

PARISH OF ALYTH.

PRESBYTERY OF MEIGLE, SYNOD OF ANGUS AND MEARNS.

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I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THE name of this parish and village has remained without material change from the earliest period to which it can be traced; and in the very oldest documents in which it occurs the spelling is exactly the same as at present. In the parochial records and other documents, it sometimes appears in the forms of Alicht, Elicht, Elith, &c.; but these variations are evidently accidental, and can only be regarded as instances of the loose orthography of ancient times. The name is probably derived from the Gaelic *ailleadh*, a slope or ascent (*dh* in the Gaelic language being pronounced like the English *th*;) and seems to refer to the slope on which the old church and the more ancient part of the village are situated. At least, no more plausible etymology has been suggested. The same name, with precisely the same spelling, belonged to one of the suppressed bishoprics in Britany, where a Celtic dialect was spoken.

Boundaries, &c.—The parish is bounded on the north, by Glenisla; on the east, by Airlie and Ruthven; on the south, by Meigle; and on the west, by Bendochy, Blairgowrie, Rattray, and Kirkmichael. It is separated from the parishes of Airlie and Meigle by the river Isla, and from Kirkmichael and a detached part of Bendochy by the Ericht or Blackwater. It is of an irregular oblong form, narrowing from south-east to north-west, with a length of 15 miles, and a transverse breadth varying from less than 1 to above 6 miles. The whole extent of the parish is 53.375 square miles, or 34,160 statute acres, much the greater part of which is uncultivated. It is divided by the hills of Alyth, Loyall, and Barry, into two districts of unequal extent, differing completely in their character and features. The lower and more fertile district lies on the south of these hills in the valley of Strathmore, and forms an ir-

regular square of nearly four miles a-side. The northern district may be again subdivided into three parts; 1. a tract of cultivated ground immediately behind the hills; 2. the forest of Alyth, an extensive tract of moor and moss, separating the lowland from the Highland part of the parish; and, 3. the Blacklunans, a small fertile district lying along the side of the Blackwater. The district of Blacklunans belongs to the county of Forfar.

Elevation and Climate.—The elevation of the parish, from the banks of the Isla on the south to the summit of Mount Blair at the northern extremity, ranges from about 130 to about 1600 or 1700 feet. Mount Blair, the most considerable eminence in this neighbourhood, belongs partly to this parish and partly to Glenisla, the line of march running across the summit. The hill of Kingseat, 1178 feet above the level of the sea, is picturesquely situated on the side of the Ericht, about three miles south from Mount Blair. The elevation of Barryhill was calculated by the late Principal Playfair at 668 feet; and the hills of Alyth and Loyall are somewhat higher. The climate is bracing and salubrious; and there is no distemper to which the inhabitants are subject in a more than ordinary degree. Fevers and other infectious diseases are comparatively rare. The whole of this district is a good deal exposed to easterly winds, particularly in the spring months, but in this parish the north-west wind is, on the whole, the most prevalent; so much so, that trees in unsheltered situations frequently receive a permanent bend to the south east.

Rivers and Streams.—This parish, as has been already stated, is bounded in part by the Isla and Ericht; and it is also traversed by several minor streams. The most considerable of these is the burn of Alyth, which rises in the mosses of the forest, and falls into the Isla at Inverquiech, about two miles east from the village.

Geology.—With regard to its geological formation, the parish is divided into three districts, which are chiefly occupied, respectively, by the crystalline slates, trap, and the old red sandstone. The first of these comprehends the Blacklunans and the forest of Alyth. Towards Mount Blair, the rocks exhibit the character of mica-slate, and, in the southern part of the forest, that of clay-slate, the intermediate space presenting the usual gradations, interspersed with quartz, hornblende slate, and other analogous species. Beds of limestone, although generally of rare occurrence in the Grampians, are frequent at Mount Blair, and farther down on the side of the Blackwater.

The ridge of high ground behind Bamff House consists of a band of trap rock, generally about a mile in breadth, with fronts stretching down into the hollow behind the hill of Alyth. On the north side of the ridge, the trap rocks are conglomerate in their structure, the pebbles being also trap; but towards the south they are more homogeneous, and of a felspathic texture. Within this series, some narrow beds of light-grey sandstone occur; and towards the north of the trap beds, there is a large nucleus of yellowish compact limestone, which is well adapted for building. A little to the south of Bamff House, the trap range is intersected by a dike or vein of well-defined serpentine, about a hundred yards in width, forming a prolongation of that which traverses the district to the eastward.

The southern part of the parish, with the range of hills behind the village, is occupied by the old red sandstone strata, intersected by narrow dikes of trap, two of which are laid open by the channel of the burn. These strata, at their commencement on the north, are generally conglomerate, the pebbles ranging from one to six inches in diameter, and consisting of quartz, porphyry, &c. As they descend towards the south, the strata become more homogeneous and of finer grain, and are occasionally of a soft marly texture. The synclinal line of Strathmore passes near the village, from north-east to south-west. On the south of the line, the dip is to the south-east; on the north, to the south-west. On the north side of the line, the amount of dip is very great, ranging in the conglomerate beds from seventy to ninety degrees. No fossil remains have been observed.

No ornamental stones are found in the parish. The beautiful agates, formerly well known under the name of Alyth jaspers, were found in the Burn of Kilry, in the adjacent parish of Glenisla, and derived their name from the circumstance, that they were generally searched for by persons from Alyth.

The flat grounds or haughs, on the side of the Isla, consist of a fine deep loam, with a subsoil of sandy alluvial silt, and are very productive. With the exception of these alluvial loams, the best soils are where the rocks are thinly covered by their own *detritus*, which forms a warm dry porous subsoil. When the cover is deeper, it is chiefly composed of *detritus* from the Grampians, forming an impervious mixture of clay and stones of all sizes. The subsoil is generally of this kind, in the hollows behind the hills of Alyth, &c., and in the Muir of Alyth, an extensive com-

mon lying on the south of the village. On the faces of the hills, the soil is a fine sharp gravel, producing good crops of oats, potatoes, &c. In the Blacklunans, the arable land is generally a light fertile black loam; but some parts are very moorish. There is an extensive peat-moss in the forest, called the Culpanach, and several smaller ones in other parts of the parish. A deposit of marl, being the only one known to exist in this immediate neighbourhood, was lately discovered in draining a small loch on the farm of Nether Balloch, near the village. A pair of antlers, considerably larger than any now seen on the living animal, were dug up some years ago in a peat-moss at Ballach.

Botany and Zoology.—From its situation, this parish exhibits both the vegetation characteristic of alluvial and highly cultivated districts, and also that which is peculiar to upland and subalpine regions. Its Flora has not been minutely examined, but the following plants, interesting from their beauty or rarity, have been gathered within its limits. In the lower part of the parish, the *Alisma ranunculoides*, the *Scrophularia vernalis*, the *Senecio sarracenicus*, (a doubtful native), the *Astragalus glycyphyllus*, on the banks of the Isla, near Inverquiech, its only habitat, so far as is known, in the basin of the Isla. The banks of that river are also adorned with the *Trollius Europæus*, the *Campanula latifolia*, and the *Gallium boreale*, which last, though rare in many districts, is abundant on the Isla and its mountain tributaries. In the upland districts, the *Orobus sylvaticus*, the *Habenaria albida*, and *H. viridis*, (the latter sparingly), the *Trientalis Europæa*, the *Alchemilla alpina*, in rocky and elevated situations, and the *Saxifraga aizoides*, and *S. stellaris*, along the brooks. The white heath, (*Erica vulgaris alba*), is said to be of unusually frequent occurrence. The right bank of the Den of Airlie is in the parish of Alyth, but it is the left bank which is peculiarly interesting to the botanist. Both banks are clothed with a fine stool of natural wood of every species indigenous to this country. The native wood in the rest of this parish, of which there is not much, is chiefly birch, hazel, and alder.

The rivers and larger rivulets are well stored with trout, and, in some seasons, a considerable number of salmon ascend the Isla. There is also excellent pike-fishing in an old channel of the river, on the property of Mr Whitson of Bardmony. Roe-deer and the common kinds of game are plentiful. Pheasants have

been introduced, and thrive very well. Ptarmigan is occasionally met with in the higher part of the parish, and white hares have been shot in severe winters.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

The earliest document in which the name of this parish occurs, is a charter of the lands of Bamff, &c. granted by King Alexander II., in the year 1232, to Nessus de Ramsay, the lineal ancestor of the present proprietor, Sir James Ramsay, Bart. The rest of the property in the parish has repeatedly changed hands since that period. The Lyndesays, afterwards Earls of Crawford, became connected with it in 1303, when Alexander de Lyndesay received a grant from Thomas, Earl of Marr, confirmed by a charter from King David II. of the lands of Balwyndoloch, now Ballendoch. By successive charters from the Scottish Kings, to whom they were nearly related, the family came into the possession of the whole of the parish of Alyth, or at least of all the land in it worth occupying, with the exception of the estates of Bamff and Balhary, the latter of which was then much less extensive than at present. About the beginning of the fifteenth century, they fell into straitened circumstances, and sold or pledged their lands piecemeal, until, in 1630, they disposed of all their remaining property in this district to the family of Airlie, who were already the chief land-owners in this parish.

The village of Alyth is a place of considerable antiquity, and has enjoyed the privileges of a burgh of barony since the reign of James III. The family of Airlie, who have also the title of Barons of Alyth, are the superiors. At a much earlier period, it seems to have been a place of some importance. In the *History of Dundee*, published 1803-4, it is said that David Bruce, who reigned from 1341 to 1371, granted an edict in favour of that town, prohibiting Kirriemuir, Alyth, &c. from holding weekly markets, as being within the liberties of Dundee. The people of this village, with Thomas Greig, Prebendary of Alyth, took an active part in the tumultuous election of the celebrated Gavin Douglas to the Bishopric of Dunkeld, A. D. 1516, and are even said to have taken up arms in his favour (*En. Brit. new edition, Art. Douglas*). Stewart, the defeated candidate, obtained the livings of Alyth and Cargill, as a solatium for his disappointment.

This parish had a considerable share in the commotion and turmoil of the troublous period, from 1640 to 1660. Notwithstanding the prevalent malignity of the district, and the proximity of powerful royalist families, the people of Alyth seem to have

adhered rigidly to the cause of Presbytery. In the session records for the years 1645-6, there are several intermissions of public worship, "because of the common enemy." From February to August 1646, Montrose's army was stationed in the immediate neighbourhood, to the great consternation of the inhabitants, as appears from the following entries in the session book. "July 5 day 1646, first Sabbath. Given to Hendrie Cargill, x sh^{ll} for to go to the camp to trie and search some news from the malignants, and that he may be for warnisse of their cuming upon us. July the 2 Sab. This day no preaching, because of the commonemie: July the 3 Sab. and 4 Sab.: No preaching, because Montrose was so near us. August the first Sab. and 2 day: Ther was no preaching with us since the last Fast, (Feb. 1st.) because the enemie was quarterit in our bownds. This day our minister taught."

When Dundee was besieged by General Monk in 1651, the Committee of Estates and of the Kirk met at Alyth with other lords, gentlemen, and ministers, to concert measures for raising the siege; but the meeting was summarily dissolved by a detachment of the English army, who surprised them and took a number of prisoners. This occurrence is generally stated by Hume to have happened near Dundee; but in Gumble's Life of General Monk, it is expressly said to have taken place at Alyth, near the Highlands. The writer has not given his authority for the statement, but it is confirmed by several entries in the parish records. It appears from the following, that Mr John Rattray, who was minister of this parish from 1637 to 1678, was among the prisoners. "August the last day 1651: This day no preaching, because our minister was taken on Thursday last by the Englishes, being the 28 of August 1651." Mr Rattray was carried with the army into England, and was not restored to his parish till the month of June in the following year. Mention is also made in other places of persons taken or wounded in the "onfall of Alyth." The following entry seems curious enough to be quoted, as illustrative of the state of the country at that period. "March the 28, 1652: No preaching, except only ane Englishè trouper went up to ye pulpit, and made ane forme of ane preaching, who hade no warrant to preach, whose text was upon the 45 Psalm, 13, 14 vs." After the Restoration, the minister and parishioners of Alyth appear to have submitted quietly to the altered state of things. "March 15, 1663: This day, the clerk writter hereof, being ap-

pointed and ordained be the minister and session to read everie Sab before the incoming of the minister to the pulpit, red this day," &c. In 1667, Mr Thomas Robertson was inducted as assistant and successor, with the usages and ceremonies of the Episcopal Church.

The Forest of Alyth was so called, as having been a hunting-ground of the Scottish Kings. In the Register of the Great Seal, published by Thomson, (p. 134, No. 40, Roll 5), there is a charter dated in the sixth year of the reign of Robert II., vesting John de Roos in the office of Justiciary of the King's Forests of Clunie and Alyth.

Before the Reformation, the benefice of Alyth was attached to one of the prebends in the Cathedral of Dunkeld, and the patronage seems to have been exercised by the bishop down to the Revolution. There was also a chapel dedicated to St Ninian, described as situated "infra coemeteriam ecclesie parochialis de Alyth." The chaplainry was likewise in the gift of the Bishop of Dunkeld. The vicarage of Alyth and the chaplainry of St Ninians were unquestionably distinct offices, although they might sometimes be held by the same person. It seems most probable that the chaplainry was a provision for the clergyman who discharged the duties of curate of the parish in the absence of the incumbent. The lands of Balwhyme, in the neighbourhood of Alyth, formed part of the provision of the chaplain. In a dispute with respect to the teinds of Balwhyme, which took place about thirty years ago, the Earl of Airlie produced a deed, executed in 1554, by Robert Fowler, Chaplain of St Ninians, with consent of the Dean and Chapter of Dunkeld, the see being then vacant, conveying the lands of Balwhyme, with the teinds, &c. to Ogilvy of Clova. A charter of confirmation was granted by the bishop in 1546. There is also extant a deed of cognition and infestment, dated 1670, vesting Mr Thomas Robertson, assistant minister of Alyth, in the chaplainry and altarage of St Ninians, to which he had been presented by the bishop, on the demission of that benefice by the incumbent of the parish. In this document, the chapel is said to have been situated "on the north side of the kirk-yard." The site is still pointed out. The feu-duties of Balwhyme were drawn for a long time by the minister of Alyth, as part of the stipend, but they are now merged in the Teinds.

Remarkable Persons.—Nessus de Ramsay, the founder of the family of Ramsay of Bamff, was a person of considerable note in the thirteenth century. He held the office of Physician to King

Alexander II., and received a grant of lands in this parish, which his descendants still hold, in reward for having saved the life of the King by a critical operation; according to popular tradition, by "cutting a hair-ball from the King's heart." One of his descendants, James Ramsay, attained to eminence in the same profession, and was Physician to James I. and Charles I. Mr Thomas Aiton, who was minister of this parish in the earlier part of last century, was a man of considerable learning, and the author of a Treatise on the Original Government of the Church. James Sandy, a bed-ridden cripple, who died here in 1821, attained great local celebrity by his extraordinary mechanical genius.

Land-owners.—The chief land-owners in the parish, in respect of valued rent, are, the Earl of Airlie; John Smyth, Esq. of Balhary; Sir James Ramsay of Bamff, Bart.; George Knight, Esq. of Jordanstone; Captain Clayhills Henderson, of Hallyards; and the Honourable William Ogilvie of Loyall. In respect of real rent, Mr Smyth of Balhary is the principal heritor. The family of Airlie have a special grant from the Crown for the name of the lands of Loyall, in commemoration of their fidelity to Charles I. and II. during the great Rebellion.

Antiquities.—On Barry Hill (from the Gaelic *Bar-ra*, a hill fort,) there are the remains, still in very perfect preservation, of an ancient Pictish entrenchment of great strength. The summit has been levelled into an area of an oval form, about 150 yards in circumference, and surrounded with a rude rampart of unhewn and uncemented stones. It is protected on the east and south by a deep fosse about ten feet in width; the other sides of the hill being so steep as to render such a defence superfluous. The approach was from the north-east, along the verge of a precipice, and the entrance was protected by a bulwark of stone. There are some remains of a narrow bridge thrown over the fosse. In the different accounts of this fort which have been published, the stones of the bridge are said to have been cemented by the action of fire; but the slight marks of vitrification, which may probably be accidental, are not sufficient to warrant the statement. There is no vestige of a well; but, on the west side of the entrenchment, between the base of the mound and the precipice, there was a deep pond, apparently artificial, which was filled up about fifty or sixty years ago by the tenants in the neighbourhood. On the declivity, about a quarter of a mile to the eastward, there are some less perfect remains of a smaller entrenchment of the same kind. The fort on Barry Hill is considered by Chalmers as coeval with

the Roman Invasion. Like other places of the same kind, it is the scene of innumerable legends, which agree in representing it as the residence or prison of the infamous Vanora or Guinevar, the wife of King Arthur, who appears in the local traditions under the more homely appellation of Queen Wander, and is generally described as a malignant giantess. This tradition perhaps arose from the vicinity of the celebrated sepulchral stones at Meigle, which are generally considered as remains of the monument of Vanora. Even with respect to these famous tombstones, the legendary account, which connects them with the Vanora of tradition, is certainly more than doubtful. A more satisfactory account of them has been suggested by Captain T. P. Mitchell, a gentleman distinguished by his research and sagacity in investigations of this nature. He considers them as neither more nor less than the monuments of the Knights Templars, who unquestionably had a burying-ground at Meigle. At the top of the south face of the largest stone, the armorial bearings of the kingdom of Jerusalem may be distinctly traced, and the group of figures, now almost obliterated, which has been supposed to represent Vanora torn in pieces by wild beasts, (and on which the popular tradition was very probably founded), may be considered, with great probability, as an allegorical representation of Judea rescued by the Crusaders.

In the barony of Alyth, on the south of Barry Hill, there are several rude obelisks, or "standing-stones," probably intended to commemorate some long-forgotten conflict. They are referred by tradition to the time of King Robert the Bruce; but there can be no doubt that they belong to a much more remote period. On the most remarkable, about three miles to the east of the village, there is the mark of a large horse-shoe, rudely cut out with indistinct traces of other figures. There is no vestige of sculpture on any of the others. Stone coffins, containing human bones, are said to have been occasionally turned up; and about fifty years ago, an artificial cavity, of considerable size, partly filled up with ashes, was discovered in a field on the farm of Loyall.

The ruins of the old Castle of Inverquiech are situated at the junction of the Burn of Alyth with the Isla. In a charter granted by Robert II. in 1394, to his nephew, James de Lyndesay, it is mentioned as "the King's Castle of Inucuyth," and appears to have been even then in ruins. At Corb, on the north-west of the forest, there are also the remains of a castle, probably a hunting-seat of the Scottish Kings, or of the Earls of Crawford.

The old church, which is now unroofed, and will soon be entirely demolished, is a building of considerable, though uncertain antiquity, having been in a ruinous state for upwards of two hundred years before it was disused. It was probably dedicated at its erection to St Molonoch, or Malachi, Bishop, as the original fair of the village is still called St Malogue's, apparently a corruption of the latter name, and coincides with the day consecrated to that saint in the old Scottish Calendar. St Molonoch was a disciple of St Brandon, and is mentioned in Keith's Catalogue of Bishops as having flourished or deceased, A. D. 629. The building had never any pretensions to architectural beauty. Some pillars and arches, in the Saxon style of architecture, are apparently much more ancient than the rest of the building. It was originally intended to preserve them when the church was pulled down; but this, it is feared, will be found to be impracticable. Near the pulpit is a plain stone monument, to the memory of the Rev. Thomas Lundin and his wife, who died in 1636, within a few days of each other, and were buried in the same grave. It was erected in 1748, by the Rev. J. Robertson, then minister of Alyth; and it is a singular coincidence that his own death took place under the same circumstances which had affected him so much in the case of his predecessor.

Modern Buildings.—The new church was completed in 1839, from a design of Mr Hamilton of Edinburgh, at a great expense. It is a remarkably handsome and commodious structure, in the Norman style of architecture, and bears ample testimony to the taste and skill of the distinguished architect. There are few rural parishes in Scotland, and not many even in towns, which enjoy the advantage of possessing such an appropriate and splendid edifice for the services of the sanctuary. Bamff House, the seat of Sir James Ramsay, Bart. about three miles to the north-west of the village, is a respectable mansion of considerable antiquity, and sufficiently improved in later times to render it the elegant and commodious residence of a country gentleman. The principal houses in the lower part of the parish are, Balhary, the seat of John Smyth, Esq.; and Jordanstone, George Knight, Esq. The former is a large and commodious mansion, erected about twenty-five years ago by the present proprietor. The church and most of the houses are built of a durable red sandstone, of which there are several quarries in the parish.

Parochial Registers.—The parish records are in general full and well kept. The register of births and marriages commences

in 1624, and the minutes of session in 1637. They are comprised in nine volumes of different sizes, some of which contain fine specimens of old-fashioned penmanship. Many of the earlier entries (some of which have been already quoted) are extremely curious, either as referring to passing events of historical importance, or as illustrative of the rigorous discipline and exorbitant pretensions of the Kirk. One of the most remarkable is the entry for the 9th of February 1651, which is as follows: "This day, my Lord Ogilvy declared his repentance before the congregation, in the habit of sackcloth, in presens of Mr Georg Patillo, minister at Newtyle; and Mr Robert Crightoun, minister at Essai; and Mr David Patton, minister at Kettyns; who were appointed be the presb^{rie} and, in sackcloth, confessed his sinful accession to General Major Middleton's rebellion, and for his sinfull miscarriages against the Covenant, and gave great evidence of his heartie grief for the samine, to the full satisfaction of the whole congregation." On the 18th of August, and 1st of September 1649, fifteen soldiers, who had taken arms in what is called "the unlawfull engagement," professed their repentance, and were admitted to the renewal of the covenant as a necessary preliminary to their participating in the communion. The page containing the entries for the Sabbaths immediately after the 29th of May 1660, the day of the Restoration, have been torn out, whether by accident, from prudential motives, or by some rancorous Covenanter, it is now impossible to conjecture. There are instances of persons being required to "sit the stool" for periods of more than twenty and even thirty Sabbaths. It is remarkable, that two cases of this unprofitable rigour took place during the temporary establishment of the Episcopal form of government after the Restoration. In addition to the classes of offences which usually fall under the cognizance of a church court, the kirk-session seem to have been frequently occupied with cases of "fechting and flytting," slander, &c., with occasional investigations into charges of witchcraft. The cases of contumacy are numerous. In some respects, the ecclesiastical discipline of that period appears to have been less rigorous than is generally supposed. Under January 20th 1650, there is the following entry: "The minister did intimate ane ordinance of the presb^{rie}, that in time coming, when people shall burie their deid upon the Lord's day, they doe it timouslie; in the winter season before sermon, and in the simmer time after the afternoon's service." On the whole, however, if we may judge from the eccle-

* "October 3, Sab. last, 1673. This day the merchants in Alight being charged,

siastical records of this parish, the parochial police of that period, to which many are disposed to look back as a golden age of purity and piety, can hardly be regarded in any other view than as most injudiciously and unjustifiably rigid, and rather calculated to irritate and harden the offender than to win him to repentance.

III.—POPULATION.

The only means of estimating the ancient state of the population, is by comparing the present average of births and marriages with the number of former periods, of which very accurate accounts have been preserved in the session books. If we may judge from these, the population seems to have continued nearly stationary down to the end of the last century, since which it has slightly increased. There is a marked diminution in the number of births and marriages from 1680 to the Restoration, and an equally marked increase for some years after that event; but this is easily accounted for without supposing any variation in the number of inhabitants. We have no exact account of the population before 1774, when it was found to be 2680. In the year 1792, the date of the former report, it amounted to 2734; in 1821, to 2387; in 1831, to 2888; and in 1841, to 2913.

The number of inhabitants within the limits of the baronial burgh of Alyth is 1738; in the country part of the parish, 1175. The population of the village has increased very much within the last sixty or seventy years. In 1774, it amounted to only 555; in 1792, to 1060. The great increase between these dates is explained by the circumstance, that, during the intervening period, several additional acres had been feued by the superior. The decrease in the rural population is owing to the abolition of the class of small farmers, and to the smaller number of hands now required in agricultural operations.

It is impossible to state the number of births with perfect accuracy, from the remissness of members of Dissenting congregations in registering their children. Taking the number of children not registered at one-tenth of the whole, the average annual number of births may be stated at 77; the average number of marriages at 16. Within the last seven years, there have been 36 illegiti-

were called and compeired, and promised not to sell any wares to any person upon the Sabth, between or after sermons, except it be upon necessitie, and that to any sick person; or that it be of necessitie to help to give our some necessaries for burying of the dead or such like needfull thing, and for performance of the promise they held up their hands in presence of the session; nor to sell unneccessarie things as they did formerlie upon the Sabth, except neidfull, tobacco or bread."

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mate children born. No obituary has been kept till very lately. The number of burials in 1842 was 56, which is probably rather above the average.

Four families of independent fortune reside in the parish. The number of proprietors of the yearly value of L. 50 and upwards resident in the parish, is eight; not resident, six. There are 6 blind persons; and 5 insane or fatuous.

Until lately, the Gaelic language was generally used in the northern part of the parish. English, or rather the dialect of this part of the lowlands, is now universally spoken.

Smuggling and poaching were at one time prevalent; but the former is now entirely suppressed, and the latter has become comparatively rare.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

The inhabitants of the country part of the parish are almost exclusively engaged in agriculture, those of the village in weaving and the retail trade. There are 53 farmers, and 109 males regularly engaged as farm servants. There are seven master manufacturers, and 404 weavers, besides a number of old men, women, and children employed in winding.

Agriculture.—It is impossible to give a strictly correct statement of the extent of land under cultivation, as no accurate measurement has been made of the principal estates, but as nearly as can be ascertained, the number of arable acres may be stated at 8,100; under wood, 1070; leaving 24,990 in waste, pasture, sites of houses, roads, &c. There are two undivided commons; the Muir of Mornity, extending to about 330 acres, and the hill of Alyth, 120 acres. Two extensive commons have been divided within the last fifty or sixty years; the forest of Alyth, and the lands of Bardmony and Aberbothrie. These lands, extending to about 600 acres Scots, were, till forty-five or fifty years ago, possessed by two proprietors in run-rig. By the division, their value has been more than tripled, and the whole of them, in place of less than half, is now under tillage. The moor of Alyth might still be added to the cultivated land with a reasonable expectation of profit. From the nature of the subsoil, furrow draining would in general be necessary to render the ground of much value. A considerable extent of uncultivated ground in the upland district might also be profitably brought under tillage. A considerable part of the moorlands in the forest is not inferior in natural capability to those parts which have already been brought

under cultivation, but it would be exposed to great disadvantages from the want of shelter, unless planting on an extensive scale were resorted to as a preliminary step.

Great improvements have been effected since the last Statistical Account in reclaiming waste land, fencing, and draining. On the property of Balhary, since the present proprietor succeeded to the estate, the extent of arable land has been increased by one-half, and the land formerly under cultivation has been very much improved in value by the liberal and judicious application of capital. The greatest liberality has been shown by the landowners in accommodating their tenants with commodious houses and steadings. Both the farm buildings and the cottars' houses have been greatly improved of late years. The old thatch roofs are daily giving place to slate, and a stone and turf cottage is now looked upon as a relic of bygone times. The lands near the Isla were formerly much exposed to inundation, and still are so to some extent, but the evil has been remedied in a great measure by straightening the channel of the river, and by the erection of embankments which have been raised by the proprietors at considerable expense.

Most of the land in the lower district, and some farms in other parts of the parish, are in a high state of cultivation under the most approved system of husbandry, and the whole of the arable land may be generally said to be under good management. The rotation preferred by the best farmers on good land is the common one of five years. The six years' rotation, embracing three years in grass, is not unfrequently followed. The practice of taking two successive grain crops after lea is still kept up on several farms, although reprehended by every good practical farmer, not less decidedly than by the scientific agriculturist. A considerable part of the cultivated land is at present thrown permanently into grass parks, and only occasionally ploughed up.

Live-Stock.—From 2000 to 3000 sheep, all of the black-faced breed, and 200 or 300 cattle of the Angus and West Highland breed are kept on the hill and moorland pastures. Sheep are seldom seen on the cultivated land, except those which are put upon bone-dust turnips. A considerable number of cattle are reared and grazed on the arable farms. In the upland district these are generally of the native Angus breed, but on the finer soils, a cross between that breed and the Teeswater is found to be more profitable.

Plantations.—The plantations consist chiefly of larch and other

firs, sometimes without any other kind of trees, but more frequently interspersed with the different kinds of hardwood generally cultivated. A great part of the wood in the parish has been recently planted. The younger larch plantations have suffered severely by the prevalent blight, and threaten in many instances to disappoint the hopes of the proprietors, who naturally expected that they would become in a few years, a shelter and ornament to their estates, as well as a direct source of profit.

Rental and Wages.—The average rent of arable land is about L. 1, 3s. per acre, some of it near the village being let as high as from L. 3, 10s. to L. 4, 10s. The valued rental of the parish is L. 8233, 14s. 4d. Scots. The real rental, by a valuation made in 1837, amounted to little less than L. 12,000, including the value of the houses in the village. The land cannot be looked upon, in ordinary times, as excessively rented, although in the present depressed state of agricultural markets, several of the tenantry have some difficulty in fighting their way. The rate of wages has been lately reduced in consequence of the low prices of agricultural produce. The wages of a farm servant at present, range from L. 8 to L. 12 per annum, with lodging, meal, and milk. Ordinary day labourers make from 1s. 4d. to 1s. 6d. per day; masons in full employment, 12s.; and carpenters, 10s. per week. The general duration of leases is nineteen years, except on the estates of the Earl of Airlie, who is prohibited by the terms of the entail, from granting leases for a longer term than fourteen years. The greater part of the cultivated land is now enclosed, but there is still room for improvement in this respect.

Manufactures.—There is no manufacturing establishment, but a great part of the inhabitants are employed in weaving coarse or brown linen for the Dundee trade. This branch of manufacture has been established here for more than a century. The quantity made annually is about 10,500 webs, of 150 yards each. The depression of the linen trade has been severely felt in this village. The present average weekly gain of a weaver is only from 2s. 6d. to 3s.; of a winder, 1s. 2d. Many families have, in consequence, great difficulty in providing themselves with a supply of the bare necessaries of existence; and a great number would be in a state of melancholy destitution, if they had not an opportunity of eking out their scanty means by assisting in the harvest work on the neighbouring farms. There is a fulling mill in the village, and one at Inverquiech.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Alyth is, or rather was, a market town, and there is still a kind of weekly market held on Tuesday. The nearest regular market-town is Blairgowrie, distant five miles. Dundee, the nearest seaport, and the principal mart for this district, is seventeen miles from the village, and fourteen from the southern boundary of the parish. The situation of the village is healthy, and the inhabitants are well supplied with excellent water. A system of police has been established, and a baronial court is held on the first Tuesday of every month.

There is no turnpike road in the parish, but the inhabitants enjoy tolerable facilities of communication by means of county roads, which have been much improved of late years, and are generally kept in good repair. There are three stone bridges in the village over the burn; the newest and best of which was built a few years ago by Sir James Ramsay, with the view of improving the approach to Bamff house. About twenty-four years ago a bridge was built over the Isla at Crathie, on the road from Alyth to Dundee, at an expense of L. 3500, raised by subscription. By means of this bridge, and of the Dundee and Newtyle Railway, the inhabitants are enabled to keep up a constant intercourse with Dundee, and have thus facilities for disposing of their produce, and for providing themselves with many of the comforts of life, which would otherwise be beyond their reach. There is a sub-office in the village of Alyth, in connection with the post office at Meigle, four miles distant.

Fairs.—There are six annual fairs held at Alyth, but two of these, St Malogue's, and another about Christmas, known by the unaccountable name of *Troit Fair*, have fallen into disuse, and are now merely nominal. The others, two of which continue for two days, are held in the Muir of Alyth, for the sale of sheep and cattle. They have been very much improved under the management of John Hill, Esq. of Cotton, the present baron bailie.

Public Houses.—There are eight public houses and four shops licensed for the sale of spirits, all in the village. They are in general decently conducted, but their effect on the morals of the people is decidedly prejudicial. The number is less than it was some years ago, but it might still be advantageously reduced by at least one-half.

Ecclesiastical State.—The parish church is situated in the village, one mile from the western, three from the southern and east-

ern boundaries of the parish, and upwards of twelve from the northern extremity of the Blacklunans. It is seated for 1290. There is consequently no want of church accommodation. The inhabitants of Blacklunans and the northern part of the Forest, amounting to about 250, very seldom attend, even at communion seasons. Their ordinary place of worship is a chapel at Persie, in the parish of Bendochy, supported by the seat rents and voluntary contribution. It would be a great boon to the inhabitants, and a considerable relief to the neighbouring clergy, if the whole of that district were disjoined from the six parishes with which it is ecclesiastically connected, and placed under the superintendence of an ordained and legally recognized minister.

The manse was re-built in 1821, part of the old house being retained. The stipend is 18 chalders, half meal and half barley, with an allowance of L.10 for communion elements. The glebe is about four acres of good land, worth about L.2. 10s. or L.3 per acre. There is no grass glebe. The minister has a right of pasturage on the moor of Alyth, casting peats in the moss of the Culpanach, and to a small quantity of teind yarn.

There is a Dissenting meeting house in the village in connection with the United Associate Synod. The emoluments of the minister amount to L. 80 per annum, from seat rents, collections, and voluntary contributions, with a free house and garden. There was some years ago another place of worship belonging to the Original Seceders, but it is now disused. A meeting house is at present building for the accommodation of the adherents of the recent secession in this and the adjoining parishes. The Episcopal clergyman at Coupar Angus has a chapel in Alyth, in which he officiates once a fortnight. The number of sittings in the Dissenting meeting house, is 270; in the Episcopalian chapel, 92. The new meeting house is intended to accommodate between 700 and 800 sitters.

No exact account has been taken of the different religious denominations since 1835. Making allowance for the few changes which have since taken place, there are probably about 300 belonging to different bodies of seceders; 50 Episcopalian, including the families of the two chief resident heritors; 30 Roman Catholics from Ireland and the Highlands; and 50 not known to belong to any religious denomination. The ordinary congregation in the parish church is at present about 800. Several are prevented from attending, and not a few from sending their children

by the want of proper clothing. The sacrament is administered twice a-year. On the last occasion about 800 communicated, but, as a considerable number attend only once a-year, the whole number of communicants may be stated at 1000. Both the attendance at the parish church and the number of communicants have been affected to some extent by the late disturbances in the Church of Scotland. Four out of eleven elders, and a considerable section of the people, probably equal in number to the other dissenters collectively, are understood to adhere to the seceding clergymen.

A parochial association for religious purposes was established in 1836. The annual contributions have varied from L. 23 to L. 30.

Education.—The salary of the parochial schoolmaster is the maximum of L. 34, 4s. 4½d., with a good house and an allowance for garden ground. A new school-room was erected in 1835, with accommodation for 150 pupils. The number attending this school at the last examination was 98. The fees of the parish school are, for reading alone, 2s. per quarter; reading and writing, 2s. 6d.; reading, writing, and arithmetic, 4s.; Latin, with the common branches of education, 7s. 6d.; mathematics, 10s. 6d. One of the General Assembly's schools is situated at Drumfork, in the Blacklunans. It is very efficiently taught, and was attended last spring by 101 children. There is also a school at Gauldsweil, supported by Sir James Ramsay, and nine unendowed schools, all, with one exception, in the village. The total number of children attending the different schools in February last was 547. The people are in general attentive to the instruction of their children, and few or none are allowed to grow up destitute of the benefit of education.

Sabbath Schools, conducted by the elders and others, have been in a flourishing state for many years. They are at present attended by about 350 children. A class for young men and women is taught by the minister during part of the year, and is generally attended by about 50.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—The number of persons who received regular parochial aid during the last year was 107, and 79 (including 55 of those on the permanent roll) received occasional relief from the poor's box. The total amount raised for the relief of the poor was L. 511, 0s. 9½d., of which L. 445, 3s. 6d. was raised by assessment, and L. 65, 17s. 3½d. from collections and other sources, including about L. 14 from mortifications, mortcloth

dues, and penalties. The assessment is levied according to the valued rent of each heritor, the half being laid on the tenants according to the real rent. A commission of 5 per cent. is allowed to the collector. Of the sum collected, L. 412, 1s. 6d. was expended in the support of the regular paupers. There is a mortification of L. 30, subject to the annuity tax on the Ballinloch estate, administered by trustees, for clothing and educating five boys and five girls. The interest of various sums, amounting in all to L.90, is placed at the disposal of the kirk-session for the education of poor children, and a considerably greater sum is annually applied to this object. The method of assessment was resorted to so early as 1776, and has since been continued without intermission. It is a curious fact, that it was then debated whether the poor were to be relieved in this way or by a system of licensed begging. Whatever may be thought of the latter alternative, it may be safely said that the former is a very bad one, and only to be justified on the plea of insurmountable necessity, which certainly did not exist here at the time when an assessment was first imposed. Pauperism, an evil which "grows by what it feeds on," has for many years been advancing rapidly and steadily in this parish. Many persons still make most praiseworthy exertions to keep themselves and their families from what they justly regard as a degradation, but the aversion to receive parochial aid is perceptibly diminishing. It is to be hoped that the Commission at present inquiring into this subject may be able to suggest some means for checking the progress of this alarming evil, which threatens, in this and many other parishes, to become a serious burden upon property, and which has already exercised a debasing influence on the character of the population.

June 1843.