

Sutherland, to this day is called Catey, and its inhabitants Catigh ; so that Catteyness is no other than the promontory or cape of the Cattes, or Sutherland, which promontory is stretched out from the east (or rather the north) side, saith the geographer of the mountain of the Ord, Adeo ut Cattey-ness nihil aliud sit quam promontorium Cattæ seu Sutherlandiæ, quod promontorium a latere Orientali montis ordi prætenditur. These Cat-tæi are thought to be a people who arrived thither from Germany. Who would have more of this may consult the above-mentioned author. Buchanan will have it to be called Caithness, because of it being mountainous, but I know not if this reason will hold, for the countries adjacent to Sutherland and Stranaver are more mountainous, and there are few high hills or mountains in it, except at the south end thereof, where it borders with Sutherland ; but if it should be so called, because it is the ness or promontory of the mountains, the land by north these mountains falling lower and running out in a promontory into the sea, I judge it would hold better, and be said with greater reason. Boethius also saith that this country of old was called Cornana, but the reason thereof he giveth not.

The Earls of Caithness were among the ancientest in Scotland, and in former times have been very potent in this corner, as appears by the several old castles and places of strength, which then they were in possession of, but now their memory is almost extinct. The late earl George dying without issue, the Laird of Glenorchy, now earl of Breadalbane, married the dowager, who having purchased the earl's estate, the apparent heir judging himself thereby injured, did gather together some of the country people to recover his right, but was defeated by Glenorchy ; from the field they went to the bar, and debated the matter there, whereupon the Lords gave forth this sentence, that Glenorchy should enjoy the estate, but the heir should have the honours, and an aliment allowed him by Glenorchy during his life. The heir having died about a year ago, the heiress his sister succeeds to the honours, and is in a very mean condition ; living in a place where the former earls used to keep their hawks. So to this ancient and honourable family of the earls of Caithness there is almost put in holy providence a period and close : they who had four great houses in this country like palaces for pleasure and convenience, and castles for strength, now in their heirs enjoy none of them, three are ruinous, and one is possessed by a stranger : as likewise there are several other ruinous houses to be seen here, who have spued out their possessors, so confirming that common observation, " That sin, committed by the inhabitants, is as gun-powder laid to the foundations of their houses, which quickly overturneth them, when it pleaseth a righteous God to fire the train."

The late earls of Caithness were of the name of Sinclair, of which name also are many gentlemen of the country, who have bought considerable parts of the earl's estate from the earl of Breadalbane : before the Sinclairs, the earls were of the name of Shine, and before them were the Haralds, and before the Haralds were the Olas, as the tradition goeth ; concerning which, and the manner of their succession, and the interruption made therein, the country talk several things which I shall not trouble my reader with : only I shall observe what is related by Camden, a judicious antiquary, " That of old the earls of Caithness were the same with the earls of Orkney, but at length were divided, the eldest daughter of one Mulastus being given in marriage to William de S. Claro, vulgo Sinclair, the King's pantler, his posterity had this honour conferred on them, of being earls of Caithness."

The country is pleasant and very fertile, abounding with grass and corn, hence yearly there is a great quantity of victual exported, as, anno 1695, there were 16,000 bolls embarked and taken out, for which end it is much frequented by barks from the firth,