

## NUMBER XVIII.

## PARISH OF ORPHIR,

(COUNTY AND SYNOD OF ORKNEY, PRESBYTERY OF  
CAIRSTON.)

*By the Rev. Mr Liddell, Minister.*

*Origin of the Name.*

ORPHIR, or, according to the Icelandic historians, *Jorfior*, is compounded of the Norwegian words, *jord*, land, and *fior*, fire. This etymology is the more probable, as the parish of Orphir serves the neighbouring towns of Kirkwall and Stromness with a species of peats, distinguished by the name of *yarfo*, that is, fire-land, or earth fit for burning. And to the present day, there is a house and district called *Yarfo*, from its neighbourhood to a large moss of this description.

*Situation*

*Situation and Extent.*—This parish is situated in the county and synod of Orkney, and in the presbytery of Cairnston, and makes a part of the isle of Pomona, commonly called Mainland, from its being the largest of the Orkney islands.

It is bounded on the N. W. and N. by the parishes of Sternes and Firth, from which it is divided by a range of lofty hills; by the parish of Kirkwall on the N. E.; and on the E. S. and W. by the Orkney Mediterranean, generally known by the name of Scalpa Flow.

It is about eight English miles long, and from two to three miles in breadth; lying along the sea-shore, nearly in the direction of N. E. and S. W. and enjoys a fine exposure.

The face of the parish is diversified with hills and dales through which many rivulets flow. The soil, in a few places near the coast, is a rich loam, mixed with stones, and tolerably fertile; but, in general, it is clay or moss, or a mixture of both; and when well manured, though but indifferently cultivated, is more than sufficient to maintain the inhabitants.

The upper part of the parish, except a few small farms, near a lake, called the Loch of Kibister, is hilly, and chiefly covered with heath, intermixed with coarse grass, and well adapted for the breeding of sheep and small cattle. The lower part, toward the S. E. S. and W. and extending about a mile from the hills to the sea-shore, is in general plain, and beautifully diversified with corn-fields, meadows, and green pasture. The eastern district is interspersed with rising grounds, covered with heath, and large peat-mosses, which furnish the inhabitants with fuel, and enable them to supply the neighbouring town of Kirkwall.

*Climate.*

*Climate.*—From the situation of these islands, in a northern latitude, and surrounded by the ocean, the diseases incident to a cold and damp climate might naturally be expected; but the reverse happens. The ague is not known here, and scorbutic complaints seldom occur; owing, perhaps, to the abundance of fuel, to the frequent use of vegetables, and of malt liquor; and above all, to the salubrious sea-breezes, which cool the air in summer, and counteract the frosts in winter, and render the climate, upon the whole, more temperate, than in many places of a more southerly latitude upon the continent. The small-pox was much dreaded here previous to the 1757, when inoculation was introduced, and has ever since been attended with uncommon success. Consumptions are not frequent. The most prevalent distempers are fevers, which frequently prove fatal, especially in years of sterility. Rheumatisms have become more frequent of late years, owing, it is supposed, to the substitution of the linen shirt for the woolen waistcoat, formerly worn by the common people.

*Mineral Springs*—are to be met with in every district of the parish. But the one most in vogue is the water of Scoridale, which has been famous for time immemorial, and is supposed to cure all diseases. It, like all the others, is of the chalybeate kind, without any mixture of sulphur. It is of a diuretic and antiscorbutic quality, and helps to promote digestion.

*Lakes, Coasts, Islands, and Fisheries.*—There are in this parish several small rivulets, but only one lake, called the Loch of Kirbister. It is between two and three miles in circumference, and is well stored with sea-trout of an excellent quality. The fall from this lake is very considerable, and turns one of the finest mills in the country. Here

WAS

was formerly a waukmill, but it was suffered to go into decay, after the introduction of the linen manufacture. There are two other mills in the parish, which go under the name of Dubmills. These are of no use in the summer season.

The sea-coast forms a circuitous course of about 12 miles, and is finely indented with bays and creeks, where vessels may anchor; one of them in particular, called the Bay of Houton, is protected by an island at the entrance, and forms a safe harbour for small vessels. The shore, except in the bays, is in general bold, consisting of rocks of from 40 to 50 feet high; and composed partly of whin, but chiefly of freestone. The water, within a gun-shot of the shore, is from 12 to 20 fathom deep.

*Scalpa Flow.*—The sea opposite to this coast is a most beautiful piece of water, being a small mediterranean, of about 50 miles in circumference. It is surrounded with 12 different islands, through which are several outlets to the Pentland Firth, and German and Atlantic Oceans. This, particularly in time of war, is the great thoroughfare for ships coming north about. It abounds with safe roadsteads and fine harbours; such as Holm Sound, Floxa Sound, St Margaret's Houp, Pan Houp, and Long Houp in the Island of Walls; where there is good anchorage, and a sufficient depth of water for the largest ship in the British navy. The principal entrance to Scalpa Flow, is through Holm Sound on the E. and Hoymouth on the W.; near which stands the village of Stromness, a sea-port, too well known to need description here, and possessed, for its size, of one of the finest natural harbours in the world.

Two miles distant from the southmost part of Orpbir lies the island of Cava, a mile long, and about a quarter of a mile broad. There are only three families in the island, consisting at present of 19 persons. The soil is a mixture of clay and moss, which, as they have plenty of sea-ware, seldom

seldom fails to produce a good crop. Besides 9 horses and 16 cows with their calves, they have a few rabbits, and peats in abundance. The few inhabitants frequent the parish church, and are very regular in their attendance upon divine worship. There is a ruinous chapel in the island, round which is a church-yard, where they formerly used to bury their dead.

In this sequestered spot, seemingly pointed out by nature as a place for religious retirement, in the memory of people now alive, have been committed two rapes and one murder. The murder is said to have happened in self-defence. The rapes were committed by Gow the pirate's people, who carried off two young women from the island; and after keeping them for some days aboard their ship, returned them to their friends, loaded with presents; and they both soon afterwards got husbands.

There is another small island in this parish, fit only for sheep-pasture, called the *Holm* of Houton; a name generally given to small uninhabited islands

About a mile E. from the island of Cava lies a rock, or skerry, well known to seamen, called the Barrel of Butter; here was formerly a seal-fishery, for which the neighbouring farmer paid the proprietor a barrel of oil yearly, until the frequency of shipping scared them from the rock; then the proprietor, determined not to lose his rent, converted the tack-duty into a barrel of butter; which is still paid by the tenant, and thence the rock is said to derive its name. Its ancient name was Carlin Skerry.

The principal fishery on the coast of Orphir is the dog-fishery, which, for the time it lasts, is highly beneficial. These fish arrive, in successive shoals, about the time of new and full moon, and are observed to travel westwards. They make their appearance about the middle of June, and continue for a few days only at a time, until the end of August,

**August.** They are taken within half a mile of the shore, in from 20 to 30 fathoms water, with a common hand-line of half a crown value. One man will sometimes catch fifteen score in a day. They yield a great deal of oil; and when cured and smoaked, are thought to resemble kipper. Their value, *per* hundred, may amount, at an average, to 5 s. There are in this fishery about 24 boats employed, with 4 or 5 men in each. When the dog-fishing fails, which sometimes happens, the people are in the utmost distress for want of oil; which then rises from 6 d. or 8 d. *per* Scotch pint, to 1 s. or even 1 s. 6 d. During the rest of the year, they seldom catch any thing but a small fish called keiths or fillocks. These fish smoaked, together with the fillocks, constitute a great part of the food of the inhabitants.

Scalpa Flow abounds with many other kinds of fish, such as scate, flounders, haddocks, mackrel, and occasionally herrings. But the inhabitants are so much employed in making of kelp, which is the great article of Orkney commerce, that they have not leisure to attend to this fishery. The common kinds of shell-fish are also to be found here, such as lobsters, partans, spouts and cockles; there are likewise a few seals, and otters, whose skins are valuable. Sometimes, too, the small whales, called the bottle-nosed, make their appearance on this coast, and when embayed, are surrounded with boats, and forced on shore.

There are no fewer than fifteen smacks employed throughout the season, in fishing and carrying lobsters to the London market, all of which rendezvous in one or other of the harbours of Scalpa Flow. This fishery is considered as very beneficial to the inhabitants of the adjacent coast, who are chiefly employed in catching the lobsters, and receive from 1 d. to 1½ d. *per* piece. The boats fitted out for this purpose measure 12 feet of keel, and together with the nets,  
cost

cost about £. 6. There are two men in each boat, who will clear, at an average, £. 7 Sterling a-piece, during the fishing-season, which, including that of the spring and harvest, does not last above six months in the year.

*Kelp.*—Of this article, about 50 tons, at an average, are manufactured, and exported yearly. The most expert kelp-burners in Orkney are supposed to belong to this parish; the consequence of which is, that they are universally employed. One farmer in particular, Nicol Slettar in Yarso, by his superior skill in surveying, and fixing with precision the value of shores, has deserved well of his country, having thereby considerably augmented the income of many of the proprietors. This man, by dint of experience alone, and natural sagacity, without the aid of education, will ascertain, with astonishing exactness, the greatest quantity of kelp to be produced from any district of shores, which he is employed to survey; but, like most men of merit, he has been poorly rewarded.

Of this great staple of Orkney commerce, much might be said: But, as the subject has been already anticipated in former Statistical Accounts, the author of the present report would only wish to add, for the sake of his countrymen, and upon the authority of the first manufacturer in Newcastle; "That, excepting barilla, which is sometimes not to be purchased for any money, the best crown glass cannot be made without a certain proportion of Orkney kelp; and that, if the proprietors would be at the pains to prepare this article in the best manner, and to preserve it pure and unadulterated, the price it would bring at market is scarce credible.

The tang, or sea-weed, which grows on this and the neighbouring coasts, is found to be fit for burning only once in three years; whereas, in the island of Sanday, and some  
of

of the smaller islands, the same kind of sea-weed is burnt yearly. This is generally ascribed to their proximity to the ocean, and the rapidity of the tides; but, as there are many similar situations, from which the same effect is not produced, it is more reasonable to ascribe this phenomenon, either to the peculiar nature of the rocks on which these weeds grow; or, with greater probability, to the situation and soil of those islands, which are so narrow, flat, and sandy, as hardly ever to attract a cloud, or produce the smallest rivulet from one end to the other; by which means the sea-weed, being preserved from fresh-water, which is its greatest enemy, is permitted to grow in its utmost perfection.

*Tides, Bays, Headlands, and Wrecks.*—The tide, at its entrance into Scalpa Flow, is uncommonly rapid; but it gradually subsides, until it becomes scarce perceptible. The course of the flood, with a little variation, is from W. to E. There is one part of the coast, adjacent to the house of Mr Honyman of Græmfay, where the current, intercepted by a reef of rocks, runs 9 hours in one direction, and 3 in the opposite.

The principal neffes and headlands are Voeness, Toiness, Bernori, and Houton-head. The bays are, Waukmill Bay, Smugro Bay, and the Bay of Houton, all of them fronting the S. and S. E.; in each of which, particularly the last, small vessels may anchor with safety.

Only two shipwrecks have happened here in the memory of any person now alive. The one happened about 30 years ago, upon the rocks of Hobbister, where the vessel went to pieces, but the people were saved. The other in spring 1793, on the sand of the Waukmill Bay, where by unloading a part of the cargo, which consisted chiefly of flax, the vessel was got off, without receiving any consider-

able damage; upon which occasion, much to the honour of the inhabitants, every assistance was given, and not a single head of flax amissing.

*Hills.*—The principal hill in this parish is about 700 feet high. It is called the Wart Hill, as is erroneously supposed, from a small hillock raised on the top of it by Mr Murdoch Mackenzie, when he surveyed these islands. This gentleman, who is still alive, is a native of Orkney; and the first who brought surveying to that degree of accuracy which it has of late attained. Sir Robert Strange, the late famous engraver, was also a native of this country; and, as he told the present incumbent, passed some of the happiest days of his youth in this parish; which, after all his travels through France and Italy, he could not help admiring for the natural beauty of its scenery. Such is the sweet remembrance of youth! And yet this partiality is not altogether without foundation. For from the top of a hill, at the foot of which, on a rising ground, stands the manse of Orphir, are to be seen, at one view, 25 islands and 23 parishes, including most of the Orkney islands, and part of the island of Great Britain, with an extensive view of the Atlantic and Germanic Oceans, together with that truly sublime object, the stupendous mountain of Hoy, washed on one side by the Pentland Firth, and on the other by the Orkney Mediterranean, which is as beautiful a piece of water as any county in Scotland can boast of, and much frequented by shipping. The Lord Advocate of Scotland, upon a late visit to these islands, arriving at this enchanted spot, from whence he first beheld the Atlantic Ocean, is said to have exclaimed with ecstasy, “Happy is the clergyman who inhabits yonder mansion!” “And still happier would he be,” said the clergyman, “would his Lordship help him to an augmentation of stipend.” For  
without

without thee, sweet Competence ! great Nature argues all in vain ; and all is Chaos dark again.

In former times, when these islands were infested by pirates, fires were kindled on the tops of the highest hills, and served to give warning to the inhabitants of the number and approach of the enemy ; and as the people appointed to attend those light-houses were to observe and repeat the signals, from the smaller hills and headlands near the coast, thence, from the Norse word, *Warder*, to watch, or look out, they got the name of Ward, or Wart Hills ; for this appellation is not peculiar to Orkney, but is to be found in other parts of Scotland, where the Norwegians resided.

Mr Hume, the historian, in his account of the Marquis of Montrose's expedition, is pleased to call the Orkney men, an unwarlike race of men \*. But, had he consulted the Icelandick historians, he would have learned, that " of old, in these islands, when the trumpet sounded to battle, when the shell of war was heard through the land, when the signal fires were kindled on the hills, in an instant the young men of Orkney flew to arms, and assembled round their chiefs, determined to conquer or die. Their wives and their parents, instead of keeping them back from the combat, helped them on with their armour, and prepared them for the battle."—Those who distinguished themselves by their valour, were rewarded at their return with the smiles and the charms of the fair ;—of the fair maids of Orkney ! for Orkney has always been distinguished for beautiful women. Then no woman of beauty, of family, of fortune, or of virtue, would deign to give her hand to the youth who had either declined or fled from the combat. For well they knew, that *None but the brave deserve the fair*. Such, of old, were the men of Orkney, and the ladies too, whatever information Mr Hume may have received to the contrary.

\* Perhaps the historian meant, more accustomed to naval than military exploits,

trary. And for the hardiness and bravery of the seamen of the present day, about 2000 of whom have stepped forward to serve their country, in almost every war since the Hanoverian succession, his Royal Highness Prince William, the son of our gracious Sovereign, can vouch.

*Fossils.*—There are here a few slates, of an inferior quality, and some excellent flags. Abundance of iron ore is found lying on the surface of the ground, but no attempt has been made to dig up any. Blue stone, fit for building, and also freestone, are to be had in great abundance. There is a curious vein of the latter sort in Houton-head, adjacent to the sea, of about 20 feet in height, and 100, or upwards in breadth, and consisting of a variety of colours, some white, some yellow, some green, and some of a jet black, and sometimes of all of these colours beautifully blended together. A small fragment of this rock was lately presented to an eminent seal-cutter in Edinburgh, who pronounced it to be very valuable, and admirably adapted for finishing side boards, or the ornamental parts of chimneys, provided it could be found hard enough to admit of a polish. For the sample presented to him, as well as all the outward surface of this vein, is so soft and brittle, as to yield to the slightest impression: But, if quarrymen were employed to penetrate the rock to a sufficient depth, it might be discovered to be adapted for many of the purposes to which the finest marble is applied.

Some coal-stone, such as is met with near the surface of coal-mines, has been discovered, among the rocks of Wauk-mill Bay, the property of Mr Honyman of Græmsfay; but no trial has been made of it. Some very fine white and blue clay is dug up, beneath the flood-mark in Sraugro Bay, commonly used for colouring chimneys and hearth-stones.

*Quadrupeds,*

*Quadrupeds, Birds, &c.*—All the different sorts of quadrupeds and birds, which are to be met with in the other parishes of this country, are also to be found here, the bird called the lyre excepted, which is peculiar to the high rocks of Walls and Hoy, and the Redhead of Eday. It is remarked of the island of Cava, and of some other small islands, that neither rat nor mouse will live in them.

*Statistical Table of the Parish of Orphir and Island of Cava.*

Population <i>anno</i> 1755, -	855	Farmers of one plough going,	96
Ditto 1795, -	826	Ditto of two ditto, -	3
Decrease, -	29	Crofters and cottagers, -	46
Number of males, -	366	Wrights, -	5
----- females, -	460	Shoemakers, -	6
Persons below 10 years of age,	216	Weavers, -	6
From 10 to 20, -	184	Tailors, -	5
Above 20, unmarried, -	120	Masons, -	6
Widows and widowers,	40	Smith, -	1
Married persons, -	266	Millers, -	3
Houses inhabited, -	145	Merchant retailer, -	1
Baptisms from 1714 to 1723,	300	Piper, -	1
Ditto from 1738 to 1747,	264	Fidlers, -	2
Ditto from 1760 to 1769,	277	Jack of all trades, -	1
Ditto from 1786 to 1795,	264	This last is the kirk-officer, who	
Average <i>per annum</i> for those 40		serves the parish in the different	
years, -	27½	capacities of beadle, sexton, coo-	
Marriages from 1714 to 1723,	74	per, slater, plasterer, boat-beater,	
Ditto from 1738 to 1747,	82	gardener, kelper, mason, quarry-	
Ditto from 1760 to 1769,	67	man, labourer, thatcher, and far-	
Ditto from 1786 to 1795,	58	mer, and the most fortunate be-	
Average <i>per annum</i> for those 40		getter of boys of any in the parish,	
years, -	7	for his wife bore him 3 at one	
No register of burials has been kept.		birth, and most of his children are	
The births are to the population		boys.	
as - - - - -	1 to 30	Very few in this parish exceed the	
The marriages to ditto, as	1 to 118	age of 80, and only one person has	
The inhabited houses, as	1 to 5½	been known to arrive at 90 years.	
The batchelors to married		Number of horses, -	380
men and widowers, as	1 to 3	Ditto of cattle, -	883
Children to families, as	3 to 1	Ditto of sheep, -	400
Servants and indwellers as	½ to 1	Ditto of swine, -	435
Proprietors residing, -	2	Ditto of ploughs, -	102
Ditto non-residing, -	6	Ditto of carts, -	8
Clergyman, -	1	Ditto of boats, -	33
Schoolmasters, -	3		

Here

Here are no Seceders nor Dissenters of any kind.— Three suicides have been committed within these few years : One by a young woman, after a long fit of deep melancholy, from what cause is not known ; another by an elderly woman, during a lowness of spirits, occasioned by a lingering fever ; and the third by a young man, in the height of a nervous fever. Hanging was the death those unfortunate persons made choice of.

*Emigration.*—Many young men emigrate from hence yearly ; some as sailors on board merchant vessels, who generally land in the King's service at last ; although they abhor the idea of being pressed in their own country. Others, and the greatest number, enter into the service of the Hudson's Bay Company ; and, instead of offering an honourable service to their King and country, or staying at home to cultivate their lands, and protect their wives, their children, and their parents, for the sum of L. 6 *per annum*, hire themselves out for slaves in a savage land, where, in the language of Scripture, they are literally employed as hewers of wood and drawers of water ; or, what is a still more distinguishing badge of slavery, in dragging along large loads of timber, yoked in the team, like beasts of burden. My God ! Shall man, formed in the image of his Creator, desert the human species ; and, for the paltry sum of L. 6 a-year, assume the manners and the habits of the brutes that perish. Fly ye on the man, who would rather be the slave of a Company of private merchants, than enter into the fleets and armies of Great Britain, and bravely fight for his King and country, our religion, our liberties, and our laws. Many of those men, at their return, after 8 or 10 years exile, bring home with them all the vices, without any of the virtues of savages ; indolence, dissipation, irreligion, and at the same time a broken constitution ; and  
the

the misfortune is, that having earned a little money, (for, after a five years residence, their wages are augmented), they are enabled to overbid the honest industrious farmer, who is incumbered with a number of small children, and who perhaps may have fallen into a temporary arrear, upon whom the unfeeling landlord has no compassion. But, behold the consequence! in a few years, from ignorance and want of industry, the emigrant, in his turn, is also reduced to poverty, and must give way to another of his own tribe. By these means, most of the farms are over-rented; and this fluctuating state of things puts an effectual bar to all improvement, and surely calls aloud for reformation from every virtuous landholder. There are at present, from this parish alone, in this infernal settlement, 43 of our prime young men; and 12 more are just upon the eve of embarking: This, added to the number of seamen abroad, scarce leaves hands to cultivate the ground, and must sooner or later depopulate the country. By those means there are no spare hands for manufactures; and the fishery, which, next to the kelp, ought to be the great staple of Orkney commerce, is entirely abandoned; and besides, the King's service is deprived of many hardy seamen; for the moment war is proclaimed, for fear of being pressed, they skulk away to this distant settlement. At the same time it must be acknowledged, for the honour of the Hudson's Bay Company, that no men ever acted with more integrity, or fulfilled their agreements more honestly, than those gentlemen have uniformly done; and further, upon a representation from the present incumbent of this parish, they have been pleased to augment the wages to L. 10; by which means above L. 1000 Sterling *per annum* is added to the income of Orkney.

*Agriculture.*

*Agriculture.*—There are employed in tillage 100 Orkney ploughs, and two Highland ones. The latter were introduced by Patrick Honyman of Græmsay; who also inclosed his farm with good stone dikes. It is the common Scotch plough, with two stilts. The former is of a very singular construction, having only one stilt, a small pointed sock, with a coulter, resembling a kail gully; and instead of a mould-board, two sticks fastened to the head of the plough, in a horizontal direction, which, instead of levelling the sward, serves only to break it into pieces, leaving one half of the surface unturned down. This plough, which is very light, is drawn by three horses a-breast, with the assistance of a driver, who goes before, and pulls them on by a halter, fastened to the midmost horse; the ploughman carries in his right hand a small stick, called a pattle, with which he clears the plough; it also serves him occasionally as a second stilt, when he wants to take more earth; and every now and then, when the horses are lazy, he throws it at them, to quicken their pace. The furrow made by this plough is seldom above three inches deep, and thrown off in a slanting direction. The harrows, which are also small and light, are of an oblong form, and generally with wooden teeth, and are drawn side foremost: There is a horse and a driver for each harrow.

The only crops raised here are small black oats, sown in April; and bear, or big, sown in May. The harvest generally begins about the end of August, and is over about the middle of October. A few potatoes are cultivated upon every farm. There is plenty of bog-hay; and, of late, attempts have been made to introduce clover and ryegrass; but nothing can be done in this way, without sufficient inclosures.

The manure chiefly made use of is dung from the cattle, mixed up with ashes and turf, and sometimes a little seawe-

ware.

ware. Very good marl has been discovered, but little use has been made of it. There can hardly be said to be any rotation of crops, the same fields having been sown, for time immemorial, with bear and oats alternately, and seldom yield above 3 or 4 of increase. The grain of this parish is esteemed to be of a superior quality, and the best malt in Orkney is made here. The bear raised from seaware is observed to be husky, and small bodied. Pease thrive very well; but, except a few for the table, little attention is paid to them. Cabbages and garden roots grow in great perfection; and perhaps the finest and largest artichokes in the world are to be found in this country, in the common kail-yards, springing up amongst the grass without any cultivation.

*Woods.*—There are a few currant or berry bushes, and a few apple trees, trained up along the garden-walls; but no forest trees ever have been, or perhaps ever will be, raised in this country. The atmosphere is evidently too much impregnated with salt-water; for, in stormy weather, the sea-spray flies over the whole country, and frequently ruins the crop, particularly if it happens in the first of August, before the corn is greenful. There are a few natural hazles, mountain-ash, and willows, in one of the vallies of the hill of Hoy; and although these, owing to the winding of the valley, and the height of the surrounding hills, are remarkably well sheltered, yet they do not exceed 12 or 14 feet in height. A great many roots of small trees, seemingly such as these, are also dug up in several peat-mosses; but it does not appear that there have ever been trees of any size in this country; and this fact is incontrovertibly established by the Icelandick historians, who relate, that Einar, Earl of Orkney, about the end of the ninth century, “*Dictum esse Torf Einarem, quod excindi, et foco, lignorum loco ad-*

“ *beri fecit cespites (i. e. Torf.) enim in Orcadibus non erant sylvæ.*” *Celto Scandicæ, apud Johnstonum, p. 8.*

William Honyman of Græmsfay, the principal heritor of this parish, lately planted several thousand trees of different kinds, but without effect. The present incumbent has also planted a good many of different sorts and sizes, but they no sooner get above the wall, than they are immediately blasted. A few ash trees were lately cut down in the Bishop's garden at Kirkwall; which, in the space of 200 years, had grown to the height of between 30 and 40 feet; and even these were protected by houses of equal height. Indeed, Orkney is not singular in this particular. We find the same causes produce the same effects in other situations similar to theirs, *viz.* in Caithness, Buchanness, and in all promontories, where the sea-air predominates.

*Sheep.*—In the hills, and dales of Orphir, there is sufficient pasture for 3000 or 4000 sheep; and yet the whole number does not exceed 400, owing chiefly to the present want of police in the country. For, previous to the 1748, when the heritable jurisdictions were abolished, there were bailies in every parish, who decided in small matters within their bounds; and were particularly attentive to the regulations relating to the folding, shearing, and marking of sheep. Then no one was permitted to take a sheep upon any pretence, without the presence of at least two sponorable witnesses, called Lawrightmen. But of late, since these offices have been abolished, every one goes to the hill when he pleases, and either marks and shears them without any witness, or disposes of them as he thinks proper; by which means thieves abound, and the real proprietors are defrauded; and as these poor animals are neither housed nor herded, many of them perish of cold, and many are worried by dogs. Such is our situation with regard to this most useful

ful animal; chiefly owing to the above causes, and partly to the ill-judged preference given to the linen-manufacture, in a country where it can never become a staple commodity.

*Number of Acres.*—There is no map of the parish; but as the ploughgangs are much of a size, each containing about 8 acres of arable ground at an average, and the pasture consisting of about double that number; and as 3 crofts may equal a ploughgoing, then  $17 \times 8 = 936$  acres of arable, and  $936 \times 2 = 1872$  acres of pasture; and the whole parish being computed to contain 20 square miles, or 12800 acres, then there remain for mosses, braiks, lakes, and hill-pasture, 9992 acres. The arable being to the whole surface as 1 to  $13\frac{2}{3}$ ; and both arable and pasture as 1 to  $4\frac{1}{2}$ ; and to the waste land as 1 to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  nearly.

*Language, and Names of Places.*—The language spoken here is much the same as in the south of Scotland, and strangers remark, with less of a provincial accent. The ancient names of places are derived from the Norwegian, such as Tuskebister, the land of Tuskermen; Kirbister, Kirkland; Houton and Hobbister, Highland; Swambister, the land of Sueno; Orphir, the land of Fire; and Claitran, Close Town, from being the westernmost extremity of the parish, and like a mill clouse, closing or shutting up the same. It is something remarkable, that the western extremity of the neighbouring parish has a similar name, viz. Cloufton, as if the original measurer of these parishes, in laying out their different districts, had proceeded from E. to W. from a superstitious respect to the sun's course. There are many other local names, evidently of similar origin; such as, Voeness, a headland dividing two small bays; Heildibrae, a place where bonfires used to be kindled, from the Ice-landick

landick word *beild*, signifying fire; Konger's-know, a tumulus near the road leading to the King's-ferry. But from what circumstance the Mainland came to be honoured with the name of Pomona, is difficult now to account for; unless its origin be ascribed to an opinion which prevailed among the ancients, that Thule was a terrestrial paradise, resembling the garden of the Hesperides. Orkney may have received its name from the Saxons, its ancient inhabitants, who had emigrated from the Hercynian forest, which, Cæsar tells us. *Græci appellant Orcyniam*, and of which Saxony formed a part.

The ancient proprietors of this parish were the Halcros, the Sinclairs, and the Stewarts. The only considerable proprietor at present is William Honyman, Esq; of Græmfay, a gentleman possessed of the largest property in this county, next to Lord Dundas, and lineally descended from Andrew Honyman, Bishop of Orkney, whom he has the honour to represent. Keith, in his Catalogue of the Bishops, p. 136. tells us, that Andrew Honyman, Archdeacon of St Andrews, author of the Seasonable Case and Survey of Naphtali, succeeded Bishop Sydsenf, *anno* 1664, to the see of Orkney, in the month of July 1668. This prelate received, on the street of Edinburgh, by one Mitchell, who had been at the rising into rebellion at Pentland Hills, a shot in his arm, with a poisoned bullet, as he was stepping into the Archbishop of St Andrew's (Dr Sharp) coach, for whom the shot was intended. He found his health much impaired after this disaster. He died in February 1676, and was buried in the Cathedral Church of Kirkwall. He was a man of singular piety, and great abilities.

*Hill dike.*—The towns or districts of this parish are each of them surrounded by one common dike of seal, called the Hill-dike; the whole burden of keeping which in repair, very

very improperly falls upon those whose farms are contiguous to it, the rest giving themselves no concern ; by which means it is poorly kept up indeed.

*Rent.*—The valued rent is L. 1632 : 18 : 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> Scotch money ; the real rent, including the feu-duties paid for the bishopric, about L. 500 Sterling, besides L. 150, at an average, for kelp. The value *per* acre of arable land may be 6 s. 8 d. and of pasture 1 s. 8 d. About 100 fathoms of peat are sent from hence to the towns of Kirkwall and Stromness yearly, valued at L. 1, 8 s. *per* fathom ; one half of these is paid in rent ; the remainder, though purchased with great labour, both of horses and people, is a sure fund to the inhabitants, as their mosses are inexhaustible.

*Weights and Measures.*—The false weights and measures of this country have long been a source of grievance and complaint ; and in no instance is the oppression more glaring than in the measure of peats paid here by the tenants, under the denomination of a fathom. This was originally a cube of 6 feet square, containing 216 solid feet ; and will it be believed by the generous and free-born Englishman, that, in a series of years, this measure has been gradually increased upon the ignorant and unsuspecting inhabitant, by his inhuman landlord, from 216 to 1008 solid feet ! for the present fathom in this parish measures no less than 12 feet square by 7 feet high.

The other weights and measures of this country, which are of Danish origin, have been also increased in the same proportion, whether by the landholder, or superior of the feu-duties, or by both in concert, is now uncertain ; but whoever were the transactors of this infamous business, if the cries of an oppressed people ever reach the Throne of Mercy, they have by this time received their just reward.

To Lord Dundas, who is the present superior, and who is justly esteemed to be one of the best gentlemen in England, no blame whatever can attach; his family purchased the estate long after the date of those grievances; and, so far from meriting the slightest charge of oppression, his Lordship, in a year of uncommon scarcity, upon receiving a list of those grievances, readily offered to accept of the lowest conversion the proprietors would name, provided the same benefit were communicated to their subtenants: And, by he on the man who rejected the equitable and humane proposal.

On the Orkney weight, called the punlar, 24 merks make 1 setting = 32 lb. Dutch, and 6 settings make 1 niel = 1 1/4 stone ditto. This instrument is upon the same principle as the Roman steelyard, but may be very easily falsified; for, by making the smallest alteration on the short arm, to which the weight is appended, the receipt may be considerably increased or diminished; and either the payer or receiver greatly injured. A mistaken notion, however, prevails in this country: That, supposing this instrument to be correctly adjusted, and that the weigher were an honest person, yet still this mode of payment is in favour of the receiver. But the case is quite the reverse; for after an exact survey of the punlar, upon mechanical principles, it will be found, that for every stone weight above two, the receiver sustains a loss of 2 3/4 lb. Dutch. To make this understood, it will be necessary to explain, that the punlar is a lever of 6 feet long, divided, by notches, into 12 equal parts, of 6 inches each, one of which constitutes the short arm, from the extreme end of which projects a plug of iron, of a little more than an inch long, and at the end thereof is inserted a pivot, round which a hook moves, for holding up the weight. The balance, upon the opposite arm, is a stone of 32 lb. Dutch, appending from a moveable ring, which slides

slides from notch to notch as the weigher chooses. Now, it is evident, that this addition to the short arm must diminish the weight; and, that in adjusting the lever, the measure of the short arm ought to be taken from the pivot of the hook to the pivot of the center of motion, and not from the end of the beam, as is the practice, which makes a 6th part of difference. For, if you suppose this arm of the lever, which is precisely the case, by the one measurement to be 7 inches, and by the other only 6; or, dividing the same, in the one case, into 28 parts, or quarters of inches, and in the other into 24 of these quarters; then, according to the mechanical principles of the lever, the weights will be inversely as their distances, and 24 merks at the hook will balance 28 upon the opposite arm, and there will be a loss to the receiver of 4 merks upon every setting, or repetition of the first error, occasioned by not making the measure from notch to notch on the long arm of the lever of the proper length, *viz.* from the centre of the pivot of the hook to the centre of the pivot of the point of motion; of course, the loss to the receiver, upon the miel, will be 20 merks; upon the 9 settings, 32 merks; and upon the 12 settings, 44; being nearly the 7th part of the whole receipt.

To cure this original defect, a very inadequate remedy has been applied, *viz.* the person weighing adds a setting more to the weight, by sliding forward the ring to which the balance is appended half way to the next notch; for it must be observed, that every notch forms a setting. Of old, they have probably had some standard weight equal to the miel; and, finding the punlar miel to fall short of it, or perhaps not to correspond with its constituent parts upon the bismar, another Danish weight, weighing one setting, and upon nearly the same principles, they have thought to rectify the mistake in this imperfect manner, not having been  
able

able to discover the original error. And this has also been the reason why, when the weight exceeded 6 or 8 settings, they have given 6 merks of cast, or forefeeling, to make up the increasing deficiency. This unfortunate mistake for the buyer and receiver may be completely rectified, in the manner above mentioned, by taking the measure from pivot to pivot, and not from the end of the beam, and then every setting will fall upon its proper notch, without going beyond it, and there will be no cast of the beam, or forefeeling, as it is called, necessary, which is the source of great fraud.

*Church, Stipend, Poor, &c.*—The church, which was repaired 40 years ago, was built in the year 1707, and the manse in 1789. The stipend, including the glebe, may be about L.80 a-year. The patron is Lord Dundas. The present incumbent was settled in 1776, and is as yet unmarried.

There is a parochial school, where from 30 to 40 boys and girls are taught reading, writing, and arithmetic. The encouragement given to the master is extremely small; a solitary house, without so much as a kail-yard; 100 merks of salary, and no emoluments whatever; although it is to be hoped the heritors will redress this grievance, and appoint school-wages to be paid. A Society school is much wanted here; and until such can be obtained, the inhabitants, poor as they are, make a shift to employ private teachers occasionally at their own expence.

The condition of the poor is truly lamentable. The number upon the roll sometimes exceeds 20; and the annual amount of contributions for their support is only L.4 at an average. Would the non-residing heritors, who are in affluent circumstances, contribute something for their relief,

licf, which hitherto they have not done, it would redound much to their honour.

*Antiquities.*—In the church-yard are the remains of an ancient building, called the Girth-house, to which great antiquity is afcribed. It is a rotundo of 18 feet in diameter, and 20 feet high; open at top; and on the east fide is a vaulted concavity, where probably the altar flood, with a flit in the wall to admit the light; two-thirds of it have been taken down to repair the parish church. The walls are thick, and confift of ftones, ftrongly cemented with lime. From its refemblance to the Pantheon, fome have afcribed this building to the Romans; but, in all probability, it has been a Popilh chapel, dedicated by the piety of its founder to fome favourite faint.

In the diftrict of Swambifter, or Suenobifter, are the ruins of an ancient tower, of a circular form, and about 180 feet in circumference; and once, probably, the refidence of Sueno Boertrop, who was killed by the famous Sueno Aferife, during a Christmas entertainment in this parish, at the houfe of Paul, one of the Norwegian Counts of Orkney; of which a very particular account is given by the Icelandick hiftorian of Saga Orcadenfis.

In the diftrict of Tuskibifter, at a place called Obah, refided feveral of the ancient Counts of Orkney; particularly **Harold**, who was poisoned by his aunt Fraukark, and the aforementioned Paul, who was put to death by his own fifter, the firft Countefs of Athol. The fituation is fo circumftantially defcribed by the Icelandick hiftorian, as not to admit of a doubt; although, except an ancient chapel and burying-ground, alluded to by the hiftorian, fcarce a veflige of the ruin remains. Romifh chapels are to be met with in every diftrict of the parish; alfo a great many barrows or tumuli; but none of them have been opened.

*Commerce.*—The principal article of commerce is kelp, which at present sells as high as L. 10 *per* ton. The only other articles worth mentioning are, malt, black cattle, greafe, butter, and linen-yarn; for which so poor a price is given by the dealers in that commodity, that the most expert spinner can hardly earn 2 d. a-day.

No country in North Britain is better situated for trade than this, and yet nowhere has it been more neglected. This is chiefly owing to a low spirit for smuggling, which has been the bane of Orkney for half a century past; and, besides perjury, been the introduction of almost every species of meanness and of vice which can degrade the human character. The writer of the present report, when a very young man, inspired with the love of his country, and fired with indignation at this unhallowed trade, in which, as in a vortex, truth, honour, integrity, and every virtue, was swallowed up, resolved, with the spirit of an ancient Roman, to attack the hideous monster; and accordingly, despising the misapplied appellation of Informer, in so glorious as well as hazardous an attempt, gave in to the collector of the customs, on the public street, an accusation against a noted smuggler, had his vessel seized, condemned, and burnt; demanded and received the informer's share, as an inducement to others to follow the example, and immediately bestowed the same in erecting a charity school in the parish, whereby they have been since greatly benefited. Although it must be confessed, that, in this business, he was privately supported by some of the first gentlemen in Orkney; whose representatives, much to their honour, and for the good of their country, have since continued the business; and it is to be hoped, less from political motives, than from moral and patriotic principles.

*Advantages*

*Advantages and Disadvantages.*—The advantages of this parish are, fire, water, and fine women; notwithstanding which, most of the heritors reside at a distance, and leave their tenants to the mercy of factors, and under agents, who, besides the services payable to their masters, require many others, under the denomination of Favours, which, like Harry VIII.'s Benevolences, they dare not refuse. But it is to be hoped, that Mr Honyman of Græmsay, whose mind is enlightened by southern ideas, will redress those grievances, will abolish personal services, will grant long leases to his tenants, and encourage them to improve their farms; whereby he will render his people happy, his family respected, and gain to himself immortal honour; whilst his conduct, at the same time, will be an example to others, which they will be proud to imitate.

NUM.