

Library.—There is one parochial library; it is stationed at Bishopmill.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—The average number of persons receiving parochial aid is 28. The average sum allotted to each yearly is 18s.; the annual amount of church collections is L. 20; the annual amount of interest for money lent out from the poors' fund is nearly L. 11. There is an independent disposition among the poor, restraining them from seeking parochial relief, while they are healthy and able to work; but when old age or distress comes upon them, they do not consider it as degrading to apply for relief.

Alehouses.—There is no inn in the parish, and but four alehouses, two of which are toll-houses; and the fewness of these is, without doubt, much in favour of the morals of the people.

Fuel.—Some peats and turf are still used for fuel, as also a good deal of wood; but the principal fuel, and perhaps the cheapest is English coal, imported to Burghead and Lossiemouth, at an average price of about 1s. 10d. per barrel.

October 1835.

PARISH OF ALVES.

PRESBYTERY OF ELGIN, SYNOD OF MORAY.

THE REV. ALEXANDER GENTLE, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Extent, Boundaries.—THE boundary of this parish is irregular, especially towards the north. It includes about one mile of the coast of the Moray Frith, half way between Burghead and Findhorn; and for about a mile and a half inland, the parish is confined to a mile in breadth by Duffus on the east, and Kinloss on the west, along the sea coast; after which, it extends in breadth, east and west, about $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles. The south boundary is the ridge of the hill of Pluscarden, which is about $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the sea. The church and manse, situated on the north of the turnpike, are readily observed by passengers about midway between Elgin and Forres. On the south, Alves joins the landward part of the parish of Elgin; on the east, the parish of New Spynie; on the north, the parish of Duffus, the coast of the Moray Frith, and part

of the parish of Kinloss; on the west, it joins the parishes of Kinloss and Rafford.

Topographical Appearances.—The face of the country within the parish presents to the eye an agreeable variety of hill and dale,—in the spring and summer, covered with a fresh green, and in the autumn with yellow corn. Admirers of scenery would not call it beautiful, on account of the scanty appearance both of wood and water, and of the large tract of stunted heath, which appears in several parts, especially toward the south and west, close by rich fields of corn or pasture—causing the stranger to ask why the one portion has been so much cared for, and the other so much neglected? The answer is, that the property of the uncultivated parts (called common or *undivided liberty*) is claimed by the three heritors whose lands adjoin. Their respective claims have been under arbitration for upwards of forty years, but are not yet adjusted; in consequence of which, several thousands of acres lie waste, some parts of which are said to be fit for tillage, and the greater part well adapted to the growth of fir. The whole of the common has lately been measured, and, it is expected, will be divided ere long. At the east end of the parish, there is a small conical hill covered with wood, called the Knock of Alves. Like several other places in the neighbourhood, it has been rendered famous by the tradition of a *meeting of Macbeth and the Witches* on the spot. Several years ago, the proprietor, Alexander Forteach, Esq. of Newton, erected, on the top of the Knock, a handsome tower, called *York Tower*. It is a pleasing object amidst the sameness of the surrounding country; and from the top of it, may be obtained an extensive view of the Moray Frith.

Climate.—The air in this parish, as throughout the county of Moray, is dry and salubrious. During the cold season of the year, the prevailing winds are the N. and N. W.; and in the summer months the W. and S. W. It has been said that, on an average, the county of Moray has in the year about forty less of rainy days than the neighbouring counties. In a very dry season, the farmer feels the effects of this in the diminished quantity of straw. The soil, however, in this parish, which is under culture, is for the most part very fertile,—being a deep loam on a clayey bottom. The inhabitants are healthy and active, and instances of a vigorous old age are not rare.

Geology.—There are, in several places within the parish, large beds of freestone, some of which have been partly quarried. It

is found to be harder than usual, and not easily wrought, but very durable. There is, besides, one quarry for millstones at present worked,—from which the mills in the neighbourhood have for several years been in part supplied. In the low ground, in several places, there is still a considerable depth of peat moss. At one time, the inhabitants were abundantly supplied with fuel from the moss grounds. The best portions, however, are now drained, and brought into culture. The peat procured from what still remains uncultivated, emits, when burning, a very strong sulphureous vapour; and as no coal has been found in the county of Moray, the poor are at times but ill provided with fuel. They make great efforts of economy, that they may be able to purchase a small quantity of English coal,—of which several cargoes are imported yearly from Sunderland, and sold at Burghead, and Findhorn betwixt 1s. 8d. to 2s. per barrel. Occasionally, the poor have been assisted in purchasing that comfort, in the winter months, by the donations of benevolent individuals connected with the neighbourhood.

Botany.—Ash and fir, and all kinds of flowering shrubs and common fruit-trees seem to thrive in the soil. The following plants, named according to Hooker's British Flora, have been found growing spontaneously in this parish and vicinity, viz. *Acinos vulgaris*, *Chrysosplenium*, *alternifolium*, *Cerastium arvense*, *Fedia dentata*, *Goodyera repens*, *Hippuris vulgaris*, *Linnæa borealis*, *Petasites vulgaris*, *Silene anglica*, *Solanum dulcamara*, *Teesdalia nudicaulis*, *Thlaspi arvense*, *Trientalis Europæa*.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Ancient State of Property.—It appears, from Shaw's History of the Province of Moray, that at the beginning of last century, the landed property of Alves was more subdivided than at present. There had been then four mansion-houses of resident proprietors, if not more. There are now only two. One farmer occupies as his dwelling-house, the old mansion-house, which had been occupied by the proprietor, Lord Lyon, and afterwards by the family of Brodie before the property was sold to the late Earl of Fife. Some years ago, there were to be seen the remains of three castles, of the smaller size, built as places of defence. The materials of two of them have been used in the building of farm steadings. A considerable part of the third is still standing, (called the castle of Asleisk), indicating in several parts that it had been formed to hold out against a strong body of assailants. The other two are reported to have been of similar construction; they were at first occu-

pied, it is said, by three brothers, named Dunbar, among whom the *discordia fratrum* seems to have prevailed to an unusual degree.

Present Land-owners.—The greater part of the land within the parish is still held by the descendants of the ancient families, whose rights were granted or confirmed by Royal authority. There are six land-owners, viz. the Earl of Moray; the Trustees of the late James Earl of Fife; Henry Joseph Brodie Dunn, Esq. married to the heiress of Milton Brodie; James Campbell Brodie, Esq. of Lethen and Coulmony; Major L. Cumming Bruce of Rose Isle and Kinnaird; and Alexander Forteath, Esq. of Newton. The proprietors of Milton Brodie and of Newton usually reside in the parish. None of the others have a residence in it. The good understanding, however, which has for the most part subsisted between landlord and tenant is evident from this circumstance, viz. that not a few of the farms have been rented by several generations of the same families; additions being made to the original farm at each new lease. There is one tenant now occupying a large farm on the Earl of Moray's estate, who is of the ninth generation on the same ground; there is another tenant on the same estate whose fathers had occupied the same farm upwards of 400 years. Among their discharges of rent was found one signed by *Thomas Randolph Earl of Moray*. This, as a curious relic, was given up to the Earl of Moray's factor; and a renewal of the lease was granted on the most indulgent terms. It has followed, that from the residence of the same families for so long a time, on the same spot, and from the consequent intermarriages which have taken place among them,—many of the present generation are more or less nearly related to one another. Hence, too, arises a strong attachment to the neighbourhood itself,—so that if a livelihood can be obtained in it, they have not hitherto been willing to remove.

Changes in the Mode of Possession.—The rent of farms has from time to time been greatly increased. The rental of the parish, about forty years ago, is said to have been not more than L. 3000. It is now about L. 6000. - Among the changes that have taken place during that period, one is—the letting of land in large farms, instead of the small crofts into which it was formerly divided; another is—the paying of rent in money, and not in grain, wedders, fowls, &c. in which a great part of the rent of some farms used formerly to be paid. Both of these changes have no doubt operated towards improving the cultivation of the soil; more capital is employed, and every part of the work is better done.

Parochial Registers.—The parochial register of the kirk-session is preserved from the year 1649, down to the present time. The manuscript has been somewhat injured by damp and smoke. But the greater part can be read. The registers of marriages and baptisms is also preserved. In the session records, are found frequent intimations of days set apart for prayer, humiliation or thanksgiving.*

Antiquities.—The old military road can still be traced about a quarter of a mile south of the present turnpike. Not many years ago, there was, near the old road, a very large heap of stones, (called Moray's Cairn,) supposed to be commemorative of a battle. Not far from the same place were dug up some Lochaber and Danish axes. For many years, a superstitious fear prevented the neighbours from removing any of the stones from the heap; but at length, the workmen employed in making the new turnpike allowed present convenience to overcome all fears; and the stones of the cairn were thereafter employed in metalling the road. In the churchyard, was dug up several years since, a large stone coffin, such as might be supposed to have belonged to some personage of note. It was found in the ground which had formed the area of the old church.

Ecclesiastical History.—It appears, from Shaw's History of Moray, that the first Protestant minister in this parish was Mr Patrick Balfour, in the year 1567; from which time down to 1646, there had been appointed five ministers,—the last of whom, George Hannay, was deposed in 1646 for opposing the Covenant. In 1649, the kirk-session Records commence with the ministry of Mr William Campbell. The first pages of the Record are filled with the Solemn League and Covenant, written out very carefully, and subscribed by the minister and forty-two heritors and parishioners; to which signatures, are added in the handwriting of the clerk the names of above two hundred parishioners, who most likely were not able to write their own names. From that time to the present, there have been twelve ministers ordained. One of them, named Berroald Innes, was an Episcopal minister. He was ordained by the

* There is in the minute of kirk-session, dated June 22, 1746, the following notice: "The minister made intimation from the pulpit, that the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland had appointed Thursday next the 26th, to be observed as a day of thanksgiving, on account of our deliverance from and suppression of the late rebellion." Connected with the same period of Scottish history, there is a tradition among the older inhabitants, that the Duke of Cumberland on his way to Culloden rested one night at the old manse of the parish of Alves, of which Mr George Gordon was then parish minister, and that part of the Duke's army remained for some time quartered on the inhabitants.

Lord Bishop and Presbytery in the year 1676, and was ejected in 1690. He did not, however, leave the neighbourhood; but occupied a house and a small piece of ground on the border of the parish, where he remained during the rest of his days.* In his room was appointed a Presbyterian minister, Mr John Gilchrist from Leith, of whom it is stated in the minutes of kirk-session, June 22, 1697, "that he was, according to the sentence of the late General Assembly, transported from the parish of South Leith to this parish of Alves." So that there appears to have been an interval of some years at that time (from 1690 to 1697,) before any one was appointed to the stated pastoral charge of the parish.

Until the year 1659 or 1660, Alves included a large portion of what now forms the adjoining parish of Kinloss; and it is evident that, previous to this date, when Kinloss was erected into a parish, the pastoral duties of Alves must have been heavy on one minister and one session. It appears, however, from the old parish records, that in these days the elders were both numerous and assiduous in the performance of their duties. The minute of kirk-session, dated January 9, 1659, contains a resolution of the session to make a new election of elders for the *several districts of the parish*. These districts amounted to eleven, and elders are appointed to each of them. The whole list contains no less than *twenty-seven names*. As all the districts named are within the present bounds of the parish, it is likely that the new election of elders was made on account of the change which was then taking place as to Kinloss. It seems, also, to have been the usual practice of the session to nominate one of its members as ruling elder, to attend the meetings of synod. The exercise of church censure was extended much farther than in modern days. Besides other immoralities,—drunkenness, slander, brawling, theft, absence from church ordinances, profaning of the Lord's day by strolling in the fields, or playing at foot-ball, undutiful conduct to parents, &c. appear from time to time to have been the occasion of administering warning, and even rebuke before the congregation. When, from any cause, there was no sermon on the Lord's day, the congregation was nevertheless convened in the church to hear the scriptures read. On such occasions, the minute bears, "no sermon

* Part of the wall of the choir of the old church is still standing, in which is fixed a slab of Scotch marble, bearing a well written Latin inscription, to the memory of Beroald Innes, from which it appears that, for personal character, he had been highly esteemed, though ejected on account of his adherence to Episcopacy. Some of the descendants of his family are still in the parish. One of them has in his possession a Bible which had belonged to his ancestor:—it was printed in 1616 in the old English character; it has now been partly destroyed by damp.

this day, the people convened and heard the word read," "the collection for the poor," &c.

Not only are week days frequently mentioned as having been set apart for fasting or thanksgiving; but, likewise, special subjects that appeared to call for thanksgiving were often enjoined to be remembered on the Lord's day. From the middle of last century, the vigorous exercise of church censure seems to have been gradually relaxed,—so that for a considerable time back, no mention is made of any delinquent appearing before the congregation, but only before the kirk-session, to be admonished or rebuked. There has long prevailed in this neighbourhood a reverence for the Sabbath, and for the ordinances of religion.

III.—POPULATION.

While Alves included a large portion of Kinloss, the population must have greatly exceeded its present amount. Even after that time, the number of inhabitants within the present boundaries of the parish had been for several generations much greater than what it is now. This may be inferred from the following comparison of the registrations.

Old register for the year 1689,—marriages, 16; baptisms, 83.

Yearly average of the 20 years preceding 1835,—marriages, 5; baptisms, 20.

In like manner, the decrease of population appears from the returns made at different periods.

By the returns made to Dr Webster, the amount of population in 1755 was	1691
By former Statistical Account in	1793, 1111
By Government census in	1811, 922
Do. do.	1821, 947
Do. do.	1831, 945

From the above, it appears that for some time, there had been a rapid decrease; after which the amount had become nearly stationary. The great alteration in the size of farms, already mentioned, is one of the chief causes of the decrease up to the year 1811. Many small crofts were thrown into one large farm; and the surplus population, no longer obtaining dwelling or employment in their native places, went to swell the numbers in the large towns.

By census of 1831. Inhabited houses,	196
Number of families,	201
chiefly employed in agriculture,	110
trade, manufactures, &c.	44
all other families,	47

Language, Habits, &c. of the People.—The language generally spoken is the Scotch. A stranger is struck with the peculiar vowel sounds, given in a great many words, as *whéit* for wheat, *feel* for fool, *pure* for poor, and *wery* for very, &c. Gaelic is not spoken, except by strangers.

The habits of the people are marked by simplicity, frugality, and industry. They have many domestic comforts; and the changes of the seasons bring to them a regular change of occupation. Most of the cottars cultivate a small piece of ground in front of their dwellings, on which they raise a few common vegetables; many of them rear a pig, and, according to the quantity of ground they can manure, the neighbouring farmer allows them to plant potatoes for themselves on a part of his green crop field.

Instances of great age, accompanied with good health and vigour of the mental faculties, are common. The grandfather of one of the present parishioners died at the age of 106 years; an old woman died a few years ago aged 101.

During the last three years there have been 12 cases of illegitimate birth brought before the kirk-session. On this subject it is not unimportant to notice, *1st*, that the delinquents are for the most part hired servants from various quarters of the country; *2d*, that, according to an old usage, female servants for the summer half year are often hired at Whitsunday by the farmer at the public market in Elgin, *without any certificate of character*.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—Between 80 and 100 acres within the parish are planted with wood, chiefly Scotch fir. It is thinned regularly; and of late years larch, and the common kinds of hard wood have been mixed with it. It is calculated that upwards of a sixth part of the surface of the parish lies waste in the state of common, formerly mentioned. The remainder of the surface being divided into about twenty-five large farms, is cultivated with great diligence.

Rent of Land.—The average rent of arable land per acre may be stated at from L. 1, 10s. to L. 2 per English acre. Grazing of a cow or ox per quarter of a year L. 2; do. of a sheep do. do. 1s.

Wages.—Wages of a farm-servant for six months, from L. 4 to L. 6, with victuals; out-door labourers have from 5s. to 6s. per week with victuals; or from 7s. to 8s. without victuals; masons may be engaged at 2s. per day; and wrights at 2s. per day, with victuals, or at 2s. 6d. without victuals; women servants are engaged for six months, at from L. 1, 15s. to L. 2, 5s.; women are engaged to work in the field at 3s. per week in winter, and 4s. in summer; in harvest time cutting and stacking per acre, at from 13s. to 15s.; cutting and building per acre, 8s. to 11s. Thraving is counted at 2½d. to 3½d. per thrave, (viz. two stooks.) Sometimes a man engages with a farmer for the whole harvest, at from L. 1, 15s. to L. 2, 5s. and

a woman engages for the whole harvest at from L. 1, 5s. to L. 1, 15s. Of late years, some having large farms prefer as farm-servants married men. To each, they give a house on the farm, rent free, for himself and family; wages L. 5 in the half-year, with 3 bolls of 9 stone (viz. 27 stone) of oatmeal, and one pint per day of sweet milk. It is found that, with this provision, they can live comfortably with their families; that there is less service required in the master's house, and less waste. During the greater part of the year, they have already breakfasted in their own houses, and have got the horses in the yoke by six o'clock in the morning, and labour till noon; then they rest for two or three hours, during which they dine, and attend to the cattle, after that, they continue at work till six or seven in the evening.

The only country manufacture is that of plaiding, which sells at 1s. 2d. or 1s. 6d. per imperial yard; and of coarse harn, which sells at 8d. or 10d.

Live-Stock.—The cattle are for the most part of a mixed breed, betwixt the Aberdeenshire and the Highland. Some farmers have of late introduced the polled breed from Buchan.

Husbandry.—Most of the tenants are bound by their leases to adopt the fifth or sixth shift rotation of crops. The farms generally are in a high state of cultivation, and some of them have, during the current lease, been greatly improved by being subdivided and enclosed by dry stone dikes, well built, at the joint expense of the proprietor and tenant. The advantage of such enclosures is acknowledged to be very great. Most of the large farms are provided with substantial dwelling houses, of two storeys. Some are slated, others are thatched. A steading of office houses is attached to each. In several instances, the buildings have been erected by the tenant after entering on his lease; such tenants are entitled to claim from the landlord at the expiry of their leases, the value of the buildings erected to the amount of one year's rent of the farm.

Both open and under draining has been executed to a considerable extent. The under draining is in most cases done with stones. It has been tried lately with fir trees of the smaller size, laid lengthwise in the bottom of the drain,—the brush not cut off; one tree being laid above another, the brush of the one being laid along the trunk of the other. The earth being thrown in and levelled, sufficient openings for the water are kept by the branches. In this way, a drain of great length is made in a short time when the trees happen to be near at hand.

Leases of farms usually extend to nineteen years. The great and unlooked for changes in the value of farm produce in the course of nineteen years may render it very difficult for the farmer, with all his industry, to fulfil his engagements. When this occurs, the good sense and good feeling of the landed proprietors have generally pointed out the remedy. They have come forward, and allowed a reduction of fifteen or twenty per cent. on the rent due. This never fails to produce the happiest effects by cherishing good will between landlord and tenant; while it encourages the families of a whole neighbourhood to persevere in that unremitting industry which, "provides *things honest* in the sight of all men."

The chief improvements on the farms, of late years, are the extensive enclosures already noticed; and to these may be added the draining of two mosses consisting of upwards of 150 acres. Those farms which have not the benefit of enclosures nor of proper drains shew at once how much is lost by the want of them.

Produce.—The rental of the parish being about L. 6000, would, according to the usual computation, give about L. 15,000 as the average yearly value of the raw produce of all kinds raised within the parish.

It may be added that the valuation of the rental of most of the land is of an old date. It is stated in the last process of Augmentation to have been made in April 1629, and to have been then set down as 1563 bolls, 2 firlots of victual, and L. 164 Scots of money.

A great part of the grain raised within the parish is shipped at Burghead or Findhorn, and sold in the London market.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Market-towns, &c.—The nearest market-towns are Elgin on the east, and Forres on the west. The turnpike, lying in the most central parts of the parish, renders the communication with the towns very convenient. Besides the mail to Inverness, there are two stage-coaches.

There is no village within the parish. The largest group of houses lies along the high road south of the church. Among these, are two shops for the sale of groceries, meal, &c.; there are also here, a tailor, two shoemakers, and two wrights. The sale of spirits is allowed only in two houses within the parish. These are at a considerable distance from each other, and on different estates. As there are no feus, the proprietor or factor can exercise an efficient control over any improprieties of conduct on the part of the occupants of single houses or shops.

On one of the estates, a range of cottars' houses has been erect-

ed on the following conditions, viz. the cottar builds the house and encloses a small piece of ground for garden; he pays yearly a small rent of 10s., at the rate of L. 4 per acre, for the ground occupied. He is not allowed to subset the house, nor to sell spirituous liquors without express permission from the factor; he may be called on, within twelve months' notice, to resign possession of house and ground, in which case the proprietor pays him for such meliorations of the house as may be ascertained by men mutually chosen. Such a power to eject is not likely to be exercised oppressively, while it preserves a very salutary control to the landlord, who is interested in the moral condition of the neighbourhood. It is perhaps to be regretted that similar arrangements are not more frequent in country districts, and also that, when they are made, too little ground is allotted along with each house.

Ecclesiastical State.—The glebe contains about four acres of good soil, close by the church. The manse is newly built, about a hundred yards west from the church, on a different part of the glebe from the former manse. It is a very commodious and well-finished house, of three storeys, with garden and office-houses very conveniently situated. The stipend, as fixed by the last augmentation in the year 1822, is 14 chalders of victual, half meal, half barley, payable in money, according to the fiars of the county annually, with L. 8, 6s. 8d. Sterling for communion elements. Included in the stipend is the sum of 6s. 1d. yearly in lieu of the manse and croft of the *Chantor of Moray*, an office in the old cathedral at Elgin, which had been counted in former times as annexed to the parsonage of Alves. Taking the average of several years past, the stipend may be stated at L. 200.

The church was built in the year 1769, and, as was usual at that time in country churches, it is long and narrow—75 feet by 25—not the most desirable structure either for speaker or hearers. It is substantially built, and well seated; and having been built when the population of the parish was much greater than at present, it affords fully more accommodation than the law requires. This is owing entirely to the diminution of the number of parishioners, already noticed. There are sittings for about 590 persons. Each farmer has a certain number of seats, rent free, assigned to him by his landlord. These he occupies with his family, servants, and cottars. The sittings in the area of the church were fitted up from the kirk-session funds many years ago, and are let at from 6d. to 1s. 2d. each,—by which means about L. 3 are added yearly to the poors' fund. The church is conveniently situated, being not far from the centre

of the parish; and not distant much more than three miles from any of the habitations. The roads leading to it are for the most part very good; and during the greater part of the year, it is well attended.

The outward means of spiritual improvement to which the people have access are,—besides the opportunity of public worship on the Lord's day,—two Sabbath evening schools in different parts of the parish,—the yearly celebration of the Lord's supper in the month of July,—week days occasionally set apart for public worship,—annual public catechisings in twelve districts,—monthly prayer meetings in the church, commonly on the first Wednesday of the month,—two classes, one of young men, another of young women, about twenty in each class, during the winter months, at the manse in the evening, once a fortnight,—and visiting by the minister and elders in cases of sickness.

It cannot be affirmed that there are not instances of drunkenness and other immoralities; but these are comparatively few. Nor can it be denied that many shew little evidence of vital Christianity, who are yet punctual and even zealous in observing the outward forms. Still, it may be said that the Christian character is always the standard, and that the example of practical godliness exhibited by the few who come nearest to that standard, restrains some from evil, and incites others to a higher measure of what is good, than they would of themselves have sought. Daily worship is kept up in a considerable number of families, though not to the same extent as at former periods. The average yearly number of young communicants (that is communicants for the first time,) is 5. The communicants in all are about 110, of whom 38 are on the roll as male heads of families, according to the last General Assembly's Act on Calls.

During the last seven years, there have been contributed within the parish, partly for charities in the neighbourhood, and partly for the General Assembly's Schools and missionary objects, in whole about L. 112; making as the yearly average of such contributions about L. 16.

There are only four or five families of Dissenters in the parish; they are connected with the Dissenting congregations in Elgin. In one family, two of the members are Papists.

Education.—The school-house is close by the church, and consists of two flats, the under containing school-room, 28 feet by 14, and kitchen; the upper containing three small rooms and a closet. The accommodation is more than the act of Parliament requires;

but the house being built close to the churchyard, and the ground rising on the back wall to the height of eight or ten feet, cause a considerable dampness. The salary is the maximum, L. 34, 4s. 4½d., to which is added a share of the Dick bequest, (probably L. 25 or L. 30 per annum.) School fees and session clerk's fees, L. 20 ;—allowance for garden, L. 2, 2s. 9d.—Average number of scholars for several years past 50 ;—hours of teaching six ;—vacation time in winter, ten or twelve days ; in harvest about six weeks ;—branches taught, reading, writing, arithmetic, book-keeping. Some are taught English Grammar and geography ; occasionally a few are taught Latin, Greek, and the elements of mathematics, preparatory to their attendance at Aberdeen colleges. The Scriptures are read once a-day by the whole school, not as a lesson in reading, but as a means of acquiring the knowledge of the truth.

The heritors give a house and small salary to a female teacher, who gives instruction in sewing, knitting, &c. to about twenty girls. There is also a subscription school at the west end of the parish for the accommodation of several districts in this and adjoining parishes not conveniently situated for the attendance of young children at the parish schools. There are always at the Alves school seven boys as bursars,—their education being paid for out of the interest of money bequeathed by two individuals, and affording about L. 1, 10s. to each. Besides the school fees being paid, there is a small surplus for clothing, which is given to their parents for that purpose. The bursars are nominated by the kirk-session out of those families who seem most to require such aid.

The schoolmaster takes charge of a parish library, consisting of nearly 200 volumes. The readers pay 6d. per quarter. There is a juvenile library for the children, of about 80 volumes. There is also one of the itinerating libraries, of 50 volumes, lent at 1d. per volume, to be returned in two weeks. This last is in considerable demand among the farm-servants and work-people during the winter months ; and indeed that may be said to be the *reading time* with an agricultural population, their hands being at other seasons of the year so full of employment that little leisure time is left to most of them. Not a few of the farmers themselves, however, receive the newspapers regularly, sometimes three or four taking a share of an Edinburgh or London paper. They are generally intelligent and shrewd in all matters relating to agriculture, more from experience and observation than from reading. Books

of history, biography, and travels, are for the most part preferred. To some, books on Scripture subjects are more acceptable.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—There has never been in this parish an assessment for the poor. The average number on the roll is about 26, almost all above fifty years of age. It is said the number would be greater, were it not for the harvest-work, by which some gain an addition to their small means by thraving. A distribution of money is made to the poor by the minister and elders at the church on a week-day, three times a year. They receive in all from 15s. or L. 1, to L. 1, 10s. each yearly. The funds for this purpose are supplied chiefly from the contributions at church on the Sabbath, collected not at the door, but *in hand boxes carried round* by the elders before the congregation is dismissed. The average weekly collection is 10s. There is likewise the yearly interest of a small sum mortified for the poor. A poor person when admitted on the roll of paupers for the first time is required to sign an obligation to the kirk-session, giving them a preferable right to any money, furniture, &c. which the individual may be found possessed of at the time of his decease; and authorizing the kirk-treasurer to take thereof to the amount of what the pauper had received out of the poor funds. The effect of this regulation is to prevent any from seeking to be admitted on the roll, who, having some means of their own, or relatives able to assist them, are not proper objects of public charity. It is evident that the sum given out of the session funds cannot be sufficient for the yearly maintenance of any one. Even all the items which make up the yearly provision of several persons, must be acknowledged to make but a frugal provision: these are,

From the kirk-session yearly, say	-	-	-	L. 1	10	0
Work in harvest for rent of house,	-	-	-	0	10	0
2½ bolls of potatoes from their own planting on the farmer's green crop field,	0	15	0			
Occasional supplies of oatmeal from the farmer,	-	-	-	1	0	0
Do. do. of fuel and other articles,	-	-	-	0	15	0
				<hr/>		
				L. 4	10	0

This is the whole of the yearly provision of such poor persons as are unable to do out-work, except for a short time in the harvest. Formerly, spinning was the great source of maintenance for old women; and since that was done away nothing has come in its place for them.

The average yearly collections at the church for the poor amount to about L. 31. To this are added several small sums from mor-

tifications, churchyard dues, &c. making the receipts in all about L. 45 yearly; out of which, besides the regular allowance to those on the roll, extra supplies are given in cases of sickness, funeral expenses are paid, &c. also the session-clerk, precentor, and church officer; so that there is but a small sum reserved in hand; and probably so much the better,—for it seems to be generally acknowledged that, wherever a large fund is accumulated, the claimants increase in number.

Gray's Hospital at Elgin, to which the poor of all the parishes within the county have access, on presenting the certificate of their parish minister, is of incalculable benefit; and the lunatic asylum, lately attached to it, capable of receiving ten patients at a time, is likely to be found a valuable addition for the relief of the parishes of this county.

October 1835.

PARISH OF BELLIE.

PRESBYTERY OF STRATHBOGIE, SYNOD OF MORAY.

THE REV. DAVID DEWAR, MINISTER.*

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—The name has been traced by some to the Gaelic *Bellaidth*, signifying broom; and by others to *Beul-aith*, signifying the mouth of the ford.

Boundaries, Extent, &c.—The parish is of an oblong quadrangular figure, but narrower at the northern than at the opposite extreme. Its length, from north to south varies from 5 to 6 miles. Its greatest breadth is 4 miles; its mean breadth 3; and its superficial contents in square miles, very nearly 19. The Spey is the boundary on the west; the Moray Frith on the north; Rathven on the east; Keith and Boharm on the south.

Meteorology.—The following meteorological table, embracing a period of ten successive years, is extracted from a register carefully kept by an eminent naturalist, who long resided at Gordon Castle.

* Drawn up by the late incumbent of the parish, the Rev. William Rannie.