

PARISH OF MONYMUSK.

PRESBYTERY OF GARIOCH, SYNOD OF ABERDEEN.

THE REV. ROBERT FORBES, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THE parish of Monymusk is thought to have been so named from two Gaelic words *monaugh*, high or hilly, and *mousick*, which signifies low and marshy ground; and this conjecture would seem to be justified by the appearance of its surface. It extends about seven miles in length from east to west, its greatest breadth from four to five. In some places it is much narrower,—which makes it of very irregular figure, so as to contain only about twenty square miles.

Extent, &c.—It is bounded on the east and south, by the parishes of Kemnay and Cluny; on the west, by the parish of Tough; and on the north-west and north, by the parishes of Keig, Oyne, and Chapel of Garioch. It is separated from the parish of Tough on the west, and partly bounded on the north, by hills of various, and some of them of considerable, though not very remarkable, height,—Cairnwilliam, which is the highest, being about 1400 feet above the level of the sea.

Rivers.—The river Don, which rises in the mountains of Corgarff, and, after an easterly and winding course of about sixty miles, falls into the sea at Old Aberdeen, runs through the parish, and divides it into two unequal parts, leaving about two-thirds on the south, and one-third on the north of its banks. Its mean breadth within the parish may be about 35 yards, and depth 2 feet; velocity about $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile per hour.

Rocks.—The rocks of which the hills are composed are chiefly granite, of which there is abundance of excellent quality throughout the parish, many large blocks of which were quarried some years ago by a company in Aberdeen, and removed to London for the colonnade of the new market-place in Covent Garden.

In the last Account of this parish, it is stated that an iron mine had been discovered, many years ago, in a hill about a mile distant from the church to the north-west, the ore of which had been found

to yield 13-20th of iron, but that it had never been wrought on account of the scarcity of fuel in this part of the country. The working of it has never yet been attempted, probably for the same reason.

In the same hill was discovered, some years ago, a quarry of felspar, which was wrought for some time by an agent of one of the Staffordshire potteries, but has been abandoned on account, chiefly, it is said, of the great expense of the land carriage to Aberdeen, a distance of twenty miles, from which the stones, broken small and packed in large casks, were conveyed by sea to England. This quarry was searched for and discovered, according to the agent's account, in consequence of a specimen of the spar, marked Monymusk, having been observed in the British Museum.

Zoology.—The wild animals found in this parish are of the same kinds with those common in the north of Scotland, such as deer, roes, hares, rabbits, foxes, &c. Besides the birds more common to the country, great numbers of the woodcock and blackcock are to be found in the woods and young plantations, as also pheasants in considerable numbers, which, having been lately introduced by the proprietor, are now thriving at large.

The cattle and horses are, upon the whole, of a good breed, to which the farmers, in general, are careful to pay some attention; but there is nothing remarkable in their quality or size to distinguish them from those of the neighbouring parishes. Sheep, of which vast numbers were formerly kept in this parish, are now almost entirely banished, being injurious to the young plantations on the sides of the hills where they formerly pastured.

The river Don abounds with salmon and very fine trouts, and contains also some pike. The salmon are observed here to come up for spawning about the end of September, and to return towards the sea about the beginning of April. Their progress depends a good deal on the state of the river; but they are all down by the end of the month.

Forests or Plantations.—There are several extensive woods and plantations in the parish, chiefly of fir, to which the soil in general appears most congenial; but on the lower grounds, the harder woods, such as oak, ash, elm, beech, and plane, birch, alders, and hazel, of all which there are considerable quantities, thrive well, and many of them come to large size. In the old and once beautiful garden of Paradise, laid out in 1719, and now forming part of what is called Paradise Wood, there is a number of large spruces and larches by the river side, upwards of a hundred years old, several of which

measure from 10 to 11 feet in circumference at the lower part of the trunk, and were found, from actual measurement in 1826, to be from 90 to 103 feet of extreme height, and to contain from 170 to 190 cubic feet of timber. The highest and largest of these is a larch. One of the trees, a spruce, which separates into two equal stems at five feet from the root, where it is 11 feet 2 inches in circumference, each rising to 92 feet in height, measures 212½ cubic feet.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Land-owner.—The whole parish is the property of one heritor, Sir James Grant of Monymusk, Bart., lineal descendant of Sir Francis Grant of Cullen, who was knighted by Queen Anne in 1705, and afterwards appointed one of the Senators of the College of Justice by the title of Lord Cullen. That gentleman sold the estates of Cullen, Eden, Down, and fisheries in Banffshire, and purchased the whole lands of Monymusk in 1712, for L. 116,000 Scots, from Sir William Forbes, Bart., ancestor of the present Sir John Stuart Forbes of Pitsligo.

Eminent Men.—Among the eminent characters connected with the parish, Lord Cullen deservedly holds a distinguished place, as having been a gentleman of the highest respectability, both in private life and in his professional capacity. The most profound erudition, unremitting application, and the most inflexible integrity are known to have adorned his character, both as an advocate and a judge. He manifested through life a deep and lively sense of religion, the only true foundation of all real excellence in character; and the fruit of his pious benevolence and parental care for the best interests of the successively rising generations on his estate of Monymusk, are enjoyed by the parish to this day, in the permanent provision which he made for facilitating the education of the poor, and of those at an inconvenient distance from the parish school.

His eldest son, Sir Archibald Grant, was the first proprietor in the north of Scotland who planted upon an extensive scale, and introduced turnip husbandry in Aberdeenshire. He also exerted himself greatly for the improvement of the public roads throughout the district, and took a deep interest in the welfare, both temporal and spiritual, of his tenants, as appears, (among other things related of him,) particularly from an address which he had printed and circulated among them, entitled "Memorandum to the Tenants of Monymusk, January 1756," which contains most excellent ad-

vices and directions as to the management and improvement of their farms, with offers of pecuniary assistance, besides premiums in carts, and tools, and seeds, to encourage and enable them to carry on such improvements as might tend to their prosperity; and in which, after pointing at some of their prevailing vices, he strongly recommends and urges on them a virtuous conduct as one great mean of success, by drawing down a blessing on their endeavours. Nor did his improvements regard the soil alone. It was he who first introduced at Monymusk those improvements in sacred music which have since been so generally adopted, having procured a qualified teacher for the congregation, and taken an active and leading part among the singers himself; whence this, like his improvements in agriculture, gradually overcoming the prejudices of the people, soon made its way through the surrounding country. His successors have also been found indulgent landlords.

Lord Cullen's second son, William, was also a distinguished ornament of the Scottish Bar, and held successively the various offices of Procurator to the Church, and Principal Clerk to the General Assembly; of Solicitor-General, and Lord Advocate; was raised to the Bench by the title of Lord Prestongrange, and afterwards became Lord Justice-Clerk.

Another remarkable character connected with the parish, of date anterior to the above, was George Lesley, a Capuchin Friar of the earlier part of the seventeenth century, whose life and marvellous adventures were first published in Italian by the Archbishop of Fermo, and dramatized at Rome in 1673. His biographer represents him as the son of James, Count Lesley, and Jean Wood, his wife, by whom he was early instructed in the doctrines of the Reformation, and relates wonderful stories of his being miraculously converted to the Roman Catholic faith, while abroad at his education, on which he assumed the name of Archangel; of his mother's great grief at the intelligence, and her disowning of him in consequence; of his returning after many years to the Castle of Monymusk, leading the people to an adjoining mountain, and converting thousands of them to the true faith; and at last the old lady herself, with the other members of the family, and the whole establishment of the castle; with many other marvellous deeds and adventures, more like romance than true history.

The only other eminent character of whom the parish has to boast as a native, is the late Rev. Dr. Alexander Nicoll, canon of

Christchurch, and Regius Professor of Hebrew in the University of Oxford, whose reputation as a general scholar, and a linguist of the very highest order, is well known among the learned throughout Europe. He was born in the village of Monymusk, 3d April 1793, and received the first rudiments of classical literature at the parish school, under Mr Duff, the late schoolmaster. His intense application to study is supposed to have been a mean of shortening his days, which terminated 24th September 1828, in the thirty-sixth year of his age.

Parochial Registers.—There are six volumes of registers belonging to the parish, of discipline and baptisms, &c. including those now running, the oldest of which commences with the admission of Mr John Burnett, late minister of Culross, to be minister of Monymusk, 18th August 1678. The oldest register of baptisms commences 27th May of the same year, and extends to 3d May 1685, from which time till 19th October 1706, there is no record of baptisms. It is also interrupted at some other periods, owing, as is recorded, to the loss of notes by some of the clerks. The register of baptisms is not very regularly kept at present, owing to the neglect of parents in not having their children's names recorded at the proper time, and many of them not at all.

Antiquities.—There is an old castle in the parish, called Pitfichie Castle, which, with the small property formerly belonging to it, is said to have been long in possession of the family of General Hurry, or Urrie, of some notoriety in the times of the Covenanters. More lately it belonged to the Forbesees, as part of the estate of Monymusk, to which it has been long united. The Castle has been unroofed for many years.

About half a mile east from Monymusk House, and close on the bank of the Don, there is a field called the Campfield, on which, it is said, King Robert Bruce's army lay immediately previous to the battle of Inverury, which was the beginning of his good fortune, when contending for the crown of Scotland.

Besides two Druidical circles, one near the village, and the other on the side of a hill about two miles south-west of it, and the remains of a small chapel, surrounded with what appears to have been burial-ground, now covered with full-grown beeches and enclosed in the midst of a corn-field north of the Don, the only other monument of antiquity found in the parish is one figured stone, discovered upwards of forty years ago in a field near the river, about a mile east of the House of Monymusk, where it had

lain from time immemorial, and was conveyed to the nearest part of the public road by order of the late Sir Archibald Grant, and there fixed in an upright posture, where it still stands. The figure of a cross, about four feet high, with rude ornaments cut into it, is very distinct; and below the cross is a double circle ornamented like the cross. It was supposed, at the time, to have been set up at first to mark the boundary of the priory lands on that side where it was found; but as that boundary is now believed to have extended about a mile farther east, no plausible conjecture can be formed at present as to its original use.

In the month of September 1823, in digging a grave in the church-yard, there was found imbedded in the sand, a little below the depth to which the same grave had been formerly dug, a gold coin about the breadth of a shilling, or nine-tenths of an inch, clipped round the edge, and weighing 62 grains. An impression of the coin having, with the view of ascertaining its age, and the meaning of the inscription, been sent to William Marsden, Esq. F.R.S., &c. and Author of "*Numismata Orientalia Illustrata*," or, "*The Oriental Coins, ancient and modern, of his collection, described and historically illustrated*," the following account of it was received from that learned antiquary: "The impression of the coin shewn to me appears to correspond with No. cccli. of the *Numismata Orientalia*, and belongs to a Prince of the Morabetin Dynasty of Morocco.

"The substance of the inscription is as follows:—*Princeps Yúsuf ben Tâshfin. Quicumque aliam quam Islamismam profiteatur religionem, minime ab eo (Deo) acceptabitur, sed die novissimo peribit.*

"*Al-Imâm Abdallah imperator fidelium. In nomine Dei cuditus hic denarius in urbe Marakash (Morocco). Anno 491.—(1097.)*" "22d March 1827. W. M."

When, or how it may have come to this country can be matter only of conjecture: probably in the time of the crusades. It is in keeping at Monymusk House.

Mansion-Houses.—Monymusk House, the only building of note in the parish, is an ancient and spacious mansion, having received additions since first built, and is pleasantly situated on the south bank of the river Don. It has an excellent library, containing about 5000 volumes, including some old and valuable editions of the classics. There is also a very good collection of paintings in

the house, mostly by the old masters, some of which are of considerable value.

There is a distillery in the parish; and a very considerable manufactory of wood is carried on, there being two saw-mills and seven pair of sawyers in pretty constant employment. The timber manufactured within the parish, is cut in the woods both of Monymusk and of the adjoining property of Tillyfour, belonging to the same family, in the parish of Oyne; and, after being sawn into planks and deals, is carried to market in districts of the country where that commodity is scarce.

III.—POPULATION.

The population of the parish cannot be traced, with any great degree of accuracy, farther back than the date of the last Statistical Account. From a comparison, however, of the yearly number of baptisms recorded in the oldest register, with the number of births at present, the population would appear to have been fully greater a hundred and fifty years ago than it is now.

The excess of the population in 1831 above that in 1821 is to be attributed chiefly to the settlement, in several parts of the parish, of younger persons who are rearing families.

The yearly average of births for the last seven years is	80
of deaths, as nearly as can be ascertained, about	12
of marriages,	6
The average number of persons under 15 years of age,	387
betwixt 15 and 30,	278
30 and 50,	216
50 and 70,	109
upwards of 70,	32

The Grant family, residing in Monymusk House, is the only family of distinction residing in, or connected with, the parish.

Number of unmarried men, bachelors, and widowers upwards of 50 years of age,	14
women upwards of 45,	19
Average number of children in each family, reckoning as such those under 15 years of age, and 189 families,	247

There are 2 insane persons, both young men, belonging to the parish, who have been in the Lunatic Asylum at Aberdeen for several years without any prospect of recovery.

Popular Customs.—There are no popular customs or amusements peculiar to this parish at present. Formerly, the foot-ball, now the amusement chiefly of school-boys only, as in other places, was a favourite exercise with persons of almost all ages in the parish, in which parties from other parishes occasionally joined to contend for the palm of victory: and “The Monymusk Christmas Ba’ing,” with its various casualties, has been celebrated in a humorous poem by the late Rev. John Skinner, grandfather of the

present Bishop Skinner of Aberdeen, who was for some time assistant schoolmaster at Monymusk, and afterwards Episcopal minister at Longside, and who, from his great poetical genius, classical knowledge, and literary productions, is not unworthy of a place among the eminent persons connected with the parish.

Habits of the People.—The people are of cleanly habits, and dress genteelly, both men and women, on Sundays, and on other particular occasions. The ordinary food of the peasantry consists chiefly, as throughout this part of the country in general, of the various preparations from grain, with cabbage, greens, and potatoes, but little of butcher-meat being used by them in common. They are, upon the whole, a decent and industrious set of people, and are very regular in their attendance on the ordinances of religion. Their situation and circumstances are, as is common, more or less easy with different persons, but as comfortable, upon the whole, as in the country around, the chief cause of complaint or dissatisfaction among them being the heavy tax on malt, which puts that necessary and wholesome beverage, a drink of good beer, almost entirely beyond the reach of the labourer and poor artisan. Neither poaching nor smuggling prevails among them, or is practised in the parish.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—The number of acres, standard imperial measure, in the parish, which are either cultivated or occasionally in tillage, is about 5370; and of those which remain constantly waste, or in pasture, about 3080. A considerable quantity of waste land, probably about 300 acres, might still be profitably brought under the plough; and the occupiers of farms with such land attached are generally bound to improve the whole, or a certain portion of it, during the currency of their leases.

The number of acres under wood, almost all planted, and great part full-grown, may be estimated about 4150. There have also been planted within the last twelve years about 930,000 firs along the sides of the hills, and about 160,000 oaks and elms in other situations favourable to the growth of these trees. The thinning, felling, and pruning are well attended to, under the care and management of an experienced forester.

Rent.—The average rent of arable land on the larger farms may be stated at L.1 per acre. Some of the smaller possessions or crofts are higher, averaging about L.1, 12s. The average rent of the whole land in tillage is about 15s. per acre.

The average rent or cost of grazing is about L.2, 10s. per ox or cow grazed for the season. There are, as already noticed, very few sheep kept in the parish.

Wages.—The rate of labour for farm-labourers is 1s. 8d. per day in summer, and 1s. 4d. in winter; for wrights or house carpenters and masons 2s. per day through the year. Sawyers receive at the rate of 2s. per 100 feet, equal to about 3s. per day, all providing their own victuals; but these rates are found to vary with the value of agricultural produce, and the demand for the different kinds of labour.

A good system of husbandry is carried on in the parish, a regular rotation of cropping being observed, to which the tenants are bound by their leases; and the most approved modern implements of agriculture are in general use.

The general duration of leases is for nineteen years, which term is considered favourable to the occupier, as being an encouragement to improvement, by giving him an opportunity of reaping the advantage of it.

The farm-buildings have been greatly improved of late years, many of them being built with stone and lime, and slated, in consequence of encouragement given on the part of the proprietor, who supplies the wood gratis, and allows payment at the expiry of the lease for mason-work of the walls, and for slating, but not exceeding a certain amount or extent of building stipulated in the lease, the value to be ascertained by two competent judges, mutually named, or oversmen, in case of their differing. On some of the farms, the fields are well enclosed with stone dikes.

Produce.—The average gross amount of raw produce raised in the parish, as nearly as that can be ascertained, may be reckoned as follows:—

Produce of grain of all kinds,	L.6020	0	0
potatoes and turnips cultivated in the fields,	2970	0	0
hay,	1970	0	0
land in pasture, rating it at L.2, 10s. per cow or full-grown ox grazed, or that may be grazed, for the season,	1450	0	0
the annual thinning and periodical felling of woods and plantations, there being little cut in the woods of Monymusk at present, besides dead and decaying wood,	500	0	0
Total yearly value of raw produce raised,	L.14,910	0	0

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Market-Town.—There is no market-town in the parish, the nearest being Aberdeen, distant nineteen miles from the village of Monymusk. This small village, containing at present a popu-

lation of 131 souls, is a place of some antiquity, as Buchanan, in his history of the reign of Malcolm Canmore, mentions, that that king lay encamped, ad "Monimuseum vicum," at the village of Monymusk, in his way north to quell an insurrection in Moray. It has been almost entirely rebuilt of late by the proprietor, and forms a very neat square, with some fine old trees growing in the centre. It enjoys the conveniency of a daily post, and has at present three weekly carriers to Aberdeen, with which it has easy communication by two turnpike roads, one of which passes through the parish for four miles and a-half, and joins the great north road nearly a mile below Kintore, and the other leads through the parishes of Midmar, Echt, and Skene, in a more southerly direction, to which there is access at about three miles distance from the village, by a good commutation road passing through the parish of Cluny, the whole distance of either of the roads being pretty much the same.

Ecclesiastical State.—The parish church stands on the east side of the village, the entrance to the churchyard being from the centre of one of the sides of the square, and is conveniently enough situated for the greater part of the population. Its distance is somewhat more than two miles from the eastern, and from four to five from the western, extremity of the parish; but the upper part of the parish, which lies among the hills, being but thinly inhabited, there are only four families above three miles distant from the church. The date of its erection is not certainly known, but it is supposed to have been built in the eleventh century, when the priory was founded here by Malcolm Canmore, who, having encamped at the village of Monymusk, as already mentioned, vowed, as Buchanan relates, that, if he returned victorious from his expedition to the north, he would devote the village where he lay encamped to St Andrew, the tutelary saint of Scotland. Having arrived at the Spey, and being about to enter that river, he was stopped by the priests, dressed in their canonicals, who, with his permission, passed over to the enemy, and finished the war without any effusion of blood. In fulfilment of his vow he, accordingly, founded, endowed, and dedicated the Priory of Monymusk, as appears from an old writing in Latin in Monymusk House, bearing to have been extracted from the register of St Andrews, and which, after describing the boundaries of the lands assigned to it, which were ample, concludes to this effect: "And thus these are the marches which King Malcolm bequeathed, on account of a vic-

tory granted to them, to God and the Church of Saint Mary of Monymusk, giving the benediction of God and Saint Mary to all who preserve the rights of the church." Of the buildings of the priory no remains now exist, unless the present parish church, which is unquestionably very old, may, as is supposed, have been coëval with, and formed part of them. The eastern part of the church, commonly called the quire, and now seated for about forty persons, is connected with the main part of the building by a large opening through the end wall, arched in form of a semi-circle. It has a square tower at the west end, 50 feet high, through which is the principal entry, with a large iron clock in it, purchased by the session in 1699, for L. 145, 6s. 8d. Scots, surmounted by a spire 40 feet in height. It was considerably enlarged by the addition of an aisle on the north side, newly roofed and seated, and had the spire renewed in 1822, and is now a very neat and commodious place of worship, and will contain about 580 persons. The sittings are all free; and, with the exception of those in the east end already noticed, are apportioned by the heritor among the several tenants and householders in the parish, the division being subject to alteration at any time, as the circumstances of any of the families may require. The unappropriated seats are also left free for the accommodation of strangers.*

The present manse was originally built in 1737, and was thoroughly repaired, and enlarged by an additional building in 1824. A set of new offices was also built in 1829; and it deserves to be mentioned, on account of the laudable example in these times, that the enlarged church accommodation, on being represented as necessary, and the whole of the above-mentioned repairs and buildings, to the amount of very nearly L. 1400, were most readily agreed to, without any intervention whatever of the ecclesiastical court, decret having been asked merely as a matter of what was judged necessary form, to sanction the plans.

The glebe, exclusive of the garden and site of the manse and offices, measures about 7 acres imperial, and may be worth about L. 12.

The stipend, the teinds having been exhausted at last augmentation in 1824, is L. 162, 3s. 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in money; 51 bolls, 1 firiot,

* In connection with the history of the church, it may not be unworthy of remark, as it is believed to be rather a singular circumstance, that William Allan, the late kirk-officer, who left the parish at Whitsunday 1835, is the fourth in lineal descent of a family who have held that office successively for 133 years previous to the above date.

and 1 peck of meal; and 5 bolls, 3 firlots, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ lippies of bear, the meal and bear payable at the fair prices of the year.

There is an Episcopalian chapel in the village containing 150 sittings, the number of persons in connection with which, in this and the neighbouring parishes, is about 130; but, with the exception of 28 persons within the parish who belong to that communion, and three other Dissenting individuals, all the rest of the population attend the parish church; where Divine service is always well attended. The average number of communicants at the Established Church for the last seven years is 506; for the last three years, 538.

Education.—This parish is well provided with the means of education. There are two public schools in it, the parochial school, and another endowed school called Lord Cullen's School, in each of which the usual branches of education are taught, viz. English reading, writing, Latin, arithmetic, book-keeping, English grammar, geography, &c.

Lord Cullen's School is so named in consequence of its endowment from a mortification by Sir Francis Grant of Cullen, Bart. one of the Senators of the College of Justice, and proprietor of the estate of Monymusk, as already mentioned, who, by a deed bearing date 11th August 1718, mortified 2 chalders of meal yearly out of the estate of Monymusk and Afforsk, to and in favour of such country teachers as the minister and kirk-session for the time being should name or approve, and in such division yearly as might best serve the end set forth in the deed. This continued for a good number of years under the management of the kirk-session, as originally intended; but, owing to circumstances which placed the mortification for a long time, as it were, in abeyance, the annual value of the two chalders was allowed to accumulate to a very considerable sum, which, after building an excellent school and schoolmaster's house, and enclosing a garden in the year 1824, north of the river Don, where the benefit of a teacher was most wanted, and defraying other necessary expenses, has been invested, for better security, in Bank of England Stock. The management of this accumulated fund, and of the annual two chalders, according to a plan prepared by a committee of the presbytery of Garioch, who have the oversight of it, and agreed to on the part of the proprietor of Monymusk, and by the kirk-session, and sanctioned by the Lords of Council and Session,—is vested in the "Heritor of Monymusk, or the legal administrator of the estate for the time being,

the minister of the parish of Monymusk, authorized by, and as moderator of the kirk-session, and the minister of the parish of Chapel of Garioch (in which parish lie the lands of Afforsk) as moderator of the kirk-session thereof." The managers meet half-yearly in the months of January and July, in terms of the regulations, for settling the treasurer's accounts, and any other business regarding the school or funds.

The teacher of Lord Cullen's School receives a salary in meal and money, amounting to about L. 50, less or more, according to the interest of money and the fiars price of grain; and the parish schoolmaster has an allowance from the fund, also in meal and money, of from L. 8 to L. 10, variable with interest and price as above, for teaching ten or twelve poor scholars, less or more, as may be recommended by the kirk-session, and for keeping an evening school three months in winter, for which fees are payable by the scholars, and a Sunday school in summer. A like number of poor scholars, recommended as above, is also taught gratis at Lord Cullen's School, and the poor scholars at both schools are furnished from the fund with all the requisite books. There is also a small surplus fund, to which the excess of income above expenditure is yearly added, for the purpose of keeping the school-house in repair, and meeting any other exigencies necessarily connected therewith.

The salary of the parochial schoolmaster, payable by the heritor, is L. 26, and he also receives from the Trustee of the late Mr Dick's bequest to the schoolmasters of the counties of Aberdeen, Banff, and Moray, about L. 30, less or more, yearly.

The yearly amount of fees at the parish school, which is situated in the village south of the Don, amid the greater proportion of the population, may be about L. 13 at an average, and at Lord Cullen's School L. 10.

The general expense of education per year, in respect of school fees, does not exceed from 8s. to 10s., as the fees are low.

The parochial schoolmaster has an excellent house, with more than the legal accommodation, the repairing and enlarging of which in 1826 cost about L. 200. He has also a good garden.

There are no other regular schools in the parish: nor are any such necessary. There is, at present, a school for females, but unendowed; and one or two other private schools are occasionally kept by aged females, or other uneducated persons, for very young children, before they are able to attend the public schools.

There are, it is believed, none of the young betwixt six and fifteen years of age who cannot read or write : nor are there any persons of any age in the parish, capable of being taught, who cannot read ; and most of them, both men and women, have been also taught to write, as the people, in general, seem sufficiently alive to the benefits of education, with the facilities of which this parish is so well provided.

Friendly Societies.—There are two friendly societies in the parish, one of them named “ Sir Archibald Grant’s Lodge of Gardeners,” established in 1808 ; and the other, “ A Benefit Male and Female Society,” established in 1824. But it is questionable whether they have been productive of any great advantage upon the whole, the quarterly payments being very low, and the benefit derived by sick and decayed members, seldom, if ever, equal to the small allowances promised in their rules and regulations, as has been generally the case with Friendly Societies on the old plan.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—The average number of persons receiving aid from the ordinary poor funds of the parish is 15, for whom these funds, after deduction of the fees usually paid by the kirk-session, afford, at an average, L. 3 each per annum. As actually distributed, however, some have more and others less, according to their various circumstances.

Besides the number of ordinary poor just stated, from 20 to 25 poor persons receive annually, in the month of January, from 15s. to L. 1, 10s. each from the dividends on a charitable fund of L. 765, 3 per cent. consols, bequeathed to the parish of Monymusk, by the late Dame Jane Johnstone Lady Grant, by her last will and testament, bearing date the 12th October 1787 ; the dividends on which are, according to a plan for the management and application thereof, approved of by a Master in Chancery, and sanctioned by the Court, distributed in the month of January yearly, among such poor persons as receive no aid from any other charitable fund belonging to the parish. The management of this fund is vested in four trustees, all residing within the parish, including always, as first trustee, the minister for the time being.

The amount of contributions for the relief of the ordinary poor arises from the following sources : from church collections, at an average, L. 31 ; interest on L. 350, stock at 4 per cent. L. 14, yearly donation from Lady Grant of Monymusk, L. 5 ; other incidental small sums, say L. 3 ; total, L. 53. Extraordinary collections of various amount are also made annually for the Infirmary

at Aberdeen, and for the support of one of the lunatics belonging to the parish; also for the India Mission, Highland Schools, and other schemes of the General Assembly.

The poor here, in general, seem to possess that laudable spirit of honest independence, which renders them very averse from applying for parochial aid, unless compelled by absolute necessity: and there have not been wanting instances of poor persons who had been in the way of receiving it regularly, having declined it as soon as, by a little assistance from their children or friends, they could possibly live without it, and of having again had recourse to it under another unfavourable change of circumstances.

Fairs.—There are three annual fairs held in the parish, two of them at Whitsunday and Martinmas, chiefly for the engaging of servants; and the other on the last Thursday of August, for cattle.

Monthly markets have also been established of late, for the sale of cattle and grain, during the winter months, and are held in the village on the second Mondays of December, January, February, March, and April.

Inns.—There is a good inn, with excellent accommodation, in the village, and an alehouse at the Ferry-Boat, on the opposite side of the Don, both which are found necessary at these stations, for the accommodation of travellers; and they are not believed to have much, if any, bad effect on the morals of the people in general, as they are kept by persons of respectable character, who discourage drinking to excess in their houses, to which but few of the people are much inclined. There is no other public-house in the parish.

Fuel.—The most common fuel consists of peat and turf; but, as moss is not very plentiful in the parish, a considerable quantity of wood is also used, with some coals from Aberdeen, and from Kintore, to which they are conveyed in boats by the Aberdeenshire canal,—the cost of the boll when brought from either place, including the carriage, and the higher price charged at Kintore, being about 7s.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

Since the time of the last Statistical Account, a considerable quantity of waste land, (about 480 acres imperial measure,) has been brought into cultivation; the plantations have been much enlarged, public roads greatly improved, and drainage carried to a considerable extent. The establishment of a distillery has been already noticed; and there is little else worthy of remark under

this head, save the superior appearance and neatness of the farm-buildings and cottages throughout the parish, which, as already observed, have been greatly improved of late years, and are still being improved under every new lease.

November 1840.

PARISH OF MELDRUM.

PRESBYTERY OF GARIOCH, SYNOD OF ABERDEEN.

THE REV. GEORGE GARIOCH, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THE ancient name of this parish, and by which Spalding takes notice of it in his History of the Troubles and Memorable Transactions in Scotland, is Bethelnie, which is a derivative from the Hebrew words בֵּיתֵנוּ (Bethelnu,) signifying *House of our God*. It appears probable, that, at an early period, when sacred edifices were comparatively few in Scotland, the church situated in this parish may have served to accommodate the inhabitants of a large extent of surrounding country. For this reason it may have received the emphatic name of *Bethelnie*, or *House of our God*; and the appellation has been at length extended to the district in the vicinity of the place of worship, which now constitutes the parish. But whether the supposition of a great central religious locality be correct or not, undoubtedly the parish church was, from the earliest time, situated in that district which, to this day, retains the name of Bethelnie. Its site is marked by the place of interment which remains, where its foundations can be seen; and the farm which formerly surrounded it, on which the manse was built, is still called the Auld Kirk.

The modern name of the parish (Meldrum) is probably derived from the Celtic words *Mealldruim*, signifying the shoulder or ridge of a hill. This conjecture is supported by the peculiar nature of the locality, as the whole parish occupies a rising ground of greater or less degrees of elevation. At the northern extremity, the ground ascends to a considerable altitude above the surrounding valleys, and descends by an easy inclination, presenting a variety of rich and well cultivated table-land sloping to the