

NUMBER XXXIX.

PARISH OF METHVEN.

(County and Presbytery of Perth.—Synod of Perth and Stirling.)

By the Reverend Mr JOHN DOWE, Minister.

Origin of the Name.

THE name, in Gaelic, is said to signify *the Middle*, and, in that language, the adjective *dow*, or black, is commonly added in speaking of it; and the origin of that appellation was supposed to be, That it was situated nearly in the middle of the great valley, (or Strathmore,) on the south of the Grampian Mountains, which extend from Dumbarton to Stonehaven, and nearly at equal distance from those mountains, and the ridge of the Ochills, which there bound that valley on the south. Others contend, that the word *Methven* may be interpreted, *the Little Mountain*. This name is not descriptive of the situation of the village, which lies in a hollow; but in a good measure applies to the site of the Castle, which stands, with a dignified appearance, on pretty high ground. The village, which is now considerable, seems to have originated from a collegiate church, founded before the middle of the 15th century. But, it appears, that the old castle of Methven was of a much earlier date, and therefore communicated its name to the collegiate church.

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Extent

Extent and Surface, &c.—This parish, from E. to W. is, at an average, about 5 English miles; and between 3 and 4 from N. to S. The surface is agreeably varied by hollows and rising ground: But, in general, it slopes from north to south, where it terminates in a narrow plain, the west part of which is a morass, which supplies with peat the neighbouring inhabitants, and from whence two streams take their rise; the most considerable of which runs westward into the Earn, and the other eastward into the Almond: Both have the name of *the Pow*. The cultivated soil is, in general, good; one part clay, another loam, and a third gravel; but the clay soil predominates. There is a tract of waste ground, above 800 acres, on the north side of the parish, which was a common, and is now divided. A considerable part of it is very improveable; and it is hoped, that, in due time, the hand of persevering industry will transform the uncultivated heath, into verdant pastures and plentiful fields.

Rivers, &c.—The ALMOND, which bounds the greatest part of this parish on the N. and E. is a large and rapid current of water, and, in its course, turns a number of mills of various kinds. Its banks are bold and rocky, and in many places agreeably wooded. It furnishes some very picturesque and romantic views, as it passes the estate of Lednock, the property of Mr Graham of Balgowan. It was formerly well stored with fine trout, &c.; but the late erection of a high dike to raise the water, which supplies the cotton spinning, and other works, of *Cromwell Park*, prevents almost every kind of fish from penetrating any farther; and probably, in a short time, they will entirely desert the river.

Woods.

Woods.—The wood of Methven is the only natural one, of any extent, in the parish. It covers 172 Scotch acres, and is of considerable value to the proprietor, Lord Methven. It is cut in about 18 divisions, at the age of 25 years. It consists of oaks, many of which have been lately allowed to stand for timber, birch, &c. The hazel has been let at the rent of 12l. to a coal company, for above 20 years. The present wood lies a little eastward of the Castle, to which it is a great ornament; but anciently it extended a considerable distance to the south and west, as is evident from some old oaks still remaining in cultivated fields; and from an old farm which retains the name of Westwood or Woodhead. There are likewise some spots of natural wood, on the banks of the Almond.

Agriculture and Produce, &c. *.—Within these 20 years, the improvements in agriculture have been very great in this parish, as well as in other places; and, of consequence, the rents are much increased. This is owing to the use of lime, which is become very general, and is got at the port of Perth, either from Lord Elgin's lime works, on the Frith
of

* Thirty years ago, almost the whole of this parish was possessed in *Ranrig*; the tenants of 3, 4, 5, or 6 ploughgates, living in one *Town*, as it was called, and occupying a large tract of ground in that manner. About one third of the land, next to the houses, was called *Infield*, or *Croft* land, and was cropped alternately with oats and barley, the whole dung being laid on with the barley. The remainder of the farm was called *Outfield*; of which one third, or more, was in oats, and the rest in pasture. The cattle were folded in summer, on that part of the outfield, which was to be broken up the ensuing season, after which 3 crops of oats were taken; and sometimes, if the ground did not seem to be quite exhausted, a fourth; after which it was left out for pasture, until it had so far recovered, as to be able again to undergo the same operation.

of Forth, or from Sunderland. Some years ago, there was also a good deal of marl discovered, with which some of the grounds have been manured. Tenants now see the error of over cropping their lands, after lime or marl, and therefore often sow clover and rye-grass with their barley crop. Every possessor of a few roods of ground, finds it profitable to sow some pounds of red clover *. Barley, grass, oats, flax, pease, and beans, are the common crops †. Of late, some wheat has been raised, but very few turnips. Probably, however, the farmers, in a few more years, will see it their interest to clean their grounds with a turnip fallow, where land is suitable for producing that valuable root; for it seems to be allowed, that the two great points of husbandry are, to keep ground clear of root-weeds, (which cannot be done so profitably as by a turnip fallow well dressed;) and to keep it always in good heart, (which is to be done by the plenty of dung, arising from the use of turnips ‡). The average rent, per acre, of the cultivated ground, is probably about 10 s. There are a few acres, in the near neighbourhood of the village, let at 2 l. 2 s. and upwards; and two pretty large

* When grass first began to be introduced as a crop, the old tenants were much offended; and their common language was, 'That it was a *shame* to see *beast's meat* growing where *men's meat* should grow.'

† At an average of 7 years, preceeding 1792, oat meal and barley gave 14 s. 6 d. per boll, Linlithgow measure. A good ploughman has 8 l. and his maintenance; a servant maid from 50 s. to 3 l.; a day-labourer 1 s.; and, in public works, from 1 s. to 1 s. 6 d. per day.

‡ This parish owes much of its improvements to Mr GRAHAM of BALGOWAN, who first set the example of inclosing his farms, and gave encouragement to judicious tenants, by granting them easy leases, and providing them with comfortable houses.

large farms at 1 l. 5 s. per acre. This was reckoned high, 3 years ago. when the leases were granted; but, in all probability, will prove a profitable concern.

State of Property.—Two thirds of the parish belongs to LORD METHVEN and MR GRAHAM of BALGOWAN. The other third comprehends the estates of Tippermalloch and Bachilton, (belonging to Mr Duncan and Mr Oliphant,) with the small property of Wester Campsey, and several little feus which hold of Lord Methven.—The valued rent is 6400 l. Scotch. The real rent amounts to something more than 3000 l. Sterling, per annum. Almost the whole of the parish was anciently comprehended in the Barony or Lordship of Methven. While that estate remained in the Crown, various portions of it were granted in feu to different persons; and the feu duties of these lands are now paid to Lord Methven, as proprietor of the Lordship, although the lands are held of the Crown.

Ecclesiastical State.—The stipend, by decret, dated 1650, is 12 chalders of victual, two thirds meal, and one third bear; with 3 l. 6 s. 8 d. for communion elements: Also, by decret obtained before the Sheriff of Perth, in 1766, 5 l. 2 s. 4 d. Sterling of vicarage; carriages for 54 loads of turfs, and a 120 loads of peats, with other services for plowing the glebe, and carrying the dung. The glebe consists of somewhat more than 14 acres of good ground. The present church is a plain, neat, commodious edifice, and was built in 1781, in a stile superior to most country churches. LORD METHVEN is patron. The predecessor of the present incumbent, was Dr JAMES OSWALD, well known in the literary world, who resigned this benefice in 1783, and died
in

in August 1793*. A great proportion of the people are of the sect of Antiburgher Seceders, who have had a place of worship here about 40 years.

Poor.—Poor's rates have been established here since 1775. The heritors pay one half, according to their valued rent, in this parish; and the householders, (who assess one another,) pay the other half, according to their circumstances:
To

* The Doctor's immediate predecessor, was Mr WILLIAM MONCRIEFF, settled in 1694. The ministers between the Restoration and the Revolution, were Mr RAMSAY and Mr OMEY; and, when Presbyterianism was re-established in Scotland, in 1638, Mr ROBERT MURRAY, of the family of Woodend, a small estate in this neighbourhood, was then minister, whose son, Mr JOHN MURRAY, succeeded him: They were both eminent in their times. JOHN Duke of ARGYLL's great-grand-father's father, in the maternal line, was brother to the above Mr Robert Murray: His name was WILLIAM MURRAY; he was minister of Dysart; and there was another brother, THOMAS, who was Preceptor to King CHARLES I. By the interest of the preceptor, his nephew, William, son to the minister of Dysart, was educated with the young Prince, who contracted so great an affection for his play fellow, that he afterwards created him Earl of Dysart. He married Elizabeth Bruce, of the family of Clackmannan, by whom he had two daughters, ELIZABETH, Countess of DYSART, and MARGARET, married to LORD MAYNARD, in England. The Countess married SIR LIONEL TOLLEMACHE of Helingham, in the county of Suffolk, by whom she had LIONEL, Earl of DYSART, and another son; also two daughters, Elizabeth and Catharine. Elizabeth married ARCHIBALD, first Duke of ARGYLL, by whom she had JOHN, the great Duke, the Earl of ISLAY, and ANNE, married to JAMES 2d Earl of BUTE, and mother to JOHN, the late Earl. Catharine, the other daughter, was married, 1st, to JAMES LORD DOWN, son and heir of ALEXANDER Earl of MURRAY, and next to JOHN Earl of SUTHERLAND. The Countess, after SIR LIONEL's death, married the great Duke of LAUDERDALE. Thus the little family of WOODEND, soon connected itself with some of the best families in both kingdoms.

To which is added, the annual interest of 267 l. bequeathed, at different times, to the poor of the parish. There are 9 districts, whose householders collect the proportions by rotation, and give them to the schoolmaster, (the treasurer and clerk of the fund,) who makes a weekly distribution, commonly after divine service. In 1775, the number of poor, on the stated list, was 36, who received weekly 1 l. 10 s. In 1793, the number is 21, and the weekly expenditure 1 l. 3 s. 2 d. The heritors and householders meet twice a year, and fix the assessment for the ensuing half year. The session have also power from the heritors to expend, on occasional poor, the whole of the weekly collections, &c. which amount to about 18 l. per annum: And the late Dr OSWALD bequeathed 100 l. the interest of which is to be annually given to such householders, as the session know to need a temporary relief, but who do not receive regular supplies from the assessed funds of the parish. This surely is a well judged charity.

Population.—The population of this parish has been almost stationary within these forty years, as appears from the following table :

Population Table of the Parish of Methven.

Population in 1755	-	-	-	1790	
————, anno 1793	-	-	-	1786	
Decrease	-	-	-	4	
Average of births*,	}	for 6 years	}	47	
———— of deaths,				preceding	29
———— of marriages,				1793.	17
				Average	

* The above average of births, is not warranted as accurate, as

Average of persons in each family	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	Clergymen	-	2
Inhabitants in villages	400	Schoolmasters	-	2
----- in the country	1386	Farmers above 50 l. per annum	-	6
Average of males baptised	24	Ditto from 50 to 30 l.	-	6
Ditto of females	23	----- from 30 to 15 l.	-	25
Number of families	397	----- under 15 l.	-	83
----- houses in the village	102	Shopkeepers	-	18
----- ditto inhabited by members of the Established Church	47	Smiths	-	8
----- ditto by Seceders	55	Masons	-	13
Widowers	19	Carpenters	-	15
Widows	69	Stocking weavers	-	4
Families belonging to the Established Church	171	Shoemakers	-	13
Families of Seceders	226	Tailors	-	9
Proprietors	5	Butchers	-	2
		Millers, about	-	12
		Persons employed in the paper mills	-	70
		Gardeners	-	6
		Retailers of malt liquor and spirits	-	12
		Flax-dressers	-	11
		Weavers	-	159

Manufactures, Mills, &c.—The principal manufacture, carried on here, is that of broad and narrow brown linens, broad and narrow harns, and a few white broad linens. By the books of the stamp-master here, it appears, that the number of yards brought to his office, in 1787, was 44,996; from which time, the quantity continued to increase so fast, that

as the children of the Antiburghers are baptised by their own minister; and no correct account of their number can be obtained.

last year, (1792,) 140,448 yards were stamped for sale, which, at an average of 9 d. per yard, is 5,266 l. 16 s. Of these, 11 twelfths were wove in the parish. But, at present, (August 1793.) the temporary stagnation of manufactures has deprived a great number of the hands of their usual employment. There is likewise a considerable quantity of household cloth wrought here.—There are 5 corn mills, in the parish, one lint mill, one barley mill, one wauk mill, and four threshing mills. There are likewise two paper mills, belonging to Messrs Morison and Lindsay, Perth, which manufacture, weekly, paper of different kinds, viz.

Of superfine post, foolscap, &c.	60 Reams.
Of fine and common printing papers	90 ditto.
Of cartridge, blue, and wrapping papers	50 ditto.
	—————
	200

Markets, &c.—Two butchers carry on their business in the village, who annually kill about 2000 sheep, between 300 and 400 calves, about 150 fat cattle, and about 60 swine. Their trade has also increased rapidly. About 13 years ago, the butcher market here commenced about the latter end of August, and closed about the middle of January; during which time there were sold, at an average, per week, 40 carcases of sheep and goats; in all about 850. But, of late, the public taste has so much improved, that there is no more demand for goats flesh. It is only 13 years since beef was first exposed to sale in the village. It was a fat ox, value 7 l.; and the young man, who embarked in the concern, was thought very injudicious. The same man now frequently sells more than one in a week, during the plentiful season; and, for some of these, he has paid 17l. and 18l.

These little circumstances are mentioned to shew, how much the manner of living is improved here in so short a time. About 4 fifths of the meat, exposed to sale in the village, are sold in the neighbourhood, and what remains on hand is carried to Perth: And it may be added, that, in quality and variety, it is, for the most part, equal to what is to be had in the Perth market. The trade of killing cattle for the Perth market was long carried on, to a considerable extent, by the inhabitants of this village and neighbourhood; and the Methven butchers were, about 50 or 60 years ago, much richer, and in better credit, than those of Perth.

Roads.—As a great part of the parish consists of strong clay, our roads in winter have been wretchedly bad, the statute labour not being adequate to uphold them in decent repair. But lately, an act of Parliament has been obtained for a turnpike road between Perth and Crieff, the line of which passes through a great part of this parish; and is conducted through an uneven country, with a skill which does much honour to the abilities of Mr Abercrombie, the engineer, who directed it. It will be finished in the course of this season, (autumn 1793,) and will contribute much to the improvement and accommodation of this country. The cross roads are also assuming a much better appearance, now that the statute labour is applied entirely to them.

Antiquities.—The first mention found of METHVEN, in history, is about the year 970, when COLENUS, reputed the 79th King of Scotland, is said to have been killed in its neighbourhood, by ROHARD, Thane of Methven, whose daughter he had deflowered. Before 1323, the lands of Methven belonged to the MOWBRAY'S*, whose ancestor, ROGER MOWBRAY,

* A branch of this family afterwards established itself in Scotland,

a Norman, came to England with WILLIAM the Conqueror.—The first religious establishment here was a Provostry,
or

Scotland, and became very flourishing. To Sir ROGER MOWBRAY belonged the baronies of Kelly, Eckford, Dalmeny, and Methven, lying in the shires of Forfar, Roxburgh, Lunithgow, and Perth: But, for adhering to the Balth and English interest, his lands were confiscated by ROBERT I. who bestowed Eckford, Kelly, and Methven, on his son in law, WALTER, the 8th hereditary Lord High Steward of Scotland, whose son, Robert, was afterwards King, and the 2d of the name, in right of his mother MARJORY BRUCE, daughter of ROBERT I. The Lordship of Methven was granted by him to WALTER STEWART, Earl of ATHOLE, his 2d son, by Euphame Ross, his 2d wife; and, after his forfeiture, remained in the Crown a considerable time. It became part of the dowery lands usually appropriated for the maintenance of the Queen Dowager of Scotland, together with the Lordship and Castle of Stirling, and the lands of Balquhider, &c. all of which were settled on MARGARET, Queen Dowager of James IV. who, in the year 1524, having divorced her 2d husband, Archibald Earl of Angus, married Henry Stewart, 2d son of Andrew Lord Evandale, afterwards Ochiltree, a descendant of Robert Duke of Albany, son of King Robert II. Margaret was the eldest daughter of Henry VII. of England, in whose right JAMES VI. of Scotland, her great grandson, succeeded to that Crown, on the death of Queen ELIZABETH. She procured for her third husband a peerage from her son JAMES V. under the title of LORD METHVEN, anno 1528; and, on this occasion, the barony of Methven was dissolved from the Crown, and erected into a Lordship, in favour of Henry Stewart and his heirs male, on the Queen's resigning her jointure of the Lordship of Stirling. By Lord Methven she had a daughter, who died in infancy, before herself. The Queen died at the Castle of Methven, in 1540; and was buried at Perth, beside the body of King James I. Lord METHVEN afterwards married Janet Stewart, daughter of the Earl of Atholl, by whom he had a son, Henry II. Lord Methven, who married Jean, daughter of Patrick Lord Ruthven, and was killed at Broughton, by a cannon ball from the Castle of Edinburgh, in 1572, leaving a son, Henry III. Lord Methven, who died without issue. This 3d Lord Methven is mentioned on the authority of *Stewart's Genealogical Account of the House of Stewart*. In the year 1584, the Lordship of Methven and Balquhider was conferred on LUDOWICK Duke

or Collegiate Church, founded, anno 1433, by WALTER STEWART Earl of ATHOLL, (mentioned below,) who amply endowed it with lands and tythes*, for the salvation of his soul, according to the superstition of those times; and who was a principal actor † in the horrid murder of King JAMES I. his own nephew.—An aisle, which was connected with this last church, appears, from a stone built in the wall, to have been erected by some of the Royal Family ‡. On this stone is sculptured the Royal Lion of Scotland, with the Crown above; and there are some defaced illegible Saxon characters below. This aisle may have been built by Margaret the Queen Dowager, when she resided at the Castle of Methven. It is now the burying place of the family of Methven.

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Duke of LENNOX, in whose illustrious family it continued till it was purchased, in 1664, by PATRICK SMITH of BRACO, great grandfather of the present LORD METHVEN, from Charles, the last Duke; who dying without issue, anno 1672, his honours, (of which Lord Methven was one,) with his estate and hereditary offices, fell to CHARLES II. as his nearest male heir; the King's great grandfather's father, and the Duke's being brothers.

* The rent of the provostry of Methven, soon after the Reformation, (as extracted by Keith from the collector's books,) was in Scotch money, &c. 117l. 6s. 8d. 20 chalders of meal, and 10 chalders of meal. By other accounts, the victual appears to have been 10 chalders more. It seems to have been, by much, the richest Collegiate Church in Scotland. By the erection, there were, besides the provost, 5 chaplains of the choir of Methven.

† CRAWFURD'S *Peerage*.

‡ Soon after his Coronation, anno 1306, King ROBERT BRUCE was defeated by the English troops, under the Earl of Pembroke, near the Castle of Methven, and found himself deserted by most of his army: After which, he suffered the greatest

It is only necessary to mention farther, under this article, that BESSY BELL and MARY GRAY, celebrated in one of our most popular songs, are said to have been buried in this parish, about half a mile west of the present house of Lednock*.

Character of the People.—The people are sober and industrious, charitable to the poor, and compassionate to objects in distress. They are regular in their attendance on the ordinances

of the church, and patient under the most difficult and distressing. The account of the battle is thus given by a modern historian.—‘BRUCE, having had no time to discipline his men, had formed a camp at Methven, near Perth, which was the head quarter of the English General; and there lay, upon the defensive, well knowing the disadvantage he was under from his men not being disciplined. He had already attempted to surprize Perth; but failing in his design, he had retired to Methven, from whence he sent a challenge to the Earl to fight him. According to BARBOUR, and the best historians, the challenge was accepted; but, on the night before the day appointed, which was the 20th of July, while the Scots thought themselves secure, and were unprovided for battle, they were attacked, and routed by their enemies, in the park of Methven.’

Guthrie's Hist. of Scotland, Vol. II. page 177.

* The common tradition is, that Bessy Bell was daughter of the Laird of Kinvaid, and Mary Gray of the Laird of Lednock. Being near neighbours, a great intimacy subsisted between the young ladies. When they were together at Lednock, the plague broke out, anno 1645; to avoid which, they retired to a romantic spot, called BURN BREAS, on the estate of Lednock, where they lived for some time; but, afterwards, caught the infection from a young gentleman, an admirer of both, who came to visit them in their solitude: And here they died; and were buried at some distance from their bower, near a beautiful bank of the Almond.

Major BRAY, the late proprietor of Lednock, inclosed, with pious care, the spot of ground, and consecrated it to the memory of these famed and amiable friends.

ordinances of religion, without the ostentation of those, who
'thank God that they are not as other men.' And it is much
to the honour of both the religious parties in this parish,
that, in all the intercourses of common life, they forget that
they worship under separate roofs. The incumbent scarcely
knows an instance of the rancour of bigotry, or the petu-
lance of overweening conceit, among the members of the
two congregations.

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