

PARISH OF FRASERBURGH.

PRESBYTERY OF DEER, SYNOD OF ABERDEEN.

THE REV. JOHN CUMMING, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Situation.—THIS parish is situated upon the east coast of Scotland, in that part of Aberdeenshire called Buchan; and the town of Fraserburgh is eighteen miles to the west of Peterhead, and twenty-one miles by the old road, but twenty-six miles by the new one, eastward from Banff, the next town of any consequence upon the coast.

Name.—From records of an old date, it appears, that the name of this parish was originally Philorth; this being the name of the estate of the patron and principal proprietor. A town and harbour, however, having been built early in the sixteenth century, and the town erected into a burgh of regality in October 1613, it was called Fraserburgh, no doubt in honour of Sir Alexander Fraser of Philorth, who obtained the charter.

Extent, &c.—The parish is at an average about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles broad, and nearly 8 miles long: the land gradually rising from the coast to its most distant and elevated district. Owing, however, to one of those irregularities, which were fallen into in the division of many parishes, the upper part is intersected for the space of nearly an English mile by the adjacent parish of Rathen. According to measurement, it contains a little more than 10,000 acres, and though the soil, like that of other parishes upon the coast, is in many places sandy and light, yet in others it is partly clay and loam. The rest is more gravelly, and interspersed with a few mosses and moors. It extends along the coast about 4 miles, nearly two of which to the south of the town are low and sandy, bounded by hillocks, overgrown with bent. The rest is rocky and flat, except Kinnaird's head, a high land projecting into the sea, which is generally believed to be the "Promontorium Taixalium" of Ptolemy, being the turning point into the "Æstuarium Varariæ," or Murray Frith. From Kinnaird's head the land trends due west on the one hand,

and on the other makes a curve to the south-east, forming the bay of Fraserburgh. The sea has receded from the land in some places, and encroached on it in others. Westward of Kinnaird's head, is a stony beach, evidently thrown up by the sea. Many of the benty hillocks, which skirt the bay, stand upon moss or clay; and in 1760, a tree with roots and branches, and a stem twenty feet long, was found entire under the sand within the high water-mark. By a strong south-east wind, the sands on this shore, if dry, are drifted; and, were they not intercepted by the bents, would overspread the adjacent fields. Bent, therefore, ought to be carefully preserved, especially that kind of it which grows in the hay here, resembling the river-bulrush in length of joint, thickness of reed, and largeness of leaf and top, and which is seemingly upon increase. It would appear that this parish at one time abounded with wood. Large roots of trees, mostly oak, still remain in the mosses; and about Philorth House, the seat of Lord Saltoun, is some old timber, to which several plantations have been added. But owing to the marine atmosphere, and the strong winds which sometimes blow here from the north and the east, trees and hedges are reared with no small difficulty. The only hill of any magnitude in this district is that of Mormond, covered with moss and heath, standing 810 feet above the level of the sea, and is the more conspicuous, as the surrounding country is to a considerable extent low and champaign. In various parts of the parish are mineral springs of a chalybeate nature; one of which is at the south-east corner of the town, which has been deemed useful as a tonic for weak stomachs, and over which a well has been erected for the more convenient use of those, who choose to avail themselves of it. From the upper end of the town a bed of limestone runs to the south, out of which a quarry has been dug, and stones obtained for building the houses of the town, and the piers of the harbour. There is also abundance of granite in the upper part of the parish, and ironstone of a good quality also abounds amongst the rocks on the coast, but which has been seldom wrought, owing to the scarcity of fuel. Great attention has been paid for many years to the improvement of roads in this district, and there are now excellent turnpike roads from this to Aberdeen, Peterhead, Banff, and Strichen.

Being situated upon the coast, the atmosphere is here temperate, moist, and saline, and, with no mountain but that of Mormond to attract and break the clouds, there is less rain and snow than in

the interior of the country, and snow, when it does fall, soon dissolves. Hence it is, perhaps, that we are seldom visited with any epidemic distemper, and escaped the cholera, when it was prevailing elsewhere. Upon the south side of the parish flows the water of Philorth, which takes its rise in the upper district, and, increased in its course by a few tributary streams, discharges itself into the sea. The bay, to which we have already adverted, is the most interesting natural object at Fraserburgh. It is about three miles long, and attracts the notice of every stranger as he approaches the town from the south, and exhibits to him a beautiful and delightful scene in a fine summer day, when there is clear sunshine and a profound calm, and many vessels are there riding at anchor.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Antiquities.—There are in this parish the ruins of two chapels, one of which was probably a seminary of considerable repute, as it is called the College, at which some of the monks of the Abbey of Deer resided. Near this is a well, where the superstitious practice of leaving some trifle, after drinking of its waters, obtained for a considerable time; but which now seems to be given up.

At the west end of the town is an old quadrangular tower of three stories, which formed part of a large building originally intended for a college by Sir Alexander Fraser of Philorth, who, in 1592, obtained a charter from the Crown, in which powers were given to erect and endow a college and university,—to appoint a rector, a principal, a sub-principal, and all the professors for teaching the different sciences they should think proper and necessary,—and to make laws for the preservation of good order, with authority to enforce them. Every immunity and privilege of an university was granted for it, as appears from the following words of the charter:—“*In amplissima forma, et modo debito, in omnibus respectibus, ut conceditur et datur cuicunque collegio et universitati intra regnum nostrum erecto seu erigendo.*” In 1597, the General Assembly recommended Mr Charles Frame, at that time minister here, to be principal; but owing to some cause, which has not been sufficiently explained, most probably to the want of funds, the matter here stopped, for nothing farther was done in it.

On Kinnaird's Head another old tower remains, called the Wine Tower, most probably so called because it was the wine-cellar of those who at one time resided in the adjoining house, which is now the light-house. Under this tower is a cave, penetrating into the rock more than 100 feet.

In this parish there are also some ruins of Danish or Pictish houses, as they are usually called. These are about 10 feet square, with a door and hearthstone evidently marked with fire; and which, though insignificant in themselves, serve to show that the inhabitants of this part of Aberdeenshire were at one time of Scandinavian origin.

III.—POPULATION.

According to the census of 1791, the population amounted to 2215; of 1811, to 2271; and of 1831, to 2954: and by a census lately taken at the request of the General Assembly's Committee for Church Extension, it was found to be 3080; of whom there are 700 under twelve years of age. It appears that the principal increase was from 1811 to 1831, which is to be ascribed chiefly to the herring-fishery, which began to be prosecuted upon an extensive scale in 1815. The fishermen also marry at an early period of life. The number of marriages is, at an average, about 36, and of births, 60. But no register of the number of deaths has been hitherto kept, though the people have been called upon to avail themselves of it. There is reason to believe, however, that these do not exceed 50. During the herring-fishery, which commences in July, and closes in September, there is an increase of the population of no less than 1200, so that, owing to the activity and bustle which then prevail, the town and the harbour have a very bustling appearance. And the herring-fishery having brought to the inhabitants an increase of wealth, it has produced amongst them a change both as to dress and diet, in which respect there is here little or no difference from what is met with in much larger communities.

The number of illegitimate children during the last three years is 37.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—There are here three landed proprietors, and the valued rent is L. 3000 Scotch. None of the proprietors are resident but Lord Saltoun, and he only for a few weeks in the year. He is not only patron, but the largest proprietor of the parish, his proportion of the valued rent being L. 2266, 13s. 4d. The real rent has fallen about six per cent. since the year 1815; and, had it not been for those improvements which have been made in agriculture by the tenantry, the diminution would have been still greater. All the land is arable, with the exception of about 80 acres of moss. The farms are in extent from 50 to 300 acres, and are let for 10s. to L. 3 Sterling per acre. Though not put up to pub-

lic roup, they are always advertised for letting,—the former tenant generally receiving a preference, when his offer is within ten per cent. of the highest; and in unfavourable seasons Lord Saltoun makes liberal deductions to his tenants. The soil here is well adapted to green crop, and produces all kinds of grain; so that this parish not only supplies itself with all kinds of provisions, but annually exports a large quantity of barley, oats, and potatoes, of good quality. The distinction of infield and outfield has long ago ceased, and a regular rotation of cropping is now followed. For that purpose there is here abundance of manure. Besides an inexhaustible store of shell-sand, and a constant supply of seaweed or ware, the farmers avail themselves of fish refuse for manure, of which there is also a large quantity during the herring-fishery. Bone-manure is also successfully applied to dry soils.

Wages.—The wages for male farm-servants are from L. 3 to L. 6 Sterling, and for female from L. 1, 5s. to L. 2, 10s. in the half year.

Live-Stock.—The rearing of cattle for the market has always been a principal object of concern with the farmer; but, owing to the admission of all kinds, the Buchan, or native breed, which is deservedly esteemed, has been considerably diminished. There are, nevertheless, many of good size and quality; and some farmers have of late introduced the Teeswater, by which it is expected the breed will be improved. The price of cattle has risen of late, and a new market has been opened for them by exportation to London, which has hitherto brought a profitable return. There are no sheep-farms in the parish—a few only are reared upon ground of inferior quality.

Though many of the fields are inclosed, yet it is much to be regretted, that the system of inclosure is not universally followed out, and that the tenantry are still without sufficient accommodation as to dwelling-house and offices. When any alteration to the better in this respect is effected, it is generally by the tenant's laying out the money himself, with consent of the proprietor, who agrees to deduct it at the expiration of the lease; or then still evades the expense, by requiring of the incoming tenant to repay it under the designation of "dead inventory;" an expedient which is no less unfavourable to the interests of the proprietor than to those of the tenant.

The Town and Civil History of the Parish.—The town is situated upon the south side of Kinnaird's Head, and is nearly of a square

figure; most of the streets crossing each other at right angles; the lower part of it adjacent to the harbour and the bay. A considerable number of new houses have been built within these few years; and new openings are making, and new streets are laid off, according to a plan, which was resolved upon about twenty-five years ago. There are now 180 tenements, each of which contains from 20 to 22 falls. The price of each lot is from L. 30 to L. 33 Sterling, besides an annual feu-duty of 4d. per fall. The old tol-booth, town-house, and cross, were erected by Sir Alexander Fraser, the superior, and disposed to the feuars by the charter of erection. The cross is reckoned a fine structure. It is a hexagon with three equidistant angular abutments; the area of the base is 500 feet; by nine intrenchings the top is contracted to 23 feet, on the middle of which is raised a stone pillar 12 feet high. The British arms, surmounting the armorial coat of Fraser of Philorth, adorn the summit. The jail, though still remaining, is falling into ruins, and is of no use. Fraserburgh is one of the old burghs of regality, having its government vested in Lord Saltoun, the superior, two bailies, a dean of guild, a treasurer, and a council. His Lordship has the right and the authority of provost, with power to nominate and appoint yearly the new magistrates and council, with the advice and consent of the old. By the charter, the feuars and incorporated brethren of the guild have liberty to exercise all kinds of trade and merchandise. Those, who are not freemen, may be debarred this privilege; but, for a long period, this exclusion has not been insisted on. The feuars are obliged to uphold the public works of the town; but, for doing so, the market customs were granted them; and in lieu of some privileges which they possessed over commonable lands, they have obtained others from Lord Saltoun, which now rent at L. 58 Sterling per annum. These funds have been hitherto applied to repairing the streets, and opening new ones, but chiefly to bringing water into the town for domestic use, of which its inhabitants stood in great need, and of which there is now an ample supply. It is not improbable, however, that this burgh will soon undergo such a change in its constitution, as has been lately effected in others.

The Harbour and Trade.—As seamen were wont to seek for shelter to their vessels upon this coast at an early period, a harbour was built so long ago as at the beginning of the sixteenth century; being, however, upon a small scale, and not affording the requisite security, especially against storms from the north and the north-

east, a northern pier, of about 300 yards in length, was begun to be built in 1807, and was completed in 1812. It was soon found, however, that the sea here, though repelled, found its way into the harbour in a way no less detrimental to the shipping, by a circuitous run into it at the extreme point, which, passing along the interior, produced an agitation to the vessels, against which no mooring could afford proper security. There was, therefore, much dissatisfaction with it and complaint; and in order to remedy that evil, and for enlarging and improving the harbour, an application was made for an act of Parliament, which was obtained in 1818. A south pier was accordingly built, of corresponding extent to the north one; and since then, a middle pier has been erected, broader and even superior to the other two, within which vessels lie in perfect safety during the most violent storms. The expenditure upon the whole, since 1807, has been about L. 30,000 Sterling, and when the contemplated improvements are completed, it will be the best tide-harbour on the east coast of Scotland, between it and Burntisland, according to the report of an eminent engineer, Robert Stevenson, Esq. of Edinburgh. The area enclosed as a harbour is upwards of six Scotch acres, nearly one-half of which has been excavated along the piers and jetties as birthing-places. The harbour is of easy access, having a depth of about six feet water at the piers' head at low water, and of twenty feet at high spring tides. Being situated at the immediate entrance to the Moray Frith, and at the northern extremity of a deep and extensive bay, which affords excellent anchorage for ships of every size, it is of great importance to the shipping interest in general. There are eight vessels from 45 to 155 tons burthen belonging to the port, and 220 boats engaged in the herring fishery. The exportations for 1835 of grain, namely of wheat, barley, oats, pease and beans, were 12,000 quarters; of potatoes 6000 bolls; of fish, dried and pickled cod, to the value of L. 2000 Sterling, and of herrings about 16,000 barrels; the herring-fishery giving employment to 1600 people. The articles imported are chiefly timber, coals, lime, tiles, brick, salt, and goods for shopkeepers, of whom there are 30; and, including innkeepers, there are 28 who have spirit licenses. The harbour dues were originally only L. 65 per annum, but they now amount to L. 1100 Sterling per annum. Coals are now imported here at the rate of 4s. 4d. per imperial boll, from Newcastle and Sunderland; but though this be a high price for them, they are considered to afford to those who reside in the town as cheap fuel

as peat, which costs about L. 5 Sterling per leat, including all expenses.

The manufacture of kelp has been so much affected by the prevailing use of barilla, that the shores here, which at one time let for L. 150 Sterling, for that purpose, do not now bring above L. 15 Sterling per annum. Rope and sail-making are also carried on to a small extent.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Ecclesiastical State.—There are three clergymen; the minister of the Established Church, that of the Scotch Episcopal Church, and that of the Independent congregation. Of the population there are belonging to the Establishment, 2703; and 377 who are Dissenters. The parish church, which stands about the middle of the town, near the cross, was rebuilt in 1802, and is a plain good structure, and capable of containing 1000 sitters. Part of the sittings are free, and the rest are all nearly let at from 1s. to 4s. per sitting. The church has a spire with a bell, which was built by subscription, and cost about L. 300 Sterling. A new manse was built in 1818, upon a new site, at the south end of the town, upon a piece of rising ground, beside the road leading to Aberdeen and Peterhead. It is a good plain house, but not so large as other manses which have been more recently built within the bounds of the presbytery. The stipend is 16 chalders of victual, one-half meal, and the other half barley, with L. 10 Sterling for communion elements. The glebe, including the site of the manse and garden adjoining, is only a little more than four acres and a quarter in extent, and the greater part of it land of inferior quality. The attendance upon religious ordinances is considerable, and there are increasing symptoms of religious improvement. One of the great evils with which religion has had to contend here, as elsewhere, is the excessive use of spirituous liquors; and not until the labouring classes themselves come to see the folly and madness of expending their earnings in their use, will the evil be overcome. Various regulations have been laid down for restraining their use, particularly during the herring fishery; but these have hitherto been only partially observed.

Savings' Bank.—A savings' bank could not be established here until 1830; nor did the labouring classes seem to have at first that confidence in its utility to which it was entitled. But it is now succeeding; the amount of the deposits having been nearly doubled in the course of the present and the preceding year.

Societies.—There are two societies for the diffusion of re-

ligious knowledge at home and abroad, and one of these has a parochial library, containing such books only as are calculated to promote that great object.

Education.—The parochial school is attended by about 100 children, and of these there are generally from 20 to 30 girls. The salary of the teacher is L. 29, 18s. 10d. Sterling. The amount of fees is about L. 50 Sterling per annum, and as he has the benefit of Dick's bequest, and is session-clerk, his income altogether may amount to L. 130 Sterling per annum. The branches taught at the school are, the English, Latin, Greek, and French languages; writing, arithmetic, algebra, mathematics, geography, and navigation. The books used are, Wood's English Collection; Lennie's English Grammar; Simpson's History of England and Scotland; the Latin classics; Moore's Greek Grammar; Greek New Testament; Dalzel's Greca Minora; Porquet's Parisian Grammar; French Fables and Telemaque; Morrison's Book-keeping; Bonnycastle's Algebra; Davidson's Mathematics; Hamilton's Arithmetic; Norris's Navigation; Scott's Beauties; M'Culloch's Progressive Exercises in Science and Literature; and the Assembly's Catechism with Scripture Proofs. The interrogatory or intellectual system was adopted by the present schoolmaster, and continues to be prosecuted with much advantage to his pupils, and credit to himself. Besides the parochial school, there are nine others, all upon the teachers' own adventure; four of them by male, and five by female teachers. It is usual for parents to place their children when very young under female teachers, both to preserve them from accidents, to which they might be exposed, by being allowed to roam in the streets without any one to look after them, and to prepare them by instruction in the elements of education for afterwards going to the parochial, or other schools, where the higher branches are taught. By returns lately obtained, it appears that there are about 500 children throughout the parish receiving education at its schools. There are eight Sunday schools, attended by about 300 children.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—The number of the poor upon the roll is 80, who are relieved, according to the old system, by collections at the door of the parish church, which amount to about L. 100 Sterling per annum; by the greater part of the dues for proclamation of banns; and by the interest of a fund of L. 700 Sterling. The fund is made up of bequests from wealthy and generous individuals, who belonged to the parish, or who had previous-

ly resided in it for a considerable time. The annual amount distributed has been generally about L. 150 Sterling; but last year it was nearly L. 200 Sterling, and there is no appearance at present of its diminution.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

From the foregoing statement, it appears that the town and parish of Fraserburgh have participated in the general improvement of the country since the publication of the former Statistical Account; that its population has had an increase of 865 souls, with a corresponding enlargement of the town; that a new, capacious, secure, and excellent harbour has been erected, and the herring-fishery, and other branches of trade, have been carried on to a considerable extent, and with much success; that a savings bank has been established, which is now prospering; and that great attention is paid to the proper education of the young. Various other improvements are in contemplation, which, by the favour of Divine Providence, and the spirit of enterprise which now exists, will, ere long, be accomplished.

January 1840.

PARISH OF ABERDOUR.

PRESBYTERY OF DEER, SYNOD OF ABERDEEN.

THE REV. GEORGE GARDINER, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THE name of the parish seems to be derived from a small rivulet, which falls into the sea, a few hundred yards below the manse. The term *Aber* in Gaelic signifying a *mouth* or *opening*, Aberdour may here have been applied to the *mouth* or outlet of the *Dour*.

The form of the parish is extremely irregular, extending from east to west along the sea coast about 7 miles, while its greatest length from north-east to south-west, including a vast extent of moss and moor, is not less than 10 or 11 miles. There are three farms at the south-east extremity, completely cut off from the rest of the parish of Aberdour by that of Tyrie. Some suppose that these farms were originally grazings for the cattle belonging to the tenants upon the