NUMBER XXXVI.

PARISH OF MARKINCH.

(COUNTY AND SYNOD OF FIFE, PRESBYTERY OF KIRKCALDY.)

By the Rev. Mr. JOHN THOMSON.

Name, Extent, Surface, &c.

THE parish church and village of Markinch stand upon the southern declivity of an eminence, or little hill, surrounded on all sides by a marsh; and from this insular situation, the last part of the name is obviously derived. Mark, or Merk, according to the most ancient spelling, has probably been prefixed, from the valuation put upon this inch, or spot of ground. The greatest extent of the parish from N. to S., is five miles and a half; and, from E. to W., about five miles, which may contain about 7000 acres. The form of the parish is very irregular, being deeply indented in several places, by the adjacent parishes. The village of Dubiesside, which contains

tains near 200 inhabitants, and lies upon the Frith of Forth, on the W. ſide of the mouth of the Leven, forms a part of this pariſh, though totally detached by the intervention of the pariſh of Wemyſs. Markinch conſiſts of four ſtraths, or valleys, running from W. to E., all of them approaching, and ſome of them joining one another on the E. Theſe ſtraths are ſeparated by gently ſwelling hills, which riſe to no great height, and which are uſually called Laws. Theſe hills, or laws, correſponding to the general riſe of the country from S. to N., gradually riſe above one another; the more northerly always overlooking thoſe that lie towards the S. The hill on the northern boundary is in a line with the Lomond hills, and forms a part of that track of high ground, which, extending from W. to E., divides the northern from the ſouthern part of the county.

Soil, Climate, and Diſeaſes.—The ſoil of this pariſh is various. A ſmall part conſiſts of ſtrong clay, and deep loam. A larger proportion, of light loam, rich and fertile. There is alſo a good deal of dry, gravelly, ſharp land, which, in moiſt ſeaſons, yields plentiful crops. But the largeſt proportion is rather wet, and lies on a cold, tilly, or clayey bottom. Of this kind ſome is ſufficiently deep, and, in warm ſprings and ſummers, abundantly productive. But other parts of it are thin, and, when allowed to lie untilled, apt to run into heath, or coarſe benty graſs. The whole pariſh almoſt is arable, except a large moſs on the N. ſide, and ſome ſwampy ground, which has been planted with fir, and other kinds of barren timber. This pariſh has little ſhelter from the ſtorm in any direction, but ſuffers moſt from the eaſterly winds, which, in the ſpring months eſpecially, are exceedingly cold and penetrating. The climate, however, is tolerably mild and temperate, and the inhabitants generally healthy.

Rheumatiſm,

Rheumatiſm, conſumptions, and hyſtericks, are the moſt prevailing diſeaſes. Nervous fevers are not uncommon, though ſeldom epidemical. During the incumbency of the preſent miniſter, ſeveral inſtances of ſcrofula and cancer have occurred. The ſmall-pox is frequently very fatal. Though a few individuals have been reconciled to the practice of inoculation, yet the prejudices of the bulk of the common people againſt it continue ſo ſtrong, that it has not yet been generally introduced. Children from 4 to 10, or 12 years of age, ſeem peculiarly liable to worms, particularly that ſpecies, called the teres, or long round worm. Some young people in this place, have been known to void, in the ſpace of 24 hours, upwards of a ſcore of theſe worms, ſome of them 10, and 12 inches long.

Rivers.—The river Leven, which iſſues from a large lake of the ſame name, lying about 5 or 6 miles to the weſtward, runs through this pariſh, and empties itſelf into the Frith of Forth, at the town of Leven. The Orr is another conſiderable river, riſing from a loch or lake, of the ſame name, alſo to the weſtward, and runs through the ſouthern part of the pariſh, joining the Leven about 2 miles below the pariſh church. In both theſe rivers there is plenty of different kinds of fiſh. Salmon, pikes, and burn trouts are the principal kinds. There is alſo to be found in them a ſpecies of trout, of a tolerable ſize, the fleſh of which is red, reſembling that of ſalmon, of a fine flavour, and very delicate. Thoſe who are fond of the amuſement of angling, can never miſs excellent ſport in theſe rivers at the proper ſeaſons.

Roads and Bridges.—The great road from Kinghorn to Cupar, and Dundee, runs through the weſt part of the pariſh; and, ſince the late turnpike act for this county was obtained, has

has been moſtly put into excellent repair. On this road there are ſeveral bridges within the bounds of this pariſh; but 3 only of ſuch conſequence as to deſerve notice; one over the Orr, another over Lochty, a ſmall water, about a mile N. of the Orr; and another over the Leven, near Balbirnie. The firſt of theſe is very old and narrow *. The other two have been lately rebuilt. There is another line of road, which leads from Kirkcaldy to Cupar, and paſſes through the eaſtern part of the pariſh. On this road there is an excellent bridge over the Leven at Cameron. There is alſo a public road, which leads from Kinroſs to Leven, Largo, and the eaſt coaſt, and nearly divides the pari.h in the middle. It is in tolerable order, though not yet in the ſame ſtate of repair with the two juſt now mentioned. On the W. road, there is a toll-bar near the northern extremity of the pariſh; and another on the E. road, at Windygates, near Cameron bridge. Beſides the bridges already taken notice of, there is one over the Orr, about a mile and a half above its influx into the Leven; and two over the Leven, one at Balgonie, and the other at Balfour. The by-roads are in a very bad condition. In winter, and in wet weather, even during the ſummer months, they are, in many places, almoſt impaſſable. This evil the pariſh of Markinch feels in common with the reſt of the county; to remove which, ſome effectual remedy ought ſurely to be, as ſoon as poſſible, applied. Good toll roads are doubtleſs highly advantageous to a country: but the advantage will be almoſt entirely confined to paſſengers, and thoſe who live in the immediate neighbourhood, unleſs a ready communication with theſe be opened up for the remoter parts of the country, by putting the by-roads into a proper ſtate of repair.

Population.

* It was built about 260 years ago, by James Bethune, archbiſhop of St. Andrew's, ſon to the laird of Balfour in this pariſh.

Population.—Markinch is, perhaps, one of the moſt populous country pariſhes in Fife; the number of ſouls amounting to nearly 2800. The return to Dr. Webſter in 1755, was only 2188. Hence there is an increaſe of about 612. This extraordinary population may be accounted for from the following circumſtances: There are 7 villages in the pariſh, which contain about 400 families; and two large collieries, which employ a great number of hands. The feuars are very numerous, being about 120. There are a great many mills, of different kinds, upon the Leven. Every farm of any conſiderable extent has a cottage town upon it; and there is a great proportion of the heritors reſident, who, beſides the extraordinary number of ſervants they keep, employ a much greater number of labouring people, than tenants could be ſuppoſed to do *.

Heritors and Rent.—The principal heritors are the Earl of Leven, Mr. Balfour of Balbirnie, Colonel Wemyſs of Wemyſs, Mr. Bethune of Balfour, and the Counteſs of Rothes. Beſides theſe, there are ſeveral other reſpectable gentlemen, who poſſeſs conſiderable property in the pariſh, and a number of ſmall proprietors. The number of the whole is 21, of whom 11 are reſident. The valued rent amounts to 10,456 l. 5 s. Scotch money. The real rent cannot be exactly aſcertained, as many of the proprietors are reſident, and have a conſiderable

* Since the year 1785, when the preſent incumbent was admitted, the population of the pariſh has increaſed about 200, owing to the re-erection of Balgonie colliery, which had not been wrought for 40 years, and a great many new feus, granted lately by the Earl of Leven. Within the laſt ſix or ſeven years, about 80 new houſes have been built, and 8 rebuilt, beſides a great many more, which are building. The expenſe of theſe buildings may amount to 4000 l. Sterling. The diviſion of the inhabitants, and any other circumſtance relative to the population of the pariſh, neceſſary to be remarked, will be ſeen in the Statiſtical Table hereto annexed.

quantity of their land in their own poſſeſſion. As nearly as it can be calculated, it may amount to upwards of 5000 l. a-year. Within the laſt 20 years, the rents have riſen above 2000 l. a-year; and they are daily advancing. The rent of land, let in large farms, is from 10 s. to 22 s. the acre. Small pieces of ground, if of ſuperior quality, or in the immediate neighbourhood of the villages, will bring from 30 s. to 40 s. the acre.

Agriculture.—Some years ago, the method of farming, in this pariſh, was extremely rude, ſlovenly, and unproductive. Excepting the pleaſure-ground around gentlemen's ſeats, and ſome encloſures, which the reſiding proprietors kept in their own hands, the whole pariſh almoſt lay open and unencloſed. Few turnips were ſown; and very little ground laid out in clover and rye-graſs. The land was ill tilled; no pains taken to make, or to keep it clean, and the ſcanty allowance of manure injudiciouſly applied. In conſequence of this, the grain was of an inferior quality, and brought a lower price at the market. But of late, by the example of the gentlemen, who begin to pay more attention to the improvement of their eſtates, by the regulations fixed in the new leaſes, and by the exertions of ſome intelligent, ſubſtantial, and enterpriſing farmers, agriculture begins to aſſume a more promiſing aſpect. Though much of the pariſh ſtill lies open, encloſing is going on very rapidly. The turnip huſbandry, becomes more and more extenſive every year. A great deal of land, is ſown with clover and rye-graſs. More attention is paid to fallowing, and cleaning; and more judgment ſhown in cropping the lands. The judicious farmer keeps more of his land for hay and paſture, and leſs in tillage than formerly; by theſe means, as well as by the quantity of turnips raiſed, and conſumed upon his farm, the quantity of manure is increaſed, and he enabled, to do more

more juſtice to his grounds. The uſe of lime too, as a manure, is becoming very general. One tenant lately laid upon his farm, upwards of 1500 boils of ſhells, or unſlacked lime, in one ſeaſon. The Scots plough is ſtill uſed by many, but its conſtruction has been much improved, by which means it is rendered eaſier for the horſes, and makes better work, than formerly. However, the Engliſh plough, with the curved mould board, of caſt metal, is coming faſt into uſe. Where the land is dry and clean, a couple of horſes are only yoked into the plough, and the man who holds the plough, drives the horſes: but in wet, deep, and ſtrong land, cattle are ſtill uſed along with the horſes. This method is certainly very proper, for ſuch a ſoil; as the ſteady, deliberate ſtep of the cattle gives a due check to the hurry and impatient ardour, natural to horſes, in wet deep ground *.

Produce.—Oats, and barley, or blanded bear, are the prevailing crops. Blanded bear, or rammel, as the country people here call it, is the produce of barley and common bear ſown in a mixed ſtate. Theſe are diſtinguiſhed chiefly by the form or ſtructure of the ear; the barley having only two rows of grain, and the common bear ſix. Barley is a ſtronger and larger grain than the bear. It lies longer in the ground before it ſprings, and is later in ripening. And the ſame dif-

* Though improvements in agriculture are making conſiderable advances, yet there is one bar, which, unleſs removed, muſt greatly retard their progreſs, and prevent their ever coming to perfection; I mean the diſinclination of the proprietors to give leaſes of a ſufficient length of time. To encloſe, and ſubdivide, and clean, and manure to purpoſe, a farm of any conſiderable extent, would require from 500 l. to 1000 l. But there are few farmers who would riſk ſuch an expenſe upon a leaſe of 19 years. To accelerate the improvement of land, and to bring it to its higheſt ſtate of cultivation, the proprietors muſt either encourage the exertions of the farmer, by granting longer leaſes, or take the trouble and expenſes upon themſelves.

ference is obſervable, when they are made into malt. It is remarkable, however, that when barley and common bear have been cultivated, for ſome time, in a mixed ſtate, they ſpring, and ripen, and malten equally; and little difference in point of ſtrength or ſize is diſcernible. This is probably owing to the pollen of the two ſpecies mixing and falling indiſcriminately upon both, when the plant is impregnated, and thereby producing a ſameneſs in the quality of the grain, whilſt the external form of the ear of each is preſerved diſtinct. Correſponding to this idea, the blanded bear holds a middle place, in point of quality, between barley and common bear. Though inferior to the former, it is of a better quality than the latter. This mixed kind of grain is wearing out, and the culture of clean barley becoming more general. Till lately, little wheat was ſown in this pariſh: at preſent, between 80 and 100 acres may be raiſed annually. It is doubtful, however, when the nature of the ſoil, in general, is conſidered, whether it would be advantageous to the farmers here, to puſh the cultivation of wheat to any conſiderable extent, at leaſt, till the improvement of the ground is brought to a higher degree of perfection than it is at preſent. Nearly as much land may be employed in raiſing peaſe and beans; and upwards of 100 acres for flax. It may be proper to obſerve here, that whilſt improvements of other kinds have been attended to, the culture of flax ſtill continues to be conducted in a very injudicious and unprofitable manner. The farmers, beſides ſowing a quantity for themſelves, their ſervants, and harveſt reapers, let ſo much of their land to others, who either are adventurers in that article, and raiſe conſiderable quantities, or who raiſe it ſolely for the uſe of their own families. Little attention is paid either to the choice of the ſoil, or the preparation of the ground; and of courſe, whilſt the product is ſmall, general-

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ly not above two, and ſometimes not above one tron ſtone, from the peck of ſeed, the land is ſcourged, and a great deal of extraordinary labour and manure neceſſary to fit it for a ſucceeding crop. Potatoes too are raiſed in large quantities. Beſides what every farmer plants for his own uſe, all the cottagers upon the farm, and many of the inhabitants of the adjacent villages, take as much land for potatoes as they can plant with their aſhes, and what dung they can procure; and for this, they either pay money, or labour in harveſt. The rent at which land is let, for flax or potatoes, is generally from 3 l. to 4 l. the acre; and when let in ſmaller quantities, it is from 15d. to 18d. the 100 ſquare yards.

Cattle.—The breeding of horſes, and particularly of black cattle, has of late become an object of general attention. Moſt of the principal farmers, beſides rearing young cattle, graze in ſummer, and feed upon turnips in winter, a conſiderable number for the butcher. Formerly, every farmer, almoſt, kept a quantity of ſheep: but now they are totally baniſhed, except a few, which ſome of the reſiding proprietors breed for their own uſe, and theſe are moſtly of the large white faced kind. The farm ſteads, with a few exceptions, are ample and commodious, and every farm of any conſiderable extent, has a cottage town upon it. This is of great advantage to the farmer; as it enables him to furniſh a houſe and garden, or kail-yard, to ſuch of his men ſervants as are married; and the other houſes he can let upon ſuch terms, as to ſecure the labour of the cottagers in harveſt, or at any other ſeaſon, when extraordinary aſſiſtance may be neceſſary.

Mills and Multures.—There are a great many corn mills in the pariſh; every heritor of any conſiderable property, or who has the command of water, having a mill upon his eſtate, to

to which his tenants are usually thirled. The multures are very high, amounting to one 13th part of the value of the grain carried to the mill. For this, it is true, the mill master does a great deal of duty. He carries the grain from the farmer's barn, dries, and grinds it, and brings it home.

Manufactures.—On the Leven, near Balbirnie bridge, a manufacture of lintseed oil hath been established for a good many years, which hath been carried on to a considerable extent. This manufacture is not only profitable to the manufacturers themselves, but advantageous to the country around, as it furnishes a ready market, and ready money, for all the lintseed produced in the neighbourhood, which, being unfit for sowing, could not turn to account any other way.—There is also in this parish, a bleachfield, where a large quantity of cloth is whitened every year. It is under the best management, and gives general satisfaction. In the village of Markinch, a stocking manufacture has been set on foot lately, and promises to do well. Some time ago, a considerable quantity of brown linen was manufactured for sale. But of late, that kind of work has been mostly relinquished, and the weavers, not engaged in country work, have been employed by the great manufacturers on the coast, in making checks and ticks, and from the flourishing state of these manufactures, and the extraordinary rise of wages, the number of weavers hath greatly increased. There are a few who carry on business for themselves, on a small scale, and employ from 6 to 12 hands. Manufactures of different kinds, particularly of spinning and weaving, might be carried on in this parish with much advantage. The water of Leven affords many excellent situations for machinery. Coal is at hand, and abundant. There is great plenty of good freestone for building; and, therefore, should any man of ability and enterprise

enterprife fet a bufinefs of this kind on foot, it might be highly beneficial to himfelf, and to the country around; and would be well worthy the countenance and encouragement of the gentlemen in the immediate neighbourhood; as, by employing a number of hands, it would furnifh a ready market for the produce of their eftates, and of courfe heighten their value.

Eccleſiaſtical State.—The church of Markinch is a very ancient place of religious worſhip *. The King is patron. The living conſiſts of 128 bolls of victual, Linlithgow meaſure, half meal and half barley, and 500 l. Scotch, in money; including 100 l. Scotch for communion elements, beſides a manſe and 8 acres of glebe †. There are no Seceding meeting-houſes in this pariſh. The great body of the people continue ſtedfaſtly attached to the Eſtabliſhed Church, about one 16th part only having joined the different ſectaries.

Schools.

* It was given by Maldvinus, Biſhop of St. Andrew's, to the Culdees in the 10th century. Towards the end of the 12th century, it was mortified to the Priory of St. Andrew's, by Eugenius the ſon of Hugo, a ſecond ſon of Gillimichel M'Duff, the 4th Earl of Fife, which deed was confirmed by a charter of King William. From this Eugenius, the family of the Earl of Wemyſs is ſuppoſed to have ſprung. About the beginning of the 17th century, the ſmall parſonage of Kirkforthar, belonging to Lindſay of Kirkforthar, a cadet of the family of Crawford, was ſuppreſſed and annexed to Markinch. The ruins of the church of Kirkforthar are ſtill to be ſeen: they ſtand in the middle of the old church-yard, or burying-ground, which is encloſed by a wall; and there many of the people belonging to that diſtrict ſtill bury their dead.

† In the year 1636, the ſtipend received a ſmall augmentation on account of the annexation of Kirkforthar. Since that period, it has been but once augmented, and the augmentation got, was only 20 l. of money, and the converſion of ſome oats into meal. Among the predeceſſors of the preſent incumbent was Mr. Tullidelph, afterward Principal of the College of St. Andrew's.

Schools.—There is one eſtabliſhed ſchoolmaſter in this pariſh. He has a good houſe and garden, with a ſalary of 10 l. a-year. The ſchool-fees are, 3 s. for teaching latin, 2 s. 6 d. for arithmetic, 2 s. for writing, and 1 s. 6 d. for engliſh. And, as the village of Markinch, and the country in the immediate neighbourhood, are very populous, the emoluments are conſiderable. Including precentor's fees, and other perquiſites, they may amount to 50 l. a-year. Beſides the eſtabliſhed ſchool, there are 6 private ſchools in different parts of the pariſh, the moſt conſiderable of which, is fixed at the Coal-town of Balgonie. This is under the immediate patronage of Lady Balgonie, who has built, at her own expenſe, a ſchool-houſe, and a houſe for the ſchoolmaſter; and by the encouragement ſhe has afforded, and the perſonal attention ſhe has paid to it, has greatly contributed to its proſperity and ſucceſs. Her Ladyſhip has alſo eſtabliſhed, at the ſame place, a ſchool for teaching young girls to ſew; and has provided a houſe for the miſtreſs, with an apartment for teaching, and has given ſuch encouragement, as to induce a woman of character and abilities to undertake the management of it. At theſe different ſchools, upwards of 200 children are conſtantly taught, almoſt all of whom belong to the pariſh.

State of the Poor.—There are at preſent 20 poor people on the roll, who get regular ſupply every week; beſides ſeveral others, who are aſſiſted occaſionally as their neceſſities require. The ſum expended annually for this purpoſe, is about 60 l. Sterling, ariſing from a fund of 320 l., the weekly collections at the church-door, and the dues of the mortcloths. There are no begging poor belonging to the pariſh.

Prices of Grain and Proviſions.—For ſome years paſt, the average price of wheat has been 20 s., of barley 15 s. of

blanded bear 14 s., of common bear 13 s. 4 d., of oats 12 s., and of oatmeal 15 s. the boll. The wheat boll is nearly 4 Winchester bushels, the barley and oat boll 6 Winchester bushels, and the meal boll 8 Dutch stone. Beef, mutton, pork, lamb, and veal, sell commonly at 4½ d. the pound, of 22 ounces. At particular seasons, however, when these articles are plentiful, they fall to 3½ d., and at other times, when they are scarce, rise to 5 d., or even to 6 d. the pound. The price of all kinds of poultry has advanced greatly of late. A fed goose will sell at 3 s. 6 d., a turkey at 4 s., a hen at 1 s., and chickens at 6 d. or 8 d. the pair. Butter sells at 9 d., common cheese at 3 d., and sweet milk cheese at 4½ d. the pound. Butter and cheese are sold by the same weight with butcher meat. Some years ago, fish of all kinds were abundant and cheap. But now the price is more than doubled. This extraordinary rise is owing partly to scarcity, and partly to the increased consumption of the Edinburgh market.

Prices of Labour.—The wages of day-labourers, from March to October, are from 1 s. to 1 s. 2 d., and for the rest of the year from 8 d. to 10 d., varying according to the nature of the work in which they are employed. In harvest, men get 10 d., and women 8 d. a-day, with their meat. When hired for the whole harvest, men have a guinea, and women 15 s. or 16 s. and their maintainance; and generally the privilege of some lint sown. Men servants, who eat in the house, get of wages from 5 l. to 7 l. a-year, and maid servants from 2 l. to 3 l. Farm servants, who furnish their own provisions, get 6½ bolls of meal, and an allowance for milk, besides their wages. Sometimes they have a house and kail-yard, and a cow fed through the year, and, in that case, their wages are not so high. Tailors get 8 d. a-day, with their meat; masons have 1 s. 8 d.; and carpenters 1 s. 6 d. With-

in theſe laſt ten years, the price of labour, in general, has advanced in the proportion of 3 to 2.

Inns, and Ale-houſes.—Upon the W. road, there are two excellent inns, the New Inn at Pittillock-ford, and the Plaſterers, near Balbirnie bridge. Theſe are ſuperior to moſt, and equal to any in the county. There are 10 ale-houſes in the pariſh, which ſell porter, whiſky, and ſmall-beer. Some of theſe brew, and the reſt purchaſe ſmall-beer from brewers, partly for ſale in the houſe, and partly to ſupply private families with that article. Though ale-houſes are generally hurtful to the induſtry and morals of the people, theſe bad effects have not been ſenſibly felt in this pariſh.

Minerals and Foſſils.—In the eſtate of Balbirnie, there is an extenſive bed of ſhell marl. The ſhells are moſtly wilks (periwinkles) and muſcles. When expoſed to the air, they fall in a ſhort time to powder. The medium thickneſs of the bed is 3½ feet under a cover of 7 or 8 feet. This marl was diſcovered a great many years ago; and it is ſurpriſing, that ſuch a fund of manure ſhould have been neglected for ſo long a time, eſpecially as there is level enough to drain it, at no great expenſe. There is abundance of freeſtone in the pariſh, and ſome of it of excellent quality. On the N. ſide of the pariſh, there is a large moſs, from which a conſiderable quantity of peats is dug every year. Theſe are partly uſed by the poorer people in the immediate neighbourhood, and partly carried to more diſtant places, and ſold for the purpoſe of kindling fires.

But what chiefly deſerves to be mentioned under this article, is the plentiful ſupply of excellent coal, which this pariſh enjoys. Balgonie coal * is within a mile and a half

S. E.

* Balgonie coal, the property of the Earl of Leven, was diſcovered and wrought

S. E. of the village, and Balbirnie coal within half that diſtance to the W. Both theſe collieries are too diſtant from a ſea-port for exportation; but the whole inland part of Fife, for many miles round, and even N. to the river Tay, is ſupplied from them. The former has a water engine, with a wheel 26 feet diameter, which works two pumps to the depth of

wrought upwards of 300, ſome ſay 500 years ago. As far back as the year 1517, the Coaltown of Balgonie is mentioned in a ſcheme of diviſion and valuation of the county of Fife, of that date. The name of the village evidently indicates, that it had been originally built for the accommodation of the colliers, or, becauſe built on the ground where coal had been found and wrought. But ſince it had grown to ſuch conſideration at the above mentioned period, as to be taken notice of in the general deſcription and valuation of the county, it muſt have exiſted, and, of courſe, the coal muſt have been wrought for a conſiderable time before. That this coal had been wrought at an early period, to a conſiderable extent, appears from the coal waſte, which can yet be traced for upwards of 3 miles along the line of bearing, and which had been dried by a free level to the depth, at an average, of 14 fathoms. It would appear, however, that when the free level coal was wrought out, the workings ceaſed. How long ago this happened, it is impoſſible to ſay. The grandfather of the oldeſt man living on the ſpot 60 years ago, had neither ſeen it wrought, nor had he ſeen any perſon who could tell at what period it ſtopped. In the year 1731, it was again ſet a-going by Alexander Earl of Leven, who erected a water engine, which wrought two ſets of pumps, with 9 inch working barrels, and which dried the coal to the depth of 30 fathoms. In the year 1732, this coal was let to tackſmen, who carried it on for ſome years, but meeting with large hitches yielding much water, their engine was overpowered; which obliged the tackſman to abandon this ſpot, and erect a wind-mill at a little diſtance on the crop, leaving a ſufficient barrier to keep off the water, which drained a ſmall breaſt of the coal. This mill wrought an 8 inch bore 14 fathoms deep, which enabled them to carry on a more extenſive winning * farther on the dip, than the old level free waſtes. During this operation, George Balfour, Eſq. of Balbirnie, wrought up a level to the coal in his eſtate, anno 1740, which enabled him to underſell the tackſman of this coal; by which means, in 1743, they were obliged to give it up, there not being demand for both. Nothing more was done till the year 1785, when Lord Balgonie erected it again, by fitting up the preſent engine.

* *Whatever extent of coal is dried, either by a free level, or an engine, it is called, in the language of the colliers, a* winning, i. e. *a gaining of the coal.*

of 30 fathoms, with 12¼ inch working barrels. What the late tackſman intended, is now carried into effect by the preſent winning, which commands a very fine breaſt of coal in both ſeams. The lowermoſt ſeam is yet untouched with this winning. The main ſeam, now working, conſiſts of

	Feet.	Inch.
A mixture of ſplint cherry coal and rough coal, -	3	0
Stone, - - - - -	0	4
Rough coal, which includes 9 inches of fine cherry,	3	0
Stone, - - - - -	0	4
Rough coal, - - - - -	1	2
Stone, - - - - -	0	3
Fine ſtrong ſplint, - - -	1	6
Fine Cherry, - - - -	0	4
Total between roof and pavement,	9	11

The roof conſiſts of hard blue till, about 10 feet thick, above which are ſtrong poſts of freeſtone, ſome of which are very hard. The other ſeam lies 10 fathoms deeper; it is ſaid to be a very fine coal, 7 feet thick, but has ſome ſmall ribs of ſtone in it. The average out-put for the laſt four years is about 30 tons a-day, and ſo much is the caſe altered ſince 1743, that there is a great demand, and the conſumption is daily increaſing. This coal dips to the E. at the engine, but to the S. E., after paſſing a large hitch about 500 yards from the engine pit, on the line of bearing at the crop, the dip, or declivity, is exactly a fathom in 3; but, in the dip workings, only one fathom in 4½; which gives ground to believe that it will at laſt flatten altogether, and even crop out at the oppoſite point of the compaſs, which, if the caſe, will make it a very productive colliery.

Balbirnie coal lies both in the Balbirnie eſtate, the property

ty of John Balfour, Eſq. and in Leſlie eſtate, the property of the Counteſs of Rothes, being one and the ſame ſeam: and is called Leſlie or Balbirnie coal, according to the eſtate, in which the works are for the time. But as almoſt the whole of it, level free, and more than half the underlevel are in Balbirnie eſtate, it is generally known by the name of Balbirnie coal *, and conſiſts of two ſpecies, called the little coal and the great coal. The quality of the little coal is extremely good. It is a cherry coal, has ſomething of the caking quality, as it works iron very well, and is the only coal in this part of Fife that will do ſo; for which purpoſe the very ſmalleſt particles of it are ſold to the ſmiths on the coaſt of Fife, from Dyſart to St. Andrew's, and the whole inland part of the country, extending to 1000 tons annually, beſides the quantity of great coal, in the ſtate aftermentioned. It varies in thickneſs from 6 feet to 4 feet. The diſtance between roof and pavement is generally the ſame. When a ſtone is found in the middle of the ſeam, the coal diminiſhes in thickneſs, as the ſtone increaſes, till at laſt, if the ſtone be very thick, the coal is ſo much thinned as to be hardly worth working. This field of coal is not a regular

* When this coal was firſt diſcovered, cannot now be known, but it appears to have been wrought at an early period near Balbirnie Burns, firſt by a free level, and afterward by ſome ſort of pumps, at a place called the Pump Sink, to the northward of Balbirnie houſe. Old pits can be here traced along the crop, but the period theſe were wrought, is unknown. About the year 1730, George Balfour, Eſquire of Balbirnie, a gentleman who had paid conſiderable attention to the ſtudy of mineralogy, began firſt to trace the ſtrata by bores and otherwiſe, from theſe old waſtes, through great part of his eſtate to the river Leven, nearly one mile diſtant;—then began at the river, and, by a ſtone mine acroſs the metals, wrought into the coal, and thus made it level free to a great extent, about the year 1740. By this level, it was wrought from that date, till the year 1780. In ſinking the firſt pit on the level, a ſeam was found 18 inches thick of the little coal, and through the whole field it is exactly 21 feet above the main coal every where. The ſame gentleman bored 12 fathoms through the main coal in ſearch of other ſeams, but found none above 3 inches thick.

a regular one: it lies very nearly in the form of a horſe-ſhoe; ſuppoſing it 5 or 6 times broader than ordinary, and the open ſpace of the common ſize. At the place where firſt diſcovered, a little to the N. of the river Leven, the dip was directly S. In working forward, the field divided in two; one level run toward the N. W., another to the N. E., and the crop was wrought till within 12 feet of the ſurface. The two branches of the level ſeparated further and further, and the two crops did the ſame, leaving a ſpace of many hundred fathoms between, in which was neither coal, nor appearance of it: this ſpace reſembled the open part of the horſe-ſhoe. The encreaſing conſumption of coal will appear from the following ſtate:

From 1740 to 1763, the quantity of coal ſold at Balbirnie appears to have been 42,135 loads, or 8,427 tons annually, which, in 23 years, is	192,811
From 1763 to 1777, both inclufive, the average ſales were 46,719 loads, or 9,343 tons annually, - - - - -	140,157
From 1778 to 1792, both inclufive, the average quantity was 54,660 loads *, or 10,932 tons annually, - - - - -	163,980
In 1784, owing to a ſcheme of lowering the price of the coal to all who were more than ten miles diſtant from the coal-works, there was an additional quantity ſold, not included in the foregoing average, of - - - - - - - -	4,047
Total number of tons ſold in 52 years,	500,995

On the ſuppoſition, that the demand for coal ſhould not increaſe above the average of the laſt 15 years, being 10,932 tons annually, but continue the ſame; and although one half of the whole field of coal were yet entire (which certainly is not the caſe), an equal quantity would be entirely exhauſted in leſs than 46 years. But the increaſing conſumption muſt be immenſe, when it is conſidered, that during the firſt 40 years, there was no other coal-work, except this, to ſupply this

* The loads in the above computation contain 27 ſtone Dutch weight each, which is one third more than the ſale load, or load ſold to the country. The former is known by the name of the collier's load.

this part of Fife, and that during the laſt ſeven years the coal of Balgonie has alſo been wrought, and has ſupplied the country with 9000 tons annually, notwithſtanding of which, the conſumption of this coal is continually on the increaſe *.

Antiquities,

* Since 1780, 3 water engines have been erected upon this coal. The firſt works 2 pumps, 14 inch working barrels; the ſecond, 2 pumps of 11 inches diameter; the third, 2 pumps 15 inch diameter, of the working barrel; and about 20 fathoms left from the coal, to a mine in which the water is delivered 5 fathoms below the ſurface of the ground. Above the rock is gravel, which admits the winter rains to paſs through the numerous cutters in the ſtrata, conveys it down to the coal, and is the great cauſe of ſuch powerful engines being neceſſary to drain the coal. It is a pretty general opinion, that all coals are as good in quality, or better, in the dip than towards the crop. Alſo, that any coal once diſcovered, may be wrought to any depth from which it is poſſible to draw the water. But what has recently happened in this very coal, gives reaſon to believe that opinion, however general, to be erroneous; for, when the engines were firſt erected, from the favourable appearance of the ſurface of the ground, compoſed of flat and gently riſing fields of vaſt extent, and from the extreme flatneſs of the coal, which did not dip above 1 in 12, often not above 1 foot in 20, it had the appearance of being almoſt inexhauſtable, or, at leaſt, that the under level coal would be much more extenſive than the crop already wrought; but the very reverſe of this was found to be the caſe. An engine erected at the trifling depth of 20 fathoms, in the ſhort ſpace of 10 years from its erection, was found not only deep enough, but actually deeper than any coal in that field. In working up the engine level, it was found to go deeper than any part of the coal: dead water was kept till the coal was found entirely cut off in the dip by a gravel dike, compoſed of gravel and large bullet whin ſtones, all of them rounded as if they had been long toſſed about in water. The level was puſhed on through this gravel, till it was found impracticable to proceed with ſafety to the workmen: the coal was, therefore, wrought along the ſide of this dike, as deep as there was any coal, and in the progreſs of the work, the coal to the dip on the weſt ſide of the field, which this engine was erected to drain, not only turned out to be of bad quality, but its thickneſs was diminiſhed by a hard ſtone which divided the ſeam in two, extending from 1 to 4 feet in thickneſs, ſo hard as only to be wrought with gunpowder; which added ſo much to the expenſe, that the coal could not be wrought with profit, and was therefore abandoned altogether, and the third engine erected on the E. part of the ſame coal where the ſeam was found 6 feet

Antiquities, &c.—Balgonie castle, one of the seats of the Earl of Leven, is a fabric of great antiquity, and considerable

feet thick, without any stone at all. The proprietor wrought up a level along the side of the river Leven, about half a mile in length, which lessened the lift of the engine 5 fathoms. In working up this mine, about 150 fathoms from the place where he intended to erect his engine, he found the metals on edge perfectly perpendicular; a little further, he found them dip 1 fathom in 3, and that to the west, directly contrary to the dip of the coal, and there he found two seams of coal, with 7 fathoms of stone between them; the first, 2½ feet, and the other, 3 feet thick, dip 1 in 3. About 50 fathoms farther, he found flat metal rising to the west, the proper rise of the coal in that part of the field. These appearances gave him reason to believe the main coal did not extend far to the dip, but was either cut off by these edge metals, or would be found on the dip separated by a stone into two seams, and suddenly thrown out to the surface in the form of the two seams he had discovered in his mine, by a rise of 1 fathom in 3, directly contrary to the ordinary crop of the coal. In order to discover this, as soon as the engine was erected, a level mine was pushed on to the eastward: The coal was found perfectly good till he approached within 50 fathoms of the edge metals, where a stone made its appearance in the middle of the coal, one inch thick, 6 fathoms farther, it increased to 18 inches thick, and continued to increase till it was found impracticable to be wrought, and appeared fairly to divide the seam of coal in two, corresponding in thickness to the two edge seams he had discovered in the said mine. The coal continues flat, but it can hardly be doubted, that if the level is driven 20 fathoms farther, it will rise the opposite way, 1 fathom in 3 *. Since this is the case upon the E. part of the field, it is not easy to account, why the same thing has not happened on the west part of the same field, where the gravel dike intervenes, and cuts off the coal in place of the edge metals: the probability is, that the edge metals are also there, and that the coal will terminate and be thrown out to the surface by them in the same way, though in this part the gravel dike seems to be thrust in, between the flat and the edge metals; and is of great thickness, as a trial was made at right angles, a hundred fathoms distant, and 17 fathoms

* *Since writing the above, an upset has been pushed forward, and the coal actually found to rise, as supposed above, 1 fathom in 5; and it will, no doubt, a little further on, rise 1 fathom in 3, and crop out at the surface; and the stone will increase in thickness, till it is found 7 fathoms at the surface, and the main coal is thrown out there, in the form of the two seams, above mentioned.*

derable ſtrength. The time when it was built cannot be exactly aſcertained; but from the beſt information that can

thom deep, where, in place of the rock and ordinary metals above the coal, nothing but gravel was found; from which it may be concluded, that the dike exceeds 100 fathoms in thickneſs, how much more, it is hard to ſay; at the diſtance of another 100 fathoms, the edge metals are ſeen in this part of the field alſo, which deſtroys every hope of the main coal being again found beyond the dike. From what has appeared in the eaſt part of the field, it ſeems pretty certain, that if the coal is found at all, it will be in the form of two ſeams on edge, thruſt ſuddenly up to the ſurface by theſe edge metals, and conſequently of ſmall extent and little value.

From what is above recited, it may be inferred, that it is not always ſafe to truſt to the dip ſide of a ſeam of coal being of value, though the crop has been found good, which was the caſe here, the crop having been wrought for 40 years, and every where in the natural level found good, and yet the dip on the weſt half of the field has been exhauſted in leſs than 12 years, at leaſt, all that was found valuable in it; how long the dip of the eaſt part of the field now working may laſt, it is hard to ſay, though it is ſcarce poſſible, allowing the quality to be good through the whole extent of the known field, that any coal will remain to work 50 years hence.

From the foregoing hiſtory of two valuable fields of coal, and facts above recited, ſome very important concluſions may be drawn, viz.

1. The limited and ſmall extent of coal fields.

2. The increaſing conſumption of the coal and its limited extent, gives reaſon to apprehend its being totally exhauſted.

The limited extent of all coal, may be inferred from its being impoſſible to trace any, very far in the line of bearing. Balgonie coal may be ranked among the regular ones, as the line of bearing is the ſame with the general bearing of the ſtrata in the greateſt part of Britain, where they are not thrown out of their courſe by adventitious cauſes, ſuch as dikes, mountain rocks of a different ſpecies from the ſtrata that accompany coal, and ſometimes by the waving and twiſting of the coal metals themſelves, which frequently alter the line of bearing, as well as the dip of the coal, to all the points of the compaſs. Such regular ſeams as this, with ſo conſiderable a dip, may be thrown out of their courſe by dikes and ſlips, but generally keep the ſame line of bearing. The very flat ſeams, ſuch as Balbirnie coal, being much more liable to wave and twiſt, till the dip and crop are in the oppoſite direction from the regular courſe of bearing. It may be worth inquiry, why the moſt regular ſeams of coal can be ſeldom purſued in the line of bearing above a few miles, for the

fact

be got, it appears to be of the ſame age with the cathedral of St. Andrew's, which was built in the 12th century.

fact is, few or no ſeams in this part of Fife, reach above 2 or 3 miles in length at moſt, and many not half that diſtance; for inſtance, Dyſart coal which has the ſame line of bearing with Balgonie, has been wrought from the ſea-ſide about 2 miles, where, near the water of Orr, it is entirely cut off and no more ſeen. About half a mile E., and 1 mile N., the S. extremity of Balgonie coal appears, and keeps the ſame line of bearing, as well as reſembles Dyſart coal ſomewhat in quality, but not in thickneſs; Dyſart coal being 22 feet, and Balgonie coal only 9 feet thick; the declivity pretty much the ſame. At the diſtance of 3 miles, this coal, and all the ſtrata accompanying it, is alſo cut off; and not the leaſt veſtige or appearance of that coal, or any other, has been diſcovered within ſome miles of it. Wemyſs coal, Methel, and Durrie coal, are as regular ſeams as either Dyſart or Balgonie, but none of them can be traced farther in the line of bearing; they are all cut off in the ſame manner before they are 2 miles from the ſea. The more inland coals diſtant 8 or 10 miles from the Frith of Forth, ſuch as Burnturk, Pitleſſie, Divan, and Clatty, are ſituated on the ſides of hills of ſmall extent, the metals of which have no continued line either of bearing or declivity; and the coal in theſe ſituations conſequently ſubject to all the irregularities ever found in coal works. Some of the ſeams are even ſeen to crop out quite round a ſmall eminence. And even ſmall as the extent of theſe fields is, the coal is found full of dikes, hitches, and all imaginable troubles; which render them ſcarce worth working. Beyond this, in the flat country, along the banks of the Eden, no coal has ever been diſcovered. And from this to the Tay, there are no ſtrata ever diſcovered that indicate coal being there: nor are there ſufficient ſymptoms even to encourage trials for coal, with any rational hope of ſucceſs.

The Fife coals, even the moſt regular, being thus contracted in the line of bearing, are comparatively of very ſmall extent, compared with the idea a ſtranger has of them, on a ſlight view of the number of pits he ſees at work on the various ſeams. Such a perſon, if unacquainted with the natural hiſtory of coal and its ſtrata, is apt to ſuppoſe the whole country full of coal; the very dikes and interruptions in the bearing of the ſtrata, increaſes the deception, ſhowing, as he ſuppoſes, a ſtill greater number of ſeams and extent of coal. For inſtance, a perſon unacquainted with the interruptions met with in coal fields, ſees Dyſart coal and Balgonie both at work, he imagines the one may be wrought N. on the line of bearing, as far as the Lomonds, 6 miles diſtant, and the other S. to the ſea, and N. to the Eden, whenever the proprietors chooſe to do ſo; and hence he concludes, both coals almoſt inexhauſtible: but inveſtigate the

tury. This caſtle is pleaſantly ſituated on the S. bank of the Leven, elevated about 36 feet above the bed of the river. It

 is

the ſubject thoroughly by proper judges, and they will declare the attempt vain, to purſue the one further N., or the other either S. or N., than it has been already done. And what he imagined inexhauſtible ſeams, may poſſibly be entirely wrought out in leſs than 100 years. I ſhall not attempt to account for the frequent interruptions in the line of bearing of the coal, and all other ſtrata. I have only pointed out the fact, that neither coal nor any other ſtrata whatever, can be traced to any conſiderable diſtance, without ſuch interruptions being met with. What actually happened in working the dip of Balbirny coal, may happen in a hundred others, where the probability of the dip being both good and extenſive, cannot poſſibly be greater, than it was in that very coal, till it was actually tried. One fact ſeems to be eſtabliſhed by it, that ſome coals do not extend to any very great depth from the ſurface. But after continuing to dip for ſome time, they riſe the contrary way, and crop out to the ſurface on a point of the compaſs diametrically oppoſite to the former crop. Many could be pointed out which actually do ſo, though the greater part of ſeams may reach to ſo great a depth, and may at that depth be ſo altered by dikes and ſlips, as to throw the oppoſite crop, or riſe to ſuch a diſtance, as often prevents its being perceived to be the ſame ſeam, though it actually be ſo. This example, proves coal to be limited in extent in a different way. And that it is by no means certain that coal can be had in the dip, though good in the crop, and wrought there above 40 years.

2. The increaſing conſumption of coal, and its limited extent, gives reaſon to apprehend its being totally exhauſted.

It ſeems to be the opinion of the publick, that coal is inexhauſtible. Government appears to have adopted the ſame opinion, in allowing ſuch immenſe quantities of coal to be exported to all the nations in Europe. It is greatly to be wiſhed, that this opinion were well founded; but it is contradicted by incontrovertible facts. It is not above 200 years ſince coal came into common uſe, and it is highly probable the firſt 150 years of that period did not exhauſt ſo much of it as the laſt 50 years. Examine all the coal fields, not in Fife only, but through all Britain, and it will be found that every part of them near to a ſea-port, and many of the inland ſeams of coal, are not only exhauſted to the depth of the natural level, but almoſt all of them already wrought, and exhauſting faſt by fire and water engines, many of which are very deep. It will alſo be found, that the quantity already wrought is probably at leaſt equal to the quantities yet to work of all the known ſeams of coal within the iſland. It might, perhaps, be an object worthy of being inveſtigated by Government; for if the iſ-

ſue

is of a quadrangular form, and ſtands upon an area of 135 feet by 105. The open court within, is 108 feet by 65. The tower,

ſue of their reſearch ſhould be, as there is a high probability it would, that there was not a ſufficient fund of coal unexhauſted in the iſland of Britain to ſupply the preſent demand for 200 years to come, it is probable they would think it proper to interfere and prevent the too rapid conſumption of an article indiſpenſibly neceſſary to the very exiſtence, not only of the capital and other great cities, but to almoſt every ſpecies of manufacture, and to the many thouſand artificers employed in them. Such could not even exiſt without a plentiful ſupply of coal, in a country ſo deſtitute of wood as Great Britain is. The ſuperiority which the poſſeſſion of coal gives to her manufactures, on the failure of that ſupply, would be inſtantly transferred to thoſe nations in Europe, poſſeſſed of a ſufficient quantity of wood for their conſumption.

Is is not difficult to account how Government, and the nation at large, are lulled into ſecurity on this point. The proprietors of coal have an intereſt in a great and immediate conſumption. No matter from whatjit ariſes; immediate profit is the object, whether from the home or foreign market. The reſt of mankind have little opportunity, and ſtill leſs inclination to inveſtigate a ſubject of which the greater part have a very ſuperficial knowledge. It is not the leſs neceſſary that the alarm be given; the danger, upon candid inquiry, will not be found ideal. Great dependence is ſometimes placed upon the diſcovery of new ſeams of coal, never before known; but if it be conſidered, that there is ſcarcely a ſeam of coal of any conſequence in Great Britain, which has not been known to exiſt for half a century, and that ſcarce a new diſcovery of coal has been heard of during that period, to what is this to be imputed? Not to the want of trials, for of theſe numbers have been made without ſucceſs; but as it is an eſtabliſhed fact, that every ſeam of coal, as well as all other ſtrata, riſe and crop out, at or very near the ſurface of the ground, there is a high probability that few valuable ſeams of coal could remain ſo long undiſcovered. As in every extenſive field, the chance is, that ſome part of the crop will approach ſo near the ſurface, as to be laid open by rivers, canals, rivulets in little glens, and not ſeldom the riſe or outburſt of the coal, will be ſeen in the form of a black duſt, mixed with ſmall particles of coal, in common ditches, where nothing is meant but the encloſure of the ground. Such appearances ſhould, and, I ſuppoſe, generally are examined. By ſuch means the greater number of coals already known, have been diſcovered. And though others may exiſt not yet diſcovered, there is little reaſon to ſuppoſe the number or extent of ſuch undiſcovered ſeams to be very conſiderable.

The extent of the coal fields in Britain is very inconſiderable, when compared with

tower*, which ſtands on the N. ſide, and near the N. W. angle is 45 feet by 36 over the walls, and 80 feet high. The top is

with the immenſe tracks that have no coal metals (or ſtrata that uſually accompany coal), nor any appearance to indicate coal being contained in them. But the coal fields themſelves are very far from containing coal every where. The county of Fife, for inſtance, is a coal field, and has been held out in a late publication, on the cauſes of the ſcarcity of coal, as containing an almoſt inexhauſtible fund of that uſeful mineral, and as every where containing coal. No aſſertion could be more ſtenderly founded; it is probably much nearer the truth, that for every acre in Fife containing unwrought coal, there is not leſs than 50 that have no coal in them, nor any rational probability of any being found. That there is ſtill much coal in Fife, is a certain fact; but if no other part of Britain is better ſtored with it, it is equally certain, that more than one half of the whole quantity in the kingdom is already exhauſted. Add to this, that the remaining half muſt be wrought with engines at a vaſt expenſe; and it is not abſolutely certain whether, in quantity or quality, it may equal that part of the coals already exhauſted. To prove what is above alleged, would not, perhaps, be very difficult. Take all the coals in Fife, wrought out, or now working, one after another, examine conſumption, and the quantity of ground wrought out within the laſt ten years, and compare this with the quantity of ground which the proprietor ſuppoſes to contain coal as deep as there is a poſſibility of working, it would immediately be known, ſuppoſing the conſumption the ſame, what number of years the remaining coal would ſupply the demand, at the ſame rate of conſumption. Such an inquiry, I am afraid, would amount to a full proof that another century will conſume the whole.

* Connected with the tower is a houſe of 3 ſtories, built by General Sir Alexander Leſlie, extending to the N. E. corner; and on the E. ſide of the court is another houſe of the ſame height, built by the preſent Earl of Leven's grandfather. From the vaults under theſe new buildings, and the thickneſs of the walls in the lower ſtory, it appears probable that the old buildings had been equally extenſive, and that the new houſes had been raiſed on the foundations of the old. On the S. and W. ſides of the court, there is a high ſtrong wall, which appears to be coeval with the tower: and without the wall there has been a large foſſé, the remains of which are ſtill to be ſeen. The gate-way is on the W. ſide, beſide which, and under the wall, there is a pit. There is alſo a dungeon, or dark cell in the bottom of the tower. This caſtle ſtands in the middle of an oblong ſquare, incluſive of 300 acres, fenced by a ſtone and lime wall. Near it there is a garden of about 7 acres, encloſed by a wall of 12 feet high, and a great deal of fine old trees around. Balgonie, which anciently belonged

is ſurrounded with battlements, projecting about a foot beyond the walls. The roof, which appears to have been repeatedly repaired ſince it was firſt built, is raiſed in the middle, and between that and the battlements, it is flat, and covered with ſtones. The walls of the two lower ſtories, both of which are vaulted, are 8½ feet thick: but above that, they are only 7 feet thick. There is an apartment in it called the Chapel, and, in the wall on the oppoſite ſide of the court, the ruins of a room are ſtill to be ſeen, which was called the Chaplain's Room. The architecture of this tower is ſtill very perfect and entire, and the third ſtory hath been lately repaired by the preſent Lord Balgonie. About half a mile to E. of Balgonie, and on the ſame ſide of the Leven, is Balfour or Balor, an old building, ſtanding in the middle of ſome fine encloſures, and ſurrounded with a good deal of old plantations. This place gave the name of Balfour to a very ancient family, from which the Balfours in Fife, of whom there is a conſiderable number, it is thought, moſtly ſprung *. On the weſt ſide, and about half a mile from the pariſh church, ſtands Balbirnie, which anciently belonged to Balbirnie

belonged to a family of the name of Sibbald, was purchaſed in the reign of Charles I., by General Leſlie, who was created Earl of Leven by that monarch, in 1641. Towards the end of the laſt century, David, ſecond ſon of George Earl of Melvill, married the Counteſs and heireſs of Leven, in conſequence of which, the eſtates and titles of the two Earldoms came to be united in the ſame family, as Lord Raith, the oldeſt ſon of the ſaid Earl of Melvill died without iſſue.

* In the 5th of the reign of Robert II., John, laird of Balfour, dying without male iſſue, Robert Bethune, alſo of an ancient family in Fife, married his daughter, the heireſs of Balfour, ſtill, however, retaining the name of Bethune. From this houſe, ſeveral reſpectable families of the name of Bethune have deſcended. James Bethune, archbiſhop of St. Andrew's, and Chancellor of Scotland, his nephew David Bethune, Cardinal and Chancellor of Scotland, and the Cardinal's nephew, James Bethune, archbiſhop of Glaſgow, were all three of this houſe of Balfour.

birnie of that ilk, but which, for ſome generations back, hath been in the poſſeſſion of a family of the name of Balfour. A conſiderable part of the old houſe ſtill remains, and is kept in good repair; on the ſouth ſide of which, and connected with it, the preſent proprietor hath built a neat commodious modern houſe. The ſituation is rather low and concealed; but delightfully romantick. In front, there is a pretty extenſive lawn thinly and irregularly planted with different kinds of trees. The ſurrounding eminences, as well as all the low marſhy ground near it, are covered with fine thriving plantations of barren wood. Beſides the attention paid to the pleaſure ground around the houſe, the preſent proprietor has of late greatly beautified, as well as meliorated his eſtate in the neighbourhood, by encloſing regular fields with belts of plantation; and by placing clumps of trees on the higher grounds, arranged and diſpoſed in ſuch a manner, as at once to pleaſe the eye, and to afford ſhelter to the adjacent fields.

The ſteeple of Markinch is another ancient building, and from the ſimilarity of the workmanſhip, is probably of the ſame age with Balgonie caſtle. It is about 15 feet ſquare, and preſerves its thickneſs till it riſes to 80 feet high. From that to the top, it is about 24 feet, drawing to a point, in a pyramidical form. From its elevated ſituation, it is ſeen at a conſiderable diſtance in ſeveral directions; and forms the termination of a beautiful view from the houſe of Leſlie, the ſeat of the Counteſs of Rothes, which ſtands about 3 miles to the weſtward of Markinch. Markinch hill is a beautiful object. It lies on the north ſide of the village, and is of an oblong oval form, and 200 yards in length. On the northern declivity, there are 6 terraces of about 20 feet broad, and which extend the whole length of the hill, winding round the eaſt end of it. They are evidently artificial; but nothing certain

certain can be learned as to their original uſe and deſign *. The publick road from Markinch to the north, paſſes the weſt end of this hill, and, on a riſing ground, on the oppoſite ſide of the road, ſtands a broad ſtone about 7 feet high, called the Stobb Croſs. It is a very coarſe piece of work, without any ſculpture or characters on it, that can lead to the knowledge of the deſign of its erection †.

On the eaſtern extremity of the pariſh, in the farm of Duniface, mortified to the United College of St. Andrew's, by a gentleman of the name of Ramſay, for the education of 4 burſars at that college, there is a hill or eminence not unlike the one juſt now mentioned. On the north end of this hill, there is a ſpot of ground which riſes higher than the reſt, and is called the Maiden Caſtle, fenced on the ſouth ſide by ditches, the veſtiges of which remain to this day ‡.

Character

* Two reports prevail; the one is, that theſe terraces were originally ditches, intended to ſtrengthen an encampment, or military poſt on the top of the hill; but that they have been levelled ſince for the purpoſe of tillage. The other report is, that they were made to accommodate ſpectators, aſſembled to behold certain public games, performed in the plain below; which plain is called the Play-fields to this day.

† Vulgar tradition ſays, that it was erected to the memory of a gentleman, who fell on this ſpot, in a mortal rencounter with one of his neighbours. As this croſs ſtands upon the very edge of the road, and 8 or 10 feet above its level, it has been in danger of tumbling down, by the earth's falling away from it. The preſent Earl of Leven, therefore, cauſed it to be ſecured, by facing up the earth with a wall of ſtone and lime.

‡ Boethius calls it "Arx ſeptinalis totidem foſſis munita, olim poſſeſſio Fifi Duffi, cujus poſteritas, per multa ſecula, eam tenuere." Some pretend it was a ſeat of M'Duff, Earl of Fife, and that there was anciently a ſubterraneous paſſage from it to Brunton, which lies about a quarter of a mile to the E. of Markinch church, and where Malcolm, Earl of Fife, had a caſtle. It is ſaid that the entrance to this paſſage at Brunton was ſhut up ſo lately as in the time of the late John Simpſon of Brunton. Near the Maiden Caſtle a battle has been fought, probably between the Scots and Danes, as a great many ſtone-coffins, with human bones in them, have been lately diſcovered in the immediate neighbourhood.

Character of the People.—It would be ſacrificing truth to complaiſance, to ſay that there are no worthleſs or exceptionable characters in this pariſh. The number of ſuch, however, is comparatively ſmall. The great body of the people are ſober, peaceable, and induſtrious. Their attendance on the public ordinances of religion is punctual and exemplary, and their moral conduct correſpondent to their profeſſion. It is worthy of notice, that the colliers of Markinch poſſeſs a reſpectability in point of character, to which few other colliers in the kingdom can pretend. In them you ſee nothing of that groſs ignorance, that roughneſs and barbarity of manners, that extravagance and diſorderly behaviour, but too generally characteriſtical of this deſcription of men. On the contrary, with a very few exceptions, they are remarkably intelligent, attentive to the duties of religion, civil and obliging in their manners, ſober, frugal and diligent; in conſequence of which, they and their families live comfortably, and make a decent appearance. It deſerves alſo to be mentioned, to the honour of this pariſh, that during the late ferment, when deſigning, factious, and turbulent men were endeavouring to diſturb the public tranquillity, and to alienate the affections of the people from the mild and equal government under which they live, their loyalty to their King, and attachment to the Conſtitution remained uncorrupted. They joined no diſcontented aſſociations; they imbibed no ſeditious principles; but every man attended to the duties of his ſtation, and left the modelling and mending of conſtitutions to others, as a buſineſs beyond their ſphere, and above their abilities.

hood. In ſeveral other parts of the pariſh, coffins of the ſame kind have, at different times, been diſcovered. One, in particular, was found about 7 years ago on the Headlaw, between Markinch and Balgonie. It was of a ſquare form, made of four unhewn ſlabs of freeſtone, ſet edge-ways, and covered with a broad ſtone of the ſame kind, upon which was laid a large unformed maſs of ſtone, and above all, a heap or cairn of ſmall ſtones. The bones encloſed in it were calcined.

Statistical Table of the Parish of Markinch.

Number of ſouls,	2790	Number of wrights,	16
— males,	1364	— ſmiths,	11
— females,	1426	— ſhoemakers,	20
— families,	653	— tailors,	9
— married couples,	475	— brewers,	4
— widowers,	36	— gardeners,	5
— widows,	65	— midwives,	2
— average of marriages annually,	20	— colliers, including overſeers, drawers, &c.	100
— of births *,	63	— coopers,	2
— under 2 years of age,	200	— bakers,	3
— between 2 and 10,	538	— wheelwrights,	2
— ——— 10 and 20,	524	— flaxdreſſers,	8
— ——— 20 and 30,	469	— ſtocking-makers,	2
— ——— 30 and 40,	393	— dyers,	2
— ——— 40 and 50,	272	— turner,	1
— ——— 50 and 60,	176	— ſhopkeepers,	4
— ——— 60 and 70,	147	— male ſervants,	136
— ——— 70 and 80,	58	— female ſervants,	120
— ——— 80 and 90,	13	— labourers,	65
— heritors,	21	— horſes above 1 year old,	383
— reſiding heritors,	11	— black cattle above 1 year old,	1540
— feuars,	120	— ſheep,	300
— farmers,	60	Valued rent, 8711. 7s. 1d. Sterling.	
— teachers,	7	Real rent of land belonging	
— notary publicks,	2		
— plaſterer,	1		
— weavers,	160		
— maſons,	24		

* There is no regiſter of burials.

ing to the heritors, 5000l. Sterling.
Rents of feuars property, 480l. Sterling.
Number of inns, - 2
— poſt-chaiſes, - - 5
— carts, - - - 100
— ale-houſes, - - 11
— bleachfield, - - 1
Number of corn-mills, 10
— lint-mills, - - 7
— barley-mills, - - 4
— wauk-mills, - - 2
— flour-mill, - - 1
— oil-mill, - - 1
— collieries, - - 2
— coal engines, - - 4