

NUMBER XXVIII.

PARISH OF FINTRY.

(County of Stirling—Presbytery of Dumbarton—Synod of Glasgow and Ayr.)

By the Rev. Mr. GAVIN GIBB, Minister of STRATHBLANE.

Name, Situation, and Extent.

THE name of this parish is of Gaelic origin, and signifies *Fair Land*. Contrasted with the bleak and precipitous rudeness of the adjacent moors and mountains, its grassy hills, its fertile and well watered valleys, entitle it to this appellation.—Fintry is situated in the midst of that range of hills, which reaches from Stirling to Dumbarton, and behind that particular district of them usually denominated *the Campsie Fells*. It lies 17 miles due N. from Glasgow, 12 miles W. by S. from Stirling, and 21 or 22 miles E. by N. from Dumbarton. It belongs to the commissariat of Glasgow. It extends from E. to W. 5 miles, and from N. to S. more than 4; though the only parts of it, which are inhabited, are a small valley on the banks of the Endrick, and another on the banks of the Carron; both of which rivers have their source in this parish.

General Appearance.—The general appearance of the country is hilly. The hills are small; they are clothed with re-

refreshing verdure ; and their shapes are finely diversified. Covered with sheep, they suggest many pastoral images. The eastern part of the parish consists of three ranges of hills, with scarcely any intervening plain. Between the two fouthermost of these ranges, the Carron bog or meadow commences ; the largest perhaps in Scotland. Beginning in Fintry, it runs E. between the parishes of Kilsyth and St. Ninian's to the extent of 4 miles ; is in some places 2 miles in breadth, and in no place less than 1 ; containing about 500 acres in one continued plain. It affords sustenance during the winter to the cattle of the surrounding farms. This remarkable meadow, besides its utility, adds great liveliness and beauty to the general face of the country. The scene it exhibits during the months of July and August, of 20 or 30 different parties of people employed in hay-making, is certainly very cheerful : And during winter, the greater part of it being overflowed by the Carron, which runs through the middle of it, and which is then industriously led over its whole extent, to fertilize it for the ensuing crop, it assumes the appearance of a large and beautiful lake. In both situations, it affords an agreeable relief from the bleakness of the country around it. Towards the west end of the parish, the hills are more rocky and rugged. The valley through which the rapid stream of the Endrick runs, widens gradually to the extent of a mile. Several groves, recently planted, beginning to lift their heads along the banks of the river ; the cultivated fields on its margin ; the hedges and hedge rows round the enclosures on the estate of Culcruich ; an extensive plantation behind the mansion-house of that name ; and some well disposed clumps of trees on the sides of the opposite hills, gratify the traveller, not only with a view of beauty, but of well-directed industry. Above these, the summits of the mountains on both sides, broken, and presenting abrupt precipices, and sometimes covered with

with clouds, add grandeur and dignity to the scene.—The prospect, however, is confined within narrow limits, excepting towards the west, where it is terminated by Benlomond, that rises with eminent dignity above the neighbouring Grampians. Thus fenced and sequestered, the little hills and valleys of Fintry suggest ideas of tranquil and undisturbed seclusion. Nor can any thing of the kind be more agreeable than when in summer, the sun setting by the side of Benlomond, throws a blaze of parting radiance on the romantic banks of the upper Endrick.

Soil.—The soil in those parts of the parish which are fit for agriculture, is light, quick, and fertile; agrees better with dung for manure than lime; and, when enriched with the former, produces excellent crops. Some recent experiments however have shewn, that when the ground is pastured for two years, then limed and allowed to rest another year, it will thereafter yield better crops, than by any mode of husbandry hitherto practised.

Cultivation and Produce.—In agriculture, however, the inhabitants have made but few improvements. They follow servilely the ancient mode of *pasturing, and of sowing oats*, for two or three years alternately on their out-field, and of uniformly sowing as much land with bear as the winter's dung will cover; and from which they afterwards take two successive crops of oats. However a few of the farmers are now beginning to get the better of these prejudices, and find their account in altering the mode of cropping. In making this change they have been instructed and prompted by Mr. SPIERS of Culcruch, who, since his residence on his estate, has set the example of clearing the ground with turnips, and has introduced the sowing of grafs and clover seeds for hay. The bene-

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cial effect of this method, has encouraged some of his own tenants to follow his example; and there is no doubt but the practice will become general in all those farms upon which the enclosures are fencible against sheep. The method alluded to consists, as was mentioned, in cleaning the ground with turnips and potatoes; in sowing next year bear with grafs feeds; in raising hay for two years; in pasturing one or two; in sowing oats for two years; and then in returning to the turnips. This routine answers very well, and, with the single improvement of taking only one crop of each kind, and pasturing two years, is best adapted for this soil, which, being light, is soon impoverished by a continuation of crops, and if not regularly cleaned by pasturing and crops of turnips, is apt to be over-run with the *creeping wheat-grafs*, known by the vulgar name of *jelt*, or *pirl-grafs*. There is no soil better adapted for raising potatoes, of which the inhabitants plant considerable quantities; after which they commonly sow flax-seed, which succeeds very well, yielding from three to four stoncs from each peck sown.

Cattle.—But the attention of the inhabitants is, with very few exceptions, confined to grazing*, which is by far the most

* Under this article it is but justice to mention the name of DAVID DUN, a man whose exertions, in improving the mode of grazing, are truly laudable, and to whose example its present advanced state, through a considerable part of the west of Scotland, is in a great measure owing. He has the merit of first improving the breed of black cattle and sheep, by raising them to a greater size, and feeding them more thoroughly, than was ever done before upon grafs alone. This he has accomplished, by judiciously selecting the most choice cattle, to stock his farms with, and by keeping his grafs lighter, i. e. by putting fewer cattle upon the same space of ground, than what had been used in former times.—As a specimen of his success in this branch, the writer states the following facts, which are well attested.

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most beneficial mode of using the ground in this parish, where hill and vale equally afford most excellent pasture for black cattle and sheep. They use the plough therefore chiefly with a view to the sustenance of their cattle through winter, as fodder is the great object of labour. In some of the farms the rent is solely paid from the produce of milk cows; indeed butter and cheese form the staple produce of the parish. Feeding of cattle is also generally practised. In the month of May, each farmer buys a number of Highland cows, proportioned to the extent of his farm, which he fattens during summer, and again fells off in the months of September and October. When markets are brisk, and sales ready, this is by much the most convenient and advantageous method of using the ground in this parish, as the excellence of the pasture during summer, ensures the fattening of the cattle purchased, and the difficulty of procuring fodder for winter prevents the rearing any more than are necessary, to keep up the stock of milk-cows. Sheep are also an object of attention. The breed is in general good, a consequence of the excellent pasture

ed in Glasgow, and weighed, according to the purchaser's confession, 52 stones beef, and 10 stones tallow: the price he received was 25 guineas. At another time he sold 25 Highland stots at 12l each, the lightest of which weighed upwards of 30 stones. He sells annually about 60 tup-lambs of a year old, for which he never receives less than a guinea each; and his lambs for killing he commonly sells in May, at half-a-guinea each. He carries on his plan on a very extensive scale, renting farms in different parts of the country, from one to another of which, he removes his cattle at the proper seasons, according to the quality of the farm, and the state of the cattle. His stots he sells at 5 years old, but calves of his own rearing sometimes equal his best cattle, at three years old, and are accordingly sold at that age. When he dealt to the greatest extent he paid rents to the amount of 1800l per annum; the largest proportion of which he paid to the Duke of Montrose. His annual stock at that time was 470 black cattle, and 2740 sheep, of which 200 were ewes, as a permanent stock, from which he has frequently sold in a year 300 lambs.

ture on which they graze, as well as of the care which is taken to improve the stock, by crossing the breed, and rearing none but the best *ewe lambs*. Lambs are also frequently brought from the southern parts of Scotland, which improve greatly on this soil. The wool is of a very good quality. Lambs generally sell at 6l. per score; wool sells at from 5s. to 7s. per stone. The following table will shew the number of cows and sheep kept in this parish :

Milk Cows,	-	-	-	-	263
Fat ditto,	-	-	-	-	370
Sheep,	-	-	-	-	2470

Population.—The population of this parish, like that of most other grazing countries in Scotland, has decreased very much within these 40 years. Since the return to Dr. Webster, in 1755, it has decreased more than a third part. There are several farms in the parish, upon which from 14 to 20 families formerly lived, where only from 5 to 8 families now reside. This depopulation is evidently caused by throwing several small farms into one, which enables the possessor to pay a greater rent to the proprietor, and at the same time to live better in his own family, than when parcelled out in small portions. Nor is this counted disadvantageous to those who are ejected, as the great demand for hands by manufacturing companies, affords them a ready reception; where they and their children can earn more, and live better, than upon a small farm. But, notwithstanding present opinions, it still remains a doubt, whether this revolution in the state of a country, will in the end prove a national advantage. Whether a pallid and sickly race, brought up in the confined air of cotton mills, with few attachments, and little education, will compensate for the sturdy sons of our hills and mountains,

tains, or afford a set of as loyal and virtuous subjects, is a question which we leave posterity to determine.—The present state of the population is as under. †

POPULATION TABLE of the Parish of FINTRY.

Population in 1755,	-	-	891	Between 50 and 70,	-	55
Ditto in 1793,	-	-	513	———— 70 and 100*,	-	17
			-----	Weavers, †	-	5
Decrease,	-		248	Tailors,	-	3
Of these there are,				Smiths,	-	2
Males,	-	-	273	Shoemaker,	-	1
Females,	-	-	270	Average of births for the last 15		
Under 10 years of age,	-		136	years,	-	16
Between 10 and 20,	-		110	Ditto of deaths,	-	8
———— 20 and 50,	-		225			

Manufactures and New Village.—This parish is on the eve of experiencing a great change, by the introduction of manufactures, on a very large scale. A cotton mill is just erected on the estate of Culcruich, 156 feet in length, and 10 feet wide; which, when finished, will employ 1000 hands. A handsome village, upon a rising ground along the side of the Endrick, is already fenced off, and building for the reception of the work people. The houses, according to a regular plan, are to stand in one row, and to consist of two stories and garrets. Thus situated, the village will be well aired, dry and healthy; and very pleasant, having the gardens in front, *separated from the houses by the turnpike road, dressed on a sloping bank down to the river.*

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Proprietors

* It is worthy to be recorded, that there died, a few months previous to taking up this list, one man above 80, and another 103 years old.

† Some of these have apprentices and journeymen; and they are supplied with work from manufacturing companies. Men servants wages are 4*l.* and 4*l.* 10*s.* in the half year; women servants from 1*l.* 10*s.* to 1*l.*

Proprietors and Rent.—The whole property of the parish is vested in the Duke of MONTROSE, and Mr. SPIERS of Culcruich; the former of whom is patron of the parish, and the latter is the only residing heritor. The present rent is between 1500*l.* and 1900*l.*; but it may be expected to rise considerably.

Church, &c.—The church was built before this century: Part of it appears to be of a very ancient date. The manse was built in 1732, and has undergone several repairs. The stipend consists of 44 bolls of meal, 5 bolls of bear, and 24*l.* 10*s.* Sterling in money; exclusive of the glebe, which contains 9 acres, 4 of which are arable.

Poor.—The poor of this parish are supported by the weekly collections, and the interest of a fund, which has accumulated to 200*l.* Sterling and upwards, chiefly by donations from the family of Montrose. The present number on the poor's roll is 7, and varies from that 10. They receive, individually, according to their necessities, from 1*s.* to 3*s.* weekly. Besides this stated distribution, attention is paid to clothing the most destitute, and supplying them with fuel. These supplies are adequate to their wants; insomuch, that there is not, nor has been for many years past, a single instance of a poor person, belonging to the parish, going out to beg. This attention to their own poor, however, does not by any means free the inhabitants from the burden and plague of mendicants from other places. Crows flock thither, from the great towns and populous villages, for the space of 30 miles round, who frequently repay the charity they receive, by making nightly depredations upon their humane landlords.

Fuel.—The fuel which has been principally used hitherto in this parish, is peat; in cutting, drying, and carrying home which, the whole summer is spent, from the end of seed-time,

time, till the beginning of the hay harvest. This, were there no other obstacle, is a powerful bar to agricultural improvements, as the only time of the year, in which the farmers can carry lime, is spent in preparing and securing their fuel. It is to be hoped, however, that this obstacle will soon be removed. An attempt is just now making to find coal upon the estate of Culcruch, and appearances have hitherto been favourable. Whatever may be the ultimate issue of this search, great praise is due to Mr. Spiers for his indefatigable exertions, in promoting every measure that can contribute to the prosperity of the parish*.

Roads and Bridges — Till within these two years, the access to Fintry was extremely difficult on all sides, inasmuch, that had it not been rendered easier, no improvement could have made its way thither. The difficulty was even so great as almost to forbid any attempt to remove it. A hill, almost perpendicular, over which horses could scarcely crawl with half a load, cut off the communication with Campsie and Glasgow, from which side coal could only be got; and deep moor and moss obstructed the approach on the N. and W. These obstacles, seemingly insurmountable, are now happily
 3 B 2 overcome,

* The MODE OF BORING, which he has adopted, is such as must ascertain, without a doubt, whether there be coal in the country or not, and may serve as a lesson to others, who may have occasion to make trial for coal in hilly countries. The top of the hill consists of a very thick bed of whin stone, below which there is a bed of free-stone equally thick. Beginning at the bottom of the free-stone, which is half a mile up the hill, with a 10 fathom bore, he takes the level of the bottom of this bore down the side of the hill, making allowances for the dip and run of the strata, where he bores again to the depth of 10 fathoms, and so on, continuing till he reaches the level of the river. In one of these bores there was found last week a small crop seam of coal, which it is to be hoped is the forerunner of one of greater consequence. If the attempt succeeds, it will be of the utmost importance to a tract of country for 10 miles round, the greater part of which lies at present 20 miles from coal.

overcome, by the public spirited exertions of Mr. SMYERS and Mr. DUNMORE. The gentleman last mentioned, has formed, as it were, a new creation on the water of Endrick, and given life and spirit to a country which, 4 years ago, seemed condemned to perpetual dullness; having, in that space, brought from different parts of the country, to the neighbouring parishes of Balfron and Killearn, no fewer than 1100 persons. Both these gentlemen, with much private expence, obtained an act of parliament for a new district of roads, in the western parts of Stirlingshire; and, with a promptitude of execution, equal to their zeal in moving the measure, have furnished this part of the country with as good roads as any part of Scotland. The *Craw Road*, a mile in length and upwards, which was formerly 1 foot of ascent in 7, and in some places 1 foot in 5, is now reduced to 1 foot in 20, in the steepest place. This line of road reaches from Glasgow through Fintry, and joins the military road between Stirling and Dumbarton, about 6 miles to the N. of this place. The county road to the W. is also now put into a state of repair; so that, from being the most difficult of access, Fintry is now easily accessible on all sides.—The bridges, on this line of road are numerous, and add very much to the ease of the communication; as the deep ravines formed by the mountain streams, which were formerly very difficult to pass, are all arched over, and filled up to the level of the adjacent banks. The bridge over the Endrick consists of 4 arches, 2 of which are 26 feet wide, and the other two 12 feet each. The bridge on the old line of road, about a mile farther up the river, consists of one beautiful arch of 47 feet wide, and another of 15 feet.

Rivers, Fish, &c.—The *Endrick* has its source in the hill of Fintry on the northern side of the parish. It runs E. a little way, takes a sudden turn to the S., forming the eastern boundary of

of the parish for 2 miles; then turns due W., rushing over the *Loup of Fintry*, and inclosing part of the parish within 3 sides of a square. After receiving the river *Blanc*, and other plentiful streams, in its course, and forming 2 beautiful cascades at GARTNESS, the spot where the famous NAPIER of MERCHISTON invented his logarithms, it loses itself in Lochlomond, about 14 miles below Fintry. This river abounds with trout and par. The trout are reckoned to be of a superior quality, and may be taken in great numbers, even by an unskilful angler; upon which account it is very much resorted to, by persons fond of that amusement. Salmon, likewise, make their way in great numbers into the mouth of this river; some of which, when the water is high, come as far up as Fintry. The *Carron* rises in the W. end of the parish, on the S. of the *Endrick*, and runs E. in a straight line, watering the Carron Bog in its passage; leaving within a mile over the *Auchinlily-Linn Spout*, a tremendous cataract, corresponding to an interesting description in the tragedy of Douglas,—

“Red came the river down,” &c. &c.

From this it continues its course eastward, through the Carse of Falkirk, and falls into the Forth, about 3 miles from that town. It abounds with small and large trout; some of which, taken in the pools in Carron Bay, measure 20 inches in length.

Natural Curiosities.—The only curiosity which is universally remarked in this parish, is the above mentioned *Loup of Fintry*; a cataract of 91 feet high, over which the *Endrick* pours its whole stream. In rainy weather, and more especially after a thunder shower, or a water spout, which frequently
happens

happen in these parts, the *Loup of Fintry* may be mentioned along with what is most magnificent in this kind of object. —There is also in this parish a grand range, or colonnade, of basaltic pillars, which rise in a hill called *Dun*, or *Down*, at the end of the hill of Fintry. The range consists of 70 columns in front, which are of a gigantic stature, some of them separating in loose blocks, others apparently without joints from top to bottom. They stand perpendicular to the horizon, and rise to the height of 50 feet. They are some of them square, others pentagonal and hexagonal. A block, separated from one of the hexagonal columns, measured by an accurate survey as follows :

		<i>Feet.</i>	<i>Inches.</i>			<i>Feet.</i>	<i>Inches.</i>
1st side,	-	2	1	5th side,	-	1	2
2d do.	-	1	8	6th do.	-	0	10½
3d do.	-	1	5½	Its greatest diameter,	2	11	
4th do.	-	1	3½	Its least ditto,	2	3	

On the E. side of the range, the columns stand separated one from another, by an interstice of 3 or 4 inches. This interstice lessens gradually towards the W. side, till nothing but a seam is discernible, and then all is blended in one solid mass of rock, which is very much honey-combed, and has the appearance of having been ignited. The mountain above mentioned, consists of very extensive beds of red ochre.