

NUMBER XXIV.

PARISH OF BOHARM.

(COUNTIES OF BANFF AND MORAY.—PRESBYTERY OF
ABERLOUR.—SYNOD OF MORAY.)

By the Rev. Mr FRANCIS LESLIE, Minister.

Geography and Natural History.

THE ancient name is *Bocharin*; in the original signifying the bow about the cairn, or rocky hill, from its surrounding nearly three parts of the bottom of the mountain of Beneageen. The length, between the parish of Mortlich, at the west, and the parish of Bellie, at the east, is from 7 to 9 English miles; the breadth, from the parish of Bortriphnie, at the south, to the highest cultivated land on the mountain, northward, is from 2 to 3 English miles; but the figure of the parish is so irregular, that these measures are to be regarded as the mean, rather than as the particular length and breadth.

The general appearance of the country may be conceived as an extensive valley from east to west, having all the arable land hanging on the declivities of both sides, there being little or no plain on the banks of the brooks, which, rising in the hills, bend their courses to either hand; to Fiddich, on the west; and, by the east, turning by the north-west to Spey. From this general description, Airndilly, the seat of David M'Dowall Grant, Esq; falls to be excepted, being delightfully

Highly situated on a rising ground, above a pretty extensive plain, half encircled by the Spey, in the south-western end of the parish, near to which, a little farther down the river, lie the haughs of Kailymore, a part of the same estate, signifying the *great wood*; which epithet, in some degree, it still comparatively merits. The soil here is sandy, warm, and fertile; but, in general, over the rest of the parish, it is a stiff, rich, deep clay, generally on a bed of lime-stone, and very retentive of water, with which it is too frequently supplied, the summit of the mountain attracting or intercepting the clouds borne along from the ocean by the north and north-westerly winds, on which account the harvests are rather late; and, though the air be moist, yet there is no distemper generally prevalent. The people are vigorous and healthy; and several attain to the longest term of human life, there being at present several men, each 80, and one woman accounted 100 years of age.

The water of Fiddich, turned almost at right angles, from an eastern to a northern course, along the west end of the parish, steals in to the river Spey, which is only navigable for floating timber down from Strath Spey, part of which is manufactured into plank, deal, spar, and scantling, by two saw-mills at the Boat of Brigg. It is hardly necessary to notice here the excellent salmon caught in the Spey, as the public are already sufficiently apprised of this particular.

The charter of Moray has preserved the memorial of the bridge over Spey at this place. Part of the foundation of the southern pier still remains. It has been supposed the bridge was of timber. Here also stood *the Chapel of St Nicholas*—“*Ad receptionem Pauperum transeuntium.*” Both the bridge and hospital were extant in the year 1232; but few particulars of their history or destruction remain.

It

It may be mentioned, that it is supposed practicable to build a stone-bridge here for about the sum of 3000 l. Sterling, which, besides certain conveniencies peculiar to this situation, would comprehend also all the requisite accommodation to the public; for, if the high-way were continued from where it joins the road between Keith and Fochabers, at the south end of the last of these villages, in the shortest course, to the Boat of Brigg, the distance from Cullen to Elgin would not be increased above 5 English miles on the whole, on a road as firm, and less exposed to depth of snow, than the present high-way from Fochabers to Elgin.

Population.—The ancient state of the population of the parish cannot now be ascertained, farther than that it does not appear that the number of farm-houses, or the extent of arable land, has been any way materially altered from what they were in times very remote.

Of late years, the population has been rather on the decrease, owing to several smaller farms, on which from 2 to 6 families resided, being reduced into a single farm, and occupied by a single family.

At present, the number of persons amounts to 1294, of whom 588 are males, and 706 females.

They all reside in the country, and follow the occupation of husbandry, with the exception of the few craftsmen who are requisite for that object, and for the more immediate accommodation of the people. There are none who have left the parish for want of employment; yet a few go southward in summer, on account of the higher wages given in that part of the kingdom.

There has never been any accurate register kept of baptisms, marriages, or burials. These particulars, therefore, cannot with any satisfactory precision be ascertained.

Productions

Productions of the Parish.—Oats, barley, and pease, are the kinds of corn principally raised. There are fields of sown grafs, bearing, however, little proportion to the natural lie grafs and common pasturage. Of the corn, there may be about two third parts in oats, the remaining third in barley and pease, in which part the potatoe and flax may be also included:

The oats and pease are sown from the beginning of March, as the season allows, to near the middle of May; and the barley seed-time is generally completed before the 1st of June. The harvest begins from about the middle of August to the middle of September. In some years, of late, it has not begun before the first week of October. Its conclusion, of course, must be at different times; and it has been, of late, accounted early, if completed by the end of November.

On the estate of Airndilly, if the different banks and clumps be regarded as a whole, there is a considerable extent of natural wood, in which wild cherries, plumbs, and geens, are interspersed. On this estate there are also extensive plantations of fir and pine, and other forest trees; and similar plantations have also risen up on the estate of Auchluncart, and on the lands in this parish appertaining to the Earl of Findlater, and which are not destitute of natural wood.

The black cattle among the country tenants, though not of great bone, are accounted handsome, and of a fine figure. The ordinary price of a yoke of oxen may be from 8 l. to 15 l. Sterling; and some have been sold at a higher rate. A milk cow may sell from 3 l. or 4 l. to 6 l. Sterling; and a score of wedders, with the fleece, from 6 l. to 9 l. Sterling.

Miscellaneous.—It must be accounted a disadvantage to the greater part of the parish, that it is so much exposed to rain

in the end of summer, and during the autumn; and, from the coldness of the soil, the snow lies long in the spring, so that the seasons are later; much of the corn not fully ripened; much lost; and much vexatious trouble in harvest, evils to which the opposite side of the Spey are comparatively not exposed; while, on the other hand, the near and more easy access to the cattle fairs during the summer, the abundance of natural pasture and lime-stone, are advantages which the neighbourhood on the north side of that river do not so amply possess.

The parish is at present possessed by 4 heritors. David M'Dowall Grant, Esq; has the lands of Airndilly, Papeen, Newtown, Gallval, and Auchmadies. The Earl of Findlater holds the barony of Mulben, the lands of Cairnty and Muldeiry. Andrew Stewart, Esq; writer to the signet, has the barony of Auchluncart. Archibald Duff of Drummuir, Esq; has the farm of Knocan. The valued rent of the parish is 2840 l. Scotch. The real rent of the whole has not been ascertained.

The Scotch is the only language spoken in the parish; but, with a few exceptions, the names of the places belong to the Earse tongue.

There are no funds for the support of the poor, except two small mortifications, amounting only to 8 l. 10 s. Sterl. together. The number of poor on the roll may amount to 17.

The ruin of the castle of Gallval is the only remain of any thing that can be deemed antiquity in the parish. It was built fronting the east, on the north side of the valley towards the western end, where the declivity hath fallen more gently into an inclined plain, and shot a promontory into the deep defile, formed by the course of the stream of Aldermy; snugly sheltered from the northern blast, with an
enlivening

enlivening extent of arable field, rising behind on either hand; a luxuriant landscape, spread westward on the winding banks of the Fiddich, glittering through the meadows and woods, decorated by the steady battlements of the castles of Balvenie and Auchendown, each on its own green hill, and terminated by the summits of the blue mountains, ranged at a distance around, seeming to debar all intrusion upon the sequestered vales. It bore little resemblance to the other castles of the feudal lords, whose towers, or square or round, of various heights and form, projected for the protection of the intermediate walls. It appears to have been a simple structure of an 119 by 24 feet within, divided by an internal wall, so as to form two halls on the ground floor, one 65, and the other 54 feet in length. The windows were only 20 inches wide, though the walls were 8 feet thick, built up in frames of timber, for keeping in the fluid mortar which was poured into the dry stone-wall, when raised to a certain height. The front and corners were neatly finished with free-stone from the quarries of Duffus, at the distance of 20 miles, on the other side of Spey, the nearest where such stone could have been procured. The front and gables are now entirely broken down; but, within these 50 years, they stood to the height of several stories. About that period, several silver spoons were found among the rubbish, having the handle round, and hollow like a pipe; and the concave part, or shell, perfectly circular.

This bulky fabric, which on the eastern front had lower external accommodations, in the year 1200 was denominated *Castellum de Bucharin*. It then belonged to the Freskyns of Duffus, by whom it was no doubt built. By assuming the title *De Moravia*, from their connection with that country, they became the author of that surname. They were once possessed of many a fair domain in the north, namely, Duffus,
Duldavie,

Duldavie, Dalvey, Inverallen, and Kirkdales, in Moray; Airndilly, Aikenwall, Boharm, Botriphnie, then Botruthin, Kinermonie, then Cere Kainermonth, in Banffshire; and in Nairn or Inverness, Brachlie, Croy, Ewan, Lunyn, and Petty, as appears by the charter of Moray, from the 1100 to 1286. At this day, they are represented, in the 20th generation, by the Duke of Atholl, Captain Sutherland of Duffus, and Mr Murray of Abercairnny.

It is also by the charter of Moray instructed, that, between the year 1203 and 1222, William, the son of William Freskyn, obtained the consent of Brucius, Bishop of Moray, for building a domestic chapel, for the more commodious performance of the offices of devotion. It stood on its own consecrated burying-ground, forsaken only in the course of the last 60 years, about 50 yards from the north end of the castle; and, though only 24 by 12 feet within, must have been the parent of the present parish church, which, with several others, was erected at the private expence of James VI. for civilizing the north of Scotland, in the year 1618, at which period the parish of Airndilly may be supposed to have been annexed.

A part also of the parish of Dundurcos has been of late conjoined, and a new church erected about two miles eastward, in a situation which some suppose to be more central. But the stipend, after both annexations, including the allowance for communion elements, is only 75 l. 7 s. 2½ d. Sterling.

Although it is not certainly known that any man of peculiar eminence was born in the parish, yet it may be proper to notice, that Mr James Ferguson, the astronomer, received the rudiments of his education here, under the patronage of the grandfather of the present Mrs Grant of Airndilly. Mr Ferguson has himself published his life: It is only necessary therefore

therefore here to add, that, while a little boy who could hardly read, and employed in tending the cows, the family clock was the first object which elicited those sparks of mechanical genius which in due time shone with such a bright and vigorous flame.

The people, on the whole, are industrious, economical, obliging, and kind, according to their manners and circumstances; very attentive to the national religion; and there is no remembrance of any having been judicially punished for the violation of the laws of morality or justice. They appear, in general, to enjoy the necessaries, and many of the comforts of life, and to be contented with that situation in the world which has been allotted to them by Providence. There are means by which their circumstances might be meliorated; but, it being extremely probable they will not be adopted, it may be deemed officious to enumerate them here.

The difficulty and expence of procuring hands for the operations of agriculture, and the want of all police, either conventional or legal, respecting this object, has of late been so heavily and universally felt, that perhaps any speculation that might contribute to turn the attention of the more discerning to this interesting object, may not be deemed entirely nugatory.

In so far as this grievance hath arisen from the diminished value of money in the present opulent age, when, as in the days of Solomon, it may be said "*of silver, that it is not any thing accounted of,*" it cannot be regarded as any cause of complaint; for the price of labour must be proportional to that of other articles: But, in so far as the evil arises from the combined fraud, the falsehood, the stubbornness, and the domineering insolence of that rank of society, it ought to be repressed, although in due consistence with the rights
of

of men; and much delicacy, in this regard, is no doubt requisite. It might tend, perhaps, to check the evil, were every agricultural servant, by law, obliged to produce to the master with whom he engages, and to the church session of the parish, when required, a certificate from the master whom he left, granted before two legal witnesses, of the wages which he received, and of the discretion, fidelity, and diligence, which he maintained during the period of his preceding service; the engaging master to forfeit equal to a quarter of year's wages, and the servant as much, to the parish fund, for every omission of such formality; to be recovered at the instance of the cashier of the session, by the warrant of one justice of the peace, or other judge ordinary, in the same summary manner in which the fines are levied on the absentees from the statute labour on the roads.

Those who have been attentive to the operation of any new law, will be able perhaps to form a judgment of the effect of such an establishment, were it so framed as to admit of equal execution in England and in Scotland. It does not appear that it could be attended with much inconvenience to either party; and, while it would, in general, prevent imposition on the master who engages, by an exaggerated account of the wages paid by the last master, as is now so generally the case, it would, in many instances, have the effect of rendering the servant discreet and diligent during the term of his service, when so much as a quarter's wages depended on his behaviour.

Other improvements respecting diet, and the hours of labour, might be suggested; but it is probable the effect alone of the certificate may render these unnecessary: At any rate, if regulations respecting the contract between master and servant shall be taken under the consideration of Legislature,

every

every thing of this kind will be maturely digested, and sufficiently provided for.

By the nauseous draught of train oil in Lapland, and the more disgusting beverage of Otaheite, it may be inferred, that man cannot be satisfied with the simple element alone of water. From the different circumstances concomitant on the excise law in England and in Scotland, it would not be difficult to investigate why beer has been the prevailing drink among the peasantry of the southern, while ardent spirits has so universally obtained among the same rank in the northern end of the island, to which must be attributed their asperated and contracted features, rather than to the influence of their climate.

The Secretary of State for this department, by the restoration of its ancient families to their paternal fortunes; by increasing the independence of its Judges, particularly the Sheriff-substitutes, on whom the administration of justice among the poor so much depends; by providing for the interest of the seamen and their connections; and by the repeal of the tax on water-borne coal, hath merited more of his native country than all his predecessors in office together. Characters so highly respectable are unpopular only among the blindest of the mob. To him it would be easy to model the law in such a manner, that beer, instead of whisky, should in a short time be generally adopted by all the labouring people in Scotland; and, by this means, while he would contribute to maintain, in a high degree, the purity of the morals, and the soundness of the constitutions of his countrymen, he would at the same time expand their countenances, and improve their whole exterior form to the highest elegance of symmetry and beauty.

NUM-