

NUMBER XXIII.

UNITED PARISHES OF ARDCHATTAN
AND MUCKAIRN.(PRESBYTERY OF LORN, SYNOD AND COUNTY OF
ARGYLE.)*By the Rev. MR. LUDOVICK GRANT.**Name, Extent, Surface, &c.*

THIS district consists of two united parishes, Ardchattan and Muckairn, antiently called *Ballebhodan* and *Ksele-spickarrol*; the latter denoting the burying place of Bishop Cerylus or Cerullus, and the former signifying St Bede's town or place of residence. The walls of a small church, built by this saint, of excellent masonry, still remain entire, and have withstood the storms and tempests of several centuries.—The parish extends 24 computed miles in length, and is 20 in breadth at an average. The surface is for the most part hilly and uneven, intersected with streams of water, and diversified with heights and hollows. The air is salubrious; the people in general remarkably healthy, and strangers to the diseases which spring from idleness and luxury. The different periods of longevity, to which many have attained, is a strong presumption in favour of the climate. A man died some years a-

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go at the advanced age of 105; three men on the verge of 100, and a fourth turned of 100, are now living; and within these few years several of both sexes, from 80 to 90 years of age, have died in the full possession of all their mental faculties. This district is frequently visited by heavy rains, but the moisture is quickly absorbed by the earth, which is naturally dry.

Rivers, Hills, Woods, &c.—In the parish are several rivers, abounding with excellent trout; the most considerable are the Aw, the Kinlofs, and the Etic. Near the mouth of the former is a valuable salmon fishing, which yields a considerable rent: the salmon are of an excellent quality, not inferior to any in Scotland.—The hills are mostly covered with grass: the most remarkable is *Cruachan Bean*, one of the highest mountains in Scotland, 13 or 14 computed miles in circumference, affording excellent pasturage for black-cattle and sheep. It is very steep towards the N. E. and slopes gently down on the S. but rises with an abrupt ascent towards the summit, which is divided into two points, each exactly resembling a fugar loaf. The N. point is reckoned the highest, and commands a very noble and most extensive prospect. The sea-pink grows upon it, and sea-shells have been found on the summit.—The parish abounds with natural wood; and there are a few plantations of pines and Scotch firs. Every cutting of the wood is supposed, at a moderate computation, to yield the proprietors no less than L. 15,000 or L. 16,000 sterling. They consist of ash, birch, hazel, and alder, but chiefly oak. They abound with roes; and, on one estate, fallow deer run wild in the woods, of a much superior size and flavour to any of their species that are confined in parks. There is a forest in Glenetic, pretty well stocked with red deer. Foxes, hares, wild-cats, pole-cats,
martins,

martins, weazels, otters, badgers, black cocks, moorfowl, ptarmigans, partridges, plovers, eagles, hawks, &c. are found here.

Natural Productions.—The soil is light and dry, except in a very few instances. The arable land, when properly cultivated, and allowed time to rest for some respite to recover itself, produces excellent crops of oats, barley, and potatoes, of a choice quality. But short leases, and the promiscuous mode of letting victual farms to several tenants, without assigning to each his due proportion of arable ground, throw a damp upon the efforts of industry, and prevent the improvements which would otherwise be introduced. Whereas, by adopting the contrary practice, a spirit of emulation would be excited, the lands cultivated to more advantage than they are at present, and a much greater number would be supported by the produce. But it must be acknowledged that a remarkable alteration for the better, as to agriculture, has taken place within these few years; and the parish of Ardchattan would produce sufficient, for the maintenance of its inhabitants, if the tenants reserved their barley for their own use, but they always sell it to brewers, as it fetches a high price. This is not the case with the parish of Muckairn. About 1753, a company from Lancashire erected a furnace for casting pig-iron, in its vicinity, and obtained a long lease of several farms for rearing wood and grazing their work-horses. These lie waste and uncultivated; and occasion the importation of a considerable quantity of meal into that district. The crops raised here are oats, barley, potatoes, and a small quantity of pease. Hemp and flax are cultivated only for private use. A few sow rye-grass and clover, which yield ample returns.—The manures used here are lime, shell-sand, sea-weeds, and dung.—The Scotch plough is generally used, being well adapted to the soil.—There are 53 ploughs and 100 carts in this district.

Horses, Cattle, and Sheep.—The number of horses, including breeding mares, at the lowest computation, amounts to 440 or 450. Though small, they are well shaped, hardy, and easily fed. Their price has advanced considerably within these few years; they now cost from 10 to L. 12.—In the parish are from 2600 to 2800 black-cattle: though not of a large size, they are in general handsome and well haired, and in great estimation with the English drovers. Numbers are sold annually at from L. 4 to L. 6 each. Two five year old stots, of the Highland breed, fed by Mr Campbell of Barcaldine, were raised to such a size as to sell for 40 guineas this year (1792).—There are between 28,000 and 30,000 sheep. The large breed, brought some years ago from the south country, produce a greater quantity of wool, but are much inferior in quality to the old Highland sheep. Thousands are sold yearly to the low country butchers. When a few are purchased by individuals, they sell for from 12s. to 14s. White wool sold last year at 7s. 6d. the stone; wool besmeared with tar at 5s. 6d.—8 fleeces, on an average, to the stone.—The deep rooted prejudice against swine's flesh is now removed: most of the farmers rear some of that species, which, not 30 years ago, they held in the utmost detestation.

Rent.—The valued rent is L. 587 : 7 : 4 Scotch. The real rent has increased considerably within these ten years, and is supposed to be between L. 4,000 and L. 5,000 sterling, exclusive of the cutting of the woods and the kelp shores. It is difficult to ascertain the quantity of kelp made here, as the shores are so extensive that one of the heritors can go upon his own ground no less than 9 computed miles along the sea-coast: moreover the kelp is sold to strangers, who find their account in concealing the produce. Few farms are let below L. 60,

and some pay more than L. 200 of rent. There are 7 heritors, 2 of whom constantly reside*.

Population.—According to Dr Webster, the number of inhabitants in the united parishes amounted, in 1755, to 2195: now it has increased to between 2300 and 2400. But it appears that this district was better peopled a few years ago than it is at present. Within these two or three years 140 persons emigrated from hence to America; and this year more are preparing to follow, being much encouraged by the flattering accounts of the former emigrants. Several families have removed to the low country, where the wages are high. The principal cause of the decrease of population is the engrossing and uniting several farms, and turning them into sheep-walks. Farms that formerly supported 8 or 9 families are now occupied by only 2 or 3, and, in some places, solely by one shepherd. But, it must be acknowledged, that the present proprietors have given preference to the old possessors, and, in several instances, renewed their leases at a cheaper rate, and upon easier terms, than have been offered to them by strangers.—The yearly average of births is 46; of marriages, 19; and of deaths, 28.

Stipend, Schools, and Poor.—The stipend is 1400 merks
Scotch,

* All kinds of provisions are considerably increased in price. As there is no public market, every family must provide their own necessaries. A fat cow for slaughter, which 30 years ago could be bought at L. 2: 10, now costs L. 6. Wethers, butter, cheese, geese, and hens, in proportion. Meal, at an average, is 16s. barley at 21s. per boll, at least. The day wages of men labourers are 1s. without victuals; of masons 1s. 6d. and of wrights 1s. 6d. Men-servants get from L. 6 to L. 8 *per annum*; and female ditto, from L. 3 to L. 3: 10.

Scotch, including L. 40 Scotch for communion elements, and 39½ bolls of meal, with a glebe of 4½ acres. There are 3 places of worship, Ardchattan, Muckairn, and Inverguesfechan in Glenetie: at the last a missionary, employed by the committee for managing the royal bounty, preaches alternately with Glenco and Glencreran. Captain Duncan Campbell of Lochnell is patron.—There are 2 parochial schools, one in Ardchattan and the other in Muckairn, with a salary of L. 10 sterling to each, and the former also receives the interest of L. 1000 Scotch. A school is established in the lower part of Ardchattan parish by the Society for propagating Christian Knowledge, with a salary of L. 13 sterling; and the schoolmaster's wife has from the Society L. 3 sterling, for teaching young girls to spin, and knit stockings, which is of great benefit to the parish. There are, besides, 3 or 4 private schools in remote parts of this district, supported by the neighbouring tenants, whose children have not access to the public schools. The number of scholars at all these, at the lowest calculation, amounts to 200 in winter.—The number on the poor's roll is 45; and there is no fund for their support but the weekly collections and dues of mort-cloths, the yearly amount of which does not exceed L. 17 or L. 18;—a sum very inadequate to the wants of the poor*.

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Road;

* A part of the walls of the old priory of Ardchattan, founded in the 13th century by John M'Dougal of that ilk, is still standing. The present proprietor's dwelling house was formerly a part of the monastery, and his offices occupy a great part of the ground upon which it stood. What now remains of the priory is converted into burying ground, in which are two monuments in niches in the walls; each has a stone coffin, and one of them is ornamented with a font, and inscription in the Runic character. On two gravestones are effigies of priests in their pontifical robes, with inscriptions in the same character. There is a tradition, that in a parliament held in this monastery by
King

Roads, Services, and Fuel.—The public roads are in good repair, and have been greatly improved within these few years, which renders the access easy from all quarters; but the bye roads, especially such as lead to the glens, are rugged, slippery, and dangerous, lying in some parts along the brink of precipices, and so narrow that two men can hardly pass each other. The statute labour is converted into money.—Some personal services are still exacted, but they are not oppressive, requiring only

King Robert Bruce, immediately after his defeats at Methven and Dalree, the pleadings were in the Celtic language.

In this district stood the famous city of *Beregonium*—it was situated between two hills, one called *Dun Macsnicban*, “the hill of Snachan’s son,” and the other, much superior in height, is named *Dun bhail an righ*, “the hill of the king’s town.” A street paved with common stones, running from the foot of the one hill to the other, is still called *Straid-mbaragaid*, “the market street;” and another place, at a little distance, goes by the name of *Straid namiu*; “the meal street.” About 10 or 11 years ago a man, cutting peats in a moss between the two hills, found one of the wooden pipes that conveyed the water from the one hill to the other, at the depth of 5 feet below the surface. On *Dun Macsnicban* is a large heap of rubbish and pumice stones; but no distinct traces of any building or fortification can now be seen on either of the hills, the foundations having been dug up for the purpose of erecting houses in the neighbourhood.

There is a tradition, among the lower class of people, that *Beregonium* was destroyed by fire from heaven. In confirmation of this tradition, it may be mentioned, that a high rock, near the summit of *Dun bhail an righ*, projecting and overhanging the road, has a volcanic appearance and a most hideous aspect. Huge fragments have tumbled down from it. Adjoining to this place, is a fine, open, spacious bay, with a sandy bottom, capable of containing the whole navy of Great Britain.

It would be endless to enumerate all the Druidical monuments in this district. Many cairns and heaps of stones are to be seen here: one, in particular, near the centre of a deep moss about 3 or 4 miles in circumference. In different places, are stones rising 12 feet above the surface of the earth, all of them one single stone; and, at a small distance, a number of large stones from 20 to 22 feet in length, of an oval figure

only 8 days work in the year at different periods. It is the intention of the proprietors to abolish all personal servitude, which will tend to the mutual advantage of both master and tenant.——The only fuel used by the lower classes is peats, which lie in a very inconvenient situation for many of the inhabitants, and consume almost the whole summer in cutting, leading, and securing them. Till the tax on coals is repealed, any attempt to introduce improvements or establish manufactures in the Highlands, will be of no avail.

Miscellaneous Observations.—The people in general are sober, industrious, and intelligent; much inclined to hospitality; humane and charitable; ready to relieve the distressed, from whatever quarter they may come. They are all of the Established church; and punctual in their attendance on divine worship. The farmers make a decent appearance; seem to enjoy the comforts and conveniencies of life suitable to their station; and acknowledge that they have less difficulty in paying their rents (though considerably increased) than they had 30 years ago. The people in general are middle sized, well proportioned, and can endure great fatigue.—The common language is the Celtic: the names of all the farms are derived from it, and are in general descriptive of their situations.——Loch-Étie, which divides Ardchattan from Muckairn and two other parishes, is a navigable inlet of the sea, 15 computed miles in length, but of unequal breadth. Near its mouth is a narrow channel, not much more than a musquet-shot over, at a place called Connel, signifying in the Celtic, rage or fury; which is very descriptive of this place, as a ridge of rugged and uneven rocks runs across two-thirds of the channel, and occasions, at certain periods of the ebbing or flowing tide, such a rapid current that no vessel with the freshest breeze can stem it. In the beginning of the flood, the tide runs up with a boisterous
rapidity,

rapidity, and at ebb, it returns with a violence and noise unequalled by the loudest cataract. But there is sufficient depth of water, between the ridge of rocks and the land on the west side, for vessels of any size or burden to pass and repass with safety in the beginning of flood or ebb. There is a ferry here, and notwithstanding its alarming appearance, one of the safest in Scotland, as no accident has happened at it in the remembrance of any man living.

The sides of Loch-Etie are pleasant; indented into creeks and bays, affording safe anchorage in any wind whatever; delightfully variegated with hill and dale, meadows and cornfields, wood and water. There are several salmon fisheries on its shores; and it abounds with small red cod and cuddies; and, in some seasons, a few herrings are caught in it. Seals are its constant inhabitants; and porpoises visit it in the latter end of April, and take leave of it about the close of July.

The tide flows six hours, and takes the same time to return: it runs from Connel in a S. E. direction to Bonawe, and, after running along the north side of Cruachan-bean, bends its course N. E. till it terminates in Glenetic, i. e. the valley of Eta, famous for being the residence of Ufnath, father of Nathos, Althos, and Ardan; the first of whom ran away with DARTHULA, wife of CONQUHAN, King of Ulster in Ireland, which is the subject of a beautiful poem of Ossian. Many places in and about the loch and valley of Eta confirm, beyond a possibility of doubt, that such people were once resident there. In particular, a small island, with some vestiges of a house upon it, goes by the name of *Elain Ufnich*, or the island of Ufnath. There is also, in the farm of Dalnefs in Glenetic, a rock rising in the form of a cone, on the end of a high hill, commanding a romantic prospect, which to this day retains the name of *Griannan Dearduil*, the basking place of DARTHULA.

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