

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

The condition of the people might be ameliorated by enlarging their tenements of land, granting leases, and giving encouragement to schools. Churches and school-houses have been hitherto much neglected.

Drawn up December 18 9, revised January 1841.

PARISH OF NORTH UIST.

PRESBYTERY OF UIST, SYNOD OF GLENELG.

THE REV. FINLAY M'RAE, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THE term *Uist* may be distinctly traced to the word *Vist*, which the Danes and other northern nations are said to use, signifying *the west*.

Extent, &c.—The length of North Uist is about 30 miles, and its breadth varies from 8 to 14 miles. The exact number of square miles it contains, it is not easy very accurately to ascertain, the greater part of it being, beyond description, indented by arms of the sea and fresh water lakes.

North Uist lies nearly in the middle of the range of islands from the But, or northernmost point of the Lewis to Barra Head, the southernmost part. This range taken together is denominated the Long Island.

Boundaries.—It is bounded on the north-east by the Sound of Harris, varying in breadth from 1 to 8 miles, and which separates it from the parish of the same name; on the south-east, by the Minch, or a channel of about 16 miles breadth, which divides it from Skye; on the south-west, it is divided from Benbecula, a part of the parish of South Uist, by sands of some extent, passable on foot at low-water, but covered by the sea at about half-tide; and on the north-west, by the Atlantic Ocean.

Topographical Appearances.—Its figure is almost triangular. Along the east coast, there is a range of hills, scarcely deserving the name of mountains, rising gradually from the north to the south, and varying in height from 300 to above 700 feet. These are intersected, not by ravines, valleys, and rivulets, but by inlets.

of the sea, forming safe and commodious harbours, and supplying shelter and safety to the weather-beaten ship and to the storm-weary sailor.

Within this range, towards the west, is a large extent of soft, deep, barren moor, intersected in every direction by fresh water lakes of several miles in length. Farther on still, in the same direction, another less regular range of hills, of no great height, arises covered with heath and some coarse pasture; and beyond, is a thin black moor, covering hard gravel, and occasionally interspersed with flats and meadows. Next to this, still to the west, is the part principally appropriated to pasture and culture, which exhibits a striking contrast to the barren, boggy, and useless scene behind.

With the exception of a few bold rocky headlands, the west coast is all along bounded with light white sands, chiefly formed of shells, crumbled and pounded by the irresistible force of the Atlantic waves, gathering strength as they uninterruptedly roll their magnificent, awfully grand, and incalculable force upon the shores. The sand, or rather shells, thus literally ground to beautiful fineness, is, when dry, wafted by the winds into the interior of the country to a very considerable distance; and possessing the qualities of lime, it adds much to the productive qualities and the beauty of the belt over which it extends. This belt which, generally speaking, is the only cultivated part of the west side, is exceedingly beautiful and pleasant in the summer and autumn months. If these seasons be accompanied with warmth and moisture, this part yields the richest pasture of white and red clover, and other plants and herbs delighting in dry sandy situations. It also yields luxuriant crops of barley or bear, and, under proper management, grain crops of every description. In dry seasons, however, by the heat of the sand, the grass becomes sickly, withered, and of a burnt appearance; the crops on the *machirs*, a term used for sandy soil, fail; and vegetation appears almost destroyed. Although, during a favourable summer season, the country exhibits a delightful prospect of beauty and luxuriance, the scene is totally changed during the winter and spring months. Without high hills, and destitute of trees to shelter from the tremendous gales which during these seasons prevail, bare and unprotected, the face of the country lies exposed to their influence. The finer, the softer, the more tender, and the more valuable grasses are melted away by the rain, the frost, and storms; and the cattle, at

this time of the year, principally depend for their sustenance on the stores of the corn-yards; and if this source prove not sufficient, the loss of many valuable cattle is the consequence, and a scarcity of provisions among the poorer of the inhabitants in summer. The cattle being out-liers, or not housed, in the circumstances I have stated, they must suffer. But the remark does not apply to the east side of the country, where there are excellent winterings for cattle. The west side of Uist is not, for the reason stated, so valuable for wintering as the less fine and more rough pasture of Skye and Harris.

Caves.—Of caves or caverns—there are only two worth describing. One of these is at the point of Tighary, situated at a short distance from the parish church. It is hollowed, a considerable space in the rock, by the action of the waves, which beat with violence against the point where it is formed. The outer or external side of the cave is naturally yet regularly arched through the solid rock. Within this arch, from the superincumbent surface, is an opening of about twelve feet diameter. The immense volume of flood poured into the cave, too copious at once to recede, rises during and after a storm, as if from the bowels of the earth, in splendid magnificence, to the height of upwards of 200 feet. It is called Sloch-a-chorry, or cave of the kettle. Three miles from this, on the farm of Scolpeg, is the other cave, similarly formed, but more extensive and capacious, and in consequence not producing the like phenomenon; but exhibiting awful grandeur to such as admire

“Cliffs of darkness, caves of wonder,
Echoing the Atlantic’s thunder.”

Harbours.—It has been already observed that the greater part of the coast washed by the Atlantic is bordered with flat sands. This renders it inaccessible and unsafe for vessels of considerable size. There are some places, however, on the west coast, where vessels belonging to the country and others take shelter, and ship kelp in the summer season. These places are Digmore, on the farm of Balranald, not far from the middle of the parish. The bay of Houghary, a few miles farther north, where, at an inconsiderable expense, a key or breakwater might be erected to protect small vessels while shipping or discharging such produce as might be exported from or imported to the very populous district in its immediate neighbourhood.

At a distance of about six miles farther north, at each end of the Island of Vallay, there is a safe anchorage. That at the

east end of the island, if better known, might afford safety to ships in distress.

At the Island of Lingay, ten miles farther north still, there is an excellent anchorage.

The best of these are, during the stormy season, dangerous on account of the rocks, shoals, and breakers by which they are surrounded, and will only be sought for in cases of extremity and danger. In order to afford a chance of relief and safety, it is proper they should be known.

Six miles to the west of North Uist lies the Island of Husker, about two miles long but very narrow. In this island there is likewise an anchoring-place. From its situation, and a short distance to the west of it being clear of rocks, it would prove an eligible station for a lighthouse, which, in connection with that lately erected at Barrahead, would undoubtedly be the means of warning many ships of the danger of getting embayed and wrecked on a dangerous coast.

If nature has denied to one side of North Uist places of protection and security for shipping, she has amply remunerated the deficiency to the other. The south-east coast is very bold, bounded all along by the range of hills or mountains already described, except where intersected by inlets of the sea. These inlets, situated at nearly regular distances of six miles from each other, form safe and commodious harbours. That farthest north, situated at the boundary of the parish in that direction, is Cheesebay, a harbour of easy access from the south-east, and safe for vessels of any burden at all seasons of the year.

South of this is Lochmaddy, which, by the rising ground on either side, and the numerous islands it contains, forms not a harbour only, but harbours, numerous, safe, and capacious, sufficient to supply accommodation for almost any amount of shipping. It likewise affords an admirable outlet for vessels going either north or south. It is well-known and is much frequented. It derives its name from three bold rocks, called Madies or dogs, nearly in a line, a little beyond the entrance of the harbour. Two of these rocks are decidedly basaltic, rising precipitously from the deep to the height of about eighty feet; and although within 100 yards of the coast, they are of a character and species totally different from any rock along its shores. As lighthouses are, in this age, fortunately multiplying for the encouragement of commerce, and the safety of human life, few stations are more suitable than Maddy More, the

highest of the basaltic pillars mentioned, which points to, or rather is at the very entrance of one of the finest harbours in Scotland. South of this is Loch-west, which extends six miles into the country. The entrance is narrow, but the anchoring-ground safe, and would undoubtedly be more frequented, did not its more capacious and better-known neighbour, Lochmaddy, almost monopolize the trade.

Southward still is the harbour of Rhueva, which, likewise, is very narrow at its inlet, but safe when entered. And lastly, at the southern extremity of the parish, is the harbour of Keallin, formed by the point of the same name and the Island of Ronay. It is considered safe for vessels of no large burden.

The grounds along these harbours, generally barren and mossy, afford no idea of the fertility and beauty which the west side presents.

Islands.—About two miles from North Uist, and to the north of it, lies Boveray, an island a mile and a-half long and half-a mile broad. It is very fertile, supporting thirty families in comfort equal to that possessed by others of their class in this part of the country. Further south, and adjoining the main-land of North Uist, is Orinsay, about half-a mile long, and insulated only at high water. Of this description there are several along the west and south-west coast of the parish. Four miles from this coast to the westward lies Vallay, likewise an island at high water, and separated from the shore by a spacious strand of nearly two miles, which is dry within two hours of high water, and at low neap-tides is not covered by the sea. It is two miles long, and about a quarter of a mile broad; nearly the whole of it sandy. It is beautiful in pasture, and fertile in crops when the summer is rainy, but produces very little of either when that season is dry. The next island is Husker, already mentioned. The islands of Kirkebost and Illeray stretch along the west coast, both insulated only at high water. The latter is about four miles long; the former, or Kirkebost, is a mile long, but of no great breadth. This island was at one time of considerable value. It is composed of the fine sand already described, and being exposed to the western gales, a great part of it was literally blown away, and the sea now occupies fields which formerly produced fine crops of bear or barley. This destruction took place before a process now practised to obviate such a misfortune was known, to which we shall in the proper place advert.

Along the south-west coast, the strand, dividing North Uist from

Benbecula, is studded with a great cluster of islands of various sizes. Grimisay, the largest of these, formerly considered of little value, now supports 40 families. At the southernmost point of North Uist is the island of Ronay, which at one time was of little value, but is now improved by culture, and considered one of the most valuable grazings in the parish.

Besides those described, there are three islands or large rocks which lie opposite the west coast, and which, from time immemorial, have been attached to the farms opposite to them, in various divisions. These are still retained possession of, not for their pasture,—for pasture there is none,—but for the seals they produce. In the proper season, under certain regulations, a boat is sent to each rock, the crew being furnished with large clubs, which they use dexterously. When successful, the division is made according to ancient rule, with scarcely a murmur or dispute. The proprietor is entitled to four, and the minister to one seal. This the latter receives not as a tithe, but because the glebe comprehends a part of a farm which is entitled to a share of the rock.

There are a great number of islands in the inlets of the sea; and also in the fresh-water lakes. The larger and more important islands in the latter have become the principal resort of the red deer.

Diseases.—Typhus fever, formerly so fatal, is now hardly known. This may undoubtedly be ascribed to the change in the habitations of the people, which took place in consequence of the lotting system. Before this system was introduced, the whole houses on a farm, to the number of from 20 to 50, were crowded and huddled together in a manner most unfriendly to cleanliness; but now, every small tenant has his cottage on his own croft, each at some distance from his neighbour's. The climate, notwithstanding, cannot be said to be unhealthy, and, though humid, less rain falls here than in Skye, where the exceedingly high mountains attract the clouds with a force conveying them over and beyond this comparatively flat country.

Hydrography.—We have stated that there are numerous fresh water lakes of considerable extent; with some of these the sea communicates at high tides. They are inhabited by a few salmon and trout of various kinds, and of good quality and flavour. Though there are no fresh water streams deserving the name of river, there are some inlets of the sea of great strength and rapidity. Over three of these, wooden bridges have been erected, which have immensely shortened the line of road.

Geology.—The chief rock in this parish is the stratified species called gneiss. Intermingled with this interesting primitive deposit, other rocks occur more or less abundantly in beds, veins, &c. We trust, that, ere long, some one competent will be induced to visit us, and examine the numerous interesting geological arrangements of our district.

Zoology.—The variety of aquatic birds along the coast, and in the innumerable islands of the fresh water lakes, is numerous beyond description : there, thousands of the duck tribe build their nests and hatch their young. Of these the largest and most beautiful is the eider-duck, valuable more for its feathers than flesh, the flavour of which is coarse, fishy, and rank. The male is elegantly streaked with white along the sides, and the other part is a dusky brown, the last being the prevailing colour of the female.

This kind, though now numerous, was unknown, I am informed, not many years ago. Besides those that rear their young on our shores, vast numbers emigrate and winter with us, such as the widgeon and many others. Swans, too, annually pay us a visit, and by their early or late appearance, the natives anticipate a severe or mild winter. The gray wild geese are inhabitants of, and hatch in, the islands and along the shores of the fresh water lakes; whence in August, they come to the cultivated plains, in flocks of five and six hundred, and attack the barley fields. To obviate their destructive attacks, fires are lighted, clappers driven by the wind are erected, and some other devices used to scare them away. In winter, they are joined by innumerable flocks of the barnacle goose, and both are seen in flocks of incredible numbers. The green plovers in large flocks are here for the whole year, and also the curlew.

The May fowls, a species of curlew, pay us a visit, and remain with us during that month. Moorfowl, snipe, and woodcock are inhabitants of our hills and moors, and pigeons of our caves; so that to the sportsmen there is presented a great variety of amusement, at all seasons of the year. To these may be added other animals, in compassing the destruction of which, the sportsman seems to enjoy no small delight. Of these, along the shore are the otter and the seal; and in the larger islands on the fresh water lakes so often mentioned, is a considerable number of red-deer. The mode of stalking the last is so peculiar that we are tempted briefly to describe it. The sportsmen rendezvous at a place previously fixed on, and each with an attend-

ant is appointed to a pass along the lakes, which he cautiously approaches, and when all are presumed to be at their stations, another party, with a small boat provided for the purpose, come up as quietly as possible. The deer, scared from their fastnesses in the islands, make for some of the passes, and it very rarely happens that a chance of a good shot is not afforded to some one or more of the sportsmen concealed under the cover of the heather.

The black-cattle, sheep, and horses, which formerly were bred here, like those throughout the Long Island, were small, and a very great proportion of the sheep still reared are the indigenous breed, and of very diminutive size. Their numbers are considerable, but they never thrive so as to enable their possessors to sell or export any of them beyond the island. Their mutton is deliciously fine-flavoured; their quantity of wool, though very fine, is exceeding small, each fleece being from one and a-half to two pounds in weight. Stocking with sheep has been introduced lately in a few favourable situations, and on a limited scale; and they appear to answer well. All the sheep exported or sold from the parish, do not exceed from six to seven hundred.

The breed of black-cattle has been immensely improved, within the last twenty years, by the introduction of superior Highland cattle and bulls from various quarters, at an enormous expense; and in consequence, there are some stocks which yield to none in the Highlands, in point of united symmetry and weight. The cattle of the small tenants, too, are on a scale of rapid improvement, in consequence of the liberal and wise measure which the proprietor some years ago commenced, and still continues, of giving premiums annually for the best bulls exhibited by the small tenant farms. There can be no doubt, that, by a similar regulation and encouragement, the small breed of sheep would be rendered more valuable, and would amply compensate for the necessary outlay.

The horses used by the tacksmen are of equal size and value as those kept for similar purposes in the south of Scotland; and in general, the horses of the small tenants are of a larger and better description than formerly.

We have already mentioned that the lakes are stocked with trout. In some of them with which the sea communicates, sythe and some other fish are found of large size and of fine quality, and partaking in some degree of the flavour of fresh water trout. The inlets of the sea are not very productive of many varieties of fish. On the east side are some good red or rock cod, and on the west, along the fords.

or channels of the strands, and on the adjacent shallows without, are very fine large flounder, little inferior to turbôt. The great resource for sustenance, particularly in a season of scarcity, is the cockle—a shell-fish of no large dimension, which is found in inexhaustible abundance on the strands, where, on the retiring of the tide, hundreds of people are seen collecting them. They are an excellent and nutritious food; made up into stews with some milk and with a little bread, they form a principal part of the diet of poor people in seasons of scarcity. As an article of luxury, they form excellent sauce with fish of every description, and used raw they are little inferior to oysters. Besides this valuable shell-fish, there are razor-fish, spout-fish, welks, muscles, limpets, and in many parts lobsters, crabs, clams, &c.

The cockle, besides its importance as an article of food, is of importance in some manufactures. Its shell when burned forms the best lime known. In strength, it is superior to any other, and in whiteness it vies with snow itself. In a manufacture of kelp into soda, lately erected by Lord Macdonald at Lochmaddy, the cockle shell is used in place of lime.

The quantity required for this, and used for lime in this parish, cannot be of less value than L. 200 a-year.

Botany.—It is not our intention to enter into any lengthened detail on this subject, but merely to mention a few grasses and plants which are converted to the immediate benefit of the inhabitants. Amongst these the most generally and beneficially used is the bent, a grass which grows in the driest sand-banks to the height of from one to two feet. It is very tough, and in some degree elastic, and is used by the poor people for many purposes, such as mounting for their crooksaddles and creels, sacks for their corn, meal, &c. It makes excellent mats for doors and passages. But its principal use is, to plant it for the suppression of sand drift. The wild spinage and wild carrot are used for food; the tormentil root, for barking leather; the rue water-lily root and crottle, for dyes; the hemlock, foxglove, tussilago, wild thyme, and trefoil are used medicinally; the black and red slock or laver, found on the rocks, makes excellent soup; and dulse is used in a raw and boiled state. Here we may mention also, a kind of earth found in the moors, used for cleaning metals, called *moine nan urnud*, and an earth termed *dubhoch*, used with other mixtures for dyes.

The insect most injurious to vegetation, and particularly de-

structive to corn at an early stage of its growth, is the grub-worm, against whose inroads no effectual means have been devised.

At some remote period, woods undoubtedly had extensively grown in this quarter, although now no trees naturally grow in it. That this had been the case is evident from the fact, that the roots of trees are found in peat mosses, and, what is still more remarkable and unaccountable, they are found under high-water mark, nearly as low as the water recedes at spring-tides, imbedded in black soil or moss, exposed to view in places where the sand, by the action of the sea, has been washed away. This is particularly the case, on no limited scale, near my residence. From this circumstance it may be inferred, that the land must have largely extended its bounds beyond its present limits. This is still less doubtful from the fact, that several miles from the shore, moss is taken up on the flakes of anchors, where, covered by the sea, it could never have grown. But we must repress speculating and return to statistics. An opinion had long prevailed that the sea-air prevents the growth of trees. This, in fact, is not the cause, but the want of shelter. Were the experiment fairly tried, there is not the shadow of a doubt that trees would grow in sheltered situations, and from these the plantations might be extended. This was put to the test some years ago by a gentleman, who was then factor of North Uist. He planted a corner of a field in a well sheltered situation with trees, which have grown and continued to thrive beyond expectation; and the black thorn hedge has been planted by another, which is flourishing. Neither of these is at a distance from the sea.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Amongst the remarkable characters connected, but not exclusively, with this parish, we may notice a class of persons who have passed away for ever, with the age and habits which encouraged and fostered them. In the last generation, every farm and hamlet possessed its oral recorder of tale and song. The pastoral habits of the inhabitants led them to seek recreation in listening to, and in rehearsing the tales of other times; and the *senachie* and the bard were held in high esteem. As—to use the language of commerce—demand produces supply, so a number of bards arose, possessing various grades of genius and excellence. Amongst these was John MacCodrum, who lived in the last generation—a man in low circumstances, born and brought up in this parish, and who scarcely ever went beyond its bounds—who possessed

a poetical genius of the highest order; and composed in the Gaelic language, the only one he understood, poems and songs on various subjects; some solemnly sublime, some pleasantly humorous, some bitterly sarcastic. Such is the rapid change that has taken place in the habits of the people, that productions such as his, which in former ages would have been repeated with delight, and handed down through numberless successive generations, are already, since they are not in print, greatly forgotten, and in a few years more will be entirely lost.

Macpherson seized on the last moments it was possible to preserve the sublime and majestic Ossian from passing to forgetfulness.

Lord Macdonald, the representative of the great Macdonald of the Isles, is sole proprietor of this parish. His ancestors possessed it almost from time immemorial, at least for centuries back; indeed, since the time of the great Somerled, *Rex Insularum*, the founder of the clan. And in ages gone by, some of the chiefs, and always several near branches of the family, lived in it.

Parochial Registers.—No parochial registers were kept till lately in this parish; and even now, the entries from the more remote districts of it are irregular.

Antiquities.—In some of the burying-grounds, particularly in the island of Husker, (anciently named *Iollen na Moinoch*, or *Island of the Monks*,) are found several crosses rudely cut on stone. There are also two stones or obelisks of large size; the one at Balmartin, near the centre of the parish, named Caracrom, regarding the erection of which tradition is totally silent. The other is opposite the island of Kirkebost. It is called *clach mhore a chi*, and is said by universal tradition to have been erected to commemorate a battle of the same name; but when or by whom fought, I have not been able to ascertain. At Carinish, the south-west point of the parish, there is a ruin of large dimensions, called *Teampul na Trianaide*, or Trinity Temple, which, by the tradition of the inhabitants, is said to have been built by the daughter of Lorn, when she was separated from the Lord of the Isles. I have in my possession a document, which is a copy of what is said to have been the original charter of dedication of some lands in Uist to the Trinity and blessed Virgin Mary Church at Carinish, by Godfrey Macdonald, Lord of Uist, in the year 1389. This, should it be genuine, does not contradict the tradition.

Near the tops of two hills in this parish are immense heaps of stones; some of them of large size. They are called *barps*, a

word evidently not of Celtic origin. It may probably have been derived from barrow, a heap or mound. Be this as it may, the uses for which these immense piles were, with Herculean labour, put together, are now unfortunately unknown; and, in the absence of all authentic record and tradition, conjecture, at best uncertain, is all that can be substituted. Some, from their formation, suppose them to have been Druidical circles or Temples. Some, that they were towers forming places of defence and protection at a very early period, against the incursions of enemies, while they likewise served the purpose of beacons to give warning to the inhabitants of the approach of danger. This conjecture is in some degree supported by the circumstance, that above Roudh in Harris, and also in Barra, there are similar constructions, but of less magnitude, and all so uninterruptedly in a line, that a beacon-fire lighted in any of them would be seen by all. It is, however, more probable that they were the tumuli of eminent warriors.

Modern Buildings.—Other remarkable buildings in this parish are the Danish forts or castles. They are generally built of a circular form, in the middle of fresh water lakes of no great depth, and accessible from the shore by causeways, some now, and formerly most probably all, above the level of the water. Many of them have outer protecting walls.

These duns, as they are called, are about twenty in number. They were occupied as places of residence by the more powerful families, after the Danes ceased to infest these parts. One of them was built in Lochscolpeg, a distance of four miles from the parish church. Donald Herroch, (so called from his having been born in Harris,) a descendant of one of the Lords of the Isles, and himself a very powerful individual, occupied this dun as his place of residence.*

* The tradition of his tragical end is confirmed by a great variety of circumstances. Some of his relatives, jealous of his influence and power, and desirous to seize upon both, along with his property, fell upon the following expedient to compass his destruction:—They employed an accomplice of the name of Paul, a low mean wretch, to put their intention into execution. On an occasion when many of his relations and pretended friends went to visit him,—after enjoying for some days his hospitality, they proposed various athletic exercises for pastime. Amongst these, it was suggested to try who should leap highest, they knowing that Donald Herroch's strength and agility would carry the palm of victory. Paul had previously prepared a strong leathern thong, with a running loop or noose, right over the place where the leap was to be taken, and at such a height that it might easily be reached. He was himself in the next apartment,—which was divided by a wooden partition from that in which the company were collected,—holding the end of the thong. Another accomplice was employed to give the signal when Donald Herroch leaped; and Paul, at the moment Donald's head was within the loop, drew the thong with savage determination, and

Last summer some silver coins were found in a sand hillock; in the island of Boreray. They are various coins of James VI. and are in an excellent state of preservation.

The greater number of the tacksmen occupy comfortable and commodious slated houses; and many of the farm-offices are of the same description. Besides these, the church, three mills, and three public houses are slated.

The cottages occupied by the small tenants are, in general, annually-thatched, at a great sacrifice of time and labour.

III.—POPULATION.

The population in 1801 was	3010
1811	3863
1821	4971
1831	4603

The diminution has been caused by upwards of 600 souls having emigrated in the year 1828 to British America; and, though a few have since followed their friends across the Atlantic, the population is still excessive. It is now considerably greater than it was in 1831. The census of that year we shall keep in view, in the following statements.

The average of the various ages of the population is as follows :

Males under 15 years of age,	911	—females,	988	=	1899
betwixt 15 and 30,	588	do.	625	=	1213
30 and 50,	379	do.	453	=	832
50 and 70,	236	do.	254	=	490
above 70,	83	do.	86	=	169
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	2197		2406	=	4603

strangled him. From this circumstance he was called *Paul na Hellidh* or *Paul of the Thong*. His life was short. Revenge, which, in barbarous ages, takes a summary mode of inflicting punishment, soon overtook him. In a few weeks thereafter, while Paul was building a stack of corn, from the top of it he observed, at some distance, a person of large stature rapidly moving towards the place. He hastily asked those about him from what airt the wind had blown the day before. On being informed it was from the east, and a leading wind from Skye, he exclaimed, the person at a distance must be Angus, commonly called *Aonas Fionn* or *Fair*, son of Donald Herroch, who possessed some part of Troternish in Skye, and that it was time for him to look to his own safety. At full speed, he fled to the church sanctuary at Kilmuir, a distance of about three miles. Angus saw him at a distance, and, following him with still greater speed, just as he was crossing a small rivulet that bounded the sanctuary on the south side, bent his unerring bow, and the arrow pierced Paul in the heel. He fell; his legs in the water and the rest of his body on the land within the sanctuary, which to this day is called *Shead Pholl*, or *Paul's Field*. This field forms part of the glebe of this parish. It is immediately adjoining the church; and the scene is pointed out about 100 yards from it. A blind man, a *Chomhalt* of Donald Herroch, is said to have taken a brutal and indescribable revenge on Paul, which put an end to his lingering life.

The memory of *Paul na Hellidh* is still held in universal detestation, while the descendants of Donald Herroch have since his time possessed and still possess large farms in North Uist. Loehscolpeg, in which is, or rather was the dun, where Donald Herroch was so barbarously sacrificed to the evil passion of avarice, was some years ago drained by a gentleman living in its immediate neighbourhood; and on the side of the dun he has erected a small octagonal building.

Of those above ninety, there are 2; and last month one man died aged 102 years.

It has been already stated, that Lord Macdonald is sole proprietor of the parish. He does not reside in it: The number of families in the parish is 838. Inhabited houses are 797; uninhabited and now building, 17. Number of fatuous persons, 9; dumb, 2; deaf, 2; deaf and dumb, 1. There are 3 blind, two of whom support themselves by their own industry.

Language, &c.—The language spoken is the Gaelic, which the people speak with uncommon fluency and elegance. One-fifth of the whole population above the age of twelve years understand and speak English. Such of them as are in the habit of going to the south of Scotland for trading or for working, are fond of interlarding some English or Scotch phrases with their own beautiful and expressive language. This bad taste is confined to so limited a number, that it has but slightly affected the general character of their native tongue. There are only five individuals in the parish who do not understand the Gaelic, and some of these have made considerable progress in its attainment. It was formerly noticed, that taste for song is, among the lower order, fast on the decline; so also is that for music, of which they were remarkably fond. At funeral processions, which had been, and still are conducted with remarkable regularity, the pipes, in strains of pathos and melody, followed the bier, playing slow, plaintive dirges, composed for and used only on such occasions. On arriving near the church-yard, the music ceased, and the procession formed a line on each side, between which the corpse was carried to its narrow abode. But the custom of accompanying burials with music, is now almost universally abandoned; and there are some individuals—doubtless with good intentions—whose zeal has not been wanting to put down the practice.

The people are remarkably cleanly in their habits. Though far from woods, their houses in general are more capacious, and in every respect of a better description than the habitations of many of the same class in more favoured situations. Many of these have their chimneys and their glass windows, and their beds boxed with timber at the back, on the top, and at both ends; and all sweep and sand their earthen floors daily. They dress, too, in a style superior to that of most of the islanders; and are even fastidious in this respect, and will not appear in public places, without being well dressed. The men dress in kelt or cloth of

native manufacture; and the women are seen to most advantage in beautiful strips and tartans of their own manufacture. Of late years, however, the cottons and calicoes of Glasgow, in several instances, have superseded the native female dress; and the straw bonnets have pretty extensively overcome the neat head-dress, the hair kept together by a single comb, and preserved from confusion by a slight kerchief. Neither of these innovations are improvements, but the reverse. The ordinary food is potatoes and barley-bread, which are almost exclusively used among the poorer class. The small tenants of a better class use, in addition; some milk in summer, and mutton and beef in winter.

The gentlemen farmers live genteely, comfortably, and economically. The peasantry enjoy a considerable share of happiness. Their chief earthly anxiety is to pay their rents, retain their small possessions, and keep their families about them. The gentlemen are well educated, and add to their other comforts many of the mental enjoyments which the overflowing press of the age so extensively furnishes. The common people are sober, industrious, sagacious, and acute, full of curiosity and exceedingly inquisitive. They are insinuating and even artful in their address, obliging and peaceable in their dispositions. Those of them in more comfortable circumstances are honest; but amongst the poorer and more ignorant, some are addicted to petty theft. It is amongst the last class alone, that this vice and other immoralities more frequently are found. The greater part of the better sort are most regular in their attendance on religious worship and ordinances, and correct in their moral habits. In this last respect, the gentlemen farmers set a praiseworthy example, which undoubtedly has a happy influence.

Smuggling has for years been completely abolished, not so much by the exertions of the excise, as by the wise and determined measures adopted by the proprietor and his managers for the purpose.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

The number of families employed in agriculture, 602; in trade, manufactures, &c. 69; retail trade and handicraft, 103; wholesale capitalists, professional persons, &c. 18; other males, 99; male servants upwards of twenty years of age, 92; male servants under twenty, 29; female servants, 111.

Agriculture.—

The number of acres (Scotch measure) in the parish which are cultivated or occasionally in tillage,	11,200
The number of acres constantly in pasture,	42,360
In sand drift,	1,688

55,288

Properly speaking, there is no undivided common, as the whole parish is the property of one individual. Such parts of the moor as have hitherto been grazed or held in common by the tenants of several farms, are now about to be divided, and its own share given respectively to each farm.

Wages.—The rate of labour for farm-servants for the year is from L.5 to L.9 Sterling, with victuals; and grieves or overseers receive from L.10 to L.15, with victuals. Country artisans from 2s. to 2s. 6d. per day, without victuals. Masons and carpenters about 3s. per day, without victuals.

Husbandry.—The number of black-cattle kept by the small tenants is by far too great, and a less number well kept would undoubtedly be more profitable. This remark applies with greater force to the number of horses kept. The evil arises partly from the difficulty of breaking off old habits; but principally from the small subdivisions into which the allotments are reduced, the cause of which will be afterwards specified. Measures are now being taken by the proprietor to remedy the evil, in respect to both.

On the character of the husbandry pursued much might be said, if the limits permitted. The occupiers of land may be divided into two classes, 1. The gentlemen farmers or tacksmen, each of whom possesses one or more farms; and 2. The small tenants, who formerly occupied their farms conjunctly, the arable land possessed in run-rig, or subject to annual division amongst themselves. In the year 1814, a better system was adopted. The arable lands were measured and lotted; and each small tenant put in possession of his own croft or share, while the grazing was left still in common. This naturally gave a powerful impetus to improvement. The industrious was no longer clogged by the carelessness or sloth of his neighbour, nor by the consideration that the labour of the former would benefit the latter. On the contrary, the slothful was spurred on by the example and never-failing reward of the industrious. Accordingly, larger and better crops have been raised since. The manure principally used is the sea-ware (*Alga marina*), cast in considerable quantities on many parts of the western shores; and where that is not the case, a certain quantity of the same weed cut from the rocks. I formerly took notice that the small belt subjected to cropping on the west coast is rendered productive by the sand that has been deposited on it. In fact, the most productive part is nothing more than moss mixed with and decomposed by the limy particles of the

sand. The process nature thus pointed out was remarked by some individuals of sagacity and observation, who persuaded a few to follow this guide. In consequence, along some of the shores where the moss was washed by the sea, a certain quantity of sand was led to the moss in the immediate neighbourhood, which produced crops in most instances sufficient to remunerate the trouble and expense; and which renders what was before of small value, of permanent benefit as pasture ground. This improvement, by due encouragement, might be carried on to an immense extent by what we call draining and sanding moss. It is exceedingly facilitated by the cross roads, which almost through every farm have of late years been made.

Some of the tacksmen carry on a system of husbandry, in every department of farming and grazing, which cannot suffer by a comparison with the best managed farms in the south of Scotland, though labouring under many local and other disadvantages. Recovering lands from the sea by embankments has been carried on by various spirited individuals to a considerable extent, to the amount of about eighty-six Scotch acres; and lakes have been drained, principally by the same persons, to about the same quantity. These improvements might be carried on extensively and advantageously in many parts of this parish. Another improvement, which has been tried in other parts as well as in this quarter, is what is generally termed the planting of stones in the sea for the growth of sea-ware. A great and important improvement also has been for some years extensively carried on, in the suppression of the sand-drift; an evil formerly of great magnitude in these parts. The suppression of sand-drift is effectually secured, by sloping the sand-banks, and covering them with sward from the neighbourhood; they thus become firm, and produce grasses of the same kind as in the situations whence they were taken. Bent is also employed successfully for the same purpose. Very near the sea shore, and on extensive sand-flats, the planting of bent is the best method hitherto discovered for the suppression of sand-drift.

Leases.—The tacksmen only have leases in this parish. Their duration varies from seven to fourteen years; a period greatly too short to remunerate for the necessary outlay in making permanent and substantial improvements. Nevertheless, a number of the tacksmen on this property, have made most substantial and permanent improvements, under the conviction, and in the unbounded confidence justly reposed in the justice and generosity in the Noble family of

whom they hold, that they would be remunerated by long possession, or by a pecuniary consideration. The small tenants have no leases at all. But amongst them, there are few instances in which they are removed from their possessions without a just cause; and this unwillingness to remove them has powerfully promoted an excess of population, and the subdivisions of crofts, contrary to the established regulations. To them, various encouragements for making improvements are held out. Premiums are annually given by the proprietor to the small or conjoint tenants who shall bring a certain quantity of moss or other land under culture. They are supplied with tools for making cross-roads through or along their farms from the shores to the moss; and accordingly, there are few parishes, if any, in which roads, the first means to every improvement, have been, for a few years back, so extensively carried on. Far removed from the seats of manufactures and constant employment, a great part of the time of these small tenantry is wasted, which might be more profitably applied. Early marriages, which have become habitual for ages back, increase the population in a ratio almost incredible; and the croft or lots, originally too small for the first possessor, is necessarily subdivided amongst the married sons and daughters, and become totally unfit to supply them with the comfortable or even the necessary means of subsistence. In these circumstances, some means for their profitable employment must be devised, or emigration encouraged; otherwise, in years of scarcity, they must fall an intolerable burden on the proprietors, and those in better circumstances, or have recourse for relief to a generous public. Here it may be remarked, that the changes which have taken place in the incomes of the proprietor of this parish and other proprietors in the West Highlands, arising from the low prices of kelp, in consequence of the removal of protecting duties from other articles that come in competition with it, — put it entirely out of the power of the proprietor, how generous and how liberal soever he may be, to extend relief when so largely required. The clear proceeds from the kelp alone in this parish, in 1812, after deducting every expense, exceeded L. 14,000; and for several years thereafter, it came little short of that sum. Now it puts little into the pocket of the proprietor, and in many instances is only manufactured to enable the crofters to pay for their small possessions. In these circumstances, is it not reasonable to expect that Government, who reduced the income of the proprietor from L. 17,500 to L. 3500, the present rental, by

the change of law, and abolition of duties, is bound, if not to give a compensation, at least to give grants of lands, and afford facilities of locating on them, to an interesting class of people, at once moral, peaceable, loyal, and industrious, necessarily getting year by year less employment? While it is a source of sincere satisfaction to narrate the well directed exertions of the greater number of the large farmers, truth demands that some at least of the disadvantages and discouragements under which they labour should likewise be stated. Formerly, all the kelp ware on their farms was allowed them with their other possessions. For some time back, they have been deprived of this advantage. This, perhaps, from the present low price of kelp, is no great pecuniary loss. But another evil attends it. The small tenants are sent every summer to the farms possessed by tacksmen, to manufacture the kelp, with a train of horses, which eat up a large proportion of the summer grass. Not only is this in itself a grievous loss, but it renders it impossible to divide and manage the pasture in a systematic and profitable manner. The number of horses might be reduced, and in many instances they might entirely be dispensed with. Measures are now about to be adopted for the removal of this grievance.

Fisheries.—The ordinary routine of employment, in which the generality of the people are engaged, precludes them from engaging in fisheries. In the winter season, the sea around the island is too boisterous to admit of their carrying on the fisheries, with any degree of regularity or success. During the summer season, the most proper for this employment, much the greater part of the population is occupied in the manufacture of kelp, in providing fuel, in cutting and securing crops. And, though many might be spared from these occupations, they want the necessary capital and skill to attempt to prosecute the fisheries with any reasonable prospect of success. Thus, though surrounded by the sea and its hidden resources of wealth, we can scarcely be said to have fishing. That large shoals of herrings and other fish annually visit this coast, and ling and cod may be found in the proper season in abundance around it, which might be turned to profitable account, can hardly admit of a doubt. Under this impression, a few patriotic individuals attempted to form liberal subscriptions, in order fairly to try whether this might not be made available for the benefit of the country; but the limited number willing to make the experiment, and the smallness of the sum as yet subscribed, render the result doubtful.

Produce.—The following is an estimate of the average amount of raw produce :

500 small tenants, 4 cows each, or 2000 at an average of 15s. per cow,	L. 1500	0	0
Tacksmen have in all about 300 cows, at L. 3 each,	900	0	0
3000 bolls of grain, at 16s.	2400	0	0
Potatoes, &c, 50,400, at 2s.,	5040	0	0
Sheep, including all kinds,	400	0	0
Hay,	200	0	0
	L. 10,440	0	0

Kelp Manufacture.—The only branch of general manufacture carried on, is that of kelp. At an average, there are 400 families employed in this, from the beginning of June to the 1st of August. In wet weather, no progress can be made in it; and during the dry weather they work hard, sometimes fifteen hours. The amount earned by each individual, during that period, is small. Yet, as all the family work together, the sum becomes considerable, averaging about L.4 to each family. This work enables the class of tenants to exist. With small possessions, without fisheries, with few cattle, and these of little value, if deprived of this resource, they are unable to meet their rents.

Navigation.—There are eleven decked-vessels, varying from twenty to sixty tons each. The largest and some of the smaller were built in the parish. With the exception of the Packet, they are all employed in the local and coasting trade.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

There is no market-town in this parish, and the nearest for general beneficial purposes are those of Greenock and Glasgow, distant by sea about 200 miles. With the latter the principal intercourse is held, for supplying this part of the country with almost all the goods and groceries imported; while the exports to these places to meet them are so scanty, as to be hardly worth mentioning, with the exception, indeed, of kelp, which is wholly for the benefit of the proprietor. Were a direct communication opened by means of steam, the case would be far otherwise, as I shall show before concluding.

At Lochmaddy there was, for many years, a post-office, under the name of Carinish: it is now converted into a sub-office to Dunvegan. It is difficult to assign any good reason for this. From Lochmaddy a packet of sixty tons burthen sails, when the weather permits, twice a week to Dunvegan, the nearest safe harbour in Skye. Letters and papers are received in this place, in the surprisingly short time of four days from Edinburgh. This packet is

supported by an assessment, which bears heavily upon all classes of the inhabitants, together with a small sum allowed by the post-office.

The internal communication has been immensely improved, within the last twenty years. There are now no less than eighty miles of good roads. Of these nearly fifty miles have been made by the statute labour, and a heavy assessment on the occupiers of the land. With the extension of roads, the introduction of carts has kept pace; of which there are, at this moment, in the parish 180. From the rapid increase which has taken place in regard to this excellent improvement, it may be sanguinely anticipated that at no distant period every person able to keep a horse will have his cart also. The *rootle*, too, and the clumsy plough described in the former statistics, have given way to the modern plough. The greater number of the tacksmen use Morton's iron plough; and every small tenant has a plough of a lighter description, quite sufficient for his purposes. Including all, there are nearly as many ploughs as are families in this parish.

Ecclesiastical State.—The parish church is situated near the centre of the parish, about fifteen miles from each extremity. The densest part of the population is within four miles on either side. It was built in the year 1764, when the number of inhabitants was comparatively small. It affords accommodation for no more than 400, being about one-fifth of the population within reach of it. There are no seat rents paid.

In this parish, there has never been a manse. The minister always occupied a farm-house, with a farm. The glebe is worth about L.40 Sterling. The proprietor pays L. 61, 13s. 4d. of the stipend, with L.8, 6s. 8d. for communion elements. The balance of L.88, 6s. 8d. is paid from the Exchequer, to make up the stipend to L.150. In the northern section of the parish, there is a Government church, which was finished in 1828. In the south part of the parish or district of Carinish, is placed a missionary minister, supported by the Committee for Managing the Royal Bounty. It is hoped that, at no distant period, this district will likewise form a separate parish, with endowment for church and school. Excluding the Government church parish from the calculation, the average number of communicants is 490. This number includes the Mission district. Divine service is well attended at all the places of public worship. The population is wholly Presbyterian, with the exception of two Episcopalian families, and two individuals Roman Ca-

tholics. The people have very little money circulating amongst them, and in consequence the contributions for religious purposes are very limited. The collections for charitable objects are of small amount. To make up for this deficiency, the people are remarkably attentive and charitable to the poor; and the proprietor allows L. 60, from the multure of the mills, to the most destitute. This private charity is almost the sole resource, from which the poor and destitute are supported.

Education.—There are nine schools of various descriptions in the parish:—One parochial, with a salary of L. 34, 4s. 4½d., and about L. 16 annually of school fees, of which only L. 5 is paid in cash; the rest in produce. Two schools, supported by the General Assembly's Education Committee, of which one is in the Mission district, and the other within the bounds of the Government church. Each of these has a salary of L. 25, and the school fees may amount to L. 5, the greater part of which is paid not in cash, but in produce. One school supported by the Glasgow Auxiliary Gaelic School Society; one at Carinish, supported by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge; two other schools by that Society; and four by the Gaelic School Society.

Besides the above, there are two schools for females; and private tutors are kept by some families. The people are most anxious to confer the blessings of instruction on their children. But six additional permanent schools are still required. The only inlets to general knowledge are the libraries attached to the General Assembly schools.

Fairs.—There are only two fairs held annually in this parish. One about the middle of July, the other the beginning of September,—both for the sale of black-cattle and horses.

Inns.—The inns in the parish are four. One at the packet station at Lochmaddy, another at Carinish, the opposite extremity of the island, and the other two at proper intermediate distances along the road.

Fuel.—The fuel universally used is peats, which in quality are far superior to any in the Highlands.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

We add a few observations on what appears best calculated at present, to promote the industry, and advance the temporal comfort of the inhabitants.

First, it is necessary to find some proper outlet for the excess of the population by emigration, and thus to increase the quantity of

land possessed by each family. At present, it is notorious, that there are no less than 390 families not paying rents, but living chiefly on the produce of small spots of potato ground given them by some of their neighbours and relatives. Subdivisions of this kind, from the purest motives of humanity, will and must take place. To force the people away, has been entirely repugnant to the humane feelings of the Noble proprietor and his managers. A few years ago, when it was necessary to remove some of the inhabitants from a place where they could hardly earn a scanty subsistence, Lord Macdonald very generously afforded them assistance to emigrate to British America.

Steam navigation, judiciously arranged and properly conducted, would in some degree supply the want of local manufactures, by affording facilities of export, and of communication with the south.

No regular steam-boats are employed to ply to this quarter: and the failure of the attempts that have been made to establish them has arisen from the circumstance, that the boats were not well fitted for the kind of trade proper to the district. They should have been adapted to convey cattle, &c. instead of being splendidly fitted up for passengers.

In conjunction with the projected plan of sending cattle and other produce from the West Highlands to the Liverpool and Glasgow markets, were a steam-boat of proper construction for the conveyance of cattle established, to ply during the season alternately, along the west side of Skye, with the Long Island coast, and the east side of Skye with the opposite part of the mainland,—no doubt can exist that the speculation would succeed, and would prove extensively beneficial to these remote quarters. The great variety of other raw produce that might be exported, and the goods of various kinds required for the overgrown population, would, in a short time, create a trade which must inevitably spur the industry, and promote the comfort of all classes of the inhabitants.

1837.