

NUMBER X.

PARISH OF MACHLIN.

(COUNTY OF AYR.)

By the Rev. MR. WILLIAM AULD.

Name, Situation, &c.

IN old deeds, the name of Machlein, or Machlene is used, but of late it is more commonly spelled Machlin. It is derived, as some imagine, from the Gaelic, and signifies in that language, a field of flax. It is situated in the presbytery, synod, and county of Ayr. It is about $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length, and from 2 to 4 miles in breadth. It was a priory or cell, belonging to the Abbacy of Melrose: and when that Abbacy was erected into a temporal lordship, the lands and barony of Kylemure, and Barmure, and the patronage of the church of Machlin, were given to the Lord of Loudoun. From the town or parish, the eldest son of that noble family takes his title to this day.

Surface and Soil.—The parish is in general flat, excepting Machlin-hill, which rises a little to the north-east of the town, and runs in a ridge, from east to west, about a mile in the parish, terminating at Schioch-hill, in Tarbolton. From the hill there is a very extensive prospect, not only over a
great

great part of Ayrshire, but as far as Cairnsmure, and other hills in Galloway, and Benlomond, Jura, Arran, Kintyre, &c.—The town of Machlin is situated on the south side of this rising ground, which gradually declines towards the river Ayr, on the south and south-west. About 80 years ago, the town had a charter, which is now lost, and with it, the right of chusing magistrates. This is much to be regretted, as that privilege, if properly exercised, might contribute much to the public good, by checking riots and disorders, which are at present too frequent, and promoting the good order, peace, and happiness of the community.

The soil in the parish, is, for the most part, of a clayish nature, except some fields, about Machlin, which are of a light sandy, or mixt kind. Hence, the same weather does not suit both; and, when there is a good crop on the one, there is a light or bad crop on the other.—The whole of this parish is arable, except two small mosses, and some declivities on the banks of the Ayr, fit for planting. A large tract of land, called Machlin-muir, has, of late years, been turned into arable land, and properly inclosed and surrounded with belts of planting, by the late Sir Thomas Miller. In general, all the lands or farms in the parish, within these 40 or 50 years, have been inclosed and subdivided.

Minerals, &c.—There is a good red stone quarry, near Machlin town; and another white stone quarry called *Deaconbank*, about 3 miles to the north-west. This last is much esteemed for its fine grain and colour. At Bridgend, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Machlin, there is a coal-work, with a fire engine. At Killoch, there is a lime-stone quarry and iron stone, both belonging to Miss Scot. Lime-stone also at Auchmillan, belonging to Sir William Miller. In, and on the confines of Machlin parish, are various curious caves cut out of the solid rock,

rock, by the late Lord Auchenleck, and the late President Miller.

Statistical Table of the Parish of Macblin, An. 1791.

Population, An. 1755, according to Dr. Webster			1169
Number of inhabitants, in 1791	-	-	1800
Increase	-	-	631
Inhabitants in the town	-	-	1000
———— in the country	-	-	800
Males	-	-	870
Females	-	-	930
Parents	-	-	700
Children	-	-	829
Servants and lodgers	-	-	270
Births	} at an average of 5 years, ending { 1790		87
Marriages			18
Deaths			42
Number of acres	-	-	5400
Valued rent (in Scots money)	-	-	L. 5410
Real rent in 1750	} in sterling money {		L. 1260
Real rent, An. 1790			L. 3510
Clergyman	-	-	1
Writers or attornies	-	-	2
Surgeon	-	-	1
Student at the univerfity	-	-	1
Merchants	-	-	10
Weavers	-	-	20
Mafons	-	-	20
Wrights or carpenters	-	-	12
Tanners	-	-	2
Shoemakers	-	-	12
Taylors	-	-	10
Butchers	-	-	2
			Hofiers

Hofiers	-	-	-	-	4
Sadler	-	-	-	-	1
Smiths	-	-	-	-	6
Messengers, or king's bailiffs	-	-	-	-	2
Sheriff officers	-	-	-	-	3
Farmers	-	-	-	-	73
Horses employed by them	-	-	-	-	240
Black cattle	-	-	-	-	1080

Poor.—The poors stock in this parish, is between L. 80 and L. 100. The number of poor families, or weekly pensioners, is about 30. The income from collections, mort-cloths, and some seats in the church, L. 50. The annual expenditure L. 60 yearly, and some years more; but the difference is made up by an assessment, unanimously agreed to by the heritors, at a meeting in 1771; who, in order to prevent begging in the parish, assessed themselves in a sum, amounting to L. 22 : 10 : 10 *per annum*, one half of which, however, is payable by the tenants. This increased the poors stock at the time; but as the fund is gradually decreasing, in consequence of the number and necessities of the poor, unless a new assessment is made, it will not be possible for the ordinary income to supply the demands which are made upon it. It must be obvious to every body, that according to the present mode, the burden of maintaining the poor, is most unequally divided. It falls almost entirely on tenants, tradesmen, servants, and charitable persons attending the church; while other people, however rich, particularly non-residing heritors, whatever their income may be, contribute little or nothing to the charitable funds of the parish. Hence there is, in general, ample ground for the common observation, “that it is the poor in Scotland who maintain the poor.” It must be confessed at the same time, that, it is very difficult forming a plan that would provide for the poor, without

out encouraging in them either inattention, indolence, or waste.

It may be added, that for the relief of distressed brethren, there was a society established in this place about ten years ago, called *Macblin Friendly Society*. The present allowance is two shillings weekly to such as are unable to work, and 3s to such as are confined to bed. One guinea is paid at entry. The present stock is L. 300.

Character, &c.—In such a number there must be some exceptions: but, in general, they are a sober industrious people, charitably disposed: Careful and even punctual in attending the church on Sundays, and on sacramental occasions; and their practice in the main is agreeable to their profession.—The inhabitants are of a middle size, from 5 feet, 4 inches, to 6 feet, 2 inches, and make a decent appearance, particularly at public meetings. It is a great disadvantage to them that no manufacture is carried on: But they are willing to encourage any plan that may tend to promote the improvement of agriculture, commerce, and manufacture; in all which they are making some progress.—The manner of living and dress, is much altered from what it was about 50 years ago. At that period, and for some time after, there were only two or three families in this parish, who made use of tea daily, now it is done by, at least, one half of the parish, and almost the whole use it occasionally. At that period, good two-penny, strong-ale, and home-spirits were in vogue: but now even people in the middling and lower stations of life, deal much in foreign spirits, rum-punch, and wine. In former times, the gentlemen of the county entered into a resolution to encourage the consumption of their own grain, and, for that purpose, to drink no foreign spirits: But, in consequence of the prevalence of smuggling, and the heavy taxes laid on home-made li-

quors, this patriotic resolution was either forgotten or abandoned.—As to drefs, about 50 years ago, there were few females who wore scarlet or filks. But now, nothing is more common, than filk caps and filk cloaks; and women, in a middling ftation, are as fine as ladies of quality were formerly. The like change may be obferved in the drefs of the male fex, though, perhaps, not in the fame degree.

School and Language.—There is a public eftablifhed fchool in this parifh, with a falary of L. 10 yearly; and there are two private fchools in the town, befides fome in the country. The Scots dialect is the language fpoken, but is gradually improving, and approaching nearer to the Englifh.

Climate, &c.—The air is milder and more temperate here, than towards the eastern coaft of Scotland. It is rather wet, but not unhealthy.

There are no difeafes peculiar to this parifh. Inoculation for the fmall pox is practifed with fuccefs. As a means of better health, it were to be wifhed, that the clothing, and houfes of the lower fort, were more warm and comfortable. The contributing thereto would refleét great honour, and afford much real fatisfaction to the more opulent.—The inhabitants of this parifh, are in general, addicted to exercife and temperance, two great fources of long life and good health. But death, againft whom there is no defence, is ever fnatching away fome of all ranks and ages, the rich and the poor, the young and the healthy, as well as the old and the difeafed. The people, however, in general, are long-lived. Among other instances of longevity, the minifters might be adduced. The late incumbent, Mr Maitland, held the charge of Machlin for 44 years; and the prefent incumbent was ordained about 50 years ago, to wit, in April 1742.

Church,

Church, Manse, &c.—The manse was built in 1730; and has since been several times repaired. The church, it is believed, was built before the Reformation. The stipend consists partly of victual, and partly of money; and, including the glebe, which measures from 5 to 6 acres, may amount annually to about L. 100. The right of patronage is in the family of Loudoun.

At the town-head of Machlin, on the green, there is a tombstone, with engravings; from which it appears, that in 1685, under the unhappy reign of James VII. of Scotland, five men were put to death there. Under their names, there are the following verses in the language of those times:

“ Bloody Dumbarton, Douglafs, and Dundee,
 “ Moved by the devil, and the Laird of Lee,
 “ Dragg’d these five men to death with gun and sword,
 “ Not suffering them to pray, nor read God’s word;
 “ Owing the work of God was all their crime;
 “ The eighty-five was a faint-killing time.”

The hole where the gibbet was fixed is still visible.

Miscellaneous Observations.—There are two great turnpike roads which cross one another at Machlin; one from Ayr to Edinburgh, the other from Kilmarnock to Dumfries.

—The river Ayr runs through this parish from east to west about a mile south of Machlin. In its course, there are several great works carried on at present; to wit, an iron work at Muirkirk, and a cotton-mill at Cattrine. — Over this river, there are several useful bridges near Machlin, particularly the new-bridge at Barskimming; built by the late Sir Thomas Miller. It excels all the bridges of the county in beauty and elegance, and is one the greatest curiosities to be

seen in it.——The river Ayr in its course, especially through Machlin parish, passes between steep rocks, from 30 to 40 feet high. How this passage was formed, whether by art, or by the water gradually making a channel for itself, is a point which cannot now be ascertained.——The only loch in the parish, called Loch-Brown, is about three miles north-west from Machlin. Wild-ducks, geese, and sometimes swans resort to it. It covers about 60 acres of ground; and would have been drained many years ago, had it not been for the sake of two corn mills which it supplies with water.——There is no tradition of any battle in the parish, except one at Machlin muir, between the king's party and the Covenanters, about the year 1647, when the former was defeated; and their military chest was found, it is said, many years after, hidden in the ground.——The antient parochial records of the parish are now lost. Sometime before the Reformation, the Popish clergy perceived their interest declining, and their down-fall approaching in the kingdom, to prepare for the worst, they sold their lands for ready money, in small parcels, and then departed, carrying with them all their money and effects, and all the books and registers belonging to this, and, it is believed, to other parishes in the neighbourhood.