

NUMBER V.

PARISH OF PITSLIGO.

(COUNTY OF ABERDEEN.)

*By the Rev. Mr JAMES GREIG, Minister of that Parish.**Situation, and Extent.*

THIS parish belongs to the presbytery of Deer, and Synod of Aberdeen*. It lies along the Murray Frith, in a rectangular form, its eastern extremity being two miles west from Kinnaird's head, a conspicuous point in Aberdeenshire, where a light-house was lately erected by government. It extends 3 miles and a half in length westward, and is 3 miles broad in every part, from the sea-coast to the south. A public road, leading from Frazerburgh westward to Banff, intersects it nearly in the middle, from which there is a gentle declivity on each side, to the south and north.

Soil, Climate, &c.—The face of the country is, in general, level, there being no hill in the parish; neither is there any river or lake in it, nor so much as a considerable stream.

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* It is the last erected parish within that presbytery. The lands of Pit-tendrum were formerly in the parish of Frazerburgh, and a few farms belonged to that of Tyrie, but the greatest part of it to Aberdour, from which it was disjoined, upon an application from Lord Pitsligo, in 1634, about the time when he obtained his patent of peerage.

In summer, the mills can scarcely perform any work, owing to a deficiency of water; but there is a sufficient supply of that valuable element for the common purposes of life. As there is little marshy ground in the parish, there are seldom any fogs in it. The air is dry and wholesome, but the northerly storms are sometimes hurtful to the crops, as the country is destitute of trees, and every kind of shelter. On the south side of the road above mentioned, the soil is generally black and light, very well adapted for grass, but not fit for producing weighty crops of grain. Towards the north, the soil is generally a yellow clay, which produces barley of a good quality, and is mostly all in tillage. In this quarter, the farmers make use of sea ware as a manure. They have likewise the advantage of an inexhaustible bank of sea shells, which extends along the whole coast; and a due quantity of which, when laid on the fields, produces the same effect as lime, marle, or any other calcareous substance. This parish abounds with stones of all sizes, and is therefore extremely well adapted for being laid out in inclosures.

Cairns.—On the side of the high road, from Frasersburgh to Banff, are some cairns or tumuli, about 60 feet in circumference at the base, composed of round stones, piled up in a conical shape to the height of 30 feet. There are several similar cairns in the neighbouring parishes, and they are evidently monumental repositories of the dead. On opening one of them some years ago, large flag stones were found placed in the ground, in the form of a chest or coffin, and containing ashes of burnt bones. Some arrow heads of flint were also found, but no weapons of metal of any kind; whence it may be conjectured, that they are of great antiquity. Tradition says, that they are the burying places of hostile invaders from Denmark or Norway, who were de-

feated in that neighbourhood, and seem to have been pursued with slaughter a great way along the coast, where several such tumuli are still to be seen.

Trees.—It has been a generally received opinion, that trees will not grow in this neighbourhood, by reason of the sea spray being hurtful to their vegetation; but with more probability, because of the N. W. winds, which sweep the whole face of the country, and check them in their growth. Yet it is certain, that the greatest part of this country must have been once covered with wood, as appears from the roots of very large oaks, still existing in mosses nigh the coast. Sir William Forbes of Pitligo has planted, within these few years, a piece of ground with forest trees of all kinds, adjoining to the old house or castle of Pitligo, and within about a mile of the sea, which hitherto seem to thrive very well. And this experiment will probably determine, whether the prejudice, against the possibility of rearing timber upon this coast, be well or ill founded.

Manufactures, Fisheries, &c.—A considerable quantity of kelp is made upon the shore of this parish, which is about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles in extent. At the distance of half a mile from its eastern extremity, is the fishing town of Pittaly, belonging to Sir William Forbes, which contains 23 houses, and 116 inhabitants. It sends 4 fishing boats to sea, with 6 men in each. Two miles further west is the fishing town of Roseheart, which employs 7 boats, with the same number of men in each. From autumn to the end of January, haddocks are the most valuable fish, being then in greatest perfection. When bought upon the shore, they cost 1s. the dozen, though 4 years ago, they were sold at 6d. This rise in the price is ascribed to the greater scarcity of fish, to their being
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of a larger size, and to the advanced price of provisions in general. The worst season for fishing is from January to March, little else being then caught but small cod. But in summer, besides cod, both skate and ling are taken in great abundance. In July and August, the greatest attention is paid to fishing for sea dogs, which are chiefly valuable for their oil. The value of lobsters has increased greatly of late. They are caught in numbers, and are sold at 2 d. or 2½d. a-piece for the London market. The fishermen salt up in casks the haddocks and cod taken during the winter, and in April, or, as soon as the season will permit, take them out and dry them. These, with what fish are caught and dried during the summer, they carry about in large boats, and dispose of among the different towns on the Frith of Forth, and bring home cargoes of coals and salt. It is said, that they get even lower prices for their fish in the south country, than at home; but to this the fishermen reply, that as they cannot dispose of the whole at home, it is of little advantage to sell a part; that they wish to make up a cargo, and receive a sum of money at once. Thus the price of the article is kept up in this part of the country.

Village of Roseheart.—Four miles west from Fraserburgh, upon the sea coast, is the village of Roseheart, which belongs to Lord Gardenston; and contains 42 houses, and 213 inhabitants. There are several shopkeepers in it, and mechanics, such as joiners, blacksmiths, coopers, turners, shoemakers, &c. Two merchants have shares of floops, and import wood from Norway; they likewise bring groceries from the south country.

Agriculture, Farms, &c.—This parish is divided into farms of various extent. There are some of 200 acres, but the generality are much smaller. Some part of the land is
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the best in the country ; other parts of it are very indifferent, so that it is not easy to ascertain the average rent. The best land, nigh the shore, where ware can easily be obtained, is let at from 20 s. to 30 s. an acre. Excepting one or two farms in the south part of this parish, the soil is not fit for producing oats: it yields more profitable crops of barley and beans, which last is prevailing generally ; and a newly introduced practice, of drilling and hoeing them, is a great improvement to the crop and to the soil. Beans and oats are sown as early as the season will permit, commonly in the beginning of March ; after which, the time is taken up in dunging and plowing the land for barley, which is the principal crop nigh the coast, and which is sown during the last three weeks of May. The month of June is occupied in preparing the ground for turnips, and sowing them. The remaining part of the summer is employed in making hay, drying and leading home peats, and repairing the highways until harvest, which lasts commonly through the months of September and October. Most of the farmers sow small quantities of flax, which they sell to manufacturers, when spun into yarn, or employ for the use of their own families.

Cattle, Produce, &c.—The chief articles, which the farmer has to dispose of, are, first, black cattle, which, for some years have sold high, and have been of considerable advantage to this country. The number kept upon each farm has, of late, been as large as it will maintain. The highest price of an ordinary ox is L. 10 Sterling, but the prices are very various, bearing proportion to the quality, and the demand which may be at the time. Most farmers rear what horses are necessary for themselves, but they do not pay so great attention to the breeding of horses for sale, as of black cattle. As this parish contains no extensive pastures, there are but few

few sheep in it. The common kind are sold at 10 s. each; those of the English breed are reckoned worth double that sum. The next principal commodities, which the farmers dispose of, are meal and grain. A small proportion only is sold in the country, as most of the inhabitants have crofts of their own. Meal is exported to Norway, or sold in the western isles; grain is commonly disposed of in the Frith of Forth. Barley weighs from 16 to 20 stone the boll, of 16 pecks; the price is from 8 d. to 10 d. the stone. Beans are sold at 12 s. 6 d. the boll of 3 firlots, oats at from 10 s. to 12 s. the boll of 4 firlots; and oat meal at from 10 s. to 13 s. the boll of 8 stone. Butter and cheese are also articles for which the farmers draw a considerable sum yearly. Some advantage is likewise derived from the labour of women servants within doors, who are employed, especially in winter, in spinning linen yarn, or making cloth.

Wages.—The wages of a labouring man in summer is 8 d. the day. Most of these labourers rent a small piece of land, at about L. 2 Sterling yearly, upon which they keep a cow, and raise grain to assist in supporting their families. Thus they live pretty comfortably. But no complaints are made by such as have not this advantage, except when they have large families, or are visited with sickness. The daily wages of a mason are 1 s. 4 d.; of a joiner 1 s.; but other mechanics are commonly paid, not by the day, but by the piece. The wages of a man servant are L. 5 Sterling yearly, and of a woman, L. 2, 10 s. besides victuals.

Fuel.—One of the most expensive articles in this place is fuel, the moss, where peats are got, being five miles distant. Peats are estimated by the *leet*, which is a solid body, piled up like bricks, 24 feet long, and 12 feet broad at bottom, and

12 feet high. This quantity is not sufficient for an ordinary farmer one year; it costs L. 1, 10 s. for cutting it out and drying it in the moss, and when brought to this place, it is worth about L. 5 Sterling. The farmers bring home their peats with their own horses, in the end of summer; but it is a laborious and expensive work, and detains them long from the improvement of the land. English coals are sold here at 5 s. the boll of 36 stone; Scotch coals at 4 s. 6 d. The high duty upon coals, which are brought to the north country, is justly complained of, as an *improper* and *partial* tax. Were that article furnished at a moderate expence, it would be one of the most important advantages which this country could receive. In this case, the more judicious farmers would shew an example of the use of coals to others, and devote their time more closely to the cultivation of the soil. But whatever improvements are or may be proposed here, either with respect to agriculture or manufactures, the dearth of fuel, is, and must continue to be an obstacle, which, without the aid of the Legislature, can never be removed.

Population.—The number, returned to Dr Webster in 1755, was 1224. The number of people, at present in this parish, (*anno* 1791) is 1300, viz. of males 600, of females 700. There is therefore an increase of 76; of these there are under 10 years of age 400; above it, 900. With respect to religious persuasion, there are 50 Episcopalians, and 20 Seceders. The annual average of births for some time past, has been 34, of deaths 18, and of marriages 9.

Heritors, Rent, &c.—The mansion-house of Pitligo, (now in ruins,) the gardens and adjoining farm, the seat of the ancient Lords of Pitligo, to the extent of 2 miles along the coast, belong to Sir William Forbes of Pitligo, the representative

representative of that family. The remaining part of the estate of Pitflico, extending about a mile and a half along the sea-coast, belongs to Lord Gardenston. The lands of Pittaly and Pittendrum belong to Sir William Forbes, having been lately purchased by him, from the deceased William Cumine, Esq; of Pittaly. The rest of the parish is the property of Lord Saltoun, and of Alexander Frazer, Esq; of Strichen. The valued rent of Pitflico is L. 2400 Scotch.

Eminent Men.—The first minister of this parish was Mr Andrew Cant, who had formerly been chaplain in Lord Pitflico's family. From this place he removed to Aberdeen, where he is said to have preached before K. Charles II. after his return from the continent, but before his Restoration. The Spectator mentions this Mr Andrew Cant, No. 147, where he says, that he was minister of an illiterate part in the north of Scotland, and derives the term *canting* from his name, though it seems more probably to have been derived from the Latin.

Church.—The King is patron. The manse was built about 22 years ago; but the church stands much in need of reparation, which, it is hoped, will take place in a short time. The value of the living, including the glebe, is about L. 65 Sterling.

Poor.—The capital of the poor's funds belonging to this parish, is about L. 100 Sterling, the greatest part of which is lent at interest; and the weekly collections amount to L. 22 Sterling yearly. The number of poor, at present receiving charity, is 28, to each of whom the kirk-session distributes yearly 16s. sometimes more or less, according to their necessities. This cannot support the poor; it only
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assists them. There are some, however, in greater necessity, who receive yearly more than twice that sum. The poor in Sir William Forbes's lands, and in other parts of the parish, have been greatly assisted for some time past, by liberal donations of meal and money from that gentleman.

Improvements Suggested.—This parish presents a very obvious means of improvement in agriculture, which is, to divide and inclose the ground with stone dikes, or other fences. There is no spot in the country better adapted for that purpose. The inclosures ought to be so contrived as to contain water in them; and if proper terms were concerted between the heritors and their tenants, for inclosing the fields, it would contribute greatly to the convenience of the farmer, and the melioration of the soil. The heritors seem to be sensible of the propriety of this improvement, and are taking measures for carrying it into effect. Sir William Forbes has lately, at his own expence, inclosed and laid out in grass about 100 acres of his lands in this parish. Mr William Gordon has inclosed about the same extent of a farm, which he holds in lease from Lord Gardenston, and has, in a very few years, brought the land into a state of high improvement*.

Another improvement, which this place stands greatly in need of, is the introduction of manufactures, by which employment might be given to more hands, and more money brought into circulation. Between Peterhead and Banff, which is a distance of nearly 40 miles, there is no manufacture of importance. Hence the large towns have increased greatly, and the country is drained of people and of money.

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* An error still prevails, among many farmers in this place, of keeping too many small horses, and doing no work with oxen, which are on many accounts more profitable.

Might it not be proper for the heritors of the parish, who are all very respectable gentlemen, and distinguished for attention to the interests of their country, to attempt the establishment of some suitable manufactures in it? In a place where living is cheaper than in large towns, they certainly might be expected to succeed, with very little encouragement.

The last improvement, which the parish stands much in need of, is the making of a harbour at Roseheart. There is already a quay, or one side of a harbour at that place, where sloops lie between April and September. But even then, so changeable is the weather, that they are in danger of sustaining great damage. This brings an additional expence upon trade, as goods must be brought from Frasersburgh, the nearest port, by land carriage. Lord Gardenston has generously ordered a considerable sum of money to be laid out in the improvement of this harbour, and measures will soon be taken for carrying that public spirited intention into effect. This is a necessary and important alteration; and it is hoped it will be the means of introducing other essential improvements.

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