

## NUMBER III.

## PARISH OF MINNIGAFF.

(*Stewartry of Kirkcudbright.—Presbytery of Wigton.—  
Synod of Galloway.*)

By the Reverend Mr JOHN GARLIES MAITLAND.

*Name and Appearance.*

**M**INNIGAFF, or Monnigaff, is said to mean, in Gaelic, a stony muir, which is abundantly descriptive of the greater part of this parish. The country exhibits a very rugged appearance, being composed of rocky and heath covered hills, some of them of great height.

Length of the parish 24 miles.

Breadth, about 12 ditto.

Population in 1748, 828

———— in 1755, 1209

———— in 1792, 1420

Increase in 44 years 592

This increase is chiefly owing to the mines.

Average number of Christenings 40 yearly.

Valued rent - - - L. 7586: 10 Scots.

Real rent among nine heritors L. 5925 Sterling.

*Climate, Diseases, &c.*—The climate in all the lower grounds is mild. The parish is seldom visited with any epidemical disease,

disease. The small-pox, indeed, is often attended with fatal effects in this neighbourhood, owing to the neglect of inoculation. Some unhappy scruples, flowing from a mistaken religious principle, prevent the people from doing that duty to their children which Providence has pointed out by this important discovery. Instances of longevity are frequent in this parish. One man, still alive, is said to be 118 years of age. This, however, rests chiefly on his own testimony, as no authentic record of his birth has ever been produced. His name is William Marshall; he has the remains of an athletic frame. In his youth he was a soldier; he says he served under King William in Ireland. If this was the case, he certainly does not exaggerate his age; but of this part of his history there is no better evidence than that of his age itself. That his age, however, is very great, there is this presumptive proof, that none of the oldest people in the country have ever contradicted his assertion.

*Rivers.*—The only river of any consequence is the Cree, which forms the boundary between this parish and Penninghame, and empties itself into Wigton Bay. This river is for some miles small, and runs through a bleak and dreary country, but is soon considerably increased by several large streams, which terminate in it. As soon as it has received this addition of waters, its appearance is changed in every respect. Instead of holding its course through rocks and muirs, it glides slowly and beautifully, for some miles, through a rich valley, abruptly bounded on each side by banks covered with wood. The river in this place is broad, and the whole forms a landscape truly romantic and delightful.

But beauty is not the most valuable characteristic of the Cree; it mingles the useful with the agreeable. It is navigable

gable for several miles up, which has been the source of all the agricultural improvements which have been made in this part of the country. It likewise produces excellent fish of different kinds; but the best and most abundant species is the salmon. These are found in considerable quantities. Even in the beginning of the season, when salmon are esteemed a rarity, they are sold at two-pence *per* pound; and, during the whole season, the price never varies.

The smelt or sparring, a very rare fish, is also found in the Cree. It is found only in one other river in Scotland, viz. the Forth at Stirling. It makes its appearance only during a few days in March, at which time they are caught in great quantities. They both taste and smell strongly of rushes; and this flavour, although uncommon, is to most people agreeable.

*Mountains and Mines.*—It has been already observed, that this parish contains several mountains, some of which are higher than any in the south of Scotland. Cairn-muir is 1737 feet above the level of the sea; and there are one or two more which are 20 or 30 feet higher; but, arising from a more elevated base, their altitude is not so striking. There are many others of a less considerable height.—These mountains, though apparently barren, are not unproductive. Large quantities of lead have been dug from their bowels. The military road from London to Dublin passes through this parish for several miles. It was in making this road, in the year 1763, that a piece of lead-ore was accidentally discovered by a soldier, who was at work. This important discovery was first made in the property of Mr Heron of Heron. It produced, at one time, about

about 400 ton of ore *per annum* to Mr Heron, and those who were in company with him. At present, it yields them only about 30. It was found that the veins, leaving Mr Heron's lands, went into those of Mr Dunbar of Mackernore; and there it is at present successfully wrought. Some years it produces from four to five hundred tons of ore. The ore, when smelted, yields, for every three tons, two of lead. It brings at market 18 l. *per ton* when smelted, and 8 l. *in ore*. It has been assayed, but will not bear the expence of extracting the silver. It is not carried above a mile by hand till they put it on board small vessels; and then they generally carry it to Chester, to which place they can run, with a fair wind, in 18 or 20 hours.

*Woods.*—But lead is not the only production of our hills. Some of them, especially those in the vicinity of the *Green*, are covered with useful wood. There is no land in the parish more productive than that which is employed in this manner. The greater part of this belongs to the Earl of Galloway, who lately sold the cutting of his woods for 6000 guineas, although the trees were then only from 25 to 30 years old. The wood is mostly *charred*, except a very small quantity which is used in the neighbourhood for domestic purposes. Besides Lord Galloway's, there is a good deal of other wood in the parish; but its value has not been well ascertained. In all these woods, the most predominant species of trees are the oak and the ash.

*Sheep, Black Cattle, Horses, &c.*—Sheep are certainly the staple commodity of this parish. It is believed that their number is not less than *thirty thousand*. Although, from the shyness of the farmers to give an exact account of their flock, the information on this subject cannot be perfectly accurate, yet

yet it is certain that this statement is not extravagant. But, although sheep are evidently an object of so much importance to the farmer, yet little regard has been hitherto paid to the improvement of the breed. Indeed, no experiment has ever been made for this purpose. They have been contented with the breed which they found upon the grounds, which is certainly far from being good. They are of a small species, with black face and legs, and covered with wool of a very inferior quality. They are generally sold at three years old, at which age they are, at an average, worth 12*l.* *per* score. They then weigh, if slaughtered, 12 pounds *per* quarter. The wool sells for 9*s.* a stone; and it commonly requires seven or eight fleeces to the stone. The sheep are, I believe, universally *laid*, which, although prejudicial to the quality of wool, is deemed a necessary precaution against the inclemency of winter.

Besides sheep, there are a considerable quantity of black cattle bred in the parish. These have all the advantages common to Galloway cattle, which are well known to be remarkably handsome. They are short legged, deep in the rib, broad over the loins, and, in general, without horns. They weigh remarkably well to their apparent bulk. The bullocks and heifers bred in this parish are sold at three and four years old, when they are sent to the English markets, where they bring an excellent price.

There are few horses bred for sale. In the upper part of the parish, there are still some remains of the true Galloway breed, which, although small, are remarkable for figure, spirit, and durability. They are the same with the Cornish, the Welsh, and Hebridian ponies, and are the ancient British breed. In the lower parts of the parish, where horses are  
more

more wanted for the purposes of agriculture, they generally use good middle sized draught horses.

There are also bred in the parish some goats, which are supposed to answer better than sheep on the excessively rugged grounds which are frequently to be met with. Their number is not very great. They are worth 7*l.* or 8*l.* per score.

*Rent, Soil, Crops.*—The rent of land varies astonishingly in different parts of the parish. In some places it is let not by the acre, but by the mile, one farm containing several in extent each way. In the southern part of the parish, arable land brings from 20*s.* to 30*s.* per acre. The soil is such as might be expected from the appearance of the country. Barrenness is certainly its most striking characteristic. There is, however, a small stripe of land lying along the Cree, which is abundantly fertile. The soil of this is light and shallow, but kindly, and, in wet seasons, produces excellent crops. The part of this tract which lies nearest Wigton Bay is of a different quality, being a deep clay, and in some places covered with moss. This is not unfertile. The crops raised are oats, barley, rye, wheat, potatoes, and turnip. What number of acres are respectively occupied by each of these cannot easily be determined. By far the greatest number is employed in raising oats; and, next to them, in barley or bear. Wheat and turnips are not cultivated to any extent, and have been tried rather as experiments, than as forming a part of the general plan of husbandry. These experiments have been successful. The whole grain produced in the parish does no more than supply the inhabitants.

*Ecclesiastical State of the Parish.*—The inhabitants of Gal-  
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loway have hitherto enjoyed, in a very great degree, the valuable blessing of peace and unanimity in their religious sentiments. Dissension of any kind has been less known than in almost any other part of Scotland. There are few Seceders in this parish from the established Church. There are, however, two or three families of Antiburghers and M<sup>c</sup>Milnites. One of the clergymen of the latter sect has his residence in the parish, although the number of his adherents is very small. He preaches occasionally in different parts of Galloway, and at home only by turns. The amount of the stipend is 72 l. 4s. Sterling. The glebe consists of 20 acres of land, 10 of which are arable. The value of the living, exclusive of the houses and garden, may be about 84 l. *per annum*. The number of poor persons upon the parish-roll is at present 25. These receive about 30 l. *per annum*, which is distributed to them quarterly. This sum arises almost entirely from the collections made on the Sabbath, a very small part of it only being the interest of some money left for their behoof. From this account of the matter, it appears that the poor are but very indifferently provided for. The heritors have never been assessed, although this is a measure which it would certainly be prudent and humane to adopt.

*Prices of Labour and Provisions.*—The prices of labour are various. In husbandry, during spring, summer, and harvest, the labourer receives 1 s. *per day* at ordinary works. For cutting peats, 1 s. 4 d.; for cutting hay, 1 s. 6 d. A woman at weeding, &c. 6 d. But, at reaping, both men and women receive 1 s. In winter, a man gets 10 d. The labourer who is hired by the year, and has a family, is generally paid by what is called a *benefit*. This benefit consists of a house, garden, 50 stone of oat-meal, 2 or 3 pounds in money, his fuel led home, liberty to plant 3 or 4 bushels of potatoes.

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When he eats in his master's house, this is all that he receives; but, if he eats in his own, he is allowed to keep a cow, and has some addition made to his money or meal. These benefits are worth from 15 l. to 16 l. yearly. Upon this, when they are sober, which is mostly the case, and their wives industrious, they are enabled to bring up healthy and vigorous families, and to give them all the education which their situation in life requires. I do not know one instance of indigence in the parish which has not proceeded from misconduct, sickness, or old age. The happy circumstances of the people, however, are certainly much owing to the potatoes which they are allowed to plant. A great part of their sustenance is derived from this source. The husband generally takes care to have them well dunged, and his wife and children employ their leisure hours in keeping them clean; so that the cottagers potatoes generally look the best of any in the field.—A farm servant living in the house gets 8 l.; a maid servant 3 l. *per annum*.

*Language, Manners, &c.*—The language at present spoken in this parish is that which is common to all the low lands of Scotland. But, although it is a dialect of the English which is now spoken, there is no doubt that Gaelic was formerly the language of this country, and of all the west coast of Britain, but a few ages ago. Buchanan says, that this was the language of Galloway even in his time. The names of places in this parish confirm the truth of the remark.

The people of this parish are, in general, sober and industrious. They have been even able, in a great measure, to withstand the pernicious influence of British spirits, which, to the misfortune of this country, are too commonly in use. The lower classes possess a degree of information which is  
unusual

unusual among peasants. While engaged in tending their sheep they have long intervals of leisure. Many of them fill up these with reading and reflection. Hence they are always better informed than the mechanics, or even the labourers who are engaged in agriculture.

Many of the farmers are decent and intelligent men. They are mostly wealthy, and live in a very comfortable stile. Some of them pay a great deal of rent. One, in particular, pays 500 l. Sterling *per annum*, and has a stock of near 6000 sheep.

*Antiquities.*—There were formerly several *tumuli* on the banks of the Cree. In the year 1754, some of these were opened, and arms found in them, particularly three pieces of armour, all of which seem to have been offensive. One of them was formed very much like a halbert. The second was shaped on one side like a hatchet; but, subjoined to the back part of this hatchet, there was an instrument resembling a pavier's hammer. The third was like a spade, but much smaller in size. Each of these had a proper aperture for receiving a handle. When they were first discovered, they were so much covered with rust, with which they seemed to be much corroded, that it was impossible to distinguish of what metal they were made; but they were at last found to be of brass. They lay for many years in a farm-house in the parish; but it is not now known what is become of them. Near the place where these were found, some vestiges of an intrenchment are still to be discovered; and formerly, at no great distance from this, some large stones were placed, inclosing a circular piece of ground. These circumstances tend strongly to confirm the truth of an account which Buchanan, in his History of Scotland, gives of a battle which was fought near the Cree, by the Scots on one side, and the Romans and Picts on the other.

*Miscellaneous*

*Miscellaneous Observations.*—It has been already observed, that the great road from London to Dublin passes through this parish for several miles. The advantages of this are too obvious to need any remarks. We have also several other roads of great utility. One directly to Edinburgh intersects this parish for 12 miles. Another, which is now making to Ayr, also passes through it for several miles. This road is the effect of the patriotism and public spirit of the gentlemen of Galloway and of Ayrshire, as the whole expence is to be defrayed by their subscriptions. The utility of the object will well reward them for whatever it may cost. There was formerly no carriage road to Ayr without going round almost 40 miles. The great advantage of having a communication opened with so rich a country as Ayrshire will soon be experienced.

This parish produces neither lime nor coals. Lime, however, is got from England. It costs, at the shore, 13 d. per Carlisle bushel. The farmers generally lay on 50 bushels to the acre, but it is by far too little. Shells, which are found on the neighbouring shores, are also successfully used as a manure. They are brought in small vessels for some miles up the Cree; and, when landed, the best kind cost 1 s. 4 d. per ton. 25 ton are commonly given to the acre. The same error is committed here as in the lime.

The coals, as well as the lime, are brought from England. They might be procured on very reasonable terms, were it not for the duty they pay as on exportation, though they are only carried across a frith, from the English to the Scottish border. This duty renders them very high priced, and represses the spirit of agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, in every part of Galloway.