

NUMBER XVII.

PARISH OF CLOSEBURN,

(COUNTY AND SYNOD OF DUMFRIES, PRESBYTERY OF
PENPONT.)

By the Rev. Mr ANDREW YORSTOUN.

Situation, Name, &c.

THE parish of Closeburn is distant from the town of Dumfries 12 miles. The original name of the parish was Killoburn, or, as it is spelled in a very old deed, Kelosbern, from *Cella Osburni*. It was at first but of small extent, and the church seems to have been intended chiefly for the accommodation of the family of Closeburn, and its dependents. To that very ancient and respectable family the whole parish belonged, and in their possession it remained for several centuries. The present representative of the family has a charter of confirmation, which was granted to one of his predecessors in the beginning of the 13th century. To satisfy the demands of importunate creditors, the estate of Closeburn was exposed to sale in the year 1783, and was bought by the Reverend James Stuart
Monteath,

Monteath, Rector of Barrowby in Lincolnshire. Clofeburn is quite furrounded by the parifh of Dalgarno, which was annexed to it in the year 1697; and the extent of the two united, is about 9 or 10 miles in length, and as much in breadth, meafuring from the extremities. Near where the church of Dalgarno flood, there was a village, which, though there are now no remains of it, was in former times a place of confiderable note, being a burgh of regality, to whose jurifdiction a very confiderable extent of country was fubject.

Stipend, &c.—The patronage of the united parifhes having been fold along with the eftate of Clofeburn, now belongs to Mr Stewart Monteath. The ftipend was augmented in the year 1786, and is now L. 70 in money, 2 chalders of meal, and 1 of bear, with L. 5 for communion-elements. The glebe is very fmall, no ground having ever yet been fet off for pafturnage, either in Clofeburn or Dalgarno. The glebe of Dalgarno, confifting of 4 acres and nearly one half, was exchanged in the year 1732 for 3 acres and one rood, lying contiguous to the glebe of Clofeburn, which, in confequence of this addition, meafures about 6 acres. The church was built about 50, and the manfe about 30 years ago; confiderable reparations were made upon both about 15 years ago; and they are now much better than is common in country parifhes.

Population, &c.—According to Dr Webster's report, the population in 1755, was 999. The number of inhabitants in the year 1778, was between 1000 and 1100. Laft year, (1791), they amounted to 1490. This great increafe has been occafioned by extenfive lime-works in the parifh, the divifion of farms, making of roads, and other improve-

ments. From the same causes, population still continues to increase.

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|-------------------------|-----|--------------|---|----|
| Number of males, | 729 | Labourers, | - | 80 |
| ——— — females, | 761 | Masons, | - | 6 |
| Proprietors of land, of | | Carpenters, | - | 8 |
| whom 3 reside in the | | Weavers, | - | 7 |
| parish, | 6 | Tailors, | - | 4 |
| Tenants, | 83 | Shoemakers, | - | 3 |
| Subtenants, | 30 | Blacksmiths, | - | 5 |

Marriages in the year, from 9 to 12.

Births ————— from 35 to 40.

Burials ————— from 27 to 32.

From the increase of population, it may be supposed that there is a great number of houses lately built in the parish. Some of these indeed, being built by subtenants at their own expense, are but indifferent; and it is a little unfortunate, that these poorest houses are built along the great road which passes through the parish. Travellers, from the mean appearance of these houses, are apt to form an unfavourable opinion of the country. But the principal farmers are generally lodged pretty comfortably. The new proprietor of Closeburn has built a very excellent house for himself, large, substantial, and commodious*.

Schools, Poor.—The parish of Closeburn is remarkably well supplied with schools, though there is no legal salary provided

* The situation of the parish is in general healthy. But there are no very extraordinary instances of longevity in it. The oldest man at present in it is aged 92 or 93; he is now become frail and infirm, but not so much so as might be expected in such an advanced age. His employment has always been that of a sheep farmer. There is another old man, whose

provided for a schoolmaster. In room of a legal salary, the proprietor of Clofeburn has, for a great many years, been in use to give a small sum of money yearly, to a person named by himself to teach English, writing and arithmetic, in any part of the parish he himself thought proper. But the principal school of the parish is that which, in honour of its founder, is called the school of Wallacehall. John Wallace, merchant in Glasgow, a native of Clofeburn, in the year 1723, mortified L. 1600, for the purpose of erecting this school*. The reputation of the school of Wallacehall was raised very high by the late rector Mr Alexander Mundell, and there is every reason to expect, that under his son and successor, it will preserve that reputation it has very justly acquired. The situation of this school

whose age, from his own account, is 89. He was long gardener to the family of Clofeburn; but for some years his only employment has been going errands. He is yet a healthy and vigorous man, and walks sometimes 7 or 8 miles in a forenoon, without being fatigued. In the church-yard of Dalgarno there is a tombstone, under which are buried a father and mother, with their son and his wife, whose ages, all added together, amount to 350 years.

* The presbytery of Penpont were appointed trustees for the management of the fund, judging of the qualifications of the teachers, and watching over the interests of the school. In the management of the fund, the Laird of Clofeburn was to be consulted. Five patrons were appointed to nominate the rector of the school, *viz.* John Wallace of Elderslie, Thomas Wallace of Cairnhill, and Michael Wallace, merchant in Glasgow, three brothers, the minister of Clofeburn, and town clerk of Glasgow, for the time being. In the election of a rector, it is recommended to the patrons to give a preference to one of the name of Wallace, if equally qualified. Of the money mortified by Mr Wallace, L. 200 was laid out in building a school-house and dwelling-house for the rector, and in purchasing 5 acres of ground contiguous to the school, for the rector's use; L. 1145 was laid out in purchasing lands at some distance; and the remainder was at first put out to interest, but has since been applied, towards enclosing the land, and enlarging the rector's house.

school is healthy. There is at present good accommodation for boarders, and will be still better very soon, the rector being about to build a large and commodious new house; and every attention is paid both to the morals and education of those under his care. This school is indeed not only a blessing to the parish, but a public good to the country.—The only provision for the poor of the parish is a fund of L. 100, lent to a Banking Company at 4 per cent. the weekly collections amounting to about L. 32 or L. 33 a-year, and some small fines, together with money received for the use of a mort cloth, amounting to L. 2 or L. 3 a-year. The number of poor is from 20 to 25. Of these, a few depend wholly upon what they receive out of the parish; and others are capable of doing a little work, which, with a small aid from the weekly collections, serves for their support.

Measurement, Soil, Rental, Stock, &c.—The lands in this parish have almost all been measured. The amount of the whole is about 28,000 acres; 1900 of which are annually in crop. The soil is various. Along the river Nith,

house. The land is at present rented at L. 90, including public burdens, which amount to L. 14:17:11. But the lease expires next Whitsunday, (*i. e.* Whitsunday 1793.) and a new lease has been given at the yearly rent of L. 175. The branches of education which the deed of mortification requires to be taught at this school, are, reading English, writing, arithmetic, book-keeping, Latin and Greek. But besides these, French, geography, and sometimes mathematics, are also taught. The English, writing, arithmetic, and book-keeping classes, are taught by an usher, named by the rector, and approved of by the presbytery. His salary is paid by the rector, and is by the deed of mortification appointed to be L. 10 a-year and his board, or L. 18 without his board. The rector is likewise obliged to pay L. 5 a-year to a person named by the minister, to teach English in a remote part of the parish, which, on account of the distance, cannot reap any benefit from the other schools. All these schools are free to the children of the parish.

Nith, which forms the western boundary of the parish, is to be found a fine rich loamy soil. To the eastward, the ground rises a little, and the soil becomes light, dry, and sandy. Farther on, in the same direction, the ground rises still more, and there the soil is strong and deep, with a mixture of clay; to the eastward of this again are extensive moors, unfit for tillage, but affording very good pasture for sheep. The rental of the parish is about L. 3500. The farmers are rather unwilling to publish the stock and crop upon their farms; but according to the nearest calculation, the amount of the whole may be about 11,000 sheep, 1200 black cattle, and 250 horses, all ages included.

Sheep.—The sheep generally kept are the short black-faced kind, and the farmers seem to have no inclination to change the breed, but are at pains to improve it. It is computed that every score of such sheep will yield fully 3 stones of wool; of course, there ought to be 1650 stones produced in the parish annually; but, owing to a number of sheep of one and two years old being sold off before the time of sheep-shearing, the quantity actually produced does not much exceed 1400 stones. The wool is generally sold at 6s. or 7s. the stone; but it has lately become a practice with several of the farmers in this and the neighbouring parishes to wash their sheep before they are clipped. This no doubt lessens the weight of their wool, but it brings them a price for it so much higher, as more than to compensate for the loss of weight, and for the trouble of washing; wool, which otherwise would not have brought more than 6s. the stone, being washed in this manner will bring 8s. *

Husbandry.

* There is an account still in preservation of the sheep and wool upon the barony of Clofeburn at the beginning of this century, written in the proprietor's

Husbandry.—The mode of husbandry is not uniform throughout the parish; but that which prevails most is, after liming the ground to take 2, sometimes 3 crops of oats, after these a green crop of potatoes, turnips, and pease, and then to lay it out with barley, or bear and grafs. The quantity of ground occupied by each of these kinds of crop is not exactly ascertained, but is conjectured to be about 1500 acres in oats; from 20 to 30 in wheat; 130 in barley; 70 in bear; 120 in potatoes; 30 or 40 in turnips; 40 or 50 in pease; and about 200 in clover and rye-grafs. The potatoes and turnips are all horse-hoed, and in no country are better crops of these raised than in this. Potatoes are supposed to be half the food of the labouring people through all this country; and when there are more than can be used by the people, they are found to be of great advantage in feeding horses, cows, and swine; hence the raising good potatoe crops is an object of importance, and if the farmers of this country have approached perfection in any thing, it is in this branch of husbandry. The nature of the soil is well adapted to this kind of crop, and the

proprietor's own hand; from which it appears, that there were then upon that barony 6740 sheep, yielding 537 stones of wool. The number kept at present upon the same lands is only 3960, which, allowing 3 stones of wool to the score of sheep, will yield 594 stones; so that though the number of sheep be less by almost two-fifths, yet the quantity of wool is greater. The reason of this remarkable difference in the number of sheep is, that at the beginning of this century the sheep were much smaller, consequently the lands could keep more of them; besides, the farmers then overstocked their farms; and a third reason is, that a great deal of land, which was then fit only for common sheep-pasture, has since been improved, and is now good corn-land. Farms, upon which at that time considerable flocks were kept, have not now a single sheep upon them. The disproportion with respect to the quantity of wool may be accounted for from the larger size of the sheep, from their being in better condition, and from their being heavier ~~measured~~ than they formerly were.

the beneficial effects of lime discover themselves remarkably, both by improving the quality and increasing the quantity of potatoes*.—There is nothing remarkable in the implements of husbandry commonly used. The plough in most general use is the Scots plough, which, the land being somewhat stony, is found to answer better than any other. It is made light, and is for most part drawn by two horses. One-horse carts are much in use; and it is found, that more work can be done, and with more ease both to man and horse, by these carts, than can be done by the same number of men and horses with two-horse carts. There is scarcely a farmer in the parish who has not two, some have three, some four carts.

Markets.—The only market for black cattle is Dumfries. From this parish there are sold annually about 100 come to age, whose price for three or four years has been about L. 5 the head; 60 of 2½ years old, at L. 4; and 250 of 1½ years old, at L. 2, 10s. The markets for sheep are Appleby and Staighaw, in England; Lockerby, Langholm, and Linton, in Scotland. The number sold annually is about 3700 lambs, whose price for some years has been from 3 to 5 guineas the score, that is, for 21, one being always given in to the score; 780 hogs or sheep, of a year old past, from L. 8 to L. 11 the score; and dinmonts, or sheep of two years, at from L. 10 to L. 13 the score. Hardly any are sold beyond that age. Wool is generally bought up at the farmers houses, and carried into England to be manufactured there. It is an observation in every body's mouth, that

* People begin to sow, if the season permit, about the middle of March, and it is generally near the middle of May before all is finished. Harvest commences for the most part about the 20th of August, and in tolerable seasons all is got in by the end of September.

that nothing is wanting but the establishment of manufactures to put this country into a most prosperous and flourishing state. What every body wishes will surely be attempted some time or other; and if any person or company should erect an woollen manufacture any where in this neighbourhood, they would probably find it turn out to their own advantage, as well as to the good of the public. The markets for corn and meal are, Dumfries, distant, as has been already mentioned, 12 miles; Wanlockhead, distant 18 miles; and Leadhills, distant 19 miles. The quantity usually sold from this parish has not been ascertained, for a reason already given, that the farmers are not generally inclined to publish the whole produce of their farms*.

Lime-works.—The lime-works of Closeburn deserve particular notice. By improving the land, and exciting a spirit of industry in the people, they have proved a public blessing to the country, as well as a source of wealth to the proprietor. The lime-rock was discovered many years ago, but was in a great measure neglected till Sir James Kirkpatrick, the late proprietor of Closeburn, took it into his own management. It is just about 20 years since he began to carry on that work, and from that period the country has been improving with astonishing rapidity. It has been observed, that the soil of Closeburn is various; but that which prevails most in the arable part, is the light, dry, sandy soil; and the people imagined that in place of being improved, it would be quite burnt up, and rendered useless by lime. To conquer vulgar prejudices is always a difficult matter. Indeed, nothing but long experience can
entirely

* The price of meal fluctuates from 1 s. 4 d. to 2 s. the stone, being seldom above the one, or below the other. Barley is from 2 s. 6 d. to 3 s. the bushel; but it sometimes is so high as 3 s. 6 d. and even 4 s.

entirely subdue them. Hence the use of premiums. Men must sometimes be bribed to pursue their own interest. They cannot, without some powerful inducements, be prevailed upon to give up their old customs, and to adopt those improvements which, after a fair trial, sufficiently recommend themselves. In the present case, the proprietor of Closeburn found it necessary to oblige his tenants in their leases to lime a certain quantity of their land yearly, he furnishing the lime, and even paying for the carriage of it; and they, on their parts, being bound to pay 5 s. additional rent for every 80 measures, which were considered as sufficient for an acre. To men of a small capital, who could not afford to be at the expense of liming their ground themselves, this scheme was evidently beneficial. In place of advancing the money out of their own pockets, they had to pay little more than the interest of it; at the same time, the proprietor improving his estate, and receiving good interest for his money, was, upon the whole, no loser, though greatly in advance. But even in this way, so favourable to the tenant, the greatest quantity any of them would agree to lime was two acres in the year; some of them would lime no more than half an acre; and others could hardly be prevailed upon at all to make the experiment. Such was the aversion of the people in this country to the use of lime as a manure for land, when the lime-works of Closeburn were first begun in the years 1772, 1773, and 1774; but experience has conquered their prejudices, and neither compulsion nor arguments are any longer necessary. The lime costs 9 d. the measure at the lime-works, each measure containing two Dumfries pecks heaped, or about $2\frac{1}{4}$ Winchester bushels. The reason of this high price is, the deep cover, and the distance from coal. The coal is all brought from Sanquhar, which is 14 miles from Closeburn. It is sold at 7 d. the measure when laid down at the lime-

works. The measure is the same with that by which the lime is sold; and one measure of coals is hardly sufficient to burn three of lime: The quantity of lime commonly laid upon an acre is from 60 to 80 measures, and there are from 60,000 to 70,000 measures sold annually at the lime-works. There is another lime-work in the neighbourhood, which was begun about seven years ago by Sir James Kirkpatrick, and at which a very considerable quantity of lime is sold; but, notwithstanding this, the demand at Closeburn has not in the least decreased; a strong proof of the progressive improvement of the country. Indeed, within the space of 20 years, the country has been made to put on quite a new face; for dirty croft, and poor outfield crops of gray oats, and small bear, or big, rich crops of excellent oats, barley, wheat and pease, potatoes, turnips, and fown grasses, are almost every where to be seen. Ground, which formerly paid not more than 2 s. or 2 s. 6 d. the acre, now pays 15 s. and some of it is even sublet at a guinea. The rents of the farms in general are more than doubled, yet the tenants live incomparably better than when they paid not the half of the present rents. Closeburn, from being in a great measure a bleak and barren, has become a pleasant and fertile spot in itself, and affords ample means of improvement to all the neighbouring country. All this has been brought about by the enterprising spirit of one man, whose name will long be revered in this country*.

Fuel,

* *Price of Labour* — The price of labour has increased with the improvement of the country. Twenty years ago, L. 4 a-year were thought good wages for a labouring man kept in the house, and half as much for a woman. A labourer's wages, without his victuals, were in the long day half a merk, or 6 d. 8-12ths, and in the short day 5 d.; but now the wages of a labouring man in the house are from 6 to 8 guineas in the year, and of a woman from 2½ to 4 guineas. A labourer's wages with-
out

Fuel, Woods.—There is plenty of peat in the parish; but yet fuel can not easily be procured in sufficient quantities by poor people, who have not the command of horses. Coal, though brought 14 miles, is found to be a cheaper fire than peat got at the distance of 2 or 3 miles; yet the poor people place their chief dependence upon peat. The woods in this parish are pretty extensive. There are about 200 acres of natural wood, and about 300 acres of thriving plantations.

Hills and Game.—The principal hills are Queensberry, Garrick Heights, and Auchinleck. From the first of these, the Duke of Queensberry takes his title, though only one half of it is his property. Upon the top of this hill, grows a small berry, commonly called the Nub Berry. It bears some resemblance to the bramble berry, and is pleasant enough to the taste. It is not improbable, that the hill might derive its name from this berry, which perhaps might be called the Queen of Berrys, or Queensberry, as being thought the most delicious of wild berries. This, however, is but mere conjecture. The hill of Queensberry rises about 2000 feet above the level of the sea, from which it is distant about 20 miles. The moors in this parish used to abound with black-fowl and grouse, and the low-grounds with partridges: But of late, all kinds of game have become scarce*.

Rivers,

out his victuals, where he gets constant employment, are 14 d. in the long day, and 10 d. in the short day. When employed only occasionally his wages are still higher.

* The reason commonly assigned for its scarcity, is the too eager desire to preserve it. By the severity of the game-laws, the country people, especially the shepherds, are deprived of a favourite amusement; and to
avenge

Rivers, Crichup Linn.—The river Nith forms the natural boundary between the parishes of Closeburn and Keir, Closeburn lying upon the east, and Keir upon the west of that river. But probably, on account of the river's having changed its course, there are two pretty large farms belonging to the parish of Closeburn, which now lie upon the western side. This beautiful river having been already taken notice of, in the Statistical Accounts of some other parishes, it is unnecessary to say much about it here. It runs 5 or 6 miles along the western side of this parish, through extensive holms, now highly cultivated. These holms, on each side, terminate in sloping banks, covered partly with natural wood, and partly with thriving plantations. Several genteel houses have lately been built at small distances, and within view of one another. The whole together affords a prospect as rich and beautiful as is to be seen almost in any country. The fish in the river Nith are, salmon, gillies, sea trouts, hirlings, and burn-trouts. Besides the Nith, there are several smaller waters or burns, as they are called, in the parish, in all of which there is a good deal of burn-trout. The only one of these, which deserves particular notice, is, that which is called Crichup, remarkable for its singular course. It takes its rise from a moss,
near

avenge themselves for the oppression they think they suffer in this respect, they are said in the spring, and beginning of summer, whilst they tend their flocks, to look out for the nests, and destroy the eggs of the game. In this way, they are said to do more hurt to the game than ever they could do with their guns. There are, however, other reasons for the scarcity of game. A great deal more heath is burnt now than formerly; consequently, the moor-game are more exposed to the birds of prey, which are their greatest destroyers. The sown-grass affords an early shelter to the partridges. They, therefore, very commonly make their nests in it; but before they bring out their young, the grass is generally cut, and their eggs of course destroyed. All these causes probably contribute to render the game more scarce than in former times.

near the northern extremity of the parish. Not far from its source, it forms a very beautiful cascade, by falling over a precipice of about 80 or 90 feet in height, and almost perpendicular. About half a mile below this, the water has, in the course of ages, hollowed out to itself a strait passage through a hill of red free stone, forming what in Scotland is called a linn, peculiarly romantic. This linn, from top to bottom, is upwards of 100 feet; and though 20 deep, it is yet so strait at the top, that one might easily leap across it, were it not for the tremendous prospect below, and the noise of the water running its dark course, and by its deep murmuring, affrighting the imagination*.

Antiquities.—There are hardly any antiquities in this parish worth being mentioned, except an old castle, belonging to the family of Clofeburn, which bears no inscription,

* Inaccessible in a great measure to real beings, this linn was considered as the habitation of imaginary ones; and at the entrance into it, there was a curious cell or cave, called the Elf's Kirk, where, according to the superstition of the times, the imaginary inhabitants of the linn were supposed to hold their meetings. This cave proving a good free-stone-quarry, has lately been demolished, for the purpose of building houses, and from being the abode of elves, has been converted into habitations for men. In the times of persecution, the religious flying from their persecutors, found an excellent hiding place in Crichup Linn; and there is a seat, in form of a chair, cut out by nature in the rock, which having been the retreat of a shoemaker in those times, has ever since born the name of the Sutor's Seat. Nothing can be more striking than the appearance of this linn from its bottom. The darkness of the place, upon which the sun never shines; the ragged rocks, rising over one's head, and seeming to meet at the top, with here and there a blasted tree, bursting from the crevices; the rumbling of the water falling from rock to rock, and forming deep pools; together with some degree of danger to the spectator, whilst he surveys the striking objects that present themselves to his view; all naturally tend to work upon the imagination. Hence many fabulous stories are told, and perhaps were once believed, concerning this curious linn.

tion, date, coats of arms, ornaments or figures, that can lead to any probable conjecture, as to the time of its being built. But from the style of building, it is supposed to be about 800 years old. A particular description and drawing of this castle, together with an account of the ancient and present families possessing it, may be seen in Mr Grose's *Antiquities of Scotland*. Upon the farm of Kirkpatrick in this parish, there are the remains of an old chapel and burying ground; and upon the farm of Auchencairn, there are the remains of an old vaulted building. But no traditionary account with respect to either of these, has been transmitted down to the present age. There are likewise, in different parts of the parish, several large cairns of stones heaped together. But neither is there any tradition with respect to them.

Loch and Mineral Wells.—The castle of Closeburn was surrounded by a fosse, which was connected with a loch of nearly a quarter of a mile in length. In this loch, there was a remarkable agitation in the year 1756, of which an account is given in the *Philosophical Transactions* of that year. At a small distance from the castle of Closeburn, there is a mineral well, which was once of considerable repute. Its water is sulphureous, and has often been of service in scrofulous cases. There is another of the same kind in the Duke of Queensberry's lands of Lockerben; and there is another mineral well of a different kind, known by the name of the Town Cleugh Well. It is pretty strongly impregnated with iron, and its name points out its situation. The Cleugh, where it is, is called the Town Cleugh, from its vicinity to a small village called Closeburn Town, of which the only remains now are a part of the Cross, which is not yet totally destroyed.

Roads

Roads and Bridges.—Considerable improvements have been made upon the roads in this parish. The great turnpike road in particular, from Dumfries, to Glasgow and Ayr, which goes through this parish, does much credit to the judgment of the gentlemen who marked out the direction of it. Upon this road, there is a comfortable inn at Brownhill, in this parish, which divides the way pretty equally between Dumfries and Sanquhar, and at which travellers may expect to be treated with every civility. The parish is also well supplied with bridges over every little brook; where a bridge is at all needed, an arch is thrown, and the communication of one part of the parish with another, by this means, rendered easy at all times.

Character of the People.—In so populous a parish, it is impossible but that there must now and then be a few disorderly persons. But it would be very unfair to judge of the general character of the people from the conduct of a few individuals, or from a few irregularities committed in the intemperate use of whisky. Within the memory of man, no inhabitant of this parish has ever been guilty of suicide; none has ever suffered death by the hand of the executioner; none has ever been banished from his country; none has ever been so much as *tried* for murder, theft, or any capital crime. They are upon the whole a quiet, sober, honest, and industrious people. The farmers in particular are a very decent set of men, attentive to their business, just in their dealings, civil and obliging in their manners.