

NUMBER XXXV.

PARISH OF KELLS,
(COUNTY OF KIRKCUDBRIGHT.)*By the Rev. Mr JOHN GILLESPIE.**Name, Situation, Surface, Soil, &c.*

THE name is Gaelic, and is probably expressive of the situation, which is the highest in this part of the country. The parish lies in the stewarty and presbytery of Kirkcudbright, and Synod of Galloway. It is nearly in the form of an Isosceles triangle, almost surrounded with the rivers Ken and Dee. The Ken runs from N. to S. 14 miles along the east side of it. The Dee rises at the N. W. end, and runs along the W. and S. till it meets the Ken. Its length is about 15 miles; its greatest breadth, at the N. end, 6 miles. It continues nearly of this breadth for 6 miles S.; then gradually diminishes to 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 miles, till it ends in a point at the junction of the two rivers Ken and Dee. It is bounded on the E. by the parishes of Parton, Balmaclellan, and Dalry; on the S. by Balmaghie; on the W. by Girthon and Minnigaff; on the N. by Carsphairn. The air is healthful. The face of the country is hilly and unequal. There are large rocky hills on the south end, covered mostly with heath; still higher hills

hills on the N. W. covered with grafs ; a great number of leffer rocky hills in the interior part of it, interfperfed with large flats of mofs, all covered with heath ; here and there is a large fpot of meadow and arable land. The foil on the S. W. and N. is fhallow, rocky, and barren, fit only for fheep-walks. Along the burns and rivulets, are fspots of meadow and arable land. On the eaft fide, along the Ken, and for a mile, and fometimes more, on both fides of it, the land is moftly arable, and is either flat or floping towards the river. The flats are of a deep rich clay ; the floping and higher land, of a thin, dry, and kindly foil, and improved with dung, the only manure the country affords, yields good crops. Some of it of late has been improved with lime and marl, and fully repaid the expence. The flat land at the head of Loch Ken, confifting of 200 acres, is perhaps one of the richeft fspots in Scotland. It is of a deep clayifh foil, enriched by the overflowing of Loch Ken, which covers it feveral times during winter and fpring, and, like the Nile, leaves behind it the falts, oils, and fat earths, carried down by the Ken ; fo that many acres produce 300 ftone of natural hay, and the arable is fertile in proportion. Some of it has been cropped 25 times fucceffively, without any manure, but what it receives from the inundation of Loch Ken. In great falls of rain, the rivers Dee and Ken rife near 7 feet perpendicular, by which large tracks of meadow and low land are laid under water. When thefe happen in hay time, or in harveft, they greatly damage, and often carry away large quantities of hay and corn. They come fo fuddenly, that there is no guarding againft them. But if in winter, which is ofteneft the cafe, they rather better the land.

Lakes, &c.—There are 6 lochs, befides Loch Ken, 3 of which, on the north end of the parifh, are ftored with trout ;

trout; the other 3, on the south end, near Loch Ken, stored with pike. Loch Ken is 5 miles long, and from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile broad. Loch Ken and Loch Dee are but one loch, continued 10 miles long. They abound with pike, trout, perch, eel, and salmon. The pike grow to a very large size. The head of one, caught with the rod, is preserved at Kenmore Castle, which weighed 57 lb. Some are frequently caught from 20 lb. to 30 lb.; trout and perch, from 1 lb. to 6 lb.; and several trouts have been taken, weighing 6 lb. They are in the greatest perfection in May, June, and July. Few are exposed to sale. Loch Ken and Loch Dee are navigable. Boats of considerable burden are frequently employed in bringing up marl from the Carling work Loch, and carrying down fir, ash, and oak-wood, with which this hilly country abounds. There is a salmon-fishing on the Dee. At its first erection, about 30 years ago, it was let at about L. 10. It has never been very productive. There is another fishing in this parish, claimed as no man's property, that cannot be easily estimated. I mean a pearl fishery. In dry summers, great number of pearls are fished here; some of great size, and fine water, and are sold from 1s. to L. 1, 1s. according to their size and beauty.

Hills.—There is on the south end of this parish, a range of high hills, lying from N. W. to S. E. 5 miles in length, and upwards of 3 miles over, of one continued solid mass of granite, almost naked, only here and there some spots of heath. The sloping sides of these hills, and the flats near them, for a mile S. W. are covered with large masses of loose rock, all granite; so thick, that you may almost walk over them; and so big, that many of them are 10 tons weight. These are not broken pieces of rock, fallen from the hills, for the hills are entire; and if they were, could never have come to their present situation. The
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number, size, and situation of these loose rocks, are a great natural curiosity. At the end of these hills, in the same direction, is another rocky hill, containing great quantities of iron-stone; but, as fuel is scarce, and coal distant, it cannot be turned to any advantage. These hills are the natural soil for goats. On the west side, and north end of the parish, the hills are still higher, covered with grafs, but of a bad quality. These hills are called the Kells Range, and are seen at 40 miles distance; so high, that there is snow upon them for 8, and sometimes 9 months in the year. They are the very ridge or highest land in Galloway, and the middle between the two seas on the W. and S. E. As a proof of this, the riyers Ken and Dee, which rise on the east side, run to the S. E. sea at Kirkcudbright; and the Don, which rises on the N. W. side of these, runs to the sea near Ayr. These are a part of a range of high hills, running from W. to E. by Leadhills, the whole breadth of Scotland. There is a great natural curiosity to be seen on the side of one of these hills. The *Rocking Stone*, of 8 or 10 tons weight, so nicely balanced on 2 or 3 points or excrescences, that it moves from one to the other, by the pressure of the finger. Captain Grosse, last harvest, sent and took a drawing of it; and some antiquaries think it has been a Druidical place of worship. It should seem that the stone was formed by nature, just as we see it; and lying on a strata of mofs, 2 or 3 inches deep, the rains have in time washed away this mofs or earth, and left the stone resting on these points.

Minerals.—There is a slate quarry in the north end of this parish, formerly wrought. but, by unskilful management, has fallen into disrepute. If sunk deeper, and skilfully wrought, it might be valuable, and supersede the use of English slate, brought hither at a great expence. The lead

lead mine on Sir William Miller's estate, has never been wrought to any extent. Within half a mile of it, on the same estate, is the appearance of a copper mine. Some miners, about 12 years ago, passing from Leadhills to Minnigaff, observed it, and wrought some days for a trial; and finding the appearance promising, wished to take a tack of it; but disagreeing with the landlord about the terms, it has been neglected ever since. Near the Kenmore, 2 miles further S. there is an appearance of lead. Pieces of the ore have been dug up almost on the surface. Both these are probably a part of the same strata of lead, wrought with so much advantage at Minnigaff, 18 miles S. W. of this, and might perhaps be wrought with equal profit here.

Animals.—Foxes, hares, wild cats and badgers, find excellent cover in our woods; otters in the banks of our rivers; of those last, our sportsmen, in time of frost, destroy great numbers. There is plenty of black and red game in our moors. Partridges are not so numerous as in more corn countries. Tarmagants are on our high hills. Plover and snipe in low and marshy lands. Eagles of a large size build on the tops of precipices and high rocks. One killed lately, measured from the tips of the wings 7 feet. Swallows and cuckoos make their appearance about the beginning of April; wood-cocks in the latter end of harvest, when the weather begins to be cold. In a hard winter, flocks of geese and swans come to Loch Ken; wild ducks and teals are there in great abundance at all seasons.

Population.—At the time of Dr Webster's report, the numbers were 784. For 10 years past, the average has been, marriages 6; births 13. Inhabited houses are at present 180; 73 of which are in the town of New Galloway.

loway. The number of souls at present is 869; males 438; female, 431. Nine wrights, 3 smiths, 7 tailors, 13 weavers, 7 shoemakers, 4 masons, 2 millers, 2 dyers, 2 tanners; apprentices 7. Male labouring servants 36, female 47; students at colleges 5. There is 1 surgeon, formerly 2. The people are mostly of the Established Church, there being only 2 Seceders. The number of inhabitants has greatly decreased since 1764, occasioned partly by the too common practice of uniting several farms into one; partly to the almost total disuse of cottagers and subtenants; partly to the practice of feuing out lands, and building villages on the high roads; and partly to the high rent of small possessions, which compel the poorer sort to retire to these villages. The proportion between the annual births and whole population is as 1 to 67 nearly. Between the annual marriages and the whole population, as 1 to 145 nearly. Some families emigrated to America immediately before the rebellion of the colonies. Some young people, both males and females, leave the parish as servants. Several young men of spirit go to the West Indies as planters and merchants. Some go to England to push their fortunes, as pedlars, and, when sober and industrious, commonly return, after 10 or 12 years, with L. 800 or L. 900, or L. 1000. Several return from the West Indies, after 16 or 17 years, with genteel fortunes; and some young men choose a sea-faring life.

Agriculture, &c.—There are between 280 and 290 acres annually employed in raising oats; 15 or 16 in bear and rye; between 70 and 80 in potatoes; no wheat; cabbage, turnip, and other roots are only raised in gardens; little flax or hemp. Potatoes make a principal article of the food of the lower classes of people. Oats are sown from the middle of March to the middle of April; reaped from
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the 20th of August to the middle of October. Potatoes planted in March, ready for digging about Lammas. Crops earlier near New Galloway, and along the Ken, than on the moorish and westerly part of the parish, by several weeks, and better filled. Many farms are inclosed; but the great extent and barrenness of others, discourage the attempt. There are 32 farmers in the parish, each of whom have one or more ploughs. Several labouring men have crofts and small possessions, and each have a plough. The old Scots plough, drawn by 4 horses abreast, is laid aside, and a lighter one adopted. They break up their ley-ground now with 3 horses instead of 4, and sometimes with 2, and 1 man servant, and in the following crops with 2 horses. The ploughs in the parish are 55; carts 47; carriages 2; no waggons.—The parish needs a great deal of more meal, barley and malt than it produceth. There are nearly 17,400 sheep; 1550 black cattle; 150 horses; 200 goats. The farmers depend on the sale of their black cattle, sheep and wool, for the means of paying their rent, and supplying their families with what other articles of provision and clothing they may need. A small quantity of cheese is exported. The butter is all employed in smearing sheep, and not sufficient for that purpose. There is some imported from the west country, or from England.—The land-rent is nearly L. 3000 Sterling. The rent of good arable and meadow ground, is from 12 s. to 16 s. the acre; of the best meadow land, 30 s. No artificial grass was sown here till within these 10 years; at present there may be 20 acres. It cannot be raised but by lime or marl, and the distance of each is so great, as discourages the farmers; the lime 20, and the marl 14 miles distant. The present minister was the first who brought marl to the Glenkens; the project was laughed at, as too expensive; but on seeing the rich crops it produced, amply

rewarding the labour and expence, his example was soon followed; and now, both sides of the Ken are enriched by it; and besides, the grain arising from this mode of cultivation, he has the satisfaction of having inspired his people with a spirit of industry; and now, when marl cannot be conveniently got, they have recourse to lime, and find that it pays them very well. There is no marl in Galloway beyond 10 miles from the sea. Here we are 24 miles distant. The cultivation by marl is principally owing to the exertions of Mr Gordon of Greenlaw, a very public spirited gentleman, the sheriff of the county, who not only encouraged the draining of the Carlingwork Loch, where there are immense beds of shell-marl, but at his own expence made a canal 3 miles in length, to join Loch Dee, and constructed a number of flat bottomed boats of different dimensions, to carry the marl from the Carlingwork Loch up the Dee and Ken to this place; some of which carry 20 double cart load, at 20 feet square to the cart load, or 400 solid feet of marl.—There are upwards of 500 acres of natural wood in different spots in this parish, consisting mostly of oak, ash, birch, alder, hazel. These woods have been mostly cut within these 25 years, and the young plants are in a thriving state. Much old fir is in the parish. Many acres of young fir were lately planted. About 80 acres in lochs, besides Loch Ken. There has been a large forest in the north end of this parish; two large farms still retain the name of Upper and Nether Forest, and a large flat of meadow called the King's Holm. This forest has been anciently stocked with deer; several of them were running wild on our moors about 20 years ago. Some old people remember to have seen near 20 of them. Since that time, their number has gradually decreased; the last of them was killed 7 or 8 years ago. Deer were plenty on the hills
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and moors on the south end of this parish, about 60 years ago, and were claimed as the property of Lord Kenmore; at present they are all destroyed.

Advantages and Disadvantages.—The peculiar advantages of this parish are these: The particular richness of the taste and flavour of the mutton fed on our high hills, above that fed on the lower and richer grounds; a town, with a constant weekly market; a post-office; the high road from Edinburgh to Portpatrick, and from Glasgow to Kirkcudbright passing through it, and crossing one another at New Galloway.—The peculiar disadvantages of it are, the high situation of the ground, rendering the high hills cold and stormy, and dangerous to sheep; the bad roads through the interior parts of it; the pernicious quality of a species of grass to the health of the sheep in 2 or 3 farms on the side of the Dee, infecting them with a disease called the Vanquish, *i. e.* it weakens, wastes, and would at last kill them, unless removed to another farm; but are no sooner removed than they recover their health, and gradually their strength and fatness. This disease is of a different nature from the rot; for rotten sheep put upon these farms (I am told) often recover.—The best means of meliorating the condition of the people of this parish, would be, 1st, Encouraging and promoting a woollen manufactory at New Galloway; 2dly, Improving the breed of sheep, and quality of the wool. This last has already been attempted, and in some measure effected, by the premium given by the Society for the Encouragement of Fishing and Manufactures, and, if continued, will still more promote this good purpose. 3dly, Making a canal from the sea by the Carlingwork Loch, to join Loch Dee, a scheme some years ago projected, the ground surveyed and levelled, and the expence estimated, but of late dropped. This would be a great advantage to
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this place, for importing freestone, lime, &c. for the purpose of building, and of meliorating the land. 4thly, By making or mending that part of the road leading from Portpatrick to Edinburgh, by New Galloway from Minnigaff to Monnithive, and building bridges over the Ken, especially one at New Galloway, which is often impassable by fords or ferry-boats, and also by making or mending the road leading from New Galloway, cross the moors by Shawhead to Dumfries. This would not only be a great advantage to New Galloway, but to the country in general; for as this road from Portpatrick to Edinburgh by New Galloway is 15 miles nearer than by Carlingwork and Dumfries, and the road from Portpatrick to Dumfries 10 miles nearer by New Galloway than by the Carlingwork, all travellers from Ireland and the shire of Galloway travelling to Edinburgh, Dumfries and England, and all the Irish cattle exported to England, which amount to many thousands yearly, would pass this way, and also all travellers from Edinburgh to Ireland, or shire of Galloway.

Stipend, School, Poor, &c.—The stipend is L. 80 : 11 : 3 $\frac{6}{12}$. The glebe is worth L. 7. The King is patron. The church was rebuilt 1745, and repaired 1788. The manse was repaired 1765 and 1788, and is still a bad house, and too little to accommodate the minister's family. The number of heritors is 10, 5 of whom reside.—There is a public school at New Galloway in this parish. The school-house was rebuilt last year, and rendered more commodious; the yearly salary 200 merks Scots; scholars, at an average through the year, about 36; salary included, worth L. 30 a-year; wages for English, 1 s. 6 d. a-quarter, English and writing, 2 s. writing and arithmetic, 2 s. 6 d. arithmetic, 3 s. Latin, 3 s. This school is inadequate to serve so large and extensive a parish. It can only serve New Galloway, and that part
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of the parish that is within 2 or three miles of it. Such as are farther distant, hire young lads into their families, that have been bred at the public school, to teach their children English, and the first principles of writing and arithmetic, which they can do for L. 3 or L. 4 a-year. When 4 or 5 families lie contiguous to one another, they hire a teacher among them, for which they pay from L. 5 to L. 6, with victuals; and by this means all the children in the parish are taught to read and write.—At an average for the last 12 years, the number of poor, quarterly supplied with alms, is 12; average of collections for that time, L. 12, 10 s.; interest of a fund received in legacies, and otherwise, L. 8, 10 s.; which together make L. 21, given annually to the poor.

Prices, Wages, &c.—In 1765, beef was from 3 s. to 4 s. mutton from 2 s. 6 d. to 3 s. 6 d. the English stone, a good lamb 3 s. a dozen of eggs 1 d. a hen 4 d. a duck 5 d. &c. At present (1791) the prices are nearly doubled.—The wages of a day-labourer are from 6 d. to 8 d. and victuals; without victuals, from 1 s. to 1 s. 2 d. The annual wages of a labouring man servant are from L. 5 to L. 7; of a maid servant, from L. 3 to L. 4. A healthy and industrious man is able to maintain and bring up a family.—The fuel commonly made use of is peat; scarce at New Galloway and neighbourhood. The moss is 3 miles distant, inaccessible to carts, by reason of the badness of the roads; carried home in corn-sacks, on horses backs, which, considering the distance, greatly increase the expence, and hinder the poorer sort, who have not horses of their own, from getting home a sufficient quantity; they have recourse to broom, furze, and other brush-wood, to supply the deficiency. In all other parts of the parish peat is plenty, of easy access, and of good quality. Every family cut
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their own peat, and though brought home on horses backs, as the distance is short, have sufficient fuel at a very trifling expence. Much coal is used by the better sort, brought in carts from Dalmellington, near 20 miles distant. Though New Galloway is finely situated for a woollen manufacture, the difficulty of finding fuel has hitherto discouraged the manufacturer from fixing there, and hindered both the increase and improvement of the burgh. But now when roads are opening up, and moorles rendered accessible to carts, both the expence and difficulty will be lessened; for a cart with 1 horse will carry as many as 7 horses on their backs.

Miscellaneous Observations.—The people are of the common size, between 5 feet 7 inches, and 6 feet, rather stronger made, and of a more rosy and better complexion than those in the low country; owing, perhaps, to their not being accustomed to such hard labour, to their living better, and eating more animal food. There is no part of Scotland where the poor live better, or eat so much animal food, as in this moor country.—There are no public manufactures. The people in general are frugal and industrious, and manufacture most of the woollen and linen cloth used by them. They are fond of music, dancing, and other social amusements.—A part of the landed property has been of late years exchanged, owing partly to the failure of the Douglas and Heron Bank, which has much distressed this part of the country, and partly to other causes. It sold at between 24 and 30 years purchase.—Since 1780, when the act of Parliament was obtained for conversion of the statute-labour, high-roads have been made and repaired by assessments on the parish, not exceeding L. 1 the L. 100 of valuation. Yet this is so inadequate to the making and repairing extensive roads, that many of them are still in bad order.

der. There are eleven stone bridges, and which are kept in good repair. One of them, of two arches, over the large burn of Paharrow, is the private donation of one Quintin Maclurg, a tailor, who lived in that neighbourhood about 60 years ago. Being often in fear and danger of his life, in passing and repassing this burn, to serve his customers, he resolved that no one after him should be in such jeopardy again, and erected this bridge out of the earnings of his trade, which was never more than 4 d. a-day. His name still remains engraven on a large stone on the top of the bridge, as a testimony of his public spirit.—There are only 2 inns in New Galloway, where entertainment can be had for men and horses. There are 7 smaller ale-houses in the town, and 3 in the country parish; but as these cannot afford to pay the licence, they sell only professedly in time of fairs. Formerly there were double that number; but of late years, the law has been so rigorously executed, and heavy fines imposed on such as sell without licence, that many of them have given up selling; and happy for the country that it is so, as cheap whisky has now found its way here.—Within these 10 years, 7 houses have been built and rebuilt in the town of New Galloway, 3 of which are 2 stories high; besides 1 built for a tannery, lately set up there, and now carried on to a great extent. In the country part of the parish there are 4 houses built, and 3 rebuilt, 4 of which are 2 stories high, and elegantly fitted out. A better taste for neatness and elegance is getting into this country, and which always bears some proportion to the spirit of industry. Gentlemen are not only building more elegant houses for themselves, but are also giving better and more convenient houses to their tenants. So many new houses are no proof of the increase of population; on the contrary, the farmers meet with greater encouragement from the landlords, in accumulating several farms into one;

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so that more houses are gone to ruin, for want of inhabitants, than have been built and rebuilt.—The present custom of employing hired servants, who live in the family, instead of cottagers, has its advantages and disadvantages. The advantages seem to be these: 1st, They are more under the master's eye, and more under his command day and night, than the cottagers, who often live at a distance, and think themselves obliged to work only stated hours: 2dly, An industrious tenant can often make more of the benefit commonly given to cottagers, especially when given in land, or in grafs to cows and sheep, which was formerly the case, than will pay the wages of a hired servant —The disadvantages seem to be, 1st, The decrease of population; for example, there is 1 tenant in this parish that rents L. 300 a-year, and possesses 5 different farms, in which, about 10 years ago, were 7 tenants and 7 cottagers, which make 14 families; but now there are only 10 families in these farms, which is a decrease of 4 families, calculating these at $4\frac{1}{3}$, which I find is the calculation nearest to the truth, in the country part of this parish, is 17 persons fewer than formerly. 2dly, The increase of the price of labour. Cottagers were formerly nurseries for breeding up servants, and furnished numbers sufficient for supplying the wants of the parish, and so kept down the price of labour; but now the disuse of them lessens the number of labouring servants, the wages of whom rise or fall in proportion to their numbers; and being scarce for want of proper nurseries for them, the price of labour is greatly increased, and must increase, as the spirit of industry increases, and hands are wanted; so that the disuse of cottagers is, amongst many others, one great cause of the increase of the price of labour. 3dly, This disuse, and the high rent of small possessions, discourage matrimony in young people who are servants.—New Galloway is a royal burgh. It has
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four fairs in the year. Here is an excellent meal-market; for as meal and barley are almost always 2 d. and mostly 3 d. the stone cheaper here than at Dalmellenton and shire of Ayr, great quantities are purchased at New Galloway, and carried thither, where they meet with a ready market.—The Park of Glenlee, where there is a house elegantly fitted up by the late Lord President, Sir Thomas Miller, is one of the finest situations in this hilly country. It is on the banks of the river Ken, at the head of a beautiful holm, surrounded with hills, finely skirted with natural wood, and sheltered with clumps of fir, and fine old oak. Two beautiful cascades, or falls of water, are near it.—There is still to be seen the vestige of a road from the King's Holm to the castle of Dindcuck, 3 miles distant. But who this king was, tradition itself does not say. This old castle or abbey, or whatever it was, is now in ruins, and has all the marks of having been a strong place. Some arched cellars, and some pieces of the mouldered walls, are all that remain of a large building.