

ORIGIN OF THE NAME
OF
GEMMILL
WITH A
GENEALOGICAL ACCOUNT
OF THE
GEMMILLS OF RAITHMUIR,
FENWICK,
FROM A.D. 1518.





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NOTES ON THE PROBABLE ORIGIN

OF THE NAME

Gemmill or Gemmell

WITH

A GENEALOGICAL ACCOUNT OF THE FAMILY OF GEMMILL
OF RAITHMUIR, FENWICK, FROM (*circa*) 1518,

BY

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Contents.

PROBABLE ORIGIN OF THE NAME	- - -	5
GAMAL, SON OF ORM	- - - - -	6
KIRKDALE CHURCH, YORKSHIRE, RE-BUILT BY GAMAL, SON OF ORM	- - - - -	7
EARLY BEARERS OF THE NAME IN ENGLAND	- - -	9
EARLY BEARERS OF THE NAME IN IRELAND	- - -	12
IN SCOTLAND, EARLY SETTLEMENT OF GAMELS AT FENWICK, AYRSHIRE	- - - - -	13
OTHER EARLY REFERENCES TO THE NAME IN SCOTLAND	-	17
VARIOUS SPELLINGS—NAME GRADUALLY CHANGES TO GEMMILL		22
GENEALOGICAL ACCOUNT OF GEMMILLS OF RAITHMUIR, FENWICK	- - - - -	24
GENEALOGICAL TREE OF GEMMILLS OF RAITHMUIR, FENWICK, FROM THE YEAR 1518	- - - - -	57

Notes on the Probable Origin
OF THE
Name of Gemmill or Gemmell.

"The days of old to mind I call."

THE general opinion of those versed in genealogical lore is that the *Gemmills* were originally of Anglo-Saxon or Danish origin, and that the bearers of the name, so far as Great Britain is concerned, probably settled in this country between the sixth and the eighth century, during which period, first the Anglo-Saxons and afterwards the Danes, made frequent descents on Britain, and occupied large tracts of land, particularly along the East Coast. The name Gemmill is believed to come from the Anglo Saxon word *Gamel*, or *Gamol*, Danish *Gammel*, Norse *Gamal*, all meaning old or ancient.

Be that as it may, we know for certain that a number of persons bearing the name Gamal or Gamel were owners of property in Britain before the Norman Conquest. In *Florence of Worcester*, vol. i., p. 223, mention is made of *Gamal*, son of *Orm*, being slain on 28th December, 1065.

He was an officer in King Harold's army, and along with 200 soldiers had been sent by Harold to York on a mission to Tostig, but was slain by Tostig's orders. Shortly afterwards Harold fought and defeated Tostig, and then marched southwards to fall on 14th October, 1066, at the Battle of Hastings. Freeman, in his *Norman Conquest*, vol. ii., pages 477 to 479, gives some further information regarding the death of *Gamal* at the hands of Tostig. The name Gemmill under various old spellings, such as Gamal and Gamul, occurs several times in the *Domesday Book*, compiled by the order of William the Conqueror in 1080 to 1086.

It would appear that the family of Gamal, son of Orm, had large possessions in the North-Riding of the County of York, and while making a search in the British Museum I came across some interesting information regarding the family in the *Archæologia*, or Miscellaneous Tracts relating to Antiquity, published in London in 1779. At vol. v., p. 188, there is a carefully prepared paper by John Charles Brooke, Esq., of the Herald's College, F.S.A., read before the Archæological Society, on 16th January, 1777, giving an illustration of a Saxon inscription and sundial on the Church of Kirkdale, in the North-Riding of York. Mr. Brooke had visited the old church the previous summer, and he gives a drawing of the church, and inscription, which I reproduce:—



The translation of the Saxon characters is as follows:—

Orm Gamal's	This is Days Sun Marker	ken down and fallen and he
Son bought Saint	for every time	renewed it from
Gregory's Min-		the ground to Christ and St. Gregory,
ster when it		in the days of Edward, the King,
was all bro-	Hawarth wrought me and Brand	and in the days of Tosti, the Earl.

The inscription and sundial are on a large stone slab which is over the doorway, and forming part of the original wall. The Saxon characters are still quite legible.

The church was dedicated to Gregory, the Pope, as was natural, he being so instrumental in introducing the Christian religion among the Saxons in Britain. The building has since been added to, but the old doorway and inscription still remain.

Mr. Brooke goes on to explain that the time when the inscription was engraved may be determined within a few years. TOSTI, sometimes spelled TOSTIG, was brother to King Harold, and was made Earl of Northumberland by King Edward the Confessor, anno 1056. The Kingdom of Northumberland, in the Saxon Heptarchy, included that part of the County of York which was called DEIRA, and in which Kirkdale was situated, which probably is why Tosti is mentioned as the Earl in the inscription. Tosti was slain at the Battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066, so the church must have been rebuilt, and the inscription engraved between the years 1056 and 1065.

Mr. Brooke explains that an examination of the fabric betokens it to be of an ante-Norman date, and he describes what apparently have been subsequent alterations. The original arch of the door over which the inscription is placed is circular. The windows, the aisle, and the porch he conceives to be of modern date, built as the country became more civilised. Fortunately the old inscription has not been much obliterated by the weather ; this seems in some measure to be owing to the subsequent addition of the porch, which almost entirely covers it, and to its having

been at one time plastered over with lime or other cement, as appears from the remains in the interstices of the letters.

Mr. Brooke then goes on to tell of Orm, the son of Gamal, who restored the church, and furnished us with such a curious monument of Saxon antiquity, and quoting from *Domesday Book*, *Simcon of Durham*, and *Drake's Eboracum*, he shews that Orm, the son of Gamal, had the rank of Thane, that he married Etheldrith, one of the daughters of Earl Aldred, Earl of Northumberland, and that he was the owner of Kirkdale, and all the adjacent country, with many Manors, of all which great property his family were deprived at the Conquest by William I., who gave the estates to Hugh Fitz-Baldric, one of his Norman followers. He adds that Gamal himself was slain at York by Earl Tosti, and that his daughter, Ecgfrida, married Eilsi de Teisse. Mr. Brooke gives many other interesting details, and his paper closes with a genealogical tree, in which he traces this family of Gamals, as landowners in that district, as far back as 969, the first ancestor, whose name is given, being named Waltheof. Mr. Brooke's interesting paper forms the most detailed and circumstantial account of any of the early bearers of the name of Gamal or Gamel in Britain, so far as I have been able to trace.

In the *History of Northumberland*, by Bates, page 102, it is mentioned that the church of Hexham was served by two vicars of the name of Gamel. The date is not given, but the period is evidently about the year 1031.

We have seen from *Domesday Book* that there were several families of the name of Gamel, owners of property in England at the time of the Norman Conquest, one of them being mentioned at page 576 of the *Domesday Book Additamenta* as Gamel de Rogerelepp, and on the same page mention is made of Gamell, the son of Godric. Both these Gamels seem to have held land in the County of Durham. The ancestor of King Robert the Bruce, Earl of Carrick, etc., came from Yorkshire to settle in Ayrshire. In the *Domesday Book*, index page 258, a "Robert de Bruis" is entered as the owner of Gamesford, in the West Riding of York. Gamelsby in Cumberland was probably founded by a person of the name of Gamel, and the district called after him. *By* is Danish, and its association supports the view of the Norse origin of Gamel. Gamelsby is mentioned in Bain's *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland*, vol. i., section 149, as early as the year 1179. By or soon after that time Gamelsby came into the hands of William de Bruis, a progenitor of King Robert the Bruce, but in 1267 it was gifted to E. de Baliol. In the *Patent Rolls of Henry III.*, page 298, in the year 1229, mention is made of Questric, son of Gamel. He is also mentioned in the *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland*, vol. i., section 1040, under date July, 1229, as owner of a tenement near Newcastle. In the same vol., at section 1076, under date 20th January, 1229, Gamel and Margarita, his wife, are mentioned in connection with a property in Northumberland.

In the *Chronica Majora* of Matthew Paris, vol. iii., page 126, an entry occurs regarding a property in Norfolk held in 1227 by Roberto filio Gamel. Reference may also be made to the *Tale of Gamelyn*, with notes by Skeat. From other old English records we find there were Gamolles at Chester in the time of Edward III., and an MS. in the British Museum gives the pedigree of the Chester family, the spelling in the manuscript being Gamul. Other old manuscripts preserved there give information regarding the Gamulls of Salghall, Shropshire, and also of a family of Gamuls de Erylton, or some place like that (the writing is very indistinct), but the county is Stafford. In the *Archæologia* (London), vol. xlvii., pp. 105 and 106, a Radulphus (Ralph) Gamell is about the year 1231 twice mentioned in connection with some ground near Barnsley, the spelling in the one case being Gamell, and in the other Gamel, and in vol. lvii., p. 83, there is an entry under date 1450 that a "Raufe Gamul of Chester was of the family of Gamul of Buerton." Occasionally we find the name in the form Gambull and Gamble.

It will be noted that the earliest references to the name Gamel occur in the north-east of England, particularly Northumberland and Yorkshire. These districts were specially affected by the incursions of the Anglo-Saxons and Danes.

In addition to Gamelsby there were a number of places commencing with *Gamel*, and probably most of

them had some association with a person of that name. There was *Gamelspeth*, where it was arranged that the sovereigns of England and Scotland should meet. In Bates' *History of Northumberland*, at page 138, it is mentioned that by the Code of Marsh Law drawn up at Redingburn in 1249, the men of Redesdale and Coquetdale were to answer at Gamelspeth. This points to Gamelspeth being on the border line near where the rivers Rede and Coquet have their source. There was also *Gamelstorp* in Yorkshire, *Archeologia, London*, vol. v., page 196; a *Gamilliscleuch* in Ettrick, *Exchequer Rolls*, vol. viii., page 588, year 1479; and *Gamilschelis*, near Haddington, *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, section 513, year 1451. At Haddington there was also a Gammylstoun. In the *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, section 3786, year 1512, there is a Crown Charter to Ade Hepburne of the lands of Gammylstoun in the Constabulary of Haddington. By 1576 the name changed to Gemilstoun when Lord William Hay of Yester completed his title to it. See the *Inquisitionum ad Capellam*, i.-iii., Haddington (3). Curiously enough, from entry 52 of the same volume we find that on 2nd March, 1610, John, Lord of Yester, reverts to the *a*, and is served heir in the lands "de Gamilstoun."

By 1293 the name had found its way to Ireland, a *Henry Gamel* having on 22nd June, 1293, acted as Attorney for William de Spineto (*Calendar of Documents for Ireland*, p. 8).

So far as Scotland is concerned, it is uncertain when or where the Gamels or Gemmills first settled; but various circumstances point to a very early, if not the first permanent settlement of Gemmills in Scotland, to have been in that upland portion of Ayrshire known as Fenwick. When the Gemmills first settled in the Fenwick district we cannot say, but the old Registers still in existence make it clear that it must have been at a very early period. Up till about 1570 there was no definite system of Registers in force, and for the period prior to that date the information available in regard to families of the middle class in Scotland is very fragmentary. But soon after 1570, by which time an organised though somewhat primitive system of registration was in operation, we find from entries in these old Registers that at least twenty-three different properties, all of considerable size, viz., the lands of Raith, Raithmuir, Dalsraith, Grassyards, Darwhilling, Langdykes, Blackbyre, Clonfin, Hareshawhill, Cullarie, Brae, Blackwood, Glessock, Horsehill, Hillhead, Rushaw, Bankdyke, Artnock, Hillhousehill, Monkland, Fosterhill, and Wardlaw, in Fenwick district, were all held by different families of the name of Gemmill. There may have been a number more, but these twenty-three families I have been able to definitely locate. I have found in the old Registers numerous traces of these families of Gemmills being related to each other. Their names frequently occur in each other's Wills, and as witnesses to each other's signatures.

The lands mentioned as held by them all adjoin, or are near each other, and cluster round what is known as Raith. They extend to at least 2000 acres. The old Registers show beyond doubt that a number of these lands originally formed part of what was known as the old "five pound" lands of Raith. Very likely they almost all did. In the titles of Raithmuir it is expressly stated that Raithmuir consists of the "nine shilling and fourpenny lands," part of the "five pound lands of auld extent of Raith." These figures and the "auld extent" refer to a very ancient valuation for assessing the owners of property under the early Scottish kings. The sums at which the lands were entered in the "auld extent" indicate approximately their value and area. We know that the nine shilling and fourpenny land of Raithmuir extends to 321 acres, and, on the same ratio, the five pound lands of Raith would extend originally to more than the 2000 acres already mentioned. What I have said indicates, I think, beyond any reasonable doubt, that the old lands of Raith were acquired by a person of the name of Gamel or Gemmill at a very early period, and that gradually, in the course of the generations, it became divided and sub-divided among his descendants, each branch of the family acquiring a separate portion of the original estate of Raith. This process of sub-division would necessarily be a very slow one. The eldest surviving son would usually succeed to the whole or the greater portion of the lands; another son might have

off and found a settlement elsewhere; a younger son might get an outlying part of the estate. During all these centuries, Scotland was seldom without its wars and feuds, and some of the Gemmills, as they grew to manhood, would no doubt fall in battle or foray. Then our old Scottish forefathers were slow to sub-divide their land properties. The entail system of Scotland shows how deep-rooted in our Scottish character was the instinct to hand down to the eldest son the whole of the lands, and in bygone days, in the majority of cases, younger sons had to be content with but a scant share of the family patrimony. This being so, it would probably be only now and again, as the generations passed, that any sub-division of the land would take place. It will be seen later on that the portion known as Raithmuir was during two centuries only sub-divided twice. Such a complete sub-division of the old Raith lands as indicated above, by the year 1570, could not well have been the work of less than the three preceding centuries. Very probably it would take longer than that, and in the light of these facts it seems not unreasonable to assume that it could not be very much later than 1100 or 1200 when the progenitor of the Fenwick Gemmills first settled on the old lands of Raith. When and where he came from, is uncertain, and any opinion we may form must be a mere conjecture, but it is a matter of historical certainty that large numbers of the Anglo-Saxon freeholders in England were driven from their

possessions after the Norman Conquest, and that many of them took refuge in Scotland, particularly in the south and west. It is known that King Malcolm III. of Scotland welcomed the refugees, and put no obstacles in the way of their permanently settling under his rule. He had married the Princess Margaret, the sister of Edgar, the rightful heir to the Anglo-Saxon throne. For the sake of his wife he treated the Anglo-Saxon exiles generously, and to many of them gave grants of land, so much so that he rather displeased the Scottish nobles. He also made several expeditions into England to aid the Saxons in their attempts to drive back the Normans, and this so incensed William the Conqueror, that he marched through Northumbria ravaging all the land north of the Humber till it was like a desert. The estates of Orm, the son of Gamel, were, as we have seen, given to a Norman noble, Hugh Fitz-Baldric, and are now in the possession of the Norfolk family. On the whole, therefore, it seems not improbable that the first of the Raith or Fenwick Gemmills was from one or other of the Anglo-Saxon Gamal families in the north of England, and that he was among those who were dispossessed by the Normans and driven northward. It is an interesting fact that the Howies of Lochgoin, an upland property in Fenwick parish, and only about two or three miles from Raithmuir, are said to have been settled there for over seven centuries. The progenitor of the Craufurds of Craufurdland, which is in Fenwick

parish, and close to Raith, was dispossessed of his properties in Northumbria by William the Conqueror, and took refuge in Scotland.

Whether the settlement of the Gemmills at Fenwick was soon after the Norman conquest, and whether it was the first settlement of the name in Scotland or not, cannot, as we have said, be definitely known. But this is certain, that when authentic Registers came into operation, there was no other district in Scotland where anything like so many families bore the name of Gemmill as at Fenwick. There are as will be seen entries, at various dates subsequent to 1165, showing Gemmills to have been connected with Jedburgh, St. Andrews, Perth, Maybole, Irvine, Dunlop, Kilmaurs, Cumnock, Glasgow and Edinburgh, but these seem to have been isolated families. The name "Fenwick" is believed to be Saxon. The most of the Ayrshire bearers of the name would no doubt originally be offshoots from the Fenwick Gemmills.

One of the earliest references to the name in Scotland appears in the *National MSS. of Scotland*, volume i., No. 38, where in a Charter by King William the Lion, year 1165, he confirms to the Church of St. Mary, of Jedburgh, numerous properties, including a gift by Gamel, his sons Osulf and Ughtred concurring in the gift. Osulf and Ughtred are both Saxon names. In the *Registrum of St. Andrews*, published by the Bannatyne Club, at page 244, mention is made of "Gamellus, the

son of Thore." The period is during the reign of Alexander II., and evidently about the year 1249. Then in the *Registrum Vetus de Aberbrothoc*, also published by the Bannatyne Club, we find from page 97 that "Adam, the son of Gamel," was a witness to a charter by Alexander II.; and in the *Liber de Melros*, vol. i., pp. 212, 214, Gamelinus Magister is mentioned in charters by Alexander II. He was Lord Chancellor of Scotland in 1250, and consecrated Archbishop of St. Andrews in 1255. In *The Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland*, vol. iii., p. 69, we find at Perth, in the year 1312, mention of Laurencius filius Gamel, and from *Wardlaw MS.*, *Fraser Chronicles*, p. 57, we learn that at the crowning of Alexander III. at Scone there was present Gamelinus, Archbishop of St. Andrews. In the *Stirling Burgh Records*, page 20, Adam Gamelsone is mentioned as a Burgess of Stirling in 1366. He and other Burgesses unsuccessfully resisted the claim of the Abbot of Cambuskennet to the Cruives and fishings at Stirling. In the *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland*, vol. iv., there are some interesting entries. First at page 69, under date 13th December, 1382, there is a Fiat granted by Richard II. for protection for "John Gemel, Esquier, going abroad on the King's Service beyond seas under Bertrucus de Lebret." At page 285, under date 31st July, 1473, a warrant is granted by Edward IV. from "Fodringhey Castle" for safe conduct for Richard Gamble and three

others with a ship "Le Mary," of Scotland, 80 tons, with a captain and twenty-one of a crew to trade in the King's Dominions. Then at page 298, sect. 1465, we find that a "Thomas Gamyll, born at Luthre," was naturalised at London, 15th June, 1479.—The entry is headed "Letters of Denisation for the following Scotsmen." So Thomas Gamyll must have been of Scottish origin. From the *Cartulary of Cambuskenneth*, page 307, we find that a Deed of Gift to the Abbey is on 5th January, 1445, signed, among others, by "Joannes Gamill." In the *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland*, vol. i., under date 1474, there are the following entries:—"Item fra Dik Gamyll $\frac{1}{2}$ elne of Satyne to lyne the cuffis of the Sleffis of a Jacket for the King (James III.), 13/4," and at page 73, "Item fra Dik Gamyll v elne of velvous for a gowne to my lady, £12 10/." He seems to have been the Court Draper.

In 1501 a Robert Gamyl was Prebendary of the church of Maybole. In the *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, 1424-1513, page 490, Nigello Gammyll appears as a witness to a Charter by Thome Somerveile of Braxfield, dated 7th August, 1495, of the lands of Prestwyk Schawes, in the county of Ayr; under date 5th November, 1532, mention is made of Johanis Gammyl having assigned to Alexander Montgomery the lands of Halkheid, in Ayrshire. From M'Kay's *History of Kilmarnock*, 3rd edition, page 5, we find, from a List compiled in 1547 in connection

with the election of a priest for the Parish of Kilmarnock, that out of 300 parishioners who signed, six were "Gemylys." They would, no doubt, be heads of houses. At that time Kilmarnock parish included what is now known as Fenwick, and probably the bulk of these six families of Gemylys resided in the Fenwick portion of the parish. After 1559 we find frequent references to the Gemmills of Templehouse, a farm in the Parish of Dunlop, some seven or eight miles from Fenwick, and very probably an offshoot from the Fenwick Gemmills, and, from about the same date, we find references to a family of Gemmills at Cumnock, another family at Irvine, and two or three families in Glasgow. But at none of these places are there traces of any large settlement of Gemmills such as we find in and round Raith at Fenwick. If we are correct in assuming that the settlement of the Gemmills at Fenwick was as early as about the year 1100, or soon after the Norman Conquest, then it seems not unlikely that the various Gamels, Gemylys, and Gemmills in the west of Scotland, appearing in the entries, were mostly branches of the Fenwick stock.

My much-respected friend, the late Mr. J. A. Gemmill, Barrister, Ottawa, whose enthusiasm for every thing connected with the name did much to interest me in the subject, in an interesting little volume on the Surname of Gemmill, printed in 1901, mentions a John de Gemilston in 1325, and that the Parish of Kirkmichael, Ayrshire, was

in former times called "Kirkmichael de Gemilstoun." He cites, among other authorities, *Chalmers' Caledonia*, vol. xi., p. 533, and *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, vol. i., pp. 16, 152, and he conjectures that the progenitor of this John de Gemilston was probably the first of the name to settle in Scotland. In the *Exchequer Rolls*, vol. i., p. 16, the spelling given is "Genilstoun." Mr. George Neilson, LL.D., of Glasgow, who knows the district, has pointed out to me that a curious misconception has crept in, and that the name is neither "Gemilstoun," nor "Genilstoun," but "Gevelston," now pronounced Gelston. On looking further into the authorities I find that at four different places in the *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland*, viz., vol. ii., pages 172 and 198, and sections 824 and 834, the name is invariably given as "John de Gevelston." In the *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, under date 1st July, 1451, the Crown Charter to the Church states that it was gifted by "Sir John de Gevellestoun." In the *Ragman Rolls* and *Agnew's Hereditary Sheriffs of Galloway*, p. 111, the spelling is "John de Geuelston." The *u* being an old form of *v*. For example, on the same page there occur the names "Steuene," now spelt Steven, and "Colueille," now Colville. I made numerous local enquiries, but could find no trace of any early settlement of Gemmills at Kirkmichael, and there seems no doubt the name was "Gevelston," not "Gemilstoun."

It is interesting to note the various spellings, and how "Gamal" and "Gamel" gradually changed to "Gamyll," afterwards to "Gemyl," and, later on, mainly to "Gemmill," though some still use the forms "Gammell" and "Gamble." "Gemmell" has also come to be frequently used, but "Gemmill" is the older form, and is the prevailing spelling in the *Registers* after 1570.

An example in the change in the spelling occurs in the *Records of the Burgh of Irvine*, where, under date 1542, a "Stephani Gammyll" is mentioned as owner of a tenement, and in 1572 the owner's name is given as "Stevin Gemmill." In the ancient records of Greyfriars' Church, Edinburgh, the name is variously given as Gaimill, Gemile, Gemmal, Gemol, Gymmill. The dropping of the *a* and the substitution of the *e* seem to have come gradually into general use about the year 1550, by which time the people were becoming better educated, and were probably speaking with less of the broad accent of earlier times. This process has been going on ever since, and few of the present generation understand the "braid Scots" of our forefathers. It will be noted that the first change takes place in the second syllable. The original Gamal and Gamul give way to Gamel probably by the year 1200, but it is not for more than other three centuries that the *a* drops out, and the spelling generally becomes Gemmill. The Gaimmill and Gymmill may have been intermediates between the broad *a* in Gamel and what

some may consider the more refined *e* in Gemmill. The spelling in the olden times would no doubt be affected by the local pronunciation, and we know that other family names have similarly varied.

What I have written thus far is of interest to me mainly for its bearing on the origin of the name, and of some of the families of Gamel, or Gemmill, in early times. In printing these notes, I take the opportunity of adding some information regarding my own branch of the name. My forefathers were, as will be seen, members of the old Raith or Fenwick stock. If this little volume, incomplete and defective as I know it is, interests any of those who may come after me, or any one of the same name, it will be a sufficient reward for any trouble in compiling it.



Gemmills of Raithmuir, Fenwick,
AFTERWARDS OF
Muirside, Grougar, and Hillhead, Auchline.

*"It is opportune to look back on old times and contemplate
our fathers."*—Sir THOMAS BROWNE.

THE lands of Raithmuir extend, as we have seen, to 321 acres, and are composed in part of fairly good arable ground, and the remainder moorland. It is the most upland portion of the lands of Raith, and is in close proximity to the farm of Meadowhead, which was at one time held by Captain Paton the famous Covenanter. It is understood that "Raith" is Celtic, and signifies "fortification." Towards the north-east, and further up into the moorland, lies the farm of Lochgoin, the home of the Howies, already mentioned. At what period Raithmuir became detached from the lands of Raith is unknown, but among the ancient Records in the Register House in Edinburgh there is preserved the Testament Testamentar of

I.—*John Gemmill*, in Raithmure, who died in July, 1578. He is the earliest of my forefathers whom I have been able to definitely trace. His Testament is dated 21st June, 1578, and is recorded in the Register of Testaments kept

at Edinburgh, vol. xii., 6th September, 1583, and, under it, he provides that his widow, Marion Smith is, for six years, to enjoy his right to Raithmure (that of kindly tenant or rentaller,¹ under the Earl of Loudon as overlord), after which, his fourth son, Peter Gemmill, is to enter to one half, and after his mother's death, to the whole. If his mother dies before the six years, Peter is to undertake the care of Margaret and Marion, his sisters. Further, Peter, when he enters to the said lands, is to pay to Alexander Gemmill, his younger brother, 100 merks as bairns' part. There are also bequests in favour of the eldest son, John Gemmill, and of the other sons, Thomas and James. To Peter he also bequeaths his "riding-gear, except the sword "which is to go to Alexander, and if Peter wants it, he is "to give his own sword to Alexander," and he ordains "his "wife and son Peter to be guided by the counsel of "Thomas and John Gemmill, in Gresyards, in all things." He also nominates, as his trustees, Thomas Gemmill, in Gersyards, John Gemmill there, William Gemmill, in Langdykes, Robert Gemmill, in Darquilly, and Mr. Robert Wilkie, minister, at Kilmarnock. His estate included grain, cattle, and sheep, valued at £280 8s., which was a considerable sum in these days. Gresyards, sometimes spelt Gersyards (now pronounced Grassyards), Langdykes

¹ Kindly tenants or rentallers had a right akin to the English copyhold—their names were enrolled in the Rental Book of the overlord, and they had a sort of hereditary right, though not a formal feudal title.

and Darquihilly (now pronounced Darwhilling), are all neighbouring farms of considerable size, and were all originally parts of Raith, and the then owners of these farms would no doubt be related to the John Gemmill of Raithmure.

Almost contemporaneous with this we find mention of James Gemmill, owner of a ship called the "Berwick," and his brother, Thomas Gemmill, Burgess in Edinburgh. The Testament Testamentar of the former is recorded in vol. i. of the *Edinburgh Testaments*, under date 15th October, 1567, and it narrates that he died on 24th July, 1564. He nominates Thomas Gemmill, Burgess in Edinburgh, as his sole Executor, and in his Will mention is made of Kilmarnock, and of his being due Andrew Gemmill of Grasyards, Fenwick, so that James Gemmill and his brother, the Burgess in Edinburgh, were probably of the Fenwick branch of the name. This is corroborated from the Testament Testamentar of Neill Gemmell of Cullarie, which is only a mile or so from Raithmure. He died in October, 1584, and his estate included £8 due to him by the widow of Thomas Gemmill, Burgess in Edinburgh. One of Neill Gemmell's Executors was John Gemmill in Raithmure, which is another indication that they all related to one another.

Going back to the Settlement of John Gemmill of Raithmure, who died, as we have seen, in 1578, it is of interest to note that the Battle of Langside had been

fought in 1568, only ten years previously, and the reference in the Will to the two swords and the special interest he takes in them, makes it not unlikely that the Testator or some of his sons may have been at the battle, or, at all events, in some of the frequent conflicts of these troublous times. The farm of Raithmure is not far from the borders of Renfrewshire, and is within an hour and a half's ride of where the battle was fought.

It is from the Peter Gemmill, to whom the Testator bequeathes his sword, that we are descended, and I remember well from my boyhood days with what care my father always handled an old sword, which, he said, had been handed down from generation to generation. There had originally been also a flint-lock gun of very ancient design, but it had gone amissing. My father, shortly before his death, handed over the old sword to me as the eldest surviving son, with instructions to preserve it carefully. At the same time he gave me the beautiful Family Bible that had been presented to my grandfather after referred to, and it and the old sword are now among my most cherished possessions. The sword is of a very old pattern, beautiful workmanship, and excellent steel, and compared with the ancient swords in the British Museum and the Wallace Collection in London, it seems to date as far back as the fifteenth century. In all probability it is the sword of our forefather, the John Gemmill of 1578.

II.—*Peter Gemmill*, as we have seen, succeeded to

Raithmuir. He is one of the witnesses to a Deed in favour of John Gemmill in Blackwood, dated 25th November, 1615, recorded in the *Commissariat Books* at Glasgow, 13th January, 1618. He is also one of the Executors of the Testament Testamentar of James Gemmill of Raith, which is recorded 11th March, 1616 (*Glasgow Testaments*, vol. ii.), and among the other Executors are Thomas Gemmill in Garsyards, John Gemmill in Langdyke, Florie Gemmill in Blackbyre, Thomas Gemmill in Clonfin, and John Gemmill in Cullarie, all in the immediate vicinity. This fact supports the view that the Raithmuir, Garsyards, Raith and Langdyke Gemmills, and the James Gemmill of the ship "Berwick," and his brother, the Burgess in Edinburgh, were all of the same parent stock, viz., the Gemmills of the Raith. Peter Gemmill of Raithmure was succeeded by his eldest son,

III.—*John Gemmill*, whose Contract of Marriage, dated 7th June, 1614, is recorded in vol. cclxxix. of the Register of Deeds at Edinburgh. It bears to be between Peter Gemmill in "Raythmuir" and John Gemmill, his son, on the one part, and Agnes Smyth in Clouster, with consent of her mother, and under it Peter Gemmill, the father, promises to transfer to the said John and his said future wife, "and to the children to be procreated between "them all and haill his nyne schilling four penny land of "Raithmuire with houses, yards and pertinents presentlie "possest be him lyand within the Barony of Lowdon,

“ Bailliarie of Cunynghame and Sherifffdome of Air, with the
 “ said Peters haill richt titill tak kyndness and possession
 “ thereof specialie the Tak set to the said Peter his airis
 “ and assignayis be the rycht nobill lord Hew Lord of
 “ Lowdoun heretor and only proprietor of said lands for all
 “ the days and years of the said Peters lyfetye and eftir
 “ the deceis of the said Peter for the space of nyntene
 “ yeiris.” Agnes Smith, on the other hand, seems to have
 “ been entitled to the liferent ” of the 18/8 land of Clouster
 within the “ Lairdshipe of Crawfordland ” which is within
 about two miles distance of Raithmure.

Occasionally there are variations in the spellings of the name. But in these old days spelling seems to have been a matter of indifference, so much so that sometimes the name is spelt “ Gemmell ” and also “ Gemmill ” in the same document.

This John Gemmill also owned the 20/- land of Raischaw, now pronounced Rushaw. He died in December, 1622, and his Testament is recorded in the *Commissariot of Glasgow*, 16th September, 1623, vol. xix., page 203, and in it he is designed as “ Johnne Gemmill in Reathmuir.” Under it he constitutes his spouse, Agnes Smith, his Executrix, and his brothers, “ Abraham and Alexander Gemmillis tutoris and oversearis to his bairns.” He leaves “ his richt and kyndness of the nyne schilling four “ penny land in Raithemuir to his eldest son Johnne Gemill, “ and his richt and kyndnes of his twentie schilling land

“in Raischaw to Peter and Jonet Gemmillis his bairnes,”
 “and he leaves “his richt and kyndness to the nynteen yeir
 “Tak of the equal half” of Raithmuir to the said “Peter
 “and Jonet Gemmillis his bairnes.” This Tack was no
 doubt the one mentioned in the Contract of Marriage before
 referred to, and he seems therefore to have been proprietor
 of what is now called Ruschaw and of half of Raithmuir,
 and to have held the other half of Raithmuir under Tack
 from the Earl of Loudon. It is not known when the lands
 of Ruschaw passed from our family, but it continued in
 their possession for several generations. John Gemmill of
 Raithemure was Cautioner on two occasions for Thomas
 Gemmell, of Raith and Dalsraith. He was succeeded by
 his eldest son,

IV.—*John Gemmill*, who at his father's death could not
 have been more than four or five years of age. He seems
 to have died in early life, because we find that some twelve
 years later, viz., in 1635, his brother,

V.—*Peter Gemmill*, who was his heir, had by an Edict
 in the Court at Iruin (now pronounced Irvine), Curators
 appointed to him until he attained 21 years of age. Peter
 Gemmill seems to have died unmarried on 7th July, 1643,
 shortly after attaining majority. By his Will, which is
 recorded in the *Commissariat Books* at Glasgow, 31st
 August, 1643, after making provision for his sister, Jonet
 Gemmill, spouse of Hector Lowdoun, and leaving a legacy
 to Thomas Gemmill of Dalsraith, “he levis his roome

“and mailling in Raithmuir to Abrahame Gemmill in “Hurastane, and Alexander Gemmill in Clonfine,” who were both brothers of his father. I cannot identify Hurastane, perhaps the spelling may not be correct as the writing is difficult to decipher, but Clonfine is a farm quite near to Raithmuir, and was probably part of the original lands of Raith. Abraham Gemmill seems either to have died without issue, or sold his half to his brother, because the next title is a Charter in favour of

VI.—*Alexander Gemmill.* The Charter is dated 5th December, 1657, and is granted by “James Dunlope of that Ilk, with consent of ane noble Erle, Johne Erle of Loudoun” with consent of Dame Margaret Campbell, his spouse, and others. The Earl of Loudon was the over Superior, and the Charter bears to be granted by James Dunlop of that Ilk, with the consents therein named in virtue of an apprising led by a James Livingstone against the Estates of the Earl of Loudon. This Earl was Lord Chancellor in 1642 and again in 1649. He was opposed to the policy of Charles I. against the Covenanters, and when in London narrowly escaped being beheaded. Under the Charter to Alexander Gemmill, the feu-duty for Raithmure is 28s. Scots, equal to 2s. 7d. sterling, a mere nominal sum, which shews that the real rights to the half of Raithmure had previously been vested in the Gemmills. The property is described as “the just and equal half of “all and Haill that nyne schilling four penny land of auld

“extent of the fyfe pund land of Raith callet Raithmure
 “presentlie occupyet and possest by the said Alexander
 “Gemmill, etc.” Together with the houses, biggings,
 yards, mosses, etc., and with right of “halking, hunting,
 “fisching, coalis, coal-heuches, woods, forrestis,” etc.
 From the designation of the Charter it would appear that
 at the date of the Charter Alexander Gemmill held both
 Clonfine and Raithmure. He was succeeded by his son,

VII.—*Thomas Gemmill*. The Contract of Marriage
 between him and his wife, Bessie Hog, second daughter of
 John Hog, elder in Ardeirs, is dated 4th January, 1662, the
 witnesses being Thomas Gemmill of Dallisraith, and John
 Gemmill, his brother, and David and John Gemmills of
 Horshill. The Sasine thereon in the one-half of Raithmuir
 is recorded 14th February, 1662. On the death of his
 father, he completed a Title by Precept of Clare Constat,
 dated 2nd January, 1678, the Sasine on which is recorded
 22nd January, 1678.

This was the time of the Covenanting troubles, and no
 part of Scotland is more closely associated with the
 struggles and persecutions of the Covenanters than that
 upland district stretching from Fenwick and Lochgoin to
 Loudonhill and Drumclog. Much of the ground being
 moorland, there were numerous lonely retreats among the
 mosshags where the troopers could hardly follow. The
 holders of the different farms in the Fenwick neighbour-
 hood were almost to a man keen Covenanters--so much so

that Captain Inglis, when quartered at Dean Castle, in the immediate neighbourhood, in a letter to the Laird of Rowallan, dated 24th January, 1682, complains that "the countrie men will not sell corn or straw for ready monie" for the use of himself and his dragoons. It is a family tradition that the Fenwick Gemmills were staunch Covenanters. At least two Gemmills gave their lives to the cause. A John Gemmill fell with the saintly Richard Cameron at Airmoss on 20th July, 1680, and is buried at the lonely monument in Wellwood's dark valley,

"Where Cameron's sword and his Bible are seen

Engraved on the stone where the heather grows green."

Then in 1685, Peter Gemmill, a mere youth, 21 years of age, was shot dead in the corner of one of the fields on Midland Farm, Fenwick. He and three other Covenanters, George Woodburn, John Ferguson, and John Nisbett, of Hardhill, had taken shelter at Midland on the Saturday evening. Hearing that the dragoons were searching for them they left on the Sabbath morning, but decided to return on account of the illness of Ferguson, whom they would not forsake. Soon after forty troopers, commanded by Lieutenant Nisbett, surrounded the house. They hid among the cows in the byre, resolving if the dragoons found them to fight to the last rather than be taken, saying it was death do what they would. They were discovered, but defended themselves so bravely that the dragoons "seeing they could not get at them for the beasts (some

“whereof were shot and lay in the way), cried to go all forth
 “and burn the house. The four Covenanters, choosing
 “rather to die by the sword than by fire, went out after them,”
 but were overpowered. Gemmill, Woodburn, and Fer-
 guson were straight away and without any trial led a few
 yards into the field and shot dead. John Nisbett, as the
 leader, was taken to Edinburgh, and executed there on
 4th December, 1685. Fuller accounts are given in the
Martyrs’ Graves, page 174, and Woodrow’s *Select*
Biographies, vol. ii., page 385. Over Peter Gemmill’s
 grave in Fenwick Churchyard a simple stone bears this
 inscription :

Here lies the corps of Peter Gemmill,
 who was shot to death by Nisbet
 and his party, 1685, for bearing his
 faithful Testimony to the Cause of
 Christ. Aged 21 years.

This man like holy anchorite of old,
 For conscience sake was thrust from house and hold ;
 Blood-thirsty red-coats cut his prayers short,
 And even his dying groans were made their sport.
 Ah Scotland ! breach of solemn vows repent,
 Or blood thy crime will be thy punishment.

From M’Kay’s *History of Kilmarnock*, p. 64, we learn
 that, in the same year, a John Gemmill and other eleven
 Covenanters were one evening holding a prayer meeting
 at the farm of Little Blackwood, in Fenwick parish, then
 occupied by James Paton. While they were on their knees
 in prayer, a noise was heard without, and immediately
 afterwards Captain Inglis and a party of his soldiers burst
 open the door. One of the Covenanters, James White,

seized the only gun in the house and aimed it at the first of the troopers. He pulled the trigger, but the priming burned without the gun going off, and its light revealed James White to the soldiers, who instantly shot him dead. While some of the Covenanters were trying to make their escape through the thatch, John Gemmell of Blackbyre, Fenwick, and James Paton made their way to the byre. A soldier with a bayonet attacked them, but Gemmell wrested the bayonet from the soldier's grasp, thrust it into his body, and escaped into the darkness. The soldiers next day cut off the head from the dead body of James White, and used it as a football for their sports at Newmilns. See also the *Cloud of Witnesses*, page 546.

I have not been able to trace definitely where the John Gemmell who fell at Airmoss resided. Young Peter Gemmill seems to have been a son of David Gemmill of Horsehill, and to have been baptized on 8th August, 1663. The entry in the *Register of Baptisms* at Fenwick, page 305 is as follows:—"8th August, 1663, Peter, son to David Gemmill in Horshill." It will be noted that the spelling in the *Register of Baptisms* is "Gemmill" not "Gemmell" as on the Tombstone. The Tombstone would probably, like many other Covenanters' monuments, be erected by the public about fifteen years after the close of the Persecution, without any special care being taken as to the exact spelling of the name. The Gemmills, of Wyllieland, Fenwick, afterwards of Mansheugh, trace

kinship to young Peter Gemmill, and my father used to say that we are also related, an aged relative having many years ago explained the links to my father when a youth, but my father could not, in his later years, remember the links sufficiently to detail them to me. I notice from the Register of Sasines (vol. i., folio 86, year 1662) that Peter Gemmill's father, David Gemmill of Horsehill, was, on 14th February, 1662, a witness to the Sasine on the Contract of Marriage of my ancestor, Thomas Gemmill of Raithmuir. Peter Gemmill's grave in Fenwick Churchyard is in that portion of the ground, where for centuries, a number of the Gemmills holding portions of the old lands of Raith, including my forefathers of Raithmuir, were buried. Midland Farm, where where young Peter Gemmill was shot, is a mile or two to the north of Raithmuir, while Little Blackwood is fully a mile to the south of Raithmuir. Meadowhead, where the noted Covenanter, Captain John Paton, lived, is about two miles to the north-east. Thomas Gemmill was succeeded by his son,

VIII.—*Peter Gemmill.* He was baptized on 17th May, 1663, his kinsman, Peter Gemmill, the martyr, being baptized on 8th August in the same year. He completed his Title to the equal half of Rathmure by Precept of Clare Constat from Hugh, Earl of Loudon, of date 20th October, 1712. From the Instrument of Sasine thereon, it appears that his wife's name was Janet Millar, and that their Contract

of Marriage was dated 16th April, 1702. He is mentioned as having acted as Bailie at the giving of Sasine to Janet Gemmill of North Grassyards as heir of her father, 12th June, 1713. About this time, or rather 5th September, 1717, Sasine is given on a Contract of Marriage between the Rev. William M'Knight, Minister at Irvine, and Elizabeth Gemmill, the heiress of the lands of Dalsraith, and the name of the Dalsraith family thereafter becomes M'Knight. Peter Gemmill was succeeded by his son,

IX.—*Thomas Gemmill*, who seems to have died without making up a title. Thomas Gemmill was succeeded by his son,

X.—*Peter Gemmill*, who completed a title by Precept of Clare Constat as heir of his grandfather, dated 24th January, 1751, and Instrument of Sasine thereon, recorded at Edinburgh, 8th May, 1751. He was succeeded by his only son,

XI.—*Thomas Gemmill*, whose title was made up by Precept of Clare Constat from the Trustee of John, Earl of Loudoun, dated 15th and 28th March, 1782. Thomas Gemmill possessed his equal half of Raithmuir till 1795, when he sold it to a Mr. Alexander Anderson, Merchant in Kilmarnock. The cause of the sale is not given in the Deed, but my father told me it was on account of Thomas Gemmill having been involved in the banking troubles of that period, and, in addition, he had become security for a friend who failed to meet his indebtedness.

My old aunt, Mrs. Janet Gemmill or Breckenridge, told me the same story. These were anxious times, and trade was greatly depressed. The country was engaged in the Continental Wars, and my father informed me that one of the Gemmills, after Raithmuir was sold, entered the Army, and fell on the battlefield in Spain. The other half of Raithmuir had sometime prior to 1657, come to be possessed by a family named Stewart. My father said the tradition was that one of our forefathers, prior to that date, had a son and a daughter, and had left the half of the farm to his son and the other half to his daughter, and that she married a Mr. Stewart. I have not been able at this distance of time to verify this, but my father was quite certain that the Gemmills and the Stewarts were related to each other, and that Raithmuir was held by the two families on the old "runrigg" system, that is, each owned rigg about. The pasture and muir ground must have been common between them, but with the ploughed lands, each possessed one rigg, the other the next, and so on alternately over the whole farm. It was a primitive system unsuited for modern farming, and is now quite out of use. The Stewarts sold their half of Raithmuir in 1787 to Wm. Boyd, of Berryhill who, in 1796, acquired the remainder from Alexander Anderson. After the family sold Raithmuir, Thomas Gemmill's son,

XII.—*Alexander Gemmill*, my great-grandfather, became tenant of the half of the farm of Ruschaw, in the immediate

vicinity, but shortly afterwards removed to the adjoining farm of Muirside. The exact date of his entry to Muirside is not known, but Matthew Fowlds, of Greyston Knowe, Fenwick (a most remarkable man in many ways, and who died on 31st January, 1907, in his one hundred and first year), told me that he, when eleven years of age, went to Muirside as herd laddie to Alexander Gemmill, and remained there during the years 1817, 1818, and 1819. He also told me that he had often heard my great-grandfather speak of leaving Raithmuire and going to Ruschaw before settling at Muirside. Mr. Fowlds described Alexander Gemmill as then a tall man about 60 years of age, beginning to get white, and to stoop. His wife was Mary M'Taggart, from Campbeltown, or near there. She was a woman of more than ordinary intelligence, very fond of reading, with much of the romance and poetic temperament of the Celt. Their little daughter Mary died, and on the family tombstone in Fenwick Church Yard, are engraved the following lines, which are said to have been composed by her as an epitaph for her daughter and herself:—

“In calm repose my mortal parts doth rest
 “The wreck of nature’s overwhelming tide
 “No waves of trouble now disturb my breast
 “Still as my daughter mouldering by my side.”

Alexander Gemmill had two sons and three daughters:—

- (1) Thomas Gemmill, my grandfather, born in 1790.
- (2) Margaret Gemmill, who married a Mr. Anderson and went to America.

- (3) Sarah Gemmill, born at Raithmuir, baptized 9th December, 1794, married Allan Macdonald, and whose only child, Mary Macdonald, is the wife of Mr. Alexander Muir, of Dean Villa, Pollokshields, Glasgow, a well known and much respected Builder in Glasgow.
- (4) Alexander Gemmill, born at Raithmuir, baptized 6th August, 1797, got the farm of Muirside at his father's death, but died of fever, unmarried, on 12th March, 1834. He is said to have been a very promising youth, of good height, ruddy complexion, with auburn hair.
- (5) Mary Gemmill, born at Ruschaw, baptized at Fenwick, 23rd February, 1800, died on 6th April, 1811, aged 13.

Alexander Gemmill died 23rd May, 1832, and is buried at Fenwick in the old burying ground of the Gemmills. His eldest son,

XIII.—*Thomas Gemmill*, my grandfather, married Janet Nairn, of Blockhillhead, Stewarton, and, about the year 1817, took the farm of Hillhousehill, three miles distant, and lying midway between Muirside and Fenwick. It is a good sized farm, and belonged to a Captain White, who lived in Edinburgh. He and my grandfather, Thomas Gemmill, were very friendly. After the death of his father and his younger brother, Alexander, Thomas Gemmill gave up the farm of Hillhousehill, and went back to the old

homestead at Muirside. Later on he took also the farm of Haughyett, near Mauchline, which he held for some years, and then changed to the farm of West Hillhead, Mauchline, which he occupied till his death. He continued to hold on the farm of Muirside until his son, Cuthbert Gemmill, my father, grew up, and then it was made over to him. Thomas Gemmill, my grandfather, was tall, with light brown hair, and well built, "a braw, handsome youth," as an old friend of the family has described him to me, but he had inflammation of the lungs while at Hillhousehill, and after that he was thinner, and never the same. He died on 8th January, 1850, seven years before I was born, so I never saw him, but, for long years the respect with which old folks in the district used to speak of him, indicated that he must have been a man greatly beloved and affectionately remembered. He was an Elder of the Church of Scotland, and seems to have had a singularly sympathetic and kindly manner, which made him a welcome visitor at many a sick bed. He had a most retentive memory, and could in the evening repeat *verbatim* the sermons which he had heard during the day. The farm of Hillhead, where he latterly resided, is on the estate of Netherplace, which then belonged to Mrs. Campbell. After she was far advanced in years, and unable to attend church, she asked my grandfather, Thomas Gemmill, to come each Sabbath afternoon to Netherplace and repeat to her the sermon. He did so for a number of years, and as a mark of friendship and

esteem, she, by her Will, bequeathed a legacy to him, but he died before her, and so the legacy lapsed. I remember old John Parker, coal merchant, Keppochhill Road, Glasgow, who was a far-out friend of ours, telling me that the first time he saw my grandfather, Thomas Gemmill, was at the funeral of Mrs. Parker, of Redding, a farm in Grougar parish, lying between Fenwick and Galston. John Parker, then a lad, was at the funeral, and a short service was held at the house. What most impressed Mr. Parker at the service was the beautiful and touching prayer offered up by a Thomas Gemmill, from Hillhead, Mauchline. This was my grandfather, who had gone to attend the funeral, my father having married into the Parker-Leiper family. Old John Parker told me that he came to know intimately, and to respect Thomas Gemmill in after years, and that he never forgot this first impression made on him at the funeral. He added that grandfather should have been a minister. Several other old friends who knew him well, have spoken to me of him in much the same strain. The esteem in which grandfather, Thomas Gemmill, was held, found expression in April, 1849, when, at a meeting in Mauchline, presided over by the Rev. James Fairlie, the Minister of the Parish, he was presented with a very handsome Family Bible, and grandmother was presented with a tea service. From the newspaper account of the gathering, published in the *Ayr Advertiser* of 26th April, 1849, the Rev. Mr. Fairlie, when making the

presentation, seems to have spoken of Thomas Gemmill
 “as a most honourable member of society, and a sincere
 “and steadfast friend. How often he has carried comfort
 “to the bed of the sick, and consolation to the bereaved, is
 “known to many of you. Nor has he confined his services
 “to those of his own church. He has not looked on his
 “fellow-men through narrow loopholes of party, but in the
 “wide field of Christian philanthropy has sought to do
 “good to all as he had opportunity.”

The Tea Service, I understand, went into the possession
 of my aunts, but the Family Bible descended to my father,
 who, as previously mentioned, shortly before his death en-
 trusted it to my care, and it bears the following inscription:—

This Bible

Along with other Valuable Articles,

IS PRESENTED TO

MR. THOMAS GEMMILL,

Farmer in Hillhead, Mauchline,

By a number of his Friends, as a mark of esteem for the unwearied
 earnestness with which he has for many years performed his
 duties in this

PARISH, AS AN ELDER

of the

ESTABLISHED KIRK OF SCOTLAND,

Instructing the rising generation at the Sabbath School,

Visiting the abodes of sickness and the house of mourning, with
 fervent effectual prayer and consoling exhortation, smoothing
 the way from Time to Eternity, and

Discharging all the duties

of a

FRIEND AND NEIGHBOUR

In a most praiseworthy and blameless manner.

MAUCHLINE, *30th March, 1847.*

He was then nearing sixty years of age. The illness before referred to had left its mark on him, and he was nearing the end of his life's journey. On 8th January, 1850, he passed away. At the desire of the parishioners, his funeral was a public one, and from far and near, a great gathering, gentle and simple, laird and cottar, met at Hillhead and followed his body to its place of rest in the churchyard at Mauchline. I have often been told by old residents at Mauchline of the long and solemn procession wending its way slowly down the quiet country road that leads to the village. The parishioners insisted on being allowed to erect a memorial stone. It is a handsome one, and stands near the west door of Mauchline Church, and bears to be erected by them "as a tribute of grateful regard to his memory."

His widow, Janet Nairn or Gemmill, survived him 13 years, and died on 7th May, 1863, aged 69. At her death I would be about six years of age, and I have only a faint recollection of her. She was of medium height, very quiet and kindly in her manner, and she had been to him a true leal wife. On her death-bed, just before the end came, her children gathered round heard her faintly whisper, "I'm coming, Thomas,"—these were her last words. Her thoughts were of her dear husband, long dead, and her last words expressed the fond hope of meeting him beyond the Valley of the Shadow.

Their family consisted of

- (1) Alexander Gemmill, who died on 23rd August, 1839, leaving an only son, Thomas Gemmill, Engineer, now advanced in years, unmarried.
- (2) Cuthbert Gemmill, my father, called after his mother's father, born at Hillhousehill, Fenwick, on 15th January, 1819.
- (3) Janet, who died, aged about four.
- (4) Thomas Gemmill, born at Hillhousehill. He was trained in Stewart & M'Donald's, Glasgow, and afterwards went out to Australia along with a James Leiper Currie, who came, I think, from near Strathaven. Neither of them married, and after trying their luck, with varying success, at the gold mining in Australia, they settled in Orepuki, New Zealand, where Thomas Gemmill died on 13th November, 1887, unmarried. He was a Justice of the Peace, and greatly respected out there.
- (5) Mary, who died in infancy.
- (6) A little son, who died before he was christened.
- (7) Janet Gemmill, married John Breckenridge, Mauchline, died leaving four sons.
- (8) Mary Ann Gemmill, married James Girvan, Farmer, Laigh Logan, Sorn, died leaving three sons.
- (9) James Nairn Gemmill, born 1836, and died in 1898. He was unmarried, and lived most of

his life at Hillhead Farm. He wrote several poems of considerable merit, and being of a most cheerful kindly disposition, he was a great favourite with us boys. It is with affectionate memory we think of him as our "old uncle James." He had many stories, and one of them made me always have a feeling of pity for the poor tramp in search of work. The main road from Glasgow to Carlisle passes the farm of Hillhead, and one day my uncle was standing near the road. The day was hot, and two poor fellows were trudging wearily along, very destitute looking. But there are degrees in destitution, for one was solacing himself with a chew of tobacco, while the other had none. They did not notice my uncle, a hedge intervening, and as they passed him, one looked beseechingly at the other, and in an imploring voice said, "Man, Tam, do gi'e me a rummle o' your chow, just for a meenit." Needless to add that my uncle bent over the hedge, called them back, and gave them a good helping of tobacco.

XIV.—*Cuthbert Gemmill*, my father, was, as already stated, born at Hillhousehill, near Fenwick, on 15th January, 1819. He was of good height, dark hair, strong and well built, with features of the old Scottish type. As soon as he

grew up to manhood grandfather transferred to him the tenancy of Muirside, Grougar. It is a farm, as the name implies, bordering on the moorland, an upland farm where the cultivated ground joins on to the heather. Farming was then in a transition stage—much, indeed most, of the ground had been drained, but the implements were primitive, and in his young days the most of the corn was cut by the hook, a slow and tedious process which was gradually superseded by the scythe, and later on by the reaping machine. When the hook and scythe were in vogue the harvesters had to work late in harvest time, indeed until it was dark, the custom being as he used to tell us to work on until the harvesters could see a star for each. He was a hard worker and took his full share in the labours of the farm. He won many prizes at the ploughing matches, and I well remember the strong decided “swish” his scythe made on the hayfield.

On 11th December, 1846, he married Jean Leiper, daughter of John Leiper of Underlaw, whose father, Robert Leiper, originally from Lesmahagow, had settled at and purchased the farm of Drumboy, close to the historic field of Drumclog. Father’s courtship came about in this way:—My grandfather, John Leiper, died in middle life, and as his widow married again, my mother, then about 18, was none loath to leave Underlaw and keep house at the Redding for her maternal grandfather, Allan Parker, who was very fond of her. Muirside and

Redding farms adjoin, the glen made by the Polbaith burn lying between. Soon father got into the habit of crossing the burn and up the brae of an evening. It is said that when mother saw him coming she used to run away and hide, not that she did not like him, but she was very young, only 18, and felt shy at the idea of marriage. She was married at 19, and a quiet and uneventful, but singularly happy married life was theirs. She was of good height, well coloured, with a modest, gentle, and somewhat shy manner, and she must, as old friends have told me, have been very nice looking in her young days. She was very bright and cheery, with a smile and kind word for everybody, and I think I see her still when friends came in, as soon as she had shaken hands she would turn and stir up the fire and on with the kettle for something for them to eat. She did not give them the chance of refusing, and the cheery hiss of the kettle was in itself the welcome.

Father was wise and firm in his ways, a man of discretion and sound judgment. One who avoided quarrels and who desired to live at peace with all men. He had left school when he was twelve years of age, but he read a good deal all through life, and realising the great value of knowledge he gave us as liberal an education as he could. He took a deep interest in our lessons, and often impressed on us the after value we might unconsciously be laying up for ourselves.

Sabbath was the day we all looked specially forward to. It was the day of rest. No work was done except the feeding of the cattle and what was unavoidable. Father was an Elder of the Church of Scotland as his father had been before him, and was very regular in his attendance at the diets of divine service. But after we returned from church and got something to eat, there was no drawing of the window blinds or shutting us off from the joyousness of life. On the contrary, he almost invariably took us a long walk through the fields. He would not have permitted any frivolity either in speech or behaviour on the Sabbath, because it was to him in its fullest sense a sacred and hallowed day, but he taught us that it was a day for restrained joy and peace and for quiet communion with nature and nature's God. In our walks through the fields he would turn the conversation to something likely to improve and inspire our minds, and often some story of the Covenanting times would cause our hearts to beat faster and make us realise what others had done at conscience and honour's call. Muirside farm, lying as it did between Fenwick and Drumclog, was in the heart of the Covenanting country, and often under its roof the persecuted ones, driven from home for conscience sake, obtained food and shelter. John Finlay, who was its tenant in these troublous times, gave his life for the cause. He was taken prisoner, and executed at the Grassmarket, Edinburgh, on 15th December, 1682. At his trial, he openly

rejoiced at having had converse with those leaders of the Covenant—the Rev. Donald Cargill and Richard Cameron. After such an admission there could be only one ending, and we are told that it was with a fearless step that he mounted the scaffold. His prayer and dying testimony are given in the *Cloud of Witnesses*, page 260. Our Sabbath walks at Muirside usually took us first towards the Polbaith burn and through the Gilmoreholme field, in a corner of which was a very secluded little neuk. This neuk was much used during the Persecution times for holding religious meetings, as people could reach it by coming up or down the hollow of the water course for a long distance without being seen. A little further up the burn was a bank where some sweet-scented violets grew, and when they were in bloom we had always to pull a bunch to take home to mother. Still following up the stream, our paths led to a rocky knoll, a particularly interesting spot to us, because of the tradition, that during the Covenanting times, one of the Gemmills had early on the morning of the day on which a battle was expected to take place, started to go to the top of the knoll to ascertain if he could learn anything of the movements of the enemy. When about half way up he seemed to see a headless man standing on the top. People at that time believed more in second sight than now, and it was taken as a premonition of what was going to happen, and, strange to say, our distant relative was among those who were slain in the



fight that day. A large wood at the top of the fields was always interesting to us boys, and then our walk usually took us down another stream called the Volga, which separated us from the farm of Ruschaw. These names must have had some connection with Russia, because the little hamlet close at hand is called Moscow, but what the connection was I do not know, only it must have been a very old story, as the names occur as far back as 1600. On the farm of Ruschaw, just over from the Muirside boundary, there is still some very marshy ground. Father told us how one dark night Claverhouse's troopers while endeavouring to surprise some Covenanters, got into this marsh or bog, and becoming quite disorganised they made such a noise that the dogs at Muirside began barking. This served as a warning and enabled the Covenanters to escape further up into the moor among the moss hags. We children used to feel jubilant over the misfortunes of the troopers, so enthusiastic were we in the Covenanting cause. Mother too used to tell us many incidents of these stirring times, the farm of Underlaw, where she was brought up, being near to Loudonhill and Drumclog. One of the stories we liked best for her to tell, was about the death of John Brown of Priesthill, which is no great distance from Underlaw.

All of us have the happiest recollections of these Sabbath walks, and speak of them with delight. Mother did not come with us the whole way, but was always

looking out for our return, and would take a walk through the garden. Later on, as the day closed in, we were all gathered round the big fire. Other books were laid aside when mother rose to bring father the large Family Bible. I seem to see him yet as he slowly and reverently turned over the sacred pages, and to hear his solemn awed voice as he read and prayed. All of us loved and venerated them both, and would have done anything for them.

In 1864 father removed to the farm of Hillhead, near Mauchline, where the scenery and associations were different, but equally interesting. The house stands on rising ground, and on all sides a magnificent view of the surrounding country is got. Mossgiel farm, where Burns spent the brightest period of his life, marches with it on the west.

Father warmly appreciated the songs and poems of Burns, his special favourites being the "Cottar's Saturday Night," the "Twa Dogs," "Tam o' Shanter," and the "Holy Fair." It would have given him sincere pleasure had he survived to see the handsome Tower and Cottage Homes that, as a Memorial to the Poet, have been erected on the vacant ground between Hillhead and Mossgiel. The buildings were begun in 1896, the centenary year of Burns' death, and as the then President of the Glasgow-Mauchline Society, under whose auspices the Tower and

Cottage Homes were erected, it was my privilege to cut the first sod, and to preside at the laying of the foundation stone. Miss Annie B. Burns, the grand-daughter, and Miss Daisy Burns Hutchinson, the great grand-daughter of the poet, were present when the foundation stone was laid, and the great gathering of people, and their enthusiasm, made it a memorable day in the annals of the quiet parish of Mauchline. The Cottage Homes are for the use of deserving old folks who have fallen on evil days, and they would have specially appealed to father as he had a kindly feeling and sympathy for the unfortunate. Neither he nor mother could ever turn away a beggar empty-handed from the door, or from getting a night's shelter in the barn, and if the poor wanderers came at night they were allowed to make their tea in the kitchen—the only condition father insisted on was that they should leave their matches in the house in case of a fire. There is a good deal of honour among those poor wayfarers. Only on one occasion, so far as I remember, did I ever hear of any of them stealing anything.

Indiscriminate charity may have its evils, and many of those who got assistance would have themselves to blame, but father would tell us that people were not to be all judged by the same standard, that so much depended on heredity and early surroundings and what temptations had crossed life's path. He was one of those who gently scan

their brother man, and two of his favourite quotations from Burns were—

“The heart ay’s the part ay
That maks us richt or wrang,”

and

“What’s done we partly may compute,
But know not what’s resisted.”

With their servants father and mother were particularly considerate, and many of them stayed a long time with us. I was only a child of six, and it is many years ago now, but I still remember the awed stillness and evident grief in the house when our ploughman, John Barbour, died. He had come, I think, as ploughman the year father and mother were married, and he took special care of our black mare Betty, particularly on the Sundays mother was to be driven to church. Betty was a fast trotter, and was a special favourite, because it was she that had brought mother home on her wedding day. Father used to say—

“That day ye pranc’d wi’ muckle pride,
When ye bure hame my bonie bride.”

No one ever thought of selling Betty, and as she grew old father would stroke her neck with gentle hand, and tell of the time when few could pass her on the road.

There were eight children of us, four boys and four girls, and the first real sorrow father and mother had was in 1880, when their eldest son, my brother Tom, was cut off in the prime of life at the age of twenty-eight. He was tall and well favoured, and was a general favourite, indeed,

I remember with a kind of envy an old worker at the farm telling me he liked me too, "but no sae weel as your brother Tom." About a year before Tom's death, father had bought a young horse from somewhere in the West Highlands, partly broken in. One evening when Tom was riding it, it reared straight up and fell back and Tom with it. In falling his forehead struck a stone. He did not complain much and soon went about his duties as usual, but he was never so strong afterwards, and ultimately it developed into brain fever.

But the great sorrow of father's life came two years later when mother was on 19th September, 1882, suddenly taken from us from a shock of paralysis after a day and a half's illness. From the first, father evidently saw there was no hope, and all the joy and light of his life seemed to leave him. The old hearty laugh was gone. There remained the friendly look and smile, with to us children, a kind of wistfulness that drew us still nearer to him. When talking over the form of the gravestone, I happened to quote from one of Dean Stanley's poems, the passage "Till death us join." The words touched him, and father had them carved on her stone.

By this time he was sixty-three, and so getting up in years. He continued to take a close interest in everything, but he enjoyed more and more a serious talk on the mysteries of life and death and of the universe. All subjects interested him, but he specially enjoyed a talk on

any new discoveries in science, or on the wonders of creation, the sun, moon, and stars, the immensity of space, on man's destiny, "fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge, absolute." He saw a divine hand in everything, and though he could not fathom the mysteries, that did not trouble or unsettle him. He would say—"Our minds are finite, we cannot grasp the infinite. Here we see through a glass dimly, but then face to face." He had a profound and abiding belief in the goodness of Almighty God and in the essential truths of the Bible, and with a sure and steadfast faith was content to go forward till his appointed time should come for the veil being removed. After an illness of six months he died on 13th July, 1888, aged seventy. Four days later, though he had taken little active part in public matters, the long line of mourners, on carriage and on foot, at his funeral to the Mauchline Cemetery, showed how much he was loved and respected.







