

## [ N U M B E R   X X X I V .

## P A R I S H   O F   M O N I M A I L .

( S H I R E   O F   F I F E . )

*By the Rev. MR. SAMUEL MARTIN.**Name.*

**B**ETWEEN Lindore's loch, in the parish of Abdie, and the village of Monimail, where the church stands, and from which the parish is named, there is a hill, or rising ground, over which lies the road between Perth and Cupar. The length of this hill is supposed to have given rise to the name, *Monimail*, "At the foot of a hill one mile over." It is often written and pronounced, *Money-Meal*, and strangers suppose, that it denotes, a "parish of plenty," abounding in meal and money: but the number of Gaelic names in the neighbourhood, discountenances this etymology.

*Form, Extent, and Situation.*—There is a large map of Fife, by Ainslie. The boundaries of the parish of Monimail are not perfectly marked in it, though nearly exact. Its figure is somewhat oval, about four feet by three.—Excepting on the north and east, the lands are flat and fertile. A marsh, of about 30 acres, (Lethem mire,) and the heights on the north and east are capable of little culture.—It is remarkable,

markable, that, in this neighbourhood, both to the north and south of the Eden, the soil, in rising from the plain, becomes richer; but is thin and sandy in the low grounds.—The hills are rather green than heathy. The Mount-hill is of considerable height, and has been planted for several years. Vessels, on making the land from the east seas, are assisted and directed by this mount, and by Monzie church, which stands on the top of an eminence beneath it, as a land mark.—The situation of the parish, in general, is dry and salubrious. No peculiar epidemical distempers are known. The inhabitants are healthy; and there are several instances of considerable longevity.—About half a mile north of the church, there is a spring, known by the name of Cardan's Well: It is of no repute at present, but was highly esteemed by the famous Cardan, who used it much; and, in particular, he is said, with this mineral water, to have cured Hamilton, Archbishop of St. Andrews, of a dropsy.—The parish is well watered; but its different brooks, or waters, as they are called, are none of them considerable.

*Thunder-Storms.*—On the 27th October, 1733, Melville-house was struck with a remarkable thunder storm. The whole house, on every side, and from top to bottom, was affected. The stream of lightning, it is supposed, was attracted by a long iron spike, on the top of a cupola covered with lead. The effects of it were felt, and are still visible in almost every part of the house: providentially no person was materially hurt. Professor M'Claurin, at Lord Leven's desire, examined the progress and vestiges of the storm\*.—In a large mirror, a piece, of the size of a crown, was melted, and no crack

\* See his letter to Sir Hans Sloan, in Pennant's Tour.

crack or flaw whatever appears in any other place. Many splinters were torn out of the solid wainscoting, particularly a thin one, about the breadth of a half foot joiner's rule, was beaten 14 feet from the top of the finishing, on the floor, where it made a deep impression, which still remains. One of the chimney tops was thrown down, and some of the stones carried 100 yards into the garden. — In July 1783, about six o'clock in the morning, a girl and boy were killed with lightning. Peals of thunder, with vivid lightning, were that morning loud and frequent. The mother was a helpless palsied woman, and had been carried from her bed to the fire-side. The boy, who was much frightened with the thunder, was standing before the fire. The girl was seated opposite to her mother, feeding the fire with brush wood. On the descent of the lightning, the boy fell back, and was, for some time, believed to be the only person affected: the girl retained her sitting posture, and was not supposed to be injured. A dog lay motionless more than an hour, but on being thrown out as dead, revived and recovered entirely. The poor mother said, she thought the fire, that came down from the heavens, completely involved her with the rest. The shock had no effect on her health, or constitution, either favourable or unfavourable. What the minister, who was sent for on the awful occasion, saw of the bodies of the children, was firm and well coloured, as in life.

*Population.*—Dr Webster states the number of inhabitants to be 884. The registers have been carefully examined, in order to ascertain the population, at different periods, but it is found, that they cannot be relied on. The inaccuracy of the records may be variously accounted for, in this, as well as in other parishes. Vacancies, the negligence of parents, the carelessness of session clerks, the illegal with-holding of  
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the dues by dissenters, &c. each of these circumstances may occasion omissions. For some years back, (on which greater confidence may be placed,) the average is, births, 30,—marriages 9,—and deaths  $8\frac{1}{2}$  yearly. In January 1791, there were,

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Above 70	23	20	43
———— 50	64	78	142
———— 20	200	236	436
———— 10	117	91	208
			———— 829
Below 10 of both sexes	-	-	272
			————
Total number of the inhabitants			1101
The number of families			241
Average number in each			4.5277

Of the different ranks in life, there are 2 noblemen, (of one of whom, the Earl of Leven and Melvill, it is remarkable, that the succession can be traced, in direct descent, from father to son, for 18 generations; the other, Lord Ruthven, is a minor); 8 heritors, resident and non-resident; 1 minister, 1 preacher, 1 student of theology; 1 public and 1 private teacher, 1 school-mistress; 30 farmers, 35 weavers, 7 shoemakers, 8 tailors, 11 carpenters, 3 brewers, 1 baker, 3 masons, 4 shepherds, and 5 smiths.

With regard to religious opinions, there are 55 dissenters; 27 of whom, are Antiburgher Seceders, 2 Independants, and the other 26 are Episcopalians, Burgher Seceders, and members of the presbytery of Relief.

Of married couples there are 172, bachelors 38, and widowers,

dewers, who are heads of families, and single women, in houses of their own, 31.

There are three corn mills, and one lint-mill, driven by water. Two threshing-mills; one driven by horses, one by water. 5 small retail shops. There is no occasion for any lawyer, attorney, physician, or surgeon, in this parish, as the town of Cupar supplies its environs, with legal and medical aid.

*Agriculture.*—The mode of managing lands is the same that obtains in the low country in general: consisting of rotations of crops, hay, turnips, inclosing, and draining. The face of the parish is considerably changed of late, and improvements are still going forward. The productions are the same with those of the rest of Fife and the Lothians. Considerable quantities of wheat and barley are annually exported, or otherwise sent away. The raising of black cattle is now more attended to, than formerly. Of 8 small flocks of sheep, 3 have been very lately sold off, chiefly because sheep injure hedges and sown grass, and because it is said, that more profit is reaped from black cattle. There are 5 farms above L. 100 sterling, (one of them L. 300:) the rest from L. 70 downwards. One pretty extensive farm rents at L. 1 : 10s per acre. The average rent of good farms is below L. 1 per acre. Land of inferior quality is proportionally lower, 15s. 10s. &c. &c. Any estates, which have been lately sold in this parish, and indeed in the neighbourhood, have brought high prices.—Farm houses are now built more commodious and comfortable. The tenantry improve in their manners, dress, way of life, and form a respectable body of men.—The ploughs are 76 in number, made on different models: and new improvements are attended to, and tried, as they are suggested.

*Church, Manse, Stipend, &c.*—The church is a long narrow building, rather old and incommodious\*.

The manse being very old, and insufficient, a new and more commodious one is about to be erected.

In 1774, the rent roll of the parish was nearly L. 2500 sterling.—The stipend is worth somewhat above L. 100. An augmentation was lately obtained.—The Earl of Leven is patron.

*Prices of Provisions, Wages, and Labour, in 1750, and 1790 :*

	1750.	lb. Dutch.		1790.	lb. Dutch.
Beef	-	2 d.	-	-	4d.
Mutton	-	2 d.	-	-	4d.
Veal	-	4 d.	-	-	7 d.
Hens	-	4 d.	-	-	1s. 0d.
New butter	-	4 d.	-	-	8d.
Salmon	-	1d. & 1½d.	-	-	5d. 6d. &c.
Eggs per dozen	1½d. & 2d.		-	-	3d. 4d. 5d.
And other articles in proportion.					

	Per day.		Per day.
Day-labourers	- 5d.	-	9d. 10d. 1s.
Master wright, or mason	1s.	-	1s. 3d.—1s. 6d.
Masons, wrights	7d. 8d.	-	1s.
	<i>per annum.</i>		<i>per annum.</i>
Farm servants	L. 2 L. 2:10:0 and 2 pecks of meal per week		L. 6 L. 7 with meal.
			Upper

\* The bell is on the east end of the church. It was erected about 40 years ago, when the former one became insufficient : that bell had been used from the days of Robert the Bruce, as appeared by an inscription on it. The church was new-roofed about 50 years ago.

	1750.		1790.	
Upper family servants	L. 8	L. 10	-	L. 20 L. 25.
Livery	-	L. 4	-	L. 10 L. 12.
Maid servants	L. 1 : 10	L. 2	-	L. 3 L. 3 : 10 L. 4.

The suppression of vails operated considerably to increase the wages of family servants.—This list, which applies to Fife in general, is a strong argument for the augmentation of ministers stipends, schoolmasters, and the salaries of all stipendaries.

*Names of Places.*—The most, of perhaps all, the old names are Gaelic; '*Balintagart*, the priest's town; '*Letham*, the side of the hill; '*Fairnie*, a moist place where alders grow; '*Cunoquhie*, head of a corn field, &c. Some are modern. The Bow of Fife is the name of a few houses on the road to Cupar. Whether this uncommon name is taken from a bending of the road, as some suppose, or, as others, from the meetings of the farmers in old times, to fix the prices of grain, (the bolls being pronounced bows,) cannot be determined. It has been thought, that this spot is nearly the centre of Fife: this is also offered as the reason of the name.—Letham is the principal village. On the first week of June, there is a considerable fair held at it. Easter Fairnie is next in size: Monimail is smaller. Other clusters of houses scarcely deserve the name of villages.

*Antiquities.*—Near the church, and within Melvill park, there is a square tower in pretty good preservation. Its age is uncertain; but it was repaired by Cardinal Bethune, and was his residence, 1562. There are several distinct heads of the Cardinal, in his cap, in stone relievo on the walls. The arms of the family of Bethune are also intire. The tower is

evidently part of a large building, the remains of which are very visible.—The house of Fairnie is believed to be one of M'Duff's castles. Its walls are uncommonly thick: it is very old, and has been a place of strength.—A strip of land in the farm of Ladifron, belonging to Mr Paterfon of Cunoquhie, is called the temple. There is a tradition, that a priest lived here, who had a right to every seventh acre of Ladifron, and to the tathing (dung as left on the ground) every seventh night.

Tradition says, there was a dreadful battle, fought on the N. W. boundary of the parish, between the Scots and the Danes. A hillock, called Doulie-cairy Knoll, is said to have received its name from the battle, (*ferrow and cair*).

*Longevity.*—A woman (Helen Gray) died in this parish, in the 105 year of her age. She was born in Tealand, near Dundee. The parish register was consulted, but in vain. The death of Archbishop Sharp, she distinctly remembered: If she was 3 years old then, she was 105 at her death. She was a little woman, remarkably chearful. Some years before her death, she had a new set of teeth. In early life she had been a servant in Lord Stormont's family. The ladies of the neighbourhood were much amused with her telling them, that Mrs Helen Murray, whom they well knew, as lady directress of the Edinburgh assemblies, was one of the young bairns she remembered; and that Mr Willie, (Earl Mansfield,) when young, was a very fine laddie—(boy).

*Suicide.*—There has been but one instance of suicide for many years. The person was old, and in a confused, stupified state. This event was rendered remarkable by the manner of interment. The body was brought from the house, through the window,

window, and buried, under night, at the extremity of the parish. A proof at once of the force of old superstitious customs, and, at the same time, of the horror so natural to be felt on such an occasion.

*Poor.*—The funds, for the support of the poor, arise from legacies, mort-cloths, marriages, occasional donations, but chiefly from the weekly collections at the church doors. There are 10 or 12 regular monthly pensioners. On emergencies, others are assisted. No begging is allowed. The distributions, *communitus annis*, are betwixt L. 20 and L. 30 sterling.—In 1782, and 1783, the ordinary funds, with a voluntary and unsolicited donation from the heritors, according to their valued rents, supplied the great exigencies of the poor, during these two unfortunate seasons.

*Schools.*—The established school-master's salary, and perquisites, as precentor and session-clerk, with the school-fees, have been reckoned to be worth about L. 14. The number of scholars varies, according to the abilities and reputation of the teacher, and those of the private teachers in the parish. 30 may be the average. The fees are, English 1s per quarter; writing 2s; arithmetic 2s; book-keeping 10s 6d a course; Latin 2s 6d per quarter. It is not doubted but this, and similar reports, will evince the necessity of more encouragement to this useful and laborious order of men.

*Miscellaneous Observations.*—Peats and wood are used, but in small quantities. Coals chiefly from Balgonie and Balbirnie, in the parish of Markinck, at 7d per load, of 18 stone, are the fuel of the parish. A double cart carries five loads: the carriage costs nearly the purchase in money.—*Servitudes*

tudes are few and dying away. Those that continue, such as assistance with carriages, &c. during the hay and corn harvests, are rather voluntary and discretionary than exacted.—The general character of the parishioners has always been, that they are industrious, regular, quiet, and respectable. There are mixtures in the purest societies, but this character is still merited by the present race in Monimail.