

pace with the progress of improvement. The new system of draining, &c. has been generally adopted with much benefit; and for this mode of improvement there are now great facilities in a brick and tile work which has recently commenced at Ferryfield, on the estate of Carpow. In consequence of the division of two commonties, which was effected some years ago, a considerable addition has been made to the number of acres in plantation, or under cultivation.

December 1842.

PARISH OF DRON.

PRESBYTERY OF PERTH, SYNOD OF PERTH AND STIRLING.

THE REV. PATRICK J. MACFARLANE, A. M., M. D.,
MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name, Extent, &c.—THE name *Dronn*, in the Gaelic language, is said to signify a *ridge* or *projection*, a *hunch* or *bunch*, which is descriptive of the situation of that part of the parish where the church and manse are placed. The parish is situated about a mile south of the river Earn, and five miles south-east of the town of Perth. It extends in length from east to west between three and four miles, including a narrow strip of the lands of Pitkeathly, in Dumbarny parish, which intersects it; and in breadth from north to south, about three miles. The principal and lower part stretches, in a sloping position, along the bottom of the Ochil hills, which form the southern boundary of the rich and beautiful vale of Strathearn, and presents to the view of the traveller passing along the great road which leads from Perth to Kinghorn and the Queensferry, a very agreeable prospect of well-cultivated and inclosed fields. The face of the hills here is generally smooth and regular, uniformly green, and adorned with strips and clumps of plantation. Some are covered with an extensive wood of firs, birch, ash, &c. which at once ornaments the prospect and enriches the country. A few farms, more extensive than rich, occupy the higher part of the parish, being situated on the summit of the Ochil hills.

Rivers, Springs, Minerals.—Though there are no rivers which run through this parish, yet it is plentifully supplied with water, by springs and little currents which descend from the hills. The only river which borders on the parish, and divides it from Abernethy is the Farg. It rises in the Ochil hills, about five or six miles above, and runs through a deep and narrow and wooded glen, of romantic beauty, (through which the Great North Road passes,) for a considerable way, before it issues into the plain; and after a short course directly north it bends to the east, and loses itself in the river Earn, at a place, which derives its name from it, called Culfargie. This river abounds with fine trout.

There is some freestone in the parish, but seldom wrought, except on a particular demand. The appearances of coal are so great, that many attempts have been made to discover it, by digging, boring, &c. but hitherto without success. Many different trials have been made within this parish since the year 1758, and sanguine hopes have been entertained, but as often disappointed. The nearest coal mines are at Keltie and Loch Gellie, at the distance of eighteen and twenty miles south, from whence they are usually brought in carts during summer, for the supply of all the country south of Perth. There is no moss nearer than eight or nine miles. This scarcity of fuel is severely felt by the lower classes of the people.

The soil in the lower division of the parish, though various, according as it approaches to the bottom of the hills, or the level of the Strath, is in general strong and fertile, consisting partly of clay, till, and loam, producing plentiful crops of potatoes and turnips, wheat, beans, pease, barley, clover, oats, which is the usual rotation observed here. The soil of those farms which lie on the hills is of a lighter kind, shallow and interspersed with rock, lying at the bottom of the furrow, and frequently jutting out above the surface. But in the flats and hollows the soil is good, and produces very tolerable crops, chiefly of barley and oats, turnips and potatoes, pease only in small quantities. Wheat has been also cultivated with success, and grass. Large tracts, however, in these farms are unfit for cultivation, and only afford an extensive range of indifferent pasture for cattle and sheep. From the elevated situation of these farms, they are much exposed to suffer from high winds and late harvests.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Parochial Registers.—There is a register of baptisms, marriages,

collections, and minutes of session, in eight volumes, commencing in 1682, and continued apparently with considerable regularity to the present time.

Principal Land-owners.—Alexander M. H. Belshes, Esq. of Invermay, possessing nearly half of the parish; heirs of the late Mr Husband of Glenearn; Earl of Wemyss; J. Beatson Bell, Esq. of Glenfarg.

Mansion-Houses.—Balmanno Castle, formerly the seat of the Murrays, Baronets of Balmanno, is now the property of Alexander Murray Hepburn Belshes, Esq. of Invermay, nephew of the last baronet, who was killed at the age of twenty-two at Long Island, in the American War. It is a fine specimen, in perfect preservation, of the old Scottish castle and mansion-house; part of it of great antiquity. It is now partly occupied by the farmer. There is also the modern mansion-house of Glenearn, a neat small country-house.

Antiquities.—In the parish church-yard there is the grave and grave-stone of John Welwood, a celebrated minister of the Gospel in the times of the persecution under Charles II., who died in Perth in 1679, and was brought out and buried here during the night. In the old church-yard at Ecclesiamagirdle, there is the grave of a Covenanter killed in these times.

There were in former times two small chapels in this parish besides the parish church. One of these, which stood in the east corner of the parish, at the mouth of Glenfarg, where now stands the mill of Pottie, is now totally in ruins, no vestige of it remaining except some part of the foundation below ground. The other chapel of Ecclesiamagirdle is at Glenearn, in the west end of the parish, and still remains, though in a ruinous state.

Rocking Stone.—On the south descent of the hill, opposite to the church and manse, stands what is called the rocking stone of Dron, presenting at once a monument of ancient ingenuity and superstition. It is a large mass of whinstone, of an irregular figure, about ten feet in length, and seven in breadth, and stands in a sloping direction. (Vide Old Account.)

III.—POPULATION.

The inhabitants of the parish consist exclusively of a few farmers of high respectability and great skill, and an industrious rural population. There are no resident heritors, and the parish is divided into six large farms and four smaller hill farms. The population by the last census (1841) amounted to

441. The number of houses in the parish is about 90 or 95. There is no village. Number of illegitimate births in the parish within the last three years, 3.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—About 2600 imperial acres are cultivated. About 1100 acres are in hill pasture. Every acre in the parish is cultivated, both on the high land and the low, where cultivation would make any return. About 400 acres are under wood.

Rent of Land.—The average rent of land may be stated at about L.2 for arable, and 9s. for pasture. The entire rental of the parish is about L.5000. The agriculture of the parish is in a high state of improvement. The most recent agricultural improvement is that of tile-draining, which is carrying to a great extent, and for which the soil is peculiarly fitted, being for the most part retentive and clayey, and much of it on a low dead-level, not drainable by other means.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Ecclesiastical State.—Seventy-two families belong to the parish church; about ten families to different Dissenting bodies. Number of *bothies* in the parish, 8, of which the inmates belong to the Establishment.

Stipend.—About 1 chalder wheat, 4 chalders barley, 10 chalders meal, money, L.12, 13s. 9½d.; coals, L.6, 5s. 1½d. Average in money, L.175. No allowance for communion elements. Teinds said to be exhausted. Glebe, about 4 acres, value about L.12.

The present manse was built about twenty-five or thirty years ago, and received extensive alterations, improvements, and repairs, besides a large addition four years ago, at the expense of the heritors and the present incumbent. The church was built about fifteen years ago in a plain and handsome style, and is an excellent model of a country church. It is seated for 350 persons, and cost about L.800. The situation of the church and manse is one of great beauty, on an elevation at the foot of the line of the Ochils, and commanding a rich, and varied, and extensive view over the whole lower part of Strathearn, the upper part of the Carse of Gowrie, and the whole extent of the braes of the Carse on the one side, and of the Ochils on the other, as far as the Law of Dundee. An entirely new school and school-house have just been built by the heritors, in the neighbourhood of the manse and church, in a handsome style, and on a commodious plan, at an outlay of about L.600.

PERTH.

Education.—No schools in the parish but the parish school, which is in a flourishing state. Salary, the maximum. Probable yearly amount of fees actually paid to schoolmaster, about L.21. Probable amount of the other emoluments, about L.8 or L.9, including salary as session-clerk and heritors' clerk. There is a small piece of ground, about seven acres, adjoining to the minister's glebe, which was mortified by a Mr William Bell, minister here, 1641, and afterward conveyed to the parish of Errol, for the purpose of maintaining a student of divinity; the management and disposal of this mortification is in the hands of the presbytery of Perth, who let the lands, and appoint the rent to be paid annually as a bursary to the student whom they have chosen, and who continues in the possession of it for four years. The bursars are obliged to attend the university of St Andrews. The present rent of these lands is about L.21, exclusive of all public burdens, but subject to a deduction of one-fifth for stipend. Ministers' sons in the presbytery are preferred to all others.

Public-Houses.—There are three public-houses in the parish.

Poor.—Average number of persons receiving parochial aid, 9 or 10, besides one in the lunatic asylum. Average sum allotted to each of such persons per week or year, about L.3, 15s. per annum. Average annual amount of contributions for relief of the poor, L.60. From the poverty of the greater part of the population, and the total want of resident heritors, the collections are small; average, about L.6 or L.7. There is no legal assessment, but the heritors voluntarily assess themselves for the support of the poor to the amount, at present, of L.53 or L.54, of which L.23 are for a lunatic in the Perth Asylum.

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