

PARISH OF ABERLEMNO.

PRESBYTERY OF FORFAR, SYNOD OF ANGUS AND MEARNS.

THE REV. JOHN CROMBIE, D. D., MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Boundaries, &c.—**ABERLEMNO** is bounded on the north by the parishes of Tannadice and Caralstone, from which it is separated by the river Esk; on the north-east and east, by Brechin; on the south-east, by Guthrie; and on the south and west, by Rescobie. The small river Lemno, from which the parish derives its name, has its origin in a spring near the house of Carsegownie, (a farm towards the western extremity of the parish,) and which, after flowing a few miles in a south-westerly direction, and winding towards the north, around the western extremity of the hill of Oathlaw, takes then an easterly course, and falls into the Esk, near the ruins of the ancient castle of Finhaven, and little more than a mile from its source. As Aberlemno signifies at the mouth of the Lemno, the name is somewhat inapplicable, inasmuch as the nearest boundary of the parish is almost half a mile distant from the estuary of the Lemno. It appears, however, that a portion of the estate of Finhaven, adjacent to the south bank of the Lemno, and now annexed to the parish of Oathlaw, was once a part of this parish. The outline of an ancient church, close to the mouth of the Lemno, is still visible, which was probably the original church of Aberlemno, although tradition expresses a doubt whether it may not have been a chapel attached to the neighbouring castle of Finhaven, once a stronghold of the Lindessys.

Extent.—This parish occupies a large portion; not less, perhaps, than eighteen square miles of a hilly district lying towards the south of Strathmore. Some of the higher portions being rather bleak, are covered with broom and heath; but the lower parts are generally fertile. One of these, extending several miles along the south bank of the Esk, is subject to occasional inundations from the overflowing of the river. The hills are not of great height. Turin hill, the highest of them, is 800 feet above the level of the sea, and 600 above the adjacent lakes, so that the elevation of the lower parts of the parish is not more than 200 feet above the level of the sea. The temperature is consequently moderate, and the climate healthy. There are no diseases peculiar to the district.

Hydrography.—The only lake in the parish is that of Balgavies, close to the Auldbar-road station of the Arbroath and Forfar Railway, which is situated on the southern border of the parish. The lake furnishes to the angler a tolerable supply of pike and perch. Marl was at one time dredged from the bottom, and used for manure; but this is now discontinued.

Rocks.—The south-west part of the parish abounds with excellent freestone, of a greyish colour. Several quarries are at present in operation, yielding not only stones fitted for the ordinary purposes of building, but paving stones also, of superior size and quality, and a durable though somewhat heavy gray slate for roofing.

Woods.—In the middle and on the north side of the parish, there is a great deficiency of wood. In the south-east, however, on the estate of Auldbar, and in the west, on the slope of Turin hill, there are considerable plantations of fir; but the most thriving wood, apparently, is the hard-wood of various kinds planted around and near to the houses of Auldbar, Turin, and Balgavies.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Land-owners.—The landed proprietors of this parish and their estates are, the Right Honourable Earl Minto, Melgund; Patrick Chalmers, Esq., Auldbar and Pitkenedy; Lieutenant-Colonel Dalgairns, Balgavies; Patrick Rickard, Esq., Balglassie; Charles Gray, Esq., (of Carse), Carsegownie; Rev. Dr Buist, Tillywhandland and Kirkton; R. A. Watson Carnegie, Turin; James Webster, Esq., Flemmington; William Morgan, Esq., Balbinnie; William Smith, Esq., M. D., Damside.

Rent.—The valued rent is L. 4233, 6s. 8d. Scots. Mr Chalmers and Mr Morgan are, at present, the only resident her-

ritors. Nearly one-half of the parish belongs to the Earl Minto, in consequence of his Lordship's grandfather, Sir Gilbert Elliot, having married Agnes Murray Kynynmound, heiress of Melgund, whose son, the father of the present Earl, after having filled the high offices, first of Viceroy of Corsica, and next of Governor-General of Bengal, was, in 1813, created Viscount Melgund and Earl of Minto. The oldest son of Lord Minto is accordingly designated by courtesy the Viscount Melgund.

There is a local tradition, that the Castle of Melgund was built by the celebrated Cardinal Beaton, and that it was a favourite country residence of that ambitious prelate, to which he frequently resorted for other purposes, says the same unwritten chronicle, less creditable to the cardinal's character, and less consistent with his vow of celibacy, than a mere love of retirement or of relaxation from the fatigues of public business. The remains of this castle are still extensive, and indicate no inconsiderable degree of strength and of magnificence. The banqueting-hall has been a spacious apartment, and, in its dimensions, exceedingly well-proportioned. The present noble proprietor, with a taste well befitting his name and rank, has alike forbidden the dilapidation of the castle, and the cutting down of the fine old trees with which it is surrounded.

The Castle of Auldbar, the residence of Patrick Chalmers, Esq., lately, and until his health obliged him to resign, Member of Parliament for the Forfarshire burghs, is another of those ancient strongholds, which, in feudal times, were so frequent, and unhappily so necessary in these parts. The Castle of Auldbar is not only habitable, but is also inhabited by its respected owner, is in part modernized, and thus exhibits, at one view, the remarkable contrast of ancient strength and stateliness with modern taste, refinement, and comfort. This parish has evidently possessed, in former times, its full complement of these border fortresses, for such they may be called, as standing in the gap between the Braemen and the Lowlanders. The now antiquated but hospitable mansion-house of Balgavies is only the comparatively modern representative of its ancient castle, of which a solitary arch remains to indicate the spot where once its embattled turrets frowned defiance on the approaching raiders. The house of Carsegownie is evidently another specimen of the same kind of defensive dwelling-place, though on a smaller scale than those already mentioned; and now in a great measure divested of its stronghold appearance, by the recent enlargement of its once loop-hole-

looking windows. But a more perfect specimen is the Castle of Flemmington, about a furlong to the east of the church, being strong, stately, and dungeon-like. It is not many years since it was occupied by the proprietor, and is still inhabited by the farm-servants.

From the ancient character of the names of most places in the parish, it is evident that there have been few changes in the boundaries of estates; few breakings up of the larger, or combinations of the smaller farms, for many ages past. There are few mere conventional names of places; but most of them have allusion to some historical fact, or are descriptive of the locality, or commemorative of the persons to whom they originally belonged. Such is the farm of Wander's Hill, properly the Wanderer's Knoll; such is the hamlet of the Crosston, being near to a monumental stone, ornamented with the figure of a cross; and such is a considerable number of dwelling-houses and farms, the names of which begin with *Bal*, signifying "a town or dwelling-place generally," as Balgavies, Balbinnie, Balglassie, Bainocake, and Balgarrock. While some of these names tell us that they were the abodes, in days long gone by, of persons who, like some spoken of in the Scriptures, called their houses by their names, that they might perpetuate their memorial in the earth; others of them, as Balgarrock, which is said to signify the house on the moss, describe the nature of their locality; and all of them tell us that their designations were not of yesterday.

Parochial Registers.—The earliest of the existing parochial registers bears the date of 1706, and extends to 1716. There is then a break in the register, which may have been occasioned by the fact, that the Rev. John Ochterlonny (proprietor of the neighbouring estate of Flemmington), was the last Episcopal minister of this parish, and so managed as to keep possession of the cure long after the date of his formal ejection. About the time when the foresaid record closes, Mr Thomas Mitchell was ordained to the work of the ministry in this parish by the presbytery of Dundee; but the register does not appear to have been resumed until the year 1722, when one of the first entries is a resolution of the session to demand from Mr Ochterlonny the poor's box and the mortcloths, with a list of the persons for whose interment they had been used during the eight previous years. The communion plate became a future subject of demand by the session, Mr Ochterlonny having retained it also, by what he probably

considered his right to do so, having himself presented it, as appears from the following inscription on the only cup which was recovered, and which is still in use:—"This cup is gifted by Mr John Ochterlonny, minister of Aberlemno, for the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the said church, 1683." From the above, it is evident that the Presbyterian ministry was not fully resumed in this parish until the year 1722; and even then, and for some time thereafter, a considerable number of the parishioners attended Mr Ochterlonny's ministry in his own house, the Castle of Flemington. From about the year 1715, the office of the ministry in this parish has been held by the above-named Thomas Mitchell and his descendants, by father, son, and grandson, the last of whom died in May 1841. From 1722 to the present time, there is continuous record of the transactions of the session, also of births and marriages, with an imperfect one of deaths.

Antiquities.—Places of sepulture have been found in several parts of the parish. Cairns of stones, and rude stone coffins, evidently put together in haste, mark in various places the ancient battle-field. It is evident that the neighbourhood of the church has either been the scene of a succession of sanguinary conflicts, or else some great and protracted struggle has rolled, hither and thither, its tide of death, over the adjoining fields. In removing the stones from a tumulus some years ago, on the farm of Carsegowrie, a stone coffin was found in the centre with an urn; also, all around the circumference of the cairn, there was a continuation of similar coffins, but of ruder construction, pointing out, in all probability, the spot where a chief had fallen, and where his followers, in defending him, had fallen with him: where, having met with a common death, they found also a common grave, yet marked with a difference similar to that which had distinguished them in life. A few hundred yards to the north of the church, there is a monumental stone, about 8 feet in height, ornamented on one side with a cross, richly carved, and with two female figures in the garb and attitude of mourning. The other side is sculptured *in relief*, with men, some on horseback, and others on foot, intermingled with dogs. Near to this one are two smaller stones, which also have been ornamented; but the hand of time has greatly defaced them.

One of the most perfect of these battle-field memorials is in the church-yard. On one side of this stone there is a curious

cross in bold relieve, and entirely covered with flowered ornaments. On the reverse, towards the upper part of the stone, is another ornament, having no obvious meaning, but apparently intended for ornament only. Beneath it, there are some figures of men on horseback, armed *cap-a-pee*, with helmets. Two of these seem to be flying, but a third appears as if he were stopt in his flight by three men on foot, the first of which bears in his hand a weapon of a round form, the second has the same sort of weapon in his left hand, and in his right a spear which he is pointing at the man on horseback. The third figure is nearly obliterated. Below these, there are two other equestrian figures, one of which holds a baton in his right hand, while the other appears to be in the attitude of encountering him.

It seems not improbable that these "cross stones of Aberlemno" commemorate the defeat of one section of a powerful army, which Sueno, a Danish prince, sent into Scotland about the beginning of the eleventh century, to revenge the destruction of a previous army, and the death of his two generals, Eneck and Olave. Having landed at the Red-head, and being, near Panbride, defeated by the Scottish army under Malcolm II., part of the fugitives were overtaken, and with Camus, the leader of the expedition, destroyed near the village of Carnoustie, where Camiston cross still bears the name, and commemorates the defeat of the unfortunate chief. Another division betook themselves to their ships, and escaped; but a third division, in endeavouring to reach the mountains, with the design of passing into Moray, made good their retreat for a while, but were at length overtaken and cut off, says Buchanan, near the town of Brechin. From this town the cross stones of Aberlemno are distant only six miles; and they most probably indicate the scene of the event referred to by the historian.

A stone of a somewhat similar appearance to those already described, and from the style of its sculpture, evidently belonging to the same rude era of Scottish art, is at present in the vestibule of the House of Auldbar, having been brought thither from the ruins of a contiguous ancient chapel. It belongs, however, to an entirely different class of subjects, and is thus described by Pinkerton: "It is well known that there exist in various parts of Scotland, but chiefly on the east side, from the river Tay, singular erect stones, generally with crosses on one side, and upon the other sculptures, not ill executed for a barbarous age. Three are

found at Aberlemno. That at the chapel of Auldbar is singular, as, instead of horsemen and spears, there are two persons sitting, probably religious, and beneath them, a man seemingly tearing out a lion's tongue—perhaps Samson, and opposite to him a curious figure of an antique harp, and under these a man on horseback, a lamb, and other animals." It is most probable that this was either an altar piece, or that it was intended in some way to ornament the sacred edifice whence it was taken. The subject is evidently a scriptural one, although, from the introduction of the harp, it is most probable that it was David and not Samson, whom the sculptor designed to represent as achieving a victory over some beast of prey.

In the south-west of the parish, and on the very summit of Turin hill, are the remains of an ancient fort, called at the present day Camp Castle. The space occupied by it is considerable, and has been fortified with a double rampart. The interior enclosure is circular, through the very centre of which there passes a modern dike, dividing the camp into equal portions, between the parishes of Aberlemno and Rescobie. The view from this fort is very extensive, and must have been admirably fitted for a watch-tower, overlooking the valley of the Lunan water on the one hand, and the pass from Forfar to Brechin on the other. It has been constructed with dry stones, and bears the character, seemingly of a *castra æstiva* (summer camp,) of the Romans; while another fortification, two miles farther north, just beyond the confines of this parish, and overlooking the valley of the Esk, has more of the character of a *castra stativa* (or permanent camp), the stones having been fused and cemented by the action of fire.

III.—POPULATION.

In 1755 the population was	943
1790 it had increased to	1033
1801, it was again reduced to	945 viz. males, 471, females, 474
1831,	1079
1842,	1028

The chief, and almost the only cause of this fluctuation, is the increase or diminution in demand for workmen in the slate and pavement quarries.

The yearly average of births for the last seven years is	30
marriages,	12
burials,	25
The gross amount of interments during this period,	178
Of which, there were of children under 10 years of age,	84
The number of dwelling-houses in the parish, is about	206

The number of uninhabited houses,	12
houses occupied by families,	198
houses occupied by solitary individuals,	19
Of which last, there are widows,	7
unmarried women,	4
widower,	1
unmarried man,	1
Of the remaining 180 inhabited houses, there are occupied by	
married householders,	145
bachelors having households,	18
widows having families,	9
single women having charge of households,	4
widowers having families,	7
unmarried women having families,	2
	180

The constant shifting of farm-servants is a great bar in the way of external improvement, with one class of cottages: and even in another class more permanently occupied, the indifferent state of many of the houses, both internally and externally, affords but little encouragement to the cottager to adorn his dwelling. On some of the estates, however, the cottages begin to be better constructed, and might be beautified at small cost and pains, by the planting of a few shrubs and flowers, by laying a little pavement near the door, and by removing the dung heap a little farther from it. In their manners, the people are peaceable, obliging, and contented.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

The inhabitants of the parish are, for the most part, engaged in farming occupations. Besides the few who are employed in weaving and quarrying, there are just so many carpenters, masons, smiths, tailors, and shoemakers as are necessary to supply the local demand. There are four meal and barley-mills within the bounds of the parish, driven by water. All the large farms have thrashing-mills, so that there is very little work done with the flail. The farmers, who are, as a body, a most respectable and intelligent class of men, rear considerable stocks of cattle; and some of them export largely to the London market both of cattle and potatoes. Bondage, or the obligation to assist in the field-work of the farmer on whose land the cottager has his dwelling, still exists here to a certain extent.

Rental of Auldbar in 1753.—Bear—73 bolls, 3 firlots. Meal—159 bolls. Money, L.1914, 11s. 10d. Scots. 12 capons, 344 hens. Yarn—85 hasps, 3 hanks. 1 swine.

In addition to the payments here stated, many services were performed by the tenants, for instance; casting, drying, driving,

and stacking peats; ploughing, harrowing, &c.; cutting and leading the laird's corn and hay; giving so many days' work when required, and various others.

A letter of the time (1753) states that the rents had not been raised for forty years past, and that they might be doubled without distressing the tenants.

Rental of Auldbar in 1766.—Bear—57 bolls, 3 firlots. Meal—127 bolls. Money, L.2866, 5s. 2d. Scots. 12 capons, 290 hens. Yarn—60½ hasps. 1 swine, 1 wether.

The cultures of two mills are not included in either rental, and their value is unknown. The laird upheld nearly all the machinery of the mills.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Market-Towns.—The nearest market-towns are Forfar and Brechin, from each of which the manse is distant six miles. These are also the nearest post-towns; and the want of one nearer, or of a more regular transmission of letters than exists, is felt to be a great inconvenience.

Means of Communication.—A good turnpike-road passes through the parish, called the Auldbar road, joining the railway station of that name with Brechin, and which was designed and carried through, at a very considerable expense, by Patrick Chalmers, Esq. of Auldbar. About two miles of the turnpike-road from Forfar to Montrose pass through the south side of the parish. A road, maintained at the parochial expense, from Forfar to Brechin, passes through the extreme length of the parish, in a north-easterly direction.

Ecclesiastical State.—The situation of the church is not central, but could not be improved, without opening up new and extensive lines of road, and planting it in a bleak and barren moor. The nave of the church stands on the original, and, no doubt, Roman Catholic, foundation; but the walls, from about three feet above the ground, and an aisle, in the north centre, were built in 1722. It is capable of containing about 450 sitters; and is divided among the heritors for the use of their tenants. It is inconveniently low in the roof, and very uncomfortably seated. The manse was built in 1782, and has this year, 1842, received considerable additions, with partial repairs.

The glebe has been valued at L.15, and the stipend is rather more, in all, than 15 chalders, and is paid in equal parts of oatmeal and barley, with a small proportion thereof in money.

There is no Dissenting meeting-house in the parish. Two fa-

milies and two individuals are Episcopalian. Three families are Seceders, and as many attend the Relief. The average number of communicants in the Established Church is about 330.

Education.—There is only one school in the parish, the parochial. Another is much needed in the district of Balgavies, and means are being used to obtain it. The schoolmaster has the maximum salary.

Library.—There is a parish library, consisting chiefly of historical, biographical, and religious works.

Poor.—The average number of impotent persons receiving parochial relief is about 18. They receive, except in a few instances where more is given, 1s. per week. Orphans, and other deserted or neglected children, add greatly to the burdens of the parish; for the discharge of which the session receives the average Sunday collection of 10s., the collections of two annual communions, and a voluntary assessment from the heritors of L.84. With those who have been brought up in the parish, or resided in it any considerable length of time, there is in general a praiseworthy reluctance to receive parochial charity; but with some who are in the actual receipt of it, and especially with those who have been but a short time in the parish, and with all those who care little for religious ordinances, and seldom appear in the house of God, there is a growing importunity, and a total want of that Christianized feeling of independence which once constituted the true nobility of the Scottish nation.

December 1842.