

NUMBER V.

PARISH OF LECROPT.

(PRESBYTERY OF DUNBLANE.—SYNOD AND COUNTIES
OF PERTH AND STIRLING.)

*Drawn up by the Rev. Doctor JAMES ROBERTSON, Minister
of Callander, from Materials furnished by the Rev. Mr
JOHN KINROSS, Minister of Lecropt.*

Etymology of the Name.

LECROPT is derived from two Gaelic words, which signify one *half firm* or *dry* land, alluding to the natural division of the parish into high and low, dry and wet soil. One half is upland or elevated ground, the other is a dead flat of clay land, which must have been one continued morass, when the sea retired from the extensive valley, in which the Forth now winds its way to the ocean.

Situation, Form, Rivers, Extent, Surface, &c.—About two thirds of this parish are situated within the county of Perth, and one third in the county of Stirling. Its latitude is 56°. 11'. N. and its longitude 47'. W. of Edinburgh.—Its form is not far removed from an equilateral triangle.—The river *Teath* bounds it on the S. W. where it meets the *Forth* and the *Allan* on the E. The southern point is where the Allan falls into the united streams of the other two. From E. to
W.

W. it extends about 3 miles, and nearly about as much from **N.** to **S.** It contains about 2000 acres of ground, one half of which is a rich clay, the other half up-land, or what is generally called dry-field. The clay soil on the south is divided from the up land by a beautiful bank, which crosses the parish, almost parallel to the north side, and nearly at one third of the distance between it and the southern extremity.—In all the clay land there is not a single stone or pebble; it is therefore inclosed and subdivided with hedge and ditch, or with open drains. The up-land, which is separated from the carse by the bank, and rises backward with a gentle ascent, is also inclosed, either with stone walls, or hedge and ditch.

Prospect.—From the bank up Lecropt, there is one of the finest prospects in this part of the island, which has been always admired by every person of taste. The Forth, the Teath, and the Allan unite their streams, and form the largest river in North Britain, in the champaign country, on the southern borders of the parish. Their waving banks being clad with the richest crops, the snug steadings of farms, the hedges neatly trimmed, the lofty trees, through which the smoke ascends from the dwellings, and the busy hand of man, engaged in the various operations of agriculture, beautify and enrich the scene.—On the opposite side of this fertile valley, the Castle of Stirling rears its head in rude magnificence, on the summit of a rock, and leads the mind to review the history of years that are past, when it was the residence of the antient kings of Scotland. The huge rock of Craigforth on the one side of the Castle, and the Abbey Craig on the other, form, with the Castle itself, three vast and detached piles, about the distance of a mile from each other; and, like the pyramids
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of Egypt, look down on an extensive tract of flat country, where no other eminence intervenes*. The tower of the abbey of Cambuskenneth, in one of the links of the Forth, where the ashes of the weak and unfortunate JAMES III. rest in peace from the tumult of civil discord, and the conflict of contending factions;—the stately bridge of Stirling, through which the Forth holds his majestic course to the ocean; his long circuitous links, through innumerable farms and thriving villages, and the floops sailing along these links in all directions, amidst trees and houses, feast the eye with the pleasant prospect, and delight the mind with the grateful idea of industry and of wealth.—The distant hills of *Dundaff*, on the south-west, (still the property of the descendants of that gallant hero who broke the Roman barrier), the hills of *Falkirk* on the south, famous for the bloody rencounter between *Liberty and Despotism*; the green *Ochils* on the east, piled on one another; *Ben-vor-lich* † on the north; *Benledi* § and *Benlomond* § on the west, which raise their venerable heads to the clouds,

* These masses, and all other detached rocks, and many of our mountain rocks, in this part of the world, present a rugged front uniformly to the west, and have a tail of earth in the opposite direction. The western coast of Britain, and most other islands, present a bold shore of high rocks, while the land on the east slopes generally by an inclined plane, and dips gradually into the sea. The British rivers, for the most part, flow eastward. This is the case in many other countries, especially in America. Whether this phenomenon be owing to the current of the general deluge, or to the direction in which the earth revolves round its axis, or to the eastern inclination of the country, is perhaps uncertain; but there appears to be no doubt, that it is owing to some general cause; and there is as little doubt, that a large stone, or a rock, in a river which is not very rapid, gathers a tail on that side to which the current flows.

† The mountain of great flags.

§§ For the etymology of these names, see the account of *CALLANDER*, Vol. XI. No. L.

clouds, all diversify the landscape, add grandeur to the prospect, and prepare the soul for contemplation.

Soil, Cultivation, Minerals, &c.—The soil in the carse has been rendered more productive, by draining the swamps, by laying a greater quantity of lime annually on the land than used formerly to be done, and by freighting the ridges in several places. The soil in the higher grounds is in general loam upon a till bottom, and in many places a stiff till, without any mixture of loam, especially where the land is spouty. A great part of the upland, so lately as 20 years ago, was covered with furze and broom, which have been grubbed out by the farmers, since the knowledge of improvement, and the desire of industry have been introduced into this country; and their labour has been amply rewarded by abundant crops. The land, where furze used to grow, is now a strong generous soil; and its strength may in every case be estimated by the size and luxuriance of the whins, in its natural state. The soil which carries broom, in its uncultivated state, is not so strong as the former; but it is a trusty soil, and will make good returns of the ordinary crops, when tenderly dealt with, and allowed occasionally to rest in grass. Where whins and broom are mixed, the soil is strong or light, in the degree in which either of these prevails; and to encourage the husbandman still farther, such land seldom requires draining, where these plants are found. Blocks of granite have been blown in different places off the higher grounds, and removed at considerable expence; and land which was lately in a state of nature, lets now at a guinea an acre in pasture. Where the soil was spouty, at the skirts of the hills, covered drains have been made; but in the clay land the drains are all open.

Climate,

Climate, Diseases, and Longevity.—In the carse, intermittent fevers were very frequent some time ago, occasioned, principally, by the dampness of the country; but since the ground has been drained, and the inhabitants are more comfortably lodged and fed, all distempers, arising from a relaxed habit, are neither so common nor severe.—There is nothing extraordinary in the stature or longevity of the people. About the beginning of 1794, there died in the carse a person aged 93. Several persons, now alive, enjoy good health at the age of 80. The people in general are healthy and hardy, inured, from their infancy, to the laborious exercises of agriculture, which, by their improved stile of living, they are not only enabled to undergo with success, but with comfort and ease.

Produce, &c.—The produce is wheat, barley, oats, pease, beans, clover, and rye-grass; and in up-lands less wheat and beans, but in their place more turnips, flax, and potatoes of various kinds.—The wheat is sown in the latter end of September, and during the whole month of October, usually after summer fallow. The farmers begin to sow pease and beans in February, and oats as early in March as the season will allow. The sowing of barley is generally finished by the 1st of May. Potatoes are planted about the middle of May, which is also the season for the barley seed time in the up-land. The turnips are sown in June. The wheat yields about 10 bolls an acre, having 8 or 10 chalders of lime laid on the preceding fallow. The harvest begins about the middle of August, and is finished in 6 weeks thereafter, when the season is favourable. The wheat sells generally at 21 s. and sometimes more, by the boll; the barley from 18 s. to 22 s.; meal commonly at 16 s. The barley is sometimes sown by itself, and sometimes mixed with Chester bear. The oats,

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most frequently cultivated in this parish, are the old Scotch kind. The Cupar Grange species is also introduced. The beans have always a mixture of about one-third of pease.

Wages and Prices of Provisions.—Servants wages have risen considerably within these few years. A bred ploughman cannot be hired for a year under 9 l. or 10 l.; a maid-servant charges 3 l. and upwards. Common labourers get 1 s. a day and their victuals. Beef sells at between 4 d. and 5 d. per lib.; mutton commonly at 4 d.; a pair of good barn fowls at 2 s. 6 d.; eggs at 6 d. or 8 d. the dozen; butter at 10 d. the lib.; and cheefe at 4 d.

Farm Houses.—The farm houses have lately undergone great improvements, owing to the general spirit of industry, and the desire of convenience, which has been spreading for some years through this part of the kingdom, in every department of rural economy*. The dwellings are well lighted, and consist of 3 or more apartments; and the farmers have generally a clock in every family, and other furniture in proportion, comfortable and convenient.—They have kilns for drying grain, with brick floors, and some with cast iron floors.

Cattle.—In the carse farms, few black cattle are kept, but they pay great attention to the rearing of horses. In the
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* About 20 years ago, the houses were meanly constructed, without light, without air, and without accommodation, which must have been very injurious to the health of the inhabitants, and, together with the wetness of the soil, proved the concomitant causes of premature old age, and of many local distempers. The late ARCHIBALD STIRLING of Kier, and most of the other proprietors at the end of the last leafes, inclosed and subdivided the farm, built neat steadings of houses in central places, and covered them with tiles or blue flates.

more elevated parts of the parish, the farmers rear more cows, and pay considerable attention to the dairy, which to them is a great source of profit. Their soil is well adapted for pasture, whereas the clay soil is more productive in bearing crops of grain. There is no mountainous ground in the parish, and therefore there are no sheep farms; some large inclosures, which are let to graziers, are stocked with sheep: And from the richness of their grass, and their vicinity to the market, they make good returns.

Moss.—It is evident, from a variety of circumstances, that the flat land in this neighbourhood was formerly covered with a stratum of moss. This moss was composed of the deciduous parts of trees, which sprung up from the rich bed of clay that was exposed, when the sea retired from that extensive valley, in which the Forth flows from the head of Monteath to Borrowstounness. Marine shells are found in the body of this clay. The roots of large trees are found adhering to its surface, and their trunks and branches are mingled with the moss above; which is a sufficient proof that there was no moss when the trees were growing*.

Woods.

* By what cause those trees, which in this valley are mostly oak, were felled, is not, perhaps, so evident; but by whatever cause this took place, when the trees fell, the whole plain must have been an immense and wild morass, when the water from the higher grounds was interrupted in its progress, and rendered stagnant by leaves, and branches, and large logs of wood. The richness of the soil below would soon produce a rank growth of the long grasses, and other plants peculiar to marshy ground. When the surface was somewhat consolidated by the annual decay of these plants, it would become a vast quag-mire, acquiring a gradual consistency, enabling it to carry heath on the top. From being flow moss it would become firmer, especially at the sides, where there was least water, and where the moss was less deep, by reason of the higher ground dipping in-
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Woods and Orchards.—There is a great variety of planted trees on the higher grounds, which thrive well, shelter the country,

to it by an inclined plane.—The rivers being scarcely able to force their way through this desert, on which no four-footed creature durst venture for a long tract of time, deposited their tribute of slime, and meliorating particles of fine earth, upon the banks which produced a strip of rich land along their course. These strips of fine arable land, on the brinks of the rivers, are still discernible in all this country, while moss, in many places, retains its ancient possession, between them and the higher grounds farther back, by which it is surrounded. It is also probable, that these banks of earth, formed on the verge of the rivers, contributed to hold back the water in the morafs, and to increase its depth, or the altitude of the moss, as they grew higher, by a continual accession of more soil with every inundation.

This may be the manner in which all deep mosses are formed. The thin stratum of moss on dry ground, which is produced solely by the leaves, and other deciduous parts of heath, is entirely out of the question. All mosses, of any considerable depth, are found in beds of greater or less extent, according to the distance of the rising grounds, or other obstructions by which the morafs was inclosed, wherein they were formed. It is an absurdity to alledge, that peat earth grows, any more than other earth. No species of earth has vegetable life. It indeed produces plants which have vegetable life, and these plants, returning to their first principles, increase the mold. The plants which grow on dry ground, when not carried off, add to the staple of the soil, and form a mold, similar in its qualities to that on which they grew; and the plants, which are natural to land-locked morasses, (among which that plant, strictly called *moss*, is always to be found), the leaves, and branches, and bark of trees, where they happen to fall, uniformly produce a black mold, known by the name of *peat earth*.

In the middle of the carse of Lecroft, there remained, till of late, 60 acres of moss, originally formed in this manner. The people in the adjacent farms were in the practice of cutting peats from it, which rendered the moss very irregular. The low moss at the sides was from 4 to 6 feet deep, and the high moss in the middle from 7 to 10 feet. This moss was, about 8 years ago, taken in lease from Mr Stirling of Kier, by a farmer in the neighbouring parish. He was baffled at first in many attempts to carry off the moss; but by unwearied perseverance

country, and are highly ornamental and useful. In this parish there are 10 orchards, 5 larger and 5 less, which, in favourable seasons, yield a considerable quantity of apples, pears, and plumbs. There is also a large natural wood, mostly of oak, which is cut twice in 24 years, and affords a plentiful and occasional supply of timber for the various purposes of husbandry. The only timber trees in the Carse are saugh, which grow to a large size; and, when allowed to arrive at full maturity, the red is durable, and admits of a most beautiful polish.

Bees.—Several persons in this parish have propagated bees with great success. The numerous orchards, the extensive plantations of trees, which abound with the saccharine juice, the large fields of beans, whose grateful flavour embalms the very air in the Carse, and the up-lands adorned with variegated blossoms of clover and daisies, and furze and broom, afford a plentiful supply to these industrious insects; and the warmth of the Bank, so well sheltered from the N. and running from E. to W. through the whole extent of the parish, affords them that cover which suits the delicacy of their frame, and cherishes their unceasing industry.

Heritors,

rance he succeeded at last in carrying a small rivulet about half a mile below ground, in wooden pipes, which consist of wooden boards, 1 foot in breadth, joined at right angles, and hooped with iron. In the space of 4 or 5 years he cleared, by the aid of this stream, about 20 acres down to the clay. This land produces fine crops of oats, and, by being properly wrought, and turned up frequently to the enriching influence of the air, there is no doubt of its carrying any other species of crops, known in the clay land around it. But, to the unspeakable loss of his family, this ingenious and industrious man, whose name was *MURDOCH*, was lost about 2 years ago, within a few yards of his own house, in passing the Forth; and since his death, the improvements on the moss have gone on but slowly.

Heritors, Rents, &c.—The heritors are 5 in number, none of whom reside within the parish. More than one half of the parish belongs to JAMES STIRLING, Esq; of Kier, whose residence has a commanding prospect on the Bank of Lecropt, within a mile of the church. This family has been long and justly respected, by all ranks, for the qualities which adorn human nature in the higher spheres of life. They have embellished the place of Kier, by well dressed lawns and extensive plantations; they have given bread to the poor, in carrying on these improvements; and have, by their example and influence, diffused a stile of husbandry and cultivation through this country formerly unknown. The number of farms is 25; and their extent is from 40 to 100 acres each. There are 7 pendicles, consisting of from 3 to 14 acres. There are 20 cottages, occupied by labourers and married servants. The land in the Carse lets, on an average, at 20 s. the acre; and the average rent of the up-land is 12 s. The valued rent of the parish is 2200 l. Scotch. The real rent is not exactly ascertained.

Population.—The population of the parish has rather been on the decrease since the farms began to be enlarged. The population in 1755, as returned to Dr Webster, was 577
 The number of souls at present (1794) is - - 420
 Decrease 157
 The number of families is - - - 80

Employments.—The people are employed, for the most part, in the various operations of husbandry, as farmers, servants, and labourers. There are 2 weavers, 1 smith, and 1 millwright; but neither taylor, shoemaker, surgeon, nor lawyer, in the parish.

Fisheries.

Fisheries.—The cruives of Craigforth are placed on a ledge of rocks, which extend across the Forth, having one end in this parish, and the other in the parish of St. Ninian's. The tide flows up to this ledge; which circumstance renders it a proper station for a fishing of this kind. A great number of salmon is taken, when the cruives are kept in proper repair. Salmon are also taken on the Teath and on the Allan, besides trouts, pikes, and perches.

Village, Manufactures, Mills, &c.—There is only one village, called *the Bridge of Allan*, which consists of 28 families. None of the tenements are feued. They are all the property of Mr Stirling of Kier. The villagers are variously employed, ministering to the convenience of the country. There is, particularly, a brewery for malt liquor, where strong ale, small beer, and porter, are made.—This village is situated on the Allan, a river more remarkable, at this place, for its romantic scenery, of a deep glen covered with a variety of wood, and its tumultuous current, than for the quantity of its water. The Allan, within a short space, drives several mills, for meal, barley, and flour. There are, particularly, 3 mills for making a coarse paper, known by the name of *Callender paper*, which clothiers use in pressing cloth. The village has also the advantage of being situated in a plentiful country, near coals, and at the separation of the two great military roads, the one going by Callander, to the west of Scotland, and the other, by Crieff, to the north: So that no situation seems to be better adapted for erecting a village on a large scale.

Sources of Profit.—The farmers in the clay land, who have lime in abundance near at hand, and for a moderate price, make their returns mostly by their grain. In the upland, the farmers have not only the same command of lime, but
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shell marl, and make their returns partly by grain, and partly by the produce of the dairy, and by fattening cattle for the market. The women spin woollen yarn, which sells, when trade is good, at 2 s. the spindle, for making stockings, shal-loons, and plaids.

Roads.—The great roads in this parish are but indifferent; but a toll is soon to be erected on that leading northward, which will enable the gentlemen to pay more attention to the other great road, and to the bye-roads, which stand much in need of repair. The roads in the Carse are scarcely passable in winter. The statute labour is not commuted.

Ecclesiastical state.—The church and manse are beautifully situated on the face of the rising ground, above the Carse, and command a rich and extensive prospect, already taken notice of. The church, which is in good repair, is an old Gothic building *, consisting of a nave and choir, 72 feet in length; the nave being only 14 feet broad, and the choir but 11. The steps to the altar are still visible; and the sacred font is quite entire. The manse is commodious, and in good repair. The glebe consists of 7 acres of fertile land, properly inclosed. The stipend is 48 l. 19 s. 2½ d. in money, 43 bolls of meal, and 23 bolls of barley. Mr STIRLING of Kier is patron.

Religious Persuasions.—The town of Stirling was the original seat of the secession from the established church; and
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* It was formerly a chapel annexed to the bishopric of Dunkeld, although it be situated within the diocese of Dunblane, and only 2 miles from the bishop's seat. The curate was established at Lecropt, to be a check on the bishop of Dunblane; which practice it seems, from similar institutions, was not uncommon in these times.

from a variety of causes, the peculiar tenets of that persuasion took early a deep root in this neighbourhood. A great variety of opinions have sprung up since that period. We have Burghers, Antiburghers, Cameronians, Bereans, and persons who adhere to the presbytery of Relief. But it ought to be remarked to their credit, that persons entertaining all these different opinions live with those of the established church, and with one another, in friendship and brotherly love. The acrimony of speech, the fountains of temper, the shyness of intercourse, and the reluctance to perform good offices, which characterised religious parties some years ago, have now given place to Christian benevolence, and the sweet intercourse of social affection. The intolerant heat of party zeal has become more moderate; and the mild spirit, which the gospel breathes, polishes the ferocity of nature, and smooths the ruggedness of the human heart. Men have discovered, what they ought always to have known, that their opinions, with regard to speculative points, are often as different as their faces; and that the harmony of society, and the intercourse of life, ought not to be interrupted by the one more than by the other; that meekness and forbearance become Christians; that rudeness of manners is different from purity of morals; that asperity of temper is no mark of soundness in the faith; and that it is a precept of the highest authority, to “*love one another.*”

School and Poor.—The school is well taught. The fees are moderate; for Latin and arithmetic, 2 s.; for English, one merk Scotch, or 1 s. 1½ d.; for writing, 1 s. 6 d. Book-keeping and mathematics are also taught. The salary 100 l. Scotch, with the perquisites arising from the offices of precentor and session clerk.—There are no begging poor; but a few poor householders are comfortably maintained, without

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any regular assessment, by the interest of 100 l. a fund allotted for that purpose, together with the weekly collections.

Antiquities.—An artificial eminence, on the east side of this parish, seems to have been a post of the Romans, near their great road to the church at Ardoch. KIER, already so often mentioned, is one of a chain of rude forts, (which are all called *Kiers*), that run along the north face of the Strath, or Valley of Montcath. These forts are at present in ruins, and are discernible to strangers only by knolls of a green surface, covering a great heap of loose stones *; but well known to the inhabitants of the country, who carry away the stones for building inclosures and houses. One of these forts was situated at the place of Kier. There are also Kiers at *Achinsalt* †, at *Borland* ‡, at *Balinackader* §, at *Tar* ||, and in many other places in that direction, all similar to one another, in respect of situation, construction, prospect, and materials; which is a strong presumption at least, if not a clear proof, that their use was the same **. There is, in the neighbourhood of the
church

* They seem to have been constructed mostly with dry stones, dug from the quarries near them, because no other cement, except clay or mud, was known in this part of the world, at the time they were built. They were uniformly situated near a spring of water, or a running brook, and commanded an extensive prospect towards all points except the north, from which quarter, it is probable, no danger was apprehended.

† *The field of the good prospect*; commanding the country from the moor of Dumbarton to Queensferry.

‡ *The land of hills.* *Bor* and *tor* signify a hill; hence all the torreys are hilly.

§ *The fuller's town.*

|| *The grain.* All the *tars* are at the bottom of hills.

** It appears highly probable, that this chain of forts was
built

church of *Lecropt*, a hill, where the baron used to hold his court, during the prevalence of the feudal system. The Gallow Hill is near the Court Hill *.

Advantages and Disadvantages.—The advantages are, our vicinity to the market of Stirling, where the parishioners can purchase any commodities they stand in need of, and get a good price and ready money, for whatever they can spare for sale. They are near plenty of coal, which contributes to their domestic comfort; and abundance of cheap lime enables them to improve their ground.—Bad roads are a great disadvantage. Another inconvenience, no less severely felt, is the want of good water in the Carse. There is but one small rivulet in the parish, which is employed in carrying away the moss. There are four springs immediately below the Bank, at

built by the Caledonians, to watch the motions of the troops stationed on the Roman wall, betwixt Borrowstounness and Old Kilpatrick, begun by AGRICOLA after his irruption into the north in the year 79, and completed by ANTONINUS PIUS. The Caledonian line was about 3 or 4 hours march, in most places, from the Roman wall; and this chain of forts, whether it was constructed by GALGACUS, who was no less sagacious than brave, or by his successor, was planned with consummate judgment, not only for the reason already mentioned; but because this is the narrowest tract of Scotland that the Romans ever visited, and therefore the most easily defended, and also, because there are few fords in the river, which runs in the strath lying on the south; and, if Moss Flanders then existed, it must have been an impassable morass, and a good barrier, as far as it extended, on the Caledonian frontier.

* According to the summary proceedings of those times, sentence of death, execution, and interment, followed one another in such rapid succession, that graves, gallows hills, and *mòt*, or court hills, are found contiguous, not only here, but every where else. The court hills are called *mòt*, or *mòt* hills, from the Gaelic word *mòt*, or *mòd*, which, to this day, is the only word for a court of judicature in that language.

at the head of the clay land ; but in this, and all other large tracts of horizontal land, whatever be the nature of the soil, there can be no springs, for a very obvious reason.

Character, Dress, &c.—The people are remarkable for their decency and sobriety. None have been banished, or have suffered the higher pains of law, in any other respect, for misconduct, in the memory of man. Remote from the temptations and lurking places of great towns, where the profligate expect to elude the eye of the world, and to escape the lash of the law, in a crowded population, every man considers himself as known to his neighbours, and that he has both his own reputation, and the credit of his ancestors, to support by his conduct. Habits of industry have become familiar to the people, whatever object they have in view. In literature they have not been deficient, when their genius led them to the pursuit of study, and the improvement of the mind. One minister, one preacher, and three students, now alive, drew their first breath in this parish.—A remarkable change has lately taken place in the article of dress. The love of show is natural ; and imaginary wants are sometimes no less clamorous than those which are real. But, if the increase of their earnings do not furnish the labouring part of mankind with this increase of luxury, their savings, upon which they are to begin the world, must be less at present than when their wages were more moderate, and their clothing less expensive.

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