

PARISH OF HUNTLY.*

PRESBYTERY OF STRATHBOGIE, SYNOD OF MORAY.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name, Boundaries, &c.—THIS parish consisted originally of two distinct parishes, Dumbennan and Kinoir. The former parish, which, to a great extent, is surrounded by hills, is said from this circumstance to have received the name of Dumbennan, or *the foot of the hill*.† It is situated at the termination of the two straths, formed by the rivers Bogie and Deveron. The hill between these rivers, which is of considerable height, and is called the *Clashmach*, or gray-headed hill,‡ forms part of this parish. The latter parish of Kinoir, or the yellow-headed hill,§ stretches for about five miles along the right side of the Deveron, after it is joined by the Bogie on the right, and strangely enough, though ecclesiastically united to Dumbennan, it is separated from it for more than a quarter of a mile from this junction upwards, by the neighbouring parish of Drumblade.|| The two parishes were united into the one parish of Huntly in 1727. Its greatest length is about 10 miles, and breadth 4 miles. It is bounded on the north chiefly by the parish of Rothiemay; on the east, by a small angle of the parish of Forgue, but chiefly by Drumblade; south, by Gartly; and west, by the parishes of Glass and Cairnie.

Rivers, Hills, &c.—The river Bogie, which rises in the parish of Auchindoir, about twelve miles to the south-west, divides this parish from Drumblade for two or three miles, and the Deveron, from portions of Glass, Cairnie, and Rothiemay. The Deveron

* By the Rev. William Sinclair, A. M.

The proceedings consequent on the presentation to the parish of Marnoch in 1837, led to the deposition by the General Assembly in 1841, of the Rev. James Walker, minister of this parish, in which Mr Walker and a minority of the General Assembly do not acquiesce. They have obtained a suspension and interdict from the Court of Session.

† Former Account.

‡ Ibid.

§ Ibid.

|| The ancient burying-grounds both of Dumbennan and Kinoir are on the sites of the old churches, and, in fact, these are the only burying-grounds still used in the parish.

has its source in the parish of Cabrach, fifteen miles above Huntly, and after receiving the Bogie about a quarter of a mile below the town, flows onwards north-east for twenty-one miles, where it falls into the sea at Banff. In the great floods of 1829, the town was entirely surrounded by water; and though the Huntly bridges escaped, the bridges above the town, both on the Bogie and Deveron, were swept away. The ruins of several still remain.

The town of Huntly is embosomed in hills. Its climate, though cold, is exceedingly healthful. The water of the Bogie is pure, and fit for every purpose. It produces excellent trouts, and the Deveron affords good fishing both in salmon and trout. The soil of Kinoir is generally of a cold clayey description; but in Dumbennan, there is more of a deep loamy soil. The rocks are almost entirely of granite. Near the junction of the two rivers, some traces have been found of plumbago or black lead, (graphite, a compound of carbon and iron), but though of very superior quality, it has not been found in sufficient quantity to encourage the expenditure of any labour on it. Limestone also has been found in small quantity, and susceptible of a very high polish. On the top of St Mungo's Hill, which is in the Kinoir district, in the east of the parish, there are traces of volcanic action in a large crater-like cavity, around which there have been found fragments of lava and pumice-stone.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

There is a short account of this parish in one of the papers published by the Spalding Club, and written, it is said, by Spalding himself; but whether as useful as it is believed to be curious, the writer of this, never having seen it, cannot take upon himself to determine.

Battle-hill, Castle, &c.—The only historical events of importance are connected with the Battle-hill in the Kinoir district, next to St Mungo's, and the old Castle of Huntly. The former was the scene of the battle of Sleoch, (the name of a neighbouring farm in the parish of Drumblade), of which an important notice will be found in the account of Drumblade in this work. The castle, which is now in ruins, evidently consists of two parts,—the remains of the ancient castle of Strathbogie, and the comparatively modern Huntly Castle. All that remains of the former are a few vaults, forming apparently part of the enclosure of the court-yard, which, from the immense thickness of the walls (now overgrown with ivy), and the coarseness of the structure, must be of a very early date. It originally

belonged to the ancient and powerful family of the Comyns; but the Lords of Gordon, a powerful border clan, having nearly extirpated the Comyns in the wars of King Robert the Bruce, received, as their reward, the castle of Strathbogie, with the adjoining demesne. This castle was destroyed after the battle of Glenlivet in 1594; and the present Huntly Castle was built in 1602 by the first Marquis of that name. The chief part of it consists of a large circular tower, erected evidently for warlike purposes, and which seems to have been surrounded by a moat. It is a fine ruin, but the interior apartments appear to have fallen much into decay since the last Account of this parish was written. The stone steps in the "spacious turnpike stair" have been removed; most of the ornaments in these apartments have been stripped off for the adornment of Huntly Lodge; the square towers also which once stood in the avenue leading to the castle are among the things that were; and their former site has recently been occupied by the Duchess of Gordon's new schools. It is now upwards of forty years since any part of the castle was inhabited; and about ten years ago, Huntly Lodge, which originally was but a shooting-box of the Duke of Gordon's, was enlarged into the present handsome and commodious building. It is situated on the rising ground to the north of the castle, about a quarter of a mile distant from it, and is seen to advantage from various directions. After the family seat was removed to Gordon Castle at Fochabers, this place became the residence of the Marquis of Huntly, the Duke of Gordon's eldest son; but the Dukedom having become extinct on the death of George the fifth Duke in 1836, the lodge is at present occupied by Her Grace the Duchess-Dowager of Gordon.

Other Buildings.—South of the castle, and looking along Gordon Street, the principal street of the town, a large and very handsome building has recently been erected by the Duchess for educational purposes. It was intended as a monument in memory of her late husband; but it will also be an enduring memorial of this Noble lady's munificence and zeal in promoting the best interests of the people among whom she resides.

The whole parish is the property of the Duke of Richmond, with the exception of a small portion in the lower end of Kinoir, which belongs to Mr Gordon of Avochy. On these lands, there is part of the ruins of the old castle of Avochy; but the present house connected with the property is a plain building of very humble pretensions. The only other buildings of importance are, the

parish church, erected in 1805, and seated for 1800; the new church, built in 1840, and seated for 945, which cost, without Government drawback, upwards of £1300; the Roman Catholic chapel, which is surmounted by a curious rather than a handsome tower, the top of it appearing in the shape of a crown, built in 1834, and seated for 350,—which cost, with the priest's house, £1660, of which £1000 was paid by Gordon of Wardhouse; the Independent chapel, built in 1802, with 500 sittings; the Secession church in 1809, with 340 sittings; and the Episcopal chapel in 1770, with 140 sittings. It is in contemplation at present to build a new Episcopal chapel.

III.—POPULATION.

According to the Parliamentary returns, the population of the whole parish was,

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|----------------|------|
| In 1801, . . . | 2969 |
| 1831, . . . | 3545 |
| 1841, . . . | 3642 |

Taking the whole population at 3700, which, from the writer's own statistical notes, he believes at present to be nearly correct, the following will be found to be about the proportions in the respective districts, viz.—In the Dumbennan country district, 90 families to a population of 408, equal to 4.53 in each family; in the Kinoir country district, 93 families to a population of 422, equal to nearly 4.54 in each family; in the town of Huntly, 804 families to a population of 2870, equal to nearly 3.51 in each family.

The small proportion of individuals in each family in the town compared with the country, arises from the large number of single women, who, when disabled from active employment by age or other causes, generally find their way into the town from the whole surrounding district of country, and live in separate places by themselves. And it may also be mentioned here, that, in 1831, the population of the town of Huntly was 2585, leaving 960 for the country; the diminution in this portion having arisen from the breaking up of a number of the smaller farms at the last lease letting. As a specimen of the number of children in each family, in a district of the town containing 242 families,—excluding the families of bachelors and single women where there are no children, but reckoning every family where there are any children or a married couple,—there were found 542 children, giving $2\frac{1}{4}$ to each.

Her Grace the Duchess of Gordon is resident in the parish; and, besides a few merchants and others deriving considerable in-

come from trade, there are about forty individuals or families, chiefly in the town, of independent means, varying from £.50 to £.500 or £.600 per annum. The people are a shrewd and intelligent race, some of them indeed exhibiting intellectual powers of a very high order. They are in general peaceable and well-behaved, and free from many of the grosser vices. Poaching exists in a small degree, and drunkenness in a greater. The illegitimate births in the parish may amount to about 12 per annum.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture, &c.—The writer has not been able to ascertain the proportion of land which is cultivated or not; but it may be mentioned, that very little could be brought under cultivation which is not already so. Several thousand acres have been recently planted with fir, larch, birch, elm, and oak in this and the neighbouring parish of Cairnie, which in a few years will greatly improve the face of the country. The average rent of land per acre is about 16s.; but for “the Huntly acres” it is £.2 per acre, and the rental of the parish, which is partly paid in kind for 1841, is as follows:—

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--------|---|---|
| Kinoir, | . | £.1204 | 0 | 0 |
| Dumbennan, | . | 2280 | 0 | 0 |
| Huntly acres, | . | 1050 | 0 | 0 |
| Feu duties of Huntly, | . | 122 | 0 | 0 |
| Avochby, about, | . | 400 | 0 | 0 |
| <hr/> | | | | |
| Total, | | £.5056 | 0 | 0 |

This is not a sheep country; but the farmers on the high lands of the parish have a few flocks which range the hills. Cattle, however, are reared in considerable numbers on all the farms, and exported to the markets in the south; though, whether this will be continued to the same extent is doubtful. The only grains cultivated in this parish are oats and bear, chiefly the former. Wheat does not grow here.

Improvements, Leases, &c.—The greatest agricultural improvements needed in this parish are thorough draining and enclosures, and these are prosecuted every year with great vigour, the latter with tiles as well as loose stones. The leases almost uniformly extend to nineteen years; but at the last letting, in 1841, the system was adopted of throwing many of the smaller farms into one.

There is a Farmer's Club in this parish, for the improvement of agriculture, with the Duke of Richmond as patron, the proceedings of which are conducted with some vigour: and there are

connected with it an Agricultural library, and an annual show of cattle, with competition for prizes.

Manufactures, &c.—In regard to manufactures, there are none in this parish worth naming. Formerly the manufacture of linen was carried on in Huntly, to the extent of L.40,000 per annum: and latterly, till within a year ago, there were about twenty or thirty weavers in this trade employed by houses in Aberdeen; and in the same way, employment in weaving worsted and in knitting stockings was got for many of the old women in the parish; but the former is entirely extinct, and the latter has also been withdrawn. There is a bleachfield on the Bogie of extensive fame, and a considerable run of trade; and a tan-work and distillery are in active operation. In the town of Huntly, there are three banks, branches of the North of Scotland, the Town and County, and Aberdeen Banks; 27 merchants, including 2 hardware shops, and 6 for cloths and haberdashery; 5 bakers, and 4 butchers. There is a Gas Company also, which has been very successful in its operation, as almost every house in the town is supplied with this most useful light.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Town, &c.—The town of Huntly, which is a burgh of barony, is built on what originally was a barren heath and marshy swamp. It is now well drained, and its situation is peculiarly healthful, being sheltered from almost every wind by the surrounding hills. The present population is about 2900. For its trade it depends chiefly on the surrounding district of country; but it has exports also to a very considerable extent in butter, cheese, eggs, pork, poultry and game.

The streets of the town are very regularly laid out. The two principal cross each other at right angles, and in the centre there is a spacious square, surrounded by buildings, some of which are of a very superior description. On one side of the square, a handsome new house is being built, which is to contain apartments for the North of Scotland Bank office.

Roads, Bridges, &c.—The principal road from Aberdeen to Inverness passes through this square, crossing each of the rivers by an excellent bridge at either extremity of the town. The inhabitants thus enjoy the privilege of a daily communication with both these towns by the Mail and Defiance coaches, and with the former by the Duchess of Gordon coach every alternate day. Huntly is distant from Aberdeen to the east, thirty-eight miles; to

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the west, from Elgin by Keith and Fochabers, twenty-seven miles; and from Inverness by the same road, seventy-two miles. To the south again, there is a good turnpike-road in the direction of Rhynie, Alford, &c. ; to the north, another road leads to Portsoy, distant seventeen miles; and north-east, there is another public road to Banff, which is twenty-one miles from Huntly.

Ecclesiastical State.—The parish church is very conveniently situated in the middle of the town. It was built in 1805, and is a very plain structure, immensely too large, being seated to accommodate 1800 persons. The manse, which is on the south road, about a quarter of a mile from the town, was built about the same time, and is in a very good state of repair. The glebe contains 12 acres, and is worth about L.25 per annum, and the annual average amount of the stipend is L.185.

The new church of Huntly was built in the end of the year 1840. The immediate occasion of its erection arose from the suspension, and ultimately, the deposition, by the General Assembly, of Mr Walker, the parish minister: but it had long been felt, that there was need of an ecclesiastical division of this populous, and, in the country, very scattered parish. The new church is served by a probationer, who is stationed there by the General Assembly's Committee as missionary ; but eventually it is proposed to erect it into a distinct *quoad sacra* church and parish. The missionary's salary of L. 100 per annum is paid from a fund raised expressly for these church purposes. There are also other four chapels in the town belonging to the Independents, Seceders, Episcopalians, and Roman Catholics respectively. The stipend of the Independent minister is L.100 ;* and of the Secession minister, it is understood to be about L.60 ; both being raised by seat-rents and contributions among the people. The present Episcopal minister is also chaplain to her Grace the Duchess of Gor-

* It may not be out of place to mention here the eminently godly Mr George Cowie, the first minister of the Independent Church in Huntly. He was at first an Antiburgher minister, but was cut off from that communion in consequence of what they deemed irregularities in his proceedings in admitting to his pulpit deputations from the London Missionary Society, and encouraging meetings for the revival of religion, and promoting the establishment of Sabbath schools. He died in 1806, after a most laborious and successful ministry of thirty-five years not only in Huntly, but in many of the surrounding parishes. He was a man of vigorous mind and most fervent piety. His labours were blessed to very many souls, and he was the instrument of an extensive awakening. To this day, his aphoristic sayings are often quoted, and his memory is affectionately cherished by many of the old people in the parish. After his death, his congregation, who almost to a man had clung to him, and had retained the Presbyterian modes of worship, became divided, and eventually the majority joined the Congregationalists, while a smaller section returned to the communion of the Secession Church.

don, and with his family, resides in a separate house at Huntly Lodge. The Roman Catholic bishop resides at Preshome, in the Enzie, parish of Rathven.

The people in this parish, and, indeed, in this district, are certainly remarkable for their church-going habits.

Missionary Societies, &c.—In the new church, there have not as yet been any missionary Societies formally constituted, but prayer-meetings, expressly for missionary objects, are stately held, and, besides other objects, collections are made, and contributions raised for all the Assembly's Schemes. During the year 1841, £.40 were raised by this congregation for educational, and £.60 for missionary purposes. Among the Independents chiefly, there are auxiliaries to the London Missionary and British and Foreign Bible Societies; their contributions to which, it is understood, amount to about £.60 per annum. There is also an auxiliary to the Edinburgh Bible Society, chiefly in connection with the parish church.

Education.—The educational wants of the town of Huntly are, on the whole, at present, well supplied. In the Duchess of Gordon's new buildings, ample accommodation is provided for the parochial school, the new school,—which is chiefly connected with the new church,—an infant school, and a sewing school. All these are very efficiently taught. In the two first, all the branches of an ordinary education are taught, as also Latin, Greek, French, and mathematics. There are also six adventure schools in the town, chiefly for reading, taught by females with various degrees of success; another by an old pensioner, who teaches reading, writing, and accounts with very considerable skill; and one excellent boarding and day-school for the higher branches of female education. The salary of the parochial teacher is £.34; from the Dick Bequest he receives £.30 per annum; his school-fees may be about £.60, and he derives £.8 from other emoluments. The teacher of the new school receives a salary of £.20 per annum, which is raised by subscription among the members of the new church, the security for which evidently must depend mainly on his own efficiency; and his school-fees amount to upwards of £. 50. The teachers of the sewing and infant schools at present receive salaries from her Grace the Duchess of Gordon. The fees of the parochial and new schools vary from 2s. 6d. to 5s. per quarter, but when the higher branches are included, they are 7s. 6d.; in the infant school, the fee is one penny per week, and in the private fe-

male schools, 1s. 6d. or 2s. per quarter. The greatest number of children attending these schools during last spring, the busiest season of the year, was nearly as follows: Parochial school about 140; new school, 128; infant school, 80;* sewing school, 30; ladies' boarding-school, about 40; private adventure schools, 110; total, 528. Deducting the numbers at the infant and sewing schools, there are still about 420, most of them above six years of age, in daily attendance at school. In summer, about a fourth of these are withdrawn to be employed in herding and other country labour.† Of the adult population, there are very few who cannot read, and not many more unable to write. The people, in general, are alive to the advantages of the mere elements of education; but they are only as yet learning the advantages even of such branches as geography, grammar, &c., and certainly they are not sufficiently sensible of the necessity of the attendance at school being regular. The country districts of the parish are not so well supplied. In the Dumbennan district, there is an Assembly's school, which, at present, is not well attended; and in Kinoir, there is a private adventure school for reading, writing, and accounts, taught with tolerable efficiency, and attended in spring by 50 or 60 children, and another school conducted by a female, which is attended by about 20 or 30 little children.

Of Sabbath schools there are in the town, one connected with the new church, attended by nearly 200 scholars; another connected with the parish church with about 100 scholars; and a third conducted by the Independents. The Roman Catholic priest, it is understood, has also a Sabbath school. In Kinoir, there is another Sabbath school connected with the new church,—the scholars of which are about 30, and in Longhill, in the Dumbennan parish, another conducted by Dissenters.

Literature.—Besides the Farmers' Agricultural Library, there is a circulating library maintained by the principal bookseller; another called the Evangelical Subscription Library, which contains some excellent books, but none of a controversial character; and a Coffee and Reading-room, with one or two provincial papers.

Charitable and other Institutions.—About sixteen years ago, Dr Scott, a native of this parish, died in India, leaving, in the hands

* The infant school being only newly established on its present footing, is just coming into favour: it numbers nearly 100.

† During last winter the teachers both of the parochial and new schools had also evening classes, with upwards of 30 pupils to each.

of certain trustees, part of his property, to be employed in erecting and endowing a house in Huntly for the maintenance of aged and indigent natives, and a farther sum of money for the establishment of a bursary of £20 annually to a student in divinity of the Established Church. The former endowment is still in abeyance, as Dr Scott's widow life-rents the whole property, and, on this account, the ultimate value of this legacy cannot, at present, be accurately ascertained; but the latter has been in operation now for six or eight years.

There is a Dispensary in the town, maintained by subscription, for supplying the poor gratuitously with medicines; and in connection with this, the regular practitioners, of whom there are four, visit and prescribe for the poor at their own houses.

The Huntly Savings Bank for this and a few of the surrounding parishes is in a very flourishing condition. The total amount of deposits at the last general statement, a month or two ago, was £3644, 15s. 5d.; the number of depositors,—tradesmen, servants, and the poorer classes, is 318; and, during the years 1840, 41, and 42, the increase on the deposits has successively been £361, £416, and £511, and that, too, notwithstanding the double drawback of the dulness of trade and the springing up of similar institutions in the surrounding districts. The interest allowed on the deposits is 3½ per cent.

Friendly Societies.—Formerly, there were several Friendly Societies in the parish; but these have all become extinct, as the meetings of their managers had degenerated into mere scenes of dissipation. One, however, has been recently instituted by a branch of the Total Abstinence Society.

Poor's Funds.—The number of paupers in the parish is greatly increased by individuals, when disabled by age or otherwise from country work, or cast out of their small farms, repairing to the town from the neighbouring parishes, and there contriving to support themselves from various sources, till they acquire a legal residence in this parish. The number of paupers on the poor's roll is accordingly 160, and the average sum allotted to each is about £1, 6s. per annum; but a few, who are bedridden, receive to the extent of £2, 10s. and £5 per annum. There is at present one pauper lunatic who is maintained at an expense of from £12 to £15.

Formerly, the poor's funds were made up of the ordinary and other collections in the parish church, amounting annually to up-

wards of £.100, and the pew-rents collected from the sitters in the church, amounting to about £.40, which were given as the Duke of Richmond's contribution. But last year, these contributions being insufficient, it was found necessary to have recourse to a voluntary parochial contribution, which, including £.80 subscribed by the Duke of Richmond, £.25 by the Duchess of Gordon, and £.5 by Mr Gordon of Avoch, yielded £.190; the collections at the church doors amounting besides to about £.70. It is exceeding probable, however, that, in a year or two, a legal assessment will be laid on the parish.

Besides the regular paupers, there are not a few poor persons who shrink from the idea of receiving public relief; but, in the former class, there are many who regularly, and with much boldness, on a fixed day every week, go their rounds to receive their accustomed alms.

Fairs, &c.—There are about twelve annual fairs or markets held in Huntly, chiefly during the months of summer and autumn. Two of these, called "feeing markets," occur at Whitsunday and Martinmas, and are among the largest of the whole year. They are for the hiring of farm-servants, and may be described as unmitigated moral nuisances,—not merely from the evils inseparably attendant on the congregating of large numbers of thoughtless young people of both sexes, with money in their pockets, and many of them with loose moral principles, but also from the utter destruction of those moral checks and mutual kindly feelings which ought to subsist between master and servant,—the one class being hired generally without any regard to their character, as if they were mere beasts of burden, and the other feeling little interest in the welfare of those who are sure to leave them in half a year. The other markets are for the sale of horses and cattle.

Inns, &c.—In the town of Huntly, there is one excellent inn, kept by a highly respectable individual, and four others of a lower grade. Besides these, there are twelve public-houses, and two or three grocers sell spirituous liquors. The Total Abstinence Society has certainly been a useful auxiliary to the Gospel, in reclaiming some drunkards, and diminishing the custom of some of these houses.

Fuel.—The fuel here used consists of peat or turf, brought chiefly from a moss five miles distant, and sold at about 3s. for a cart load; English coal, brought by sea to Portsoy, and thence conveyed to Huntly, a distance of seventeen miles, by land car-

riage, and sold at about 1s. 8d. per barrel, which is equal to about L.1, 5s. per ton; and fir wood, procured at about 3s. per cart load, from the thinnings of the neighbouring woods. Long splinters of resinous pine are also used, chiefly in the country houses, as a substitute for lamps.

November 1842.

UNITED PARISHES OF
ABOYNE AND GLENTANNER.

PRESBYTERY OF KINCARDINE O'NEIL, SYNOD OF ABERDEEN.

THE REV. ROBERT MILNE MILLER, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—ABOYNE is compounded of the Gaelic words, *A*, a *ford*, and *boinne* or *buinne*, a *current of rippling water*; a name very descriptive of a ford in the Dee, a little south of the church. Glentanner is compounded of the Gaelic words *Glean-tan-ar*, signifying *the glen of scanty arable land*. The two parishes being now united are generally known by the name of Aboyne.

Boundaries and Extent.—The united parish, on the west and left bank of the Dee, is bounded by Tullich, and on the right bank by Glenmuick; on the south, by Lochlee and Birse; on the east, by Kincardine O'Neil; and on the north, by Lumphanan, Coull, and Logie-Coldstone; the boundary line being generally formed by mountain-crests, the river Dee, or some of its tributary streams. A detached part, containing a population of about 60, is situated on the left bank of the Feugh, not far from the north base of Clach-na-bein, and about nine miles south-east from the church. Between this detached part and the church, almost the whole of Birse intervenes. The form of the parish is very irregular. Its length from east to west may be 13 miles, and its breadth from north to south, 12 miles. These, however, are taken from extreme points; and its whole area may be calculated at 37,000 imperial acres. Glentanner is on the right bank of the Dee, bounded on the north by that river, and