

farmer, as rendering the feeding of stock, for which this has opened up the market, to which little attention has been hitherto paid here, an object of the first importance.

With all these changes, the condition of the people has been improving. Habits of cleanliness and comfort now more generally prevail, and the bulk of the people have been advancing in intelligence and information; towards which the facilities of education, especially the institution of the Sabbath and Infant Schools, have contributed; and which the establishment of libraries accessible to the lower classes would still further promote. A savings bank is also very desirable for the encouragement of right management and economy. But many of the people are extremely poor, and in want of regular employment,—a want which can only be supplied by the introduction of manufactures, for which the place is well situated. There is abundance of people who would be glad of employment. Living is comparatively moderate. The home market for several kinds of manufactures would be considerable, and conveyance to the foreign markets would always be easy and open.

March 1837.

PARISH OF CONTIN.

PRESBYTERY OF DINGWALL, SYNOD OF ROSS.

THE REV. CHARLES DOWNIE, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THE parish of Contin is situate in the centre of the county of Ross. Its etymology is not easily determined, and there are various opinions concerning it. In the former Statistical Account, the name is supposed to be derived from the Gaelic words *Con-tuinn*, i. e. the meeting of the waves or waters, with reference to the branches of the river Rasay, which form a small island, that has been, for time immemorial, the clergyman's possession and place of residence. It is also observable that rivers of a considerable size meet at other two points in the parish. This derivation is not quite satisfactory; but we adopt it, in the absence of a better.

Extent—Boundaries.—Contin is 33 miles long, by measurement of the Parliamentary road that passes through it; and the breadth is believed to be little short of the length. Thus, as regards extent of surface, it ranks among the largest parishes in Scotland. It is bounded on the west by Gairloch and Lochcarron; on the south by Kilmorack and Urray; on the east by Urray and Fodderty; and on the north by Lochbroom. The general aspect of the parish is mountainous; and the atmosphere is generally mild and dry.

Hydrography.—The parish is abundantly supplied with perennial springs of the most wholesome water. On the estate of Hilton, there are several strongly impregnated with iron.

Lakes are numerous. Those of sufficient importance to be here named, are Loch Chroisg, supposed to be 5 miles long, and 1 broad; Loch Fannich, 12 miles in length, and 1 in breadth; Loch Luichart, 6 miles long, and generally half a mile broad; Loch Killin, 2 miles long, and about 1 mile in breadth. In each of these, the water is mossy, and of a mild temperature.

There are likewise the smaller lakes of Achilty and Kinellan, which deserve to be noticed separately. The former is about 2 miles in circumference, and abounds in trout and char. The water is unusually pure, and very rarely freezes. The scenery all around this lake is highly picturesque. It is remarkable that a rivulet from an adjoining little lake forms the only visible ingress, while there is no egress that can be seen, although it is believed there is a subterraneous communication from it to the river Rasay, which runs within one mile to the north-east.

Loch Kinellan is also a pleasing object, with its pretty little island, (for many years a garden;) and the fine arable fields on one side contrast strikingly with the wilder scenery on the other. There is here a very distinct echo.

The principal rivers are,—the Connon, which has its origin in Loch Chroisg, in the western extremity of the parish, and is fed by tributary streams in its progress to the sea:—Meig, which originates in Glenigag, the most distant point of Contin to the west, and receives similar supplies until it joins the Connon at Little Scatnell;—Rasay, or Black Water, whose source is in Strath-Vaich, on the confines of Lochbroom, and which runs parallel to the other two, until the three waters unite at Moy, and form one river, the Connon, which discharges itself into Cromarty Frith, within a few miles from the town of Dingwall.

Salmon, pike, and trout are caught in these lakes and rivers.

Geology.—The prevailing formation in this parish is gneiss with its various subordinate rocks; the old red sandstone also occurs, but only in the lower parts of the parish.

Wood.—A considerable extent of the lowland district is covered with wood, part of which has been planted. At one period, a large proportion of the parish must have been wooded; for many roots and trunks of trees are still found imbedded in moss, in situations where there is not so much as a shrub now to be seen. Even in the recollection of persons still living, there were forests of Scots fir, remarkable for the richness and durability of their timber. These have been cut down, but there remain some plantations of larch and fir; and the soil is congenial to oak, ash, elm, birch, plane, alder, and beech also. Of the latter, some venerable and stately trees at Coul are highly ornamental.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Land-owners.—The number of land-owners is 11, of whom only one (Sir George Mackenzie) resides in the parish.

Parochial Registers.—With the exception of an old mutilated fragment, and one very imperfect register, there is no public record of any kind, of a remoter date than 1805. Marriages and births were not regularly entered until 1826; but since then a record of these has been kept in due form.

Eminent Men.—Of Æneas Morison, the last Episcopal minister of Contin, many interesting anecdotes are still related, illustrative of his wit and benevolence. This excellent man suffered very harsh treatment for refusing to conform to presbytery. He was rudely ejected from his own church, to which he had fled as a sanctuary; and he closed a long, and honourable, and useful life in great indigence. It may be noticed, also, that Mr Murdo Mackenzie, the second Presbyterian minister in the parish, appears to have been a man whose prudence, sagacity, and decision of character fitted him well for the times in which he lived, and the circumstances under which he acted. Here, too, the name of the late Rev. Roderick Mackenzie, minister of Kilmuir Wester and Suddy, who was for sixteen years minister of Contin, is well entitled to a place, for his remarkable benevolence of disposition,—his active exertions to promote the views of deserving youth,—and the paternal interest he ever manifested in all that concerned the welfare of his flock.

Antiquities.—At the eastern extremity of Loch Achilty, is seen one of those circles formed of stone, within which the Druids are

supposed to have worshipped. We have heard that an attempt was made, some years ago, to ascertain its contents; but it ended in disappointment, as nothing else was found than a few empty earthen jars.

In Lake Kinellan stands an artificial island, resting upon logs of oak, on which the family of Seaforth had at one period an house of strength; and a quarter of a mile eastward, is the place of *Blar' na'n Ceann*, or field of heads,—so named, from having been the scene of a very sanguinary conflict between the Mackenzies of Seaforth, and Macdonells of Glengarry. The latter, according to tradition, came, as was the fashion in those days, to resent an old feud by force of arms, but were routed after great slaughter; and, being pursued by the Mackenzies to the confluence of the rivers Rasay and Cannon at Moy, were there forced into the water, and drowned.

There is still in Loch Achilty a small island, likewise supposed to be artificial. It belonged to MacLea Mor, *i. e.* Great MacLea, who possessed, at the same time, a large extent of property in the parish; and who was wont, in seasons of danger, to retire to the island as a place of refuge from his enemies. The ruins of the buildings which he there occupied may still be traced. A niche was long seen in the wall of the church, called Cruist Mhic' a Lea, from its having formed part of a vault in which that family was buried.

Modern Buildings.—At Coul, in the eastern part of the parish, a new mansion-house was built in 1821, which is handsome and commodious. The surrounding grounds have been tastefully laid out, and the garden is kept in a superior style.

Two churches have been, of late years, erected in this parish,—one at Keanlochhuchart, in 1825—and the other in Strathcannon, in 1830,—upon the Government grant for building additional places of worship in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

III.—POPULATION.

By Dr Webster's census in 1755, the population was	-	1949
According to last Statistical Account in 1792,	-	2000
By the census of 1831,	-	2023

The number of males in 1831 was 943, of females 1080. The inhabitants, being partial to the place of their nativity, do not remove from it while they can earn a subsistence, until they are swept off to make way for extensive farmers.

The average of births for the last seven years has been	55
of marriages,	14
	3

The number of deaths cannot be ascertained from the want of a register.

Widowers above 50 years of age,	-	13
Unmarried women above 45 years,	-	44
Number of families in the parish in 1894,	-	437

The number of proprietors of land of the yearly value of L. 50 and upwards, is 9.

Gaelic, being the vernacular tongue, is the language chiefly spoken; but, from the general diffusion of knowledge by means of schools, English is acquired by a large portion of the rising generation.

Habits and Character of the People.—Poverty having tended greatly to crush the social feelings of the people, they enjoy in a very limited degree, the pleasures and advantages of society; yet they are in general not dissatisfied with their condition. The general character of the peasantry merits the most honourable testimony. It is that of a religious and moral people. Wherever the contrary appears, it may be traced to the influence of bad example, or to the mismanagement of those into whose hands it has been their misfortune to fall. Here, as throughout the Highlands, the native inhabitants discover great natural acuteness. Their disposition is ingenuous; and when treated with kindness, they are tractable, and grateful. Sincerity of friendship, ardour of attachment, and strict fidelity to those who repose confidence in them, continue to characterize them. In their dealings they are just, in their callings industrious, in their manners obliging, disinterested in hospitality, and kind and generous towards their brethren in distress. With few exceptions, they are of sober habits, and give regular attendance upon public worship.

The Highlanders are grossly calumniated, when represented as inactive and indolent. Let the proper encouragement be given to them, and it will be found that, however far they may surpass, they are certainly not inferior to any of their countrymen, in sagacity, ability, and inclination to work. It is true that in Contin, as well as in various other parishes, the population is seen at present under many disadvantages. The few that remain of the old race are greatly reduced in circumstances: and those who have known the noble-minded people of these districts in better days,—who are competent to judge, and who institute a comparison now, will readily, yet sorrowfully subscribe to the sentiment of the poet:

“A bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed can never be supplied.”

ings fetch the highest prices at market. We may particularize the farm of Acnashine, belonging to Mr Mackenzie of Kilcoy, the stock of which when exhibited at competitions has repeatedly obtained premiums; likewise Leadgowan, the property of Mr Mackenzie of Hilton,* and which is also well known as a sheep walk of superior value.

The few black cattle reared for sale are the remains of the old Highland breed, which seems to have degenerated in the same ratio in which the circumstances of the people have declined.

Leases vary in their duration from four to nineteen years; and it naturally follows that the tenants who receive the longest leases improve their farms most. All the arable farms are furnished with suitable houses and inclosures.

Recent Improvements.—The principal recent improvement in this parish is at Craigdarroch, where Captain James Murray of the Royal Navy has erected a beautiful residence within a short walk of Loch Achilty. The house is a substantial and comfortable building, and stands in a romantic situation, commanding a view of the lake and surrounding scenery. The garden and grounds have been laid out with great taste; and a track of barren moor has been, by persevering industry and judicious outlay, converted into productive soil.

Fishing.—The salmon-fishings of Connon and Rasay are the only two in the parish. The quality of the fish caught in each is superior; and both may be worth about L. 40 a-year.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Market-Town.—Dingwall, which is distant seven miles, is the nearest market-town,—none of the villages in the parish being of sufficient size to support a market. The Parliamentary road to Lochcarron passes through the parish from east to west. There are likewise district roads. The post-town is Dingwall.

Ecclesiastical State.—The church of Contin has always stood where it is now, on the minister's glebe, within two miles of the eastern extremity of the parish. It would seem to have been originally placed there, from the vicinity being better suited than any

* Having mentioned the honoured name of Alexander Mackenzie, Esq. of Hilton, we do no more than discharge a debt to justice, in paying a short but sincere tribute to his genuine worth and to his unequalled character as a proprietor. It has been uniformly his desire, that his tenants should enjoy comfort and happiness; and under his fostering care they failed not to prosper. In him too the virtuous poor and friendless ever found a benefactor. All who occupied his soil regarded him as a father and a friend.

other part to a permanent population ; and for the same reason, we may suppose it to have been continued in use during the time of Episcopacy.

Its local situation could never have been convenient to a great part of the population ; but the inconvenience arising therefrom was remedied latterly by the labours of a missionary minister, who itinerated among the people in the remoter parts, and the people have now the benefit of two Parliamentary ministers stationed among them.

At what period the church was erected is not known ; but the ancient appearance of the fabric,—several niches in the wall,—and the immense number of human bones found strewed within, (prior to the late repairs,) afford a strong presumption that it was built in Popish times. There cannot be a doubt that it was used for divine service while Episcopacy flourished in Scotland. About sixty years ago, it was newly roofed and slated : but not having been finished within, it was long the most miserable place of worship in the shape of a parish church in the kingdom ; nor can much be said in favour of it still. A repair was executed upon it last season, but of such a nature that it continues confined and comfortless.

The manse was built in the year 1794, but was very imperfectly finished ; and having been found inadequate to the incumbent's comfortable accommodation, the Court of Session, with its wonted enlightened and impartial liberality, decerned for a repair and improvement of it and of the offices in 1829.

Twenty-six Scots acres, arable and pasture, constitute the glebe. Being encompassed by water, and very flat, it is subject to inundation, which greatly deteriorates its value. In 1823, all the heritors surrendered their teinds ; the stipend is consequently payable in money, and averages the value of 16 chalders. For nearly thirty years, there has been an itinerating catechist on the establishment of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge. The people being warmly attached to the Established Church, there is no chapel or Dissenting meeting-house of any kind in the parish ; and we are happily free from Papists, voluntaries, and Seceders.

Divine service is performed every Lord's day both in English and Gaelic, and is well attended in each language. The average number of communicants is about 100.

Education.—Besides the parish school, there are other three supported by societies, and one by the inhabitants. English, Gaelic, writing, book-keeping, and arithmetic are the branches

generally taught in each of the schools; and in the parish school, if desired, instruction may be also had in geography, Latin, Greek, and mathematics.

The parochial schoolmaster's salary is L. 30, and the amount of fees varies from L. 8 to L. 10. Probably the other teachers receive from L. 15 to L. 20 each, including salary and fees.

Generally speaking, the people are sensible of the value of education.

Poor.—The poor are maintained entirely by church collections, and the interest of a small fund, amounting to L. 71, 3s. 8d. which has been made up out of the remains of an old legacy bequeathed to them, and savings added occasionally thereto by the kirk-session. Of persons who receive parochial aid the ordinary number is 43, and the average sum allowed to each is 8s. Church collections average L. 7, 9s. a-year.

The poor in this parish do not apply for relief, until compelled by necessity,—in any other case they regard it as a degradation.

Markets.—A market, established time out of mind, still continues to be held at Contin Inn, twice every year. At one period, the site being favourable, the business transacted was considerable.

Inns.—There are three inns along the line of the Parliamentary road, besides two or three dram-shops, which last are to be deprecated for their immoral influence.

Fuel.—Such as can afford the expense of coals, burn them; but the ordinary fuel is peat.

It does not appear necessary to add any thing further on the statistics of the parish; and the writer regrets that the foregoing account contains so little which he can hope to have any interest for the general reader.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

The increased value of land in the parish is worthy of remark.

In 1792, the rental amounted at the utmost to L. 1400 only; now, after a lapse of forty-two years, it approaches to nearly L. 6000. As regards the arable land, the value has arisen from the additions made to it, as well as from the improved system of husbandry which has been adopted. The facility of access to market has also had an effect: and the high prices of sheep and wool for many years sufficiently account for the extraordinary increase in the rents of pasture farms. As an instance of the latter, the grazing of Fannich, which let fifty years ago at L. 12, brings the present proprietor a yearly rent of L. 200. The value of game is no less

striking. In some cases, a larger rent is now paid for the privilege of shooting alone than was paid forty-five years ago for the right of pasturing.

It is gratifying to observe, that the march of intellect has dispelled many of those superstitions that were formerly so common in the Highlands; and there is reason to believe, that, in a few years, such as remain shall disappear.

September 1837.

PARISH OF FODDERTY.

PRESBYTERY OF DINGWALL, SYNOD OF ROSS.

THE REV. JOHN NOBLE, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THE name of this parish is supposed to be derived from two Gaelic words, *Foigh* and *Ritaobh*, which signify “a meadow along the side of a hill.” These terms are descriptive of the valley of Strathpeffer, which forms the principal part of the parish, and stretches westward from Dingwall to the distance of four miles.

Extent, &c.—The parish has been greatly diminished in extent, *quoad sacra*, since the localities attached to the Parliamentary churches were disjoined from it. It measures, at present, from east to west 9 miles, and from north to south 11 miles; and is bounded by Dingwall on the east; Urray on the south; Contin and Kinlochluichart on the west; and Kincardine and Kiltearn on the north.

Topographical Appearances, &c.—The parish is one of the most hilly and mountainous in Scotland. This is its general character, with the exception of the valley of Strathpeffer.

Ben-Wyves or Ben-Uaish rises to the height of 3426 feet, and in respect of lateral bulk is the principal hill in the north. It was never known to be so free of snow as in the singularly hot summer of 1826. Its top is covered with a green soft sward, and when the sky is cloudless the extent and grandeur of the view from it amply compensate for the labour and fatigue of climbing. The principal proprietor, it is said, holds his right of possession from his Majesty, on condition of presenting a snow-ball at the court of St James', on