," or other Lowther sycophants; the military its roystering cornets; or the Church its dry and dogmatic formalists. The Trade-Guilds* exercised a large social

* The incorporated companies of butchers, merchants, shoemakers, skinners, smiths, tanners, tailors, and weavers, used to assemble in the Guild Hall of the city for business and merry-making of the bacchanalian sort. None but those belonging to the Trade-Guild or Freemen could vote for the city Members of Parliament, so that when the practice of making "Honorary Freemen" of rich county proprietors came into vogue, the gentlemen so honoured had to enrol their names in the books of one of the trade fraternities. Some knights who had won "military glory" in the battle-fields of Flanders joined the banners of St. Crispin, and scions of the noble houses of Cumberland and Westmoreland

and still larger political influence in the city and its environs. They constituted the enfranchised class, and were of course the most potential agents at the elections for parliamentary representatives of the city; their gala-days were pronounced in character, and "Ascension Day," with the annual Kingmoor Races, were the noisiest and merriest of all. It is not improbable that the joviality of the Guilds, which included both rich and poor, and placed all parties very much upon an equal footing, gave rise to the title of "Merrie Carlisle." The writer can ascertain no more satisfactory explanation of the oft-quoted epithet applied to the Border City than the history of the Guild saturnalia.

Basking in the sunshine of life and longevity, the Dean of Carlisle and other dignitaries of the Church, their man-servants and their maid-servants within the Abbey gates, scarcely, if at all, affected the bills of mortality. Moreover, the heads of the Cathedral body lent kind aid to Dr. Heysham in all his sanitary schemes for the benefit of the people. The Church was a great and respected power in the city; the commonalty looked with a kind of awe upon the episcopate in full canonicals and on an exalted *rostrum*, preaching doctrines which no man would dare to deny, even if he felt himself struck on the right cheek by an evangelical Philistine. This kind of uncharitable conduct could hardly have

were fain to be registered among the tanners and skinners, as if "there was nothing like leather" in the display of civil privileges.

been met with in the pleasant circle of such divines as Bishop Law and Dr. Paley; indeed, it is gratifying to add, that the Carlisle episcopate of that day was most ably represented. Neither talents, nor amiability, nor the art of good preaching were wanting in its leading men, who, in classic attainments, in literature, and theology, ranked with the best of England. Dating from the advent of Bishop Law in 1767 to the active days of Dean Milner early in the present century, the Carlisle diocese numbered among its superior clergy men of high eminence and merit.

CHAPTER III.

THE CARLISLE BILLS OF MORTALITY—TOPOGRAPHY—CLIMATE AND RAINFALL—CENSUS OF 1763 AND 1780—NOTES ON THE MORTALITY FROM 1779 TO 1787.

DR. HEYSHAM had only been a few months in Carlisle when he meditated a census of the inhabitants, and the framing of bills of mortality. He prefaced his observations on the advantages to be derived from accurate registers of mortality by the following passages from Percival's *Essays*, vol. ii.—"The establishment of a judicious and accurate register of the births and burials in every town and parish, would be attended with the most important advantages, medical, political, and moral. By such an institution the increase or decrease of certain diseases, the comparative healthiness of different situations, climates, and seasons; the influence of particular trades and manufactures on longevity; with many other curious circumstances, not more interesting to physicians than beneficial to mankind, would be ascertained with tolerable precision. In a political point of view, exact registers of human mortality are of still greater consequence, as the number of people and progress of population in