

on reasonable terms at the sales of decayed timber, brushwood, &c. that frequently take place. The tenants on the property of the Duke of Athole are entitled to a certain quantity of peats from the moss of Craigleith, on the western boundary of the parish. It is understood that the parochial minister has also this privilege; but during many years, it has not been exercised, owing to the distance of the moss, and the trouble and expense of preparing the peats.

June 1843.

PARISH OF COUPAR-ANGUS

PRESBYTERY OF MEIGLE, SYNOD OF ANGUS AND MEARNS.

THE REV. PATRICK J. STEVENSON, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Extent and Boundaries.—THE parish of Coupar-Angus lies in the centre of Strathmore. By far the larger portion of it belongs to the county of Perth; but the original part of the town being in Forfarshire, the parish takes its distinctive name from that county. It is bounded on the north-west, by the parish of Bendochy, from which it is separated by the river Isla; on the north-east, by Meigle; on the south-east, by Kettins; and on the south-west, by Cargill. Its length is about 5 miles, stretching from north-east to south-west. Its breadth varies from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

The parish is divided, in the direction of north-east, by a ridge of some height; along which the road to Aberdeen runs; and which commands a splendid view of the Sidlaw, (or perhaps Sudlaw,) hills on the south; the lower range of the Grampians on the north, with the distant summits of Ben More, Schihallion, and Ben Voirlich.

The river Isla forms the north-west boundary of the parish. It is supposed to take its name from Yllif, a flood. In the twelfth century, Giraldus Cambrensis calls it Hylef. This supposition derives some corroboration from the whole of the haugh-land, which is of considerable extent on the south side of the river, having been formerly liable to be overflowed. After continued rain,

the river, swelled by the waters of the Dean and Ericht, rises to a great height. Embankments, however, have been erected within the last ten years, by the proprietors; and these, unless in very extraordinary seasons, are sufficient to prevent the mischief, which was occasioned every year to a greater or less degree. These embankments average in height about seven feet; in breadth, thirty-six feet at the base, and three at the top. Their base is at a considerable height above the ordinary bed of the rivers. The Isla abounds in trout; and in favourable seasons, a large number of salmon are taken in it. It rises in Canlochangeln, on the confines of Aberdeenshire; and after a winding course of upwards of 40 miles, falls into the Tay, about 3 miles beyond the western boundary of the parish.

Botany.—The only plants rare in the district and found in the parish are the following: *Stratiotes aloides*, *Lysimachia thyrsiflora*, *Tragopogon major*, *Teucrium chamaedrys*, *Hyoscyamus niger*, *Sambucus ebulus*. The rarest of these, the *Stratiotes aloides*, was planted in the loch of Forfar, by George Don. It is found in this parish in a stagnant piece of water, which formerly formed part of the channel of the Isla; and in all probability found its way into its present locality from the former, in one of the many overflowings of the Isla, which communicates with the loch of Forfar by the Dean. The *Lysimachia thyrsiflora* grows in the same locality. The *Teucrium chamaedrys* is found on an old wall by the ruins of the Abbey. The *Tragopogon major* in the den of Keithick. The *Hyoscyamus niger* and *Sambucus ebulus* in the church-yard.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Land-owners.—The chief land-owners in this parish are, W. E. Collinswood, Esq. of Keithick; F. Stewart, Esq. of Balmerino; George Kinloch, Esq. of Kinloch; Patrick Murray, Esq. of Simprim; — Cunnighame, Esq. of Cronan; Miss Geekie of Balbrogie.

Parochial Registers.—The date of the oldest of the parochial registers is 1682; and they appear to have been regularly and carefully kept.

Antiquities.—The remains of a Roman camp are still to be seen, immediately to the east of the churchyard. Maitland, in his History of Scotland, describes it as a square of 1200 feet, fortified with two strong ramparts and large ditches. The eastern rampart is the only one that has not been levelled. It is generally supposed to be one of the camps of Lollius Urbicus.

Coupar was once the seat of a rich and flourishing abbey of Cistercian monks. It was founded in 1164 by Malcolm IV., grandson and successor of David I., whose liberality to the church led King James to remark, "That Saint David must have been a sore saint to the Crown." Fordun (*Scotichronicon*, lib. viii. cap. 7,) says, "Anno MCLXIV. de consilio Waltheri, Abbatis de Melros, rex Malcolmus, fundavit nobile monasterium de Cupro-in-Angus;" and (lib. ix. cap. 48,) "hoc anno (1233) dedicatæ sunt ecclesiæ de Newbotil, Abirbrothoc, et Cupro."

Wynton, in "De Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland," tells us,

" A thowsand a hundyre and sixty yhere
 And fowre * * * * *
 Malcolme, Kyng of Scotland,
 And pesybly in it regnand,
 De elevynd yhere of his crowne,
 Mad the fundatyowne
 Of the Abbay of Culpyre-in-Angws,
 And dowyt it wyth his almws,
 In honoure of the may kles may
 Relygyws munkis there dwellis ay,
 All lyk to Cystwys in habyt,
 We oys to call thame mwnkys qwhyte."—Book vii. Cap. vii.

The revenues of the abbey appear to have been great. Boece says, "Ea est abbacia divæ virginis sacra amplissimis dotata redditibus. Inhabitant eam viri religiosi ordinis Cistertii, multa pietate celebres; nec in hunc usque diem ullo notati manifesto flagitio."

There are two rentals of the abbey; one in the Book of Assumptions, where it is valued at L.1886, 8s. 6d.; and another by Keith, as follows: money, L. 1238, 14s. 9d.; wheat, 7 chalders, 12 bolls, 1 peck; bear, 75 chalders, 10 bolls, 3 pecks; meal, 73 chalders, 4 bolls, 3 pecks, 3½ lippies; oats, 25 chalders, 4 bolls, 2 pecks, 2 lippies.

It possessed, in the parish of Coupar, the estates of Keithick, Arthurstone, Denhead, Balgersho, Cronan; in the parish of Bendochy,—Coupar Grange, probably the home-farm of the abbey, where the abbot had a country seat, and to which the monks occasionally retired when sick, Drimmie, Persie, and Cally, commonly called Monks'-Cally, to distinguish it from another Cally in the same neighbourhood. The abbey appears to have possessed land in the parish of Fossaway also; as we find that, in the year 1572, "John Edmonstoun, minister of Tullibole, had his stipend, L.73, 15s., out of the third of the Abbey of Coupar, be the taxmen or parochiners of Fossaway." The Hays of Errol,

as we learn from Keith, were great benefactors to this abbey. "William de Haya grants thereto the lands of Liderpole or Ed-derpole," in the Carse of Gowrie. David de Haya, his son, grants also, "pro anima Wilhelmi patris sui et Elenæ sponse sue cum consensu Guilberti heredis sui unum rete super aquam de Thei; with three acres of arable ground,—“ Guilbert de Haya miles, dominus de Errol,” grants to the monks of this place, “liberum transitum sine impedimento cum bobus suis super terras suas per omnes vias et semitas.” And Guilbert Hay, Constable of Scotland, grants to this monastery, “in quo progenitores sui sepulti erant et ipse etiam elegerat sepeliri jus patronatus ecclesiæ de Errol et capellæ du Inchmartin cum earum juribus et pertinentiis.” This gift is confirmed by Pope Clement.

Donald Campbell, the last Abbot, had five sons, for whom he made handsome provision out of the estates belonging to the abbey, assigning to them the properties of Balgersho, Keithick, Denhead, Cronan, and Arthurstone. Two of them lie buried in the churchyard of Bendochy. Leonard Leslie, commendator of the abbey, was also buried in the same church. His tomb is very entire. He died in 1605, aged 81.

The extent of the abbey buildings may be guessed at, but cannot be accurately defined. The only fragment now remaining is in the south-west corner of the churchyard, on the side of the turnpike road leading to Dundee. In 1780, a part of the abbey, consisting of an arch, of beautiful architecture, situate near the centre of the present churchyard, was demolished for the purpose of furnishing stones for building the present church! Till within these few years, the base of a pillar was to be seen to the eastward of the present church. The northern wall of the oldest part of the present church rests on part of the foundation of what appears to have been the northern part of the abbey.

III.—POPULATION.

The population of the parish in 1831 was 2615; in 1841, 2592; of whom 1173 are males, and 1359 females. The decrease during the last ten years may be ascribed principally to emigration. This statement in regard to the population does not include the estate of Kinloch, which, though in Coupar *quoad civilia*, has always been taken up with the census of the parish of Meikle.

The average number of births and deaths cannot be accurately ascertained, from the unwillingness of many to register their chil-

dren, and from there being no regular register of deaths. The average of marriages for the last seven years is 22.

The number of proprietors of land of the yearly value of L. 50 and upwards is 21.

There are 3 insane persons, 2 fatuous, 3 blind, 1 deaf and dumb, and 1 deaf.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

The cultivated lands in the parish may be classed under the different varieties of soil in nearly the following proportions :

Under a low-lying clayey soil, too stiff for profitable cultivation of the different species of green crops,	Acres 100
Under a deep soil, chiefly of alluvial formation, rather stiff, but naturally fertile,	300
Under a free soil of moderate depth, and of every degree of fertility from the useful sands to a medium loam,	1300
Under a gravelly soil,	70
Under the inferior dry sands,	420
Under a soil of medium quality, resting upon a close subsoil,	290
Under poor sandy clays and low-lying wet sands,	230
Under peaty soil,	50

The unoccupied land consists of

Very inferior wet sands about	30
Poor gravelly soil,	5

There are, besides, several patches of useful pasturage along the old course of the Isla.

About 80 acres are under wood.

The average rent of land is about L.2, 3s.; and the general duration of leases nineteen years.

The general system of cropping is by a rotation of four years. This system is more generally adopted than is consistent either with the nature of the soil or the practice of good husbandry. A large proportion of the arable land consists, as has been stated, of a dry fine soil, and is peculiarly adapted to the cultivation of turnips and the artificial grasses. Such a soil would require a rotation, embracing in its course a period of rest in pasture suitable to the nature of the land, and to the state of its fertility. The number of small farms may, to a certain extent, account for the general adoption of the system usually followed. The amount of capital laid out in stock and implements of husbandry being greater, when the farms are small, than what is required for the cultivation of the same amount of land when divided into large farms, holds out an inducement to the proprietors to impose as little restraint on the mode of cultivation as is consistent with the ordinary rules of good husbandry. The rotation of four years,

therefore, as imposing the least restraint, and offering the greatest inducement to a wide competition, is readily agreed to. The farm-buildings are very various in point of design and accommodation. On most of the smaller farms, they are deficient, while on the larger they are excellent. Those on Keithick, Balgersho, and Denhead may be noticed as affording illustrations of the latter.

Grazing, as a system, can scarcely be said to belong to the husbandry of the parish,—the grass-parks of Keithick being the only land under permanent pasture. They let at about L.4 per acre.

Wages.—Farm-servants are engaged for twelve months; and the average wages of a ploughman, qualified to work a pair of horses, are about L.12 in money, 35 lbs. of oatmeal per week, and three chopins (old measure) of milk per day. Good day-labourers receive, on an average, 10s. per week during the period when they can work ten hours per day. After that period, the hours of work are counted, and the rate of wages per hour is slightly raised.

Live-stock.—There is no pure or distinct breed of cattle in the parish; but, since the institution of the Agricultural Association, the emulation excited by the exhibition of stock at its annual shows, and the introduction of the short-horn breed of cattle, a great improvement has been effected on the existing mixed breed; and now many useful animals, of considerable value, are to be met with among them.

An Agricultural Association was formed, upwards of twenty years ago, for the breeding and feeding of stock. Most of the principal proprietors in the district take an interest in it. Its meetings are held twice a year; and the stock exhibited, though not numerous, is generally of very excellent quality. The number of members at present is about 50.

Improvements.—The chief improvement in agriculture consists of draining, which is now carried on to a considerable extent. The embankment above-mentioned has also rendered the low-lying lands much more valuable.

An ingenious plan of the late Lord Douglas Gordon Hallyburton for effecting the drainage of a considerable extent of flat but valuable land, is also well worthy of notice. In heavy rains, the standing water could not find any vent, the only drain,—a small stream skirting the land,—serving to increase the evil. In these circumstances, his Lordship planned the following remedy: A level was brought up from a point in the bed of the stream, 1180

feet 8 inches below the farm subject to inundation. In dry weather the stream was confined to one side of its usual channel, and a conduit of 18 inches square, well-built, flagged, and puddled on the top, to prevent any water getting in, was constructed below the bed of the burn. Above that, a complete coating of broken metal was laid to render the conduit more secure, and the burn was then allowed to run in its former course. The rise is one inch in 42 feet 2 inches. The cost of the whole was L.220. It was constructed in 1831, and has been found, with occasional trifling repairs, completely to answer the purpose for which it was intended.

Manufactures.—The chief employment of the labouring classes is weaving, principally of the coarser articles of linen manufacture. In the present depressed state of trade, the remuneration is extremely small. Able-bodied men cannot earn, on an average, above 5s. or 6s. per week. The privations which this imposes are borne, with a most praiseworthy spirit.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

There is a weekly market held here on Thursdays. The amount of business done is less than formerly, owing to similar markets having been, some years ago, originated in the neighbouring villages of Meigle and Blairgowrie.

There were formerly villages, containing a considerable population, at Keithick and Caddam. These are now entirely extinct. At Balbrogie there still is a population of about 70.

Coupar is a post-town. Letters are delivered daily.

The means of communication are abundant. The Defiance, one of the best conducted coaches in the country, passes daily betwixt Edinburgh and Aberdeen. There is also a railway to Dundee, on which coaches run four times a day.

Ecclesiastical State.—The church is situated very conveniently for the great mass of the people, being close to the end of the village. It was built in 1681. It was nearly rebuilt in 1780, and received a large addition in 1831. It affords accommodation for upwards of 800 persons.

The manse was built in 178, and has received two additions; rendering it now a comfortable and convenient residence. The glebe consists of about seven acres; part of it is, at present, let at L.4 per acre. The stipend is sixteen chalders; half meal, half barley; payable by the fiars prices, with L.10 for communion elements. There are four Dissenting places of worship, Episcopalian, United Seces-

sion, Relief, and Original Secession. Divine service in the Established Church is generally well attended. The number of communicants is between 600 and 700.

Education.—There is one parochial school and two unendowed schools. All the usual branches of education, with Latin, Greek, and French, are taught at the parochial school. The salary of the schoolmaster is the maximum, L. 34, 4s. 4½d., and the amount of school-fees is about L.70. He has the legal accommodation undoubtedly, viz. two rooms, including a kitchen, but little more. The school-room is also bad, in point of size, situation, ventilation, and repair. A majority of the heritors are at present desirous of building a new one.

Charitable Institutions.—There are two Friendly Societies, one of masons, the other of gardeners. Both have for their object, the granting assistance to members during sickness, and an annuity to their widows or children, when destitute. A small sum is given also to defray funeral expenses. There are about 50 members belonging to the one and 80 to the other. There is also a Ladies' Society for assisting Indigent Old Women. To these a small monthly allowance is given.

Savings Bank.—A Savings Bank, in terms of the Act of Parliament regulating these institutions, was opened in 1839. It promises to answer well the purpose for which it is intended. Since its commencement, the sums paid into it amount to L.2220; those taken out to L.1145,—leaving a balance in the bank of L.1075.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—The number of persons receiving a stated allowance from the poor's funds, during the last year, was 48. These received, on an average, 5s. per month. Those who received occasional aid amounted to 19. About L. 20 was distributed among them. There are, besides, three lunatics in the Dundee Asylum. For these, about L. 54 is paid per annum. The sum required for the maintenance of the poor is provided for by a voluntary assessment among the heritors, and by the collections at church door, mortcloth dues, &c. The assessment for the last eight or nine years has been voluntary. Previously to that time, it was compulsory. But at the period mentioned, with the view of getting quit of an assessment altogether, it was proposed and unanimously agreed to by the heritors, that they should, by voluntary assesment, maintain the whole of the poor at that time on the roll; leaving the kirk-session to provide, from the collections and other funds, for those who subsequently to that

date might require parochial aid. It was hoped that the kirk-session would be able, from the increase of the contributions at the church doors, and the small number of poor, who, for some years at least, were likely to require assistance, to realize such a sum as would render an assessment unnecessary beyond the period, when those, for whom the heritors engaged to provide, should cease to require support. The scheme seemed to work well at first; but the funds which the kirk-session calculated on receiving have not equalled their anticipations, and the probability is, that ere long a legal assessment will be again resorted to. One thing, however, may be noticed as the result of this experiment, viz, that the poor are less disposed to refrain from asking parochial aid when there exists a legal assessment, than where the funds for their maintenance arise solely from voluntary contributions.

Markets, &c.—There are yearly markets for horses and cattle, besides those which are held weekly. These are now much less frequented, than they formerly were.

Alehouses.—The number of houses at present licensed to sell spirits, &c. is 24,—a number most unnecessarily large for the size of the parish.

Fuel.—The chief fuel employed is English coal, which is brought by the railway from Dundee. It costs from L.1, 1s. to L.1, 2s. per ton.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

Almost all the houses and the streets are now lighted with gas, a gas company having been established a few years ago.

The steeple, which marks the town at a distance, is unconnected with the church. It was built in 1767, by a subscription among the inhabitants. It stands on the site of the old prison, when Coupar was a burgh of regality. The lower part of it is still employed as a temporary place of confinement.

There is a reading-room, provided with a daily London, and several provincial newspapers.

July 1843.