

NUMBER XXXVII.

UNITED PARISHES * OF LYNE AND MEGGET.

(COUNTY AND PRESBYTERY OF PEEBLES, SYNOD OF LOTHIAN
AND TWEEDDALE.)

By the Rev. Mr. ANDREW HANDYSIDE.

Extent, Name, Soil, Culture, &c. of Lyne.

THE parish of Lyne is between 3 and 4 miles long, and near 3 broad. The origin of the name is uncertain, perhaps from the Gaelic word Linn, "a pool or water." The river, which runs from one extremity of the parish to the other,

* It appears from the Scots Acts of Parliament, (vol. i. p. 960.) that the parish of Rodonno, or Megget, was annexed to that of Lyne, about the year 1621; and that this took place in consequence of a joint petition from the proprietor and inhabitants of the former parish, to the Lords Commissioners for Plantation of Kirks, desiring that they might henceforth be considered as a part of the latter. It is singular that Megget should not have been united to one of the neighbouring

ther, is so called, and being one of the largest that falls into Tweed in this county, might obtain the name of Linn, or the Water, by way of eminence; and the name might afterward be transferred to the parish. The lower part of the parish is, in general, of a sharp gravelly soil, requiring frequent showers in summer. The upper part is hilly, and affords good pasture for sheep, consisting of a proper mixture of heath and grass. In the year 1782, the crop in this parish did not suffer so much from the frost, as in several of the neighbouring ones. The sharp nature of the soil, and the southern exposure of the corn-lands, may account for this. The whole parish is, at present, divided into two farms; but about 60 years ago, it was possessed by no fewer than 7 small tenants. The quantity of grain raised in it is not great, as the number of acres under tillage does not, at an average, exceed 160. The rotation of crops observed, is the old one of bear with dung, then oats, then pease. Potatoes are also raised for family use. No grass has hitherto been sown, nor turnips cultivated by the farmers. This is to be ascribed chiefly to the want of enclosures, without which, these crops cannot be easily protected from the sheep and cattle, during the winter and spring.

Extent, Surface, &c. of Megget.—The parish of Megget is situated in the southern extremity of the county. It is between 6 and 7 miles in length, and near 6 in breadth. The surface is very hilly. The tops of the hills are, in general, covered with heath, and coarse grass, but the lower parts produce excellent pasture both for sheep and cattle. The climate is not, upon the whole, unhealthy, though from the high situation of the country, it is damp and cold. On this account
the

neighbouring parishes, rather than to Lyne, which is so distant from it. Perhaps the smallness both of the stipends and cures might be the chief reason; besides, both parishes at that period belonged wholly to one proprietor, Lord Hay of Yester, and it is more than probable that he had considerable influence in procuring the annexation.

the inhabitants are more subject to rheumatifms; than to any other complaint. The water of Megget rises at the head of the parish, and, after running the whole length of it, falls into St. Mary's Loch, a beautiful expanse of fresh water. This loch, with the loch of the Lows, from which it is separated by a narrow neck of land, may be near 5 miles long, and, in some places, $2\frac{1}{2}$ broad. Trout, pike, and eel, are found in both; they are frequented by water-fowl of different kinds, particularly by wild-ducks. The quantity of grain raised in Megget is very inconsiderable, and insufficient, even in the best seasons, to maintain its inhabitants. But the quantity that Lyne can annually spare, would, upon an average, fully answer all the demands of Megget.

Population, &c.—According to Dr. Webster's report, the number of souls in Lyne and Megget in 1755, was 265. The population of Lyne parish in the 1792, was 72.

Under the age of 10,	16	Females, - - - -	38
From 10 to 20, - -	25	Number of horses, -	18
From 20 to 50, - -	22	———— black cattle,	64
From 50 to 70, - -	5	———— ploughs, -	4
From 70 to 100, - -	4	———— carts, - -	9
Males, - - - - -	34		

The population of Megget in 1792, was 80.

Under 10 years, - -	10	Number of inhabited hou-	
From 10 to 20, - -	16	ses, - - - - -	12
From 20 to 50, - -	42	——of acres under tillage,	40
From 50 to 70, - -	10	——of horses, - - -	15
From 70 to 100, - -	2	——of black cattle, -	54
Males, - - - - -	37	——of ploughs, - -	3
Females, - - - - -	43		

The

The number of sheep in both parishes is between 10,000 and 11,000.

As during the summer there are 12 or 13 servants more in Megget, and 3 or 4 more in Lyne parish, mostly females, employed in milking ewes, making hay, &c. the population of both parishes will amount, at a medium, to about 160*.

There are no artificers nor mechanicks in either parish, except 1 carpenter at Lyne, who has commonly 2 or 3 apprentices. The rest of the inhabitants are wholly composed of farmers, shepherds, and labourers, with their families. Their mode of living and dress is much improved of late, and they enjoy, in moderation, the comforts and conveniences of life. They are far from being illiberal in their religious sentiments, and are truly exemplary for decency and hospitality. All the parishioners join in communion with the Established Church, except 4 or 5 Cameronians, and sometimes 2 or 3 Seceders.

Church, Stipend, Heritors, &c.—The church is an old edifice, and appears to have been originally a Roman Catholic chapel. It was, till lately, in a state almost ruinous, but is now undergoing a thorough repair. It will afterward be a commodious place for divine service. In Megget, there is neither church nor chapel of any kind. Public worship is therefore performed in the different farm-houses by rotation, which is far from being either decent or convenient. The value of the stipend, including the glebe, is about 83 l., besides the manse. His Grace of Queensberry is patron. He is also proprietor of both parishes, except the farm of Henderland, and a small heritage, called Lyn-townhead. Lord Henderland,

* No parochial register, either of births, marriages, or deaths, is to be found; but it is highly probable that the population of both parishes has decreased considerably, during the last 40 years.

land, one of the senators of the College of Justice, is proprietor of the former, and takes his title from that farm. It is not easy to ascertain the real rent of the parish, as fines or grassums are taken at the beginning of leases, instead of advanced rent.

Instance of Longevity, &c.—The only remarkable instance of longevity that can be remembered, is that of the late minister, the Rev. Mr. Johnston. Though his age cannot be fully authenticated, as the register of the parish where he was born is lost, yet there is good reason to believe, that he died at the advanced age of about 102. In his dress and diet he was very homely and simple. Regarding the manners and customs to which he had been so long habituated, as a model for succeeding ages, in the decline of life he considered every deviation from them as a corruption. He had a strong antipathy to medicine of every kind, and it is doubtful if ever he made use of any in his life, except once. He enjoyed a state of health almost uninterrupted, officiated in public the Sabbath before his death, and was getting out of bed, in order to prepare for the duties of the next Sabbath, when he expired suddenly, in a fainting fit, without a groan.

Poor.—There are no poor in this parish, nor have there been any upon the poor's roll for many years past. This is owing not only to the frugality and industry of the inhabitants, but also to their sense of honour, and independent spirit. In establishing poor's rates, the design is certainly laudable, but experience teaches us that they are attended with many bad consequences. Wherever men can depend on suitable provision being made for them, when reduced to indigence, they are divested of the proper stimulus to exertion; they soon lose the sense of shame, and are tempted to squander away in dissipation, what

what would otherwise have been laid up for the evil day. Some of the neighbouring parishes are striking instances of the truth of this observation. In our sister kingdom, the evil is still growing worse and worse. If not speedily corrected, the burden of poor's rates will, in a short time, become altogether grievous and oppressive.

Sheep.—Both in Megget and Lyne, the sheep are all of the black-faced, common Scotch kind, and they are not inferior in quality to any of that kind in this part of Scotland. After repeated experiments, the farmers in this district, are convinced that their own breed is more hardy, of a better shape, and more easily fed than any other breed with which they are acquainted. Besides, they maintain, that there is a greater demand from England for Scotch sheep, than for those of any other kind. For these reasons, they apprehend that it would be very dangerous for them, whose dependence is solely upon their sheep, to attempt any innovation, in this respect, unless it were done on a very small scale. Upon the banks of Yarrow water, a cross breed, with finer wool, has been gaining ground for some time past, but they are found not to thrive so well when carried to the higher grounds in Tweeddale. It is true, that an attempt has been lately made, with considerable success, to change the breed upon a farm near the head of Moffat water; but it ought to be considered, that though some of the land in that farm be among the highest in the S. of Scotland, yet a considerable part of it is not only low, but sheltered in such a manner, that when the farms in Megget are completely stormed with snow, the sheep on that farms are at no loss for pasture. It is admitted, that the wool of the black-faced sheep, is, in general, very coarse, but perhaps considerable improvement might be made on it, by paying more attention than is usually done, to the fleece of the

rams and ewes, which are kept as a breeding stock. After all, if it can be ascertained, from experiment and undoubted facts, that any change whatever, either in the kind or management of sheep, will, upon the whole, be more advantageous to the farmers, than the mode at present adopted, it is not to be doubted, that the sagacity of that class of men, in this county, will soon induce them to pursue that plan.

Causes of Depopulation.—The causes commonly assigned for the decrease of population in this district, are the demolishing of cottages, and the junction of sheep-farms. With respect to the first, farmers are now generally convinced of the necessity of encouraging cottagers, by building houses for them, though the reverse was too much the practice a few years ago. Cottagers, by living at a distance from towns, are commonly strangers to dissipation and vice, their children are often numerous and healthy, and almost always make the best country servants. But, with regard to the second cause, men of observation are not so unanimous. For it has been warmly disputed, whether extensive farms be, upon the whole, favourable or unfavourable to the population and prosperity of a country. Before we can determine this point, it is necessary that we attend to the situation and circumstances of the country where the farms lie. In the vicinity of a large town, where plenty of manure can be procured, or, in a rich soil, where, by means of lime and marl, cultivation may be carried to a high pitch, farms of a moderate extent are certainly proper, because the culture of them requires many hands, and much attention. But in proportion as farms are more distant from the means of improvement, and the soil of them less rich, in the same proportion, it would appear, may they increase in size, because the quantity of land under tillage being necessarily small, less attention and industry are requisite.

If

If this reasoning be well founded, it is evident that small farms may sometimes be united, and larger farms, in some cases, divided to advantage. But it may be said, does not the junction of small farms tend, in every instance, to diminish the population of a country, and is not the publick a sufferer by it? We must admit, that where the industry of the small farmer and his family cannot be turned into another channel equally beneficial to themselves and the community, this will be the case. On the other hand, at a period when the demand for manufacturers is great, and their wages high, it may be advantageous both to the individuals and the publick, that some of the small farmers become manufacturers. The case of this useful class of men, is indeed much to be pitied, when they are turned out of their small possessions, where there is no demand for their labour in any other line; they must then either emigrate or starve, and the country will, in a short time, severely feel the loss. It appears, then, that the state of trade and manufactures must have considerable influence in regulating the size of farms; so that what would be sound policy in this respect, at one period, would be the reverse at another. If it be said, that after all, the interest of the proprietor will naturally induce him to prefer the highest offer for his lands; and that as the extensive farmer can afford to give more rent than small tenants, the former will obtain the preference, and farms will continually increase in size; in answer to this, it may be observed, that neither the proprietor nor the farmer, even in a sheep country, will find it his advantage that the farm be more extensive than what one person can properly manage. The proper check, then, when farms become overgrown, appears to be at hand; and the wisdom of providence is equally conspicuous in this, as in many other instances, which often escape our observation.

On the whole, it will perhaps be found to be the soundest policy, that no restraint whatever be imposed either upon farming, commerce, or manufactures. When left to themselves, they will have a strong mutual influence on each other, and though one of them may appear to gain too great an ascendancy at a time, yet it will soon be checked by the others, and descend to its own proper level. When Government is so wise as not to interfere in these matters, it will find its advantage in the increasing prosperity of the whole state.

Antiquities.—About $\frac{1}{2}$ of a mile W. of Lyne church, there is a famous Roman camp of about 6 acres in extent. The situation of it appears to have been chosen with great judgment. The road leading to it is still visible, and runs through the present glebe. The ground within the encampment has been frequently ploughed, and it is said, that Roman coins, &c. were frequently found in it. But as this camp has been often described, it is judged unnecessary to insist more on it. In Megget there are the remains of 2 old towers, which appear to have been built, partly for defence, partly for accommodating the Kings of Scotland when on their hunting parties in the forest. The traces of 3 or 4 roads in different directions across the hills are still visible, at what period, or with what design they were formed, is uncertain. Perhaps when the country was covered with wood, they were cut out for the King and his suite when they went a-hunting. At Henderland, there are the remains of an old chapel and burying-ground. The inscription on the tomb-stone of the famous freebooter, Cockburn of Henderland, is still legible. Boetius, Buchanan, and other historians, inform us, that gold was formerly found in Glengaber water, and some small traces still remain of the ground which had been dug in search of that precious metal.

Miscellaneous

Miscellaneous Observations.—Though a great part of the land in Lyne and Megget has been formerly covered with wood, yet, at present, there are only a few trees around the church and some of the farm-houses. The old trees naturally decay through time, and the growth of young ones is effectually prevented by the sheep and cattle. In Megget, there is plenty of moorfowl in good seasons. The earn, a species of eagle that builds its nest in a small island in Lochskene, sometimes carries off a young lamb, even in view of the shepherd. Besides the necessary attention which the flocks of sheep require, the inhabitants of Megget are mostly employed during the summer and autumn in making and carrying home their peats, in cutting and leading in their hay, and in laying up provision for the winter.

Advantages and Disadvantages.—At Lyne, the distance from coals and lime is not great, the roads are good, and there are 2 convenient bridges over the water. Thirlage is a grievance justly complained of. The want of a salary for a schoolmaster, is hard on the lower class of people. Megget labours under particular disadvantages. There is no school of any kind nearer to it, than that of Yarrow, which is 8 or 9 miles distant. This want is severely felt, especially by servants who have large families, who must either send their children to a great distance for education, or be at the expense of teaching them at home. Yet, much to their credit, they are not inferior in religious knowledge to any of their neighbours. This must be ascribed chiefly to the diligence and attention of their parents, who are at considerable pains to instill into the tender minds of their offspring, the principles of piety and virtue. There was indeed the sum of 50l. Sterling mortified by a former minister of Lyne, and the interest of it was intended as a salary for a teacher; but, though that
sum

sum be now increased to 80 l. Sterling, yet the interest of it is far from being sufficient to support an established school-master. Among the disadvantages peculiar to Megget, its great distance from Lyne church, which is about 14 miles, ought not to be omitted. The river Tweed runs between them, and the road is remarkably bad and steep.

Means of Melioration.—As Megget is sometimes almost inaccessible during 2 or 3 months in winter, on account of the steep hills and rough roads, nothing would tend more to promote the comfort and convenience of its inhabitants, than a passable road up Manor water. If it were carried up the narrow glen opposite to Manor-head, which is practicable, and afterward down Glengaber water, great part of the present steep pull would be saved, and the traveller would derive essential benefit from it. It is true, that the expense would be considerable, but the sum which was lately expended in obtaining an act of parliament for making roads in the county, would have been sufficient for making that road. It is certainly very hard, especially on poor counties, when they are obliged to spend about 400 l. Sterling, in order to obtain leave to lay out their own money in the way they think best. The writer of this has no object in view, but the good of his country; and it will be admitted, that few things are more conducive to its improvement, than good roads upon a liberal plan, and in a proper direction. As this is a national concern, and not confined to any particular district, it is to be hoped, that at some future period it may meet with all the attention it deserves.

That considerable improvement has been lately made on the roads, cannot be denied; but it will also be admitted, that they are far from having attained that perfection, either in the direction or execution of them, to which they may be carried.

carried. It is certainly the interest of every member of the community, that the communication from one place to another be rendered as easy as possible; but gentlemen of landed property appear to be more concerned in this than others: For, if their tenants are obliged, on account of the steepness and roughness of the road, to employ 4 carts in carrying what would otherwise have been an easy load for 3, it is evident that the expense must ultimately fall upon the proprietor. Though the management of the money arising from turnpikes is, with great propriety, committed to the trustees of the different counties, yet it may be doubted if the planning and original direction of the roads be safest in the same hands. Wherever men are interested, there they are not competent judges; this is perhaps the reason, that, in making roads, the publick interest is sometimes sacrificed to the pretended interest of individuals. Were the gentlemen of the different counties to agree, that the planning of the roads in their own county should be left to a deputation of gentlemen from a neighbouring one, the objection would, in a great measure, be obviated; for, in that case, private or political interest would have small influence. With regard to the great roads through the kingdom, would it not be of advantage to the nation, were commissioners appointed by parliament, under proper restrictions, to superintend this branch of publick police; and if 2 or 3 engineers were added to the commission, we might reasonably expect, that beauty and utility would soon be united, and their joint labours tend, in a considerable degree, to promote the publick good.

NUM.