

PARISH OF TAIN.*

PRESBYTERY OF TAIN, SYNOD OF ROSS.

THE REV. CHARLES CALDER MACKINTOSH, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Boundaries and External Appearance.—THE parish of Tain, which is of a very irregular oblong figure, measures between 9 and 10 miles in length from north-east to south-west. Its greatest breadth is about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles, inclusive of a peninsula, which juts north-westward at the Meikle Ferry, above a mile into the sea; exclusive of that peninsula, the breadth averages about 3 miles. On the eastern side, the parish adjoins to those of Tarbat and Fearn; on the west, to Edderton; and on the south, to Loggie Easter; while its northern boundary is formed by the waters of the Dornoch Frith, along which it stretches, with several curvings and indentations, in a direction nearly east and west. The parish, as to its external appearance, separates itself into three distinctly marked districts. The first is a low sandy plain, of about four or five square miles in extent, somewhat resembling in shape a crescent or quarter moon; the lesser or inner curve of which, constituting as it does the present coast-line, may be described as an extended variously-broken sand bank, rising in several parts above the sea level to a height of about 15 feet; while the large or outer curve is marked by a sudden elevation of the land, (distinctly traceable almost from end to end of the parish,) in many places about 50 feet above the flat plain below,—presenting the appearance of a scarp or slope; on the ridge of which, about a quarter of a mile distant from the sea, and overlooking the wide-stretched flat beneath, is situated the royal burgh from which the parish is designated. Terrace-like, along the top of this escarpment, lies the second and most important division of the parish; which, extending back towards the south-east, and upwards by a gentle slope towards the south and south-west, presents a highly cultivated and richly wooded territory to the view: while the third or upland district consists of several low

* Drawn up by Mr William Taylor.

hills, forming part of a chain which constitutes the proper commencement of the Highlands, (so called in relation to the greater part of Easter Ross.) The Hill of Tain, the highest summit in the parish, has been calculated from barometrical observations to be about 780 feet above the level of the sea.

Of the three districts above described, the first has, for a period far beyond the memory of man, been gradually lessening in consequence of a very perceptible yearly encroachment of the tide, more or less rapid in various parts, according to the nature and position of the soils it has had to remove or overflow. The advance has been slowest over a portion of the plain situated at from two to four miles distance below the town, and known by the name of the *Morrish mòr*; which, accordingly, presents the appearance of a low promontory stretching far into the sea, as if to meet a somewhat similar headland,—the termination of a gently sloping hill, on the opposite Sutherland coast. On that coast, too, a precisely similar process of encroachment has been going on; so that, although the Frith now measures several miles across, the remarkable fact has been preserved by tradition, that it was at one time possible to effect a passage over it at low water upon foot, by means of a plank thrown across the channel, where narrowed to a few feet by the above-mentioned promontories, which stretch towards one another in the form of a long sand-bank, broken in a single place, to afford a waterway for the rivers of the frith. This bank still remains visible at ebb-tide, extending its yellow line amid the blue element around it; and even when covered by the sea, it may yet be traced by the difference of hue: but when the waters are agitated by the gentlest breeze, or when a ground swell, precursive of a storm, rolls in from the German Ocean, then is the ear arrested at the distance of many miles by the hoarse dashing of the breakers, as they boil and foam over the *Gizzen Briggs** in a long white band, amid the comparative calm of a shallow inland sea.

Names.—The Gaelic names of the burgh and parish are *Baile-Dhuich*, or Duthus' town, and *Sgìre-Duich*, or Duthus' parish;—so called from the patron saint. The origin, however, of the more ancient and now more general name of Tain, (or, according

* The G is pronounced hard as in *gizzard*. The first part of the name is explained as a corruption of *gizzing*, the participle of a supposed verb *to gizz*,—a sound imitating word resembling the modern *whizz*. The etymology is a probable, and at all events an appropriate one, that thus translates the name into Whizzing Bridges. The Gaelic appellation, *Drochaid an 'aigh*, means probably the Water-wraith's Bridge.

to the oldest orthography, Thayne,) has long puzzled local etymologists. If we suppose it a corruption of a correcter form, *Fayne*, the most probable root would be the same with that of Fendom, (in Gaelic *na fàna*, the low grounds,) being a part of the above-mentioned sandy plain in which the town, it is said, was anciently situated; or, if a Scandinavian origin be allowed, the Norse word *thanid*, signifying stretched, extended, (compare the Latin *tendere*, *tenuis*, and our own *thin*,) affords a sufficiently plausible derivation. The old Scottish title, Thane, seems an improbable etymon.

Climate.—The climate of the parish shares the general character of mildness with the greater part of Easter Ross; the cold of winter as well as the heat of summer being less intense than in many of the more southern districts of Scotland. The reason may perhaps be found partly in the general *lie* of the country, elevated itself but slightly, yet protected by the immediate neighbourhood of hills; and partly in the nature of the soil, which, consisting chiefly of a loose alluvial mould, (finely divided, we may add, by cultivation,) seems fitted to resist any very sudden changes of temperature. The air is pure and salubrious, and the inhabitants in general healthy. In consequence, however, of our nearness to the coast, the easterly winds—especially prevalent in the end of spring—acquire a keenness that renders pulmonary and rheumatic complaints of rather frequent occurrence; other endemic diseases there are none, and epidemics rarely spread even in the town to any considerable degree. It may be mentioned, that during the prevalence of Asiatic cholera in Easter Ross, notwithstanding that it raged all around us, (and especially in our own village of Inver to an unheard of extent,) it did not enter the town at all.

Hydrography.—The Dornoch Frith, which forms the northern boundary of the parish, is formed by the river Shin and its tributaries, of which the channel may be distinctly traced all along to the Gizzen Briggs. This bar seems to mark the position of the coast line, as it existed ere the tide waves had yet spread themselves over the surrounding plain. The breadth of the frith is about five miles immediately below the town; but to such a distance does the sea retire at ebb-tide, that it then probably measures scarcely three. The depth of the channel varies from seven fathoms, at the entrance, to two at the bridge of Bonar, to which point, a distance of fourteen miles, it may at high water be navigated: the navigation, however, is difficult, in consequence of the numerous concealed sand-banks, (of which the older inhabitants

remember to have seen some in the form of islands, though they are now, except occasionally at low water, entirely covered by the encroaching sea;) and our only harbour is that afforded by the level sands, left dry by the receding tide. At the north-western extremity of the parish, the frith suddenly narrows by the jutting forward of the two opposite headlands of the Meikle Ferry; though immediately on, it again finds entrance into this and the adjoining parish, in the form of a bay called the Sands of Edderton.

We have no rivers, except an inconsiderable trout-stream, which we dignify with the name. The springs are numerous, especially in the uplands, and in the western part of the terrace district; which latter seems to owe its superiority over the eastern, in this respect, to the presence of an overlying stratum of gravel, there wanting. The water they afford is in general considered excellent, notwithstanding that they contain a large proportion of earthy matter in solution. Several in the upland district are weakly calybeate, and are generally accounted medicinal, though rarely resorted to as such. Perhaps the most remarkable spring in the parish, is one called St Mary's Well, which is every day covered for several hours by the salt sea; on the retiring of which, its refreshing waters may be procured. It was, of old, reckoned a specific remedy for consumption; though we believe it was essential to its efficacy, that it should be drunk early in the morning, and upon the spot; and as its very name sufficiently indicates a Roman Catholic age, we may probably enough trace in that belief, the *frauspia* of a priesthood, anxious to secure to ecclesiastical benediction the honour due to the bracing influence of early rising, pure air, and exercise.

Geology.—The oldest geological formations of the parish are entirely secondary; the hills which constitute the upland district being composed wholly of sandstone, mostly white, though occasionally red: its strata are in some parts nearly horizontal; but in others, as especially at the quarries on the hill of Tain, they dip eastward at an angle varying from 15° to 25° . The several hills present nothing remarkable in their external aspect, but slope gradually down, until they blend almost imperceptibly with the lower or terrace lands; saving only towards the western boundary of the parish, where this terrace formation has no existence, and the hill reaches to within a few yards of the bay already described under the name of the Edderton sands. Here, too, as well as farther east, the sea is at present slowly advancing; but evidently, this advance is not the first that it has made;

for the magnificent wall of rock, to near the base of which it has now attained, is manifestly the result of the action of the waves, at a period whose distance we have no data for calculating, beating, in their line of greatest advance, against this farthest projecting portion of the sandstone hill. The traveller along the high road westward, as he issues from a territory that promises little to excite admiration, is suddenly astonished to find himself walled in upon his left, by a lofty precipice consisting of immense masses of stratified stone, piled one upon another in regular ascent, by the giant hand of nature,—in one part cleft and scooped away into the form of a ravine, in another jutting directly out upon his path, and perhaps exciting a momentary shudder, as, looking up from beneath the spot, he beholds an enormous projecting mass seeming ready to tumble from its elevation of forty or fifty feet upon his head; while at the same time, the rich clothing afforded by the ornamental trees with which nature and art have invested the once naked rocks, the ivy mantling, in many a place, over the surface of the steep, and everywhere here and there the birches that, rooted in the very edge of some beetling fragment, project their slight forms overhead,—confer an air of softness that renders it difficult to tell whether the prevailing character be the beautiful or the sublime.

Over the sandstone formation now described, there lies a stratum of red clay, varying in depth from a few inches near the summit of the hill, to at least 50 or 60 feet, as descending seaward over the gentle slope of the middle district, we reach the ridge of the escarpment which separates it from the plain below. In this stratum it is, that we find boulders of most frequent occurrence, and that in greater abundance always, as we approach nearer the sandstone underneath,—whether by digging down to meet it, by ascending the hill to where it almost reaches the surface, or, lastly, by proceeding along the shore westward to where the sandy and terrace districts gradually dwindle away. These boulders, which are composed partly of gneiss, but chiefly of a kind of granite, of which no rocks are to be found nearer than the western coast of Ross-shire, and which often attain a very large size, (one block, especially, known as the *Big Stone of Morangie*, containing at least 1400 or 1500 cubic feet,) seem to have been carried hither after the deposition, but before the hardening of the clayey stratum. Immediately over it (save that, in some places, a middle layer of gravel is interposed) lies a rich soil, composed principally of a mixture of clay and sand, and capable of cultivation.

But, in the extensive low-ground which adjoins the sea, and which topographical appearances alone sufficiently indicate as the subject of a cyclical overflow and retrocession of the tide, other strata have found place. There is first a layer of peat-moss, varying from 10 to 18 inches in depth, the result apparently of the decomposition of a forest which once occupied the plain; for both at the eastern boundary, where the moss reaches the surface, and is dug for fuel, as also along the course of "the river," when a freshet has washed away its channel to an unusual depth, and even where the tide now ebbs and flows, at low water, the roots of large trees, (among which, oaks are said to be most frequent,) are occasionally exposed. About the confines of this parish with that of Fearn, there was lately found in the moss a bronze battle-axe, now in the possession of Mr Mackinlay of the Tain Academy; and in digging a new channel, a few years since, for part of the above-mentioned stream, a branching deer's horn of extraordinary size was exhumed. Above the moss, succeeds a stratum of fine sand, which constituted the bed of the sea when it last covered this luniform plain, forming by the action of its waves the escarpment which bounds it; thereafter, in the slow retiring of the water, the sandy level was left to view, to be in time covered by a cultivable alluvial soil; but the tide is again advancing to re-shroud it with its mantle, and to reclaim its own. Some parts, indeed, have been already wrested from the use of man, and converted into barren downs, by the sea sand with which they have been overblown; especially the large district of the *Morrìch mòr*, which the older inhabitants remember to have seen pastured as a common, and which was turned (it is said in a single night) into an arid waste. All along the coast, the horizontal layer of shells, which the sea is uncovering in its advance, distinctly marks the level of the bed which it formerly occupied. Walking to the *Morrìch mòr*, our steps are on the remains of a former age, ground into powder by the tread of men; and where in some places the banks have been blown away by the wind, a rich treasure of beautiful shells has been disclosed,—now, however, robbed of all its finest specimens, by frequent resort.

Zoology.—It is not known whether any species of animals formerly existing in the parish, have become extinct. At least one, however, which did not formerly exist in it, namely, the rat, has been introduced within the last few years, and has, to the annoyance of the inhabitants, rapidly multi-

plied. The Frith, properly so called, contains few important kinds of fish, with the exception of the salmon which pass up to the rivers; all others, poor and sickly from the freshness of the water, are seldom sought for. Beyond the bar of the Gizzen Briggs, however, the waters abound with various species, of which the most important, in an economical view, are the cod, haddock, whiting, flounder, and skate; to which may be added, the halibut, turbot, crowner, dog-fish, and many others, besides some small trout to be found in the streamlets of the parish. The principal shell-fish in the bay (besides many that are less known) are mussels, cockles, whelks, and crabs, all occasionally used as food; but the mussel alone is turned to any great account, existing as it does in great abundance upon the sand-banks of the Frith, whence it is yearly removed by fishermen, to be employed for bait. While on this head, it may be mentioned, that a few years ago there were stranded, west of the town, on the grounds of Mr Ross of Cromarty, a number of large porpoises, amounting to about a hundred, which were frightened, it is supposed, into the bay by a thunder storm which had occurred the evening before.

Woods.—Most of the wood grown in the parish is the Scotch fir, with occasional beltings of larch, elm, beech, ash, and birch. All of these species thrive well, except where exposed to the keen sea-breeze. The estate of Tarlogie contains the finest old trees in the parish, many of them of a venerable appearance and majestic height.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Ancient State of the Parish.—Tain appears to have been, in ancient times, a place of considerable importance. From a well-authenticated document immediately to be mentioned, it is found that the Burgh dates its constitution from the latter half of the eleventh century, having been originally privileged by Malcolm Canmore, —a king celebrated as the successor of Macbeth, and son of the murdered Duncan; celebrated, too, as the introducer of several new customs and dignities into Scotland;—and claiming to be regarded farther as among the first * European sovereigns who adopted the enlightened policy of establishing free municipal corporations. At what period the town became an important ecclesiastical seat, we know not, nor whether its connection with St Duthus (who is said by Sir Robert Gordon, in his History of the Family of Sutherland, to have been Bishop of Ross about

* See Robertson's Charles V. Introductory Treatise, notes 15—18.

the year 1209, and to have been "a very godly man,") had already existed by any special pastoral tie during his own lifetime, or whether it was only after his death and canonization that he became "patron of St Duthus his chapel, beside the town of Tain." We can only conjecture, therefore, that it may have been a chief seat of the Bishoprick of Ross, after its foundation by David I., the son of Malcolm, in the twelfth century. At all events, we learn from the same document already referred to, that the burgh was "under the special protection of the Apostolic See."

Memorials of St Duthus.—In addition to the Gaelic appellations of the burgh and parish, several other names with us are compounded from that of the Saint. We have St Duthus' Fairs, St Duthus' Scalp, (namely, the mussel-scalp,) St Duthus' Cairn, St Duthus' Chapel, and St Duthus' Church; besides that the burgh arms bear upon them the figure, and are inscribed with the title of *Sanctus Duthacus*. St Duthus' Chapel exists now only as a ruin, presenting a remarkable example of combined strength and simplicity of architecture. The materials of which it was built are of the granite blocks, with which the parish abounds, (and of which our fences are still generally composed,) cemented unsparingly with lime, which, having acquired a hardness scarcely inferior to that of the stone itself, has preserved much of the walls in a state of remarkable entireness, notwithstanding that they have stood roofless and exposed for full four centuries. How long previous to this it had been built, and whether before or after the death of its patron saint, we know not. The ruins are situated on an eminence in the sandy plain, in which it has been mentioned that the town once stood. This edifice was of old a celebrated sanctuary, to which it is said that crowds used to resort; but, as it has been remarked, that while "the evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones," so of the only three instances in which its use as such has been recorded, in two its sacred character was violated, and in the third it was made the instrument for the accomplishing of an evil design.

The *first* of these events was in the year 1306, when King Robert Bruce, whose fortunes were at this period reduced to their lowest ebb, had sent his queen and daughter for safety to the stronghold of Kildrummie in Marr; whence, dreading a siege, they betook themselves by flight to St Duthus' sanctuary: but the then all-powerful Earl of Ross, deterred by no feelings of honour or of religion, seized their persons, and delivered them to

the English. The queen did not recover her liberty until eight years thereafter. *

The *second*, though a less known circumstance in the history of our country, was of more importance in relation to our private concerns. There is related with great minuteness by Sir Robert Gordon, the history of an outrage by M'Niell, laird of Criech in Sutherland, who having had a quarrel with Mowat, laird of Freswick in Caithness, by chance encountered and defeated him in the year 1427 or 1429, and pursuing him to the chapel of St Duthus at Tain, there slew both him and his company, and burnt the sanctuary. The popular tradition here is less circumstantial, having preserved only an outline of the facts, the atrocity of which it has considerably lessened. It states merely that some *robbers* had fled hither from the reach of justice; and that their pursuers, to avoid a direct violation of the sanctuary, instead of forcibly dragging them from its covert, adopted the expedient of burning it over their heads. The tradition, at all events, accounts for what in the historical narrative appears a wanton act of impiety; while the classical reader may be reminded of the somewhat similar evasion of *direct sacrilege*, which attended the death of Pausanias. After this disaster, the parish appears to have remained without a permanent place of worship for a period of more than forty years; for St Duthus' Church dates from the year 1471. It is situated on the brink of the escarpment so often referred to, in the middle of the town; which it would seem, therefore, had already changed its site. It is a large handsome building, so strongly constructed, that though the roof and interior have undergone many repairs, the walls promise to endure far longer than many of the most modern erections. The windows are Gothic; and there is placed outside, above one of the doors, a figure of St Duthus sculptured on stone in bas-relief; an inscription in church-text borders it all round, but is so effaced as to be illegible.

The *third* event we have mentioned, was a pilgrimage of King James V. to St Duthus' sanctuary, about the year 1527, and, therefore, a century after the burning of the chapel; (the former Statistical Account erroneously places it *before* it.) The royal visitant, it appears, travelled barefoot; and a rough footpath, leading across a moor in the upper part of the parish, and known by the name of the King's Causeway,—while it remains a proof of

* Hailes' Annals of Scotland.

the uncivilized state of the country at that period, in that it possessed not a single available road in this direction,—remains a proof also of the then loyalty of the people, who hastily repaired to construct one for the accommodation of their king. Our gratification, however, is considerably lessened by knowing that the pilgrimage resulted from the instigation of James's Popish advisers, anxious to remove him from the influence of any applications that might be made to him for the life of Hamilton, the Scottish proto-martyr.

Historical Documents.—The oldest existing charter of the burgh of Tain is one granted by James VI. in the year 1587, followed by another in 1612. A third was afterwards issued by Charles II. In these we find reference made to former charters granted by the ancient Kings of Scotland, which, it is said in the first of James VI. above-mentioned, “were cruelly burnt by barbarians and certain rebel subjects of Ireland (*per barbaros et quosdam rebelles subditos Hiberniæ,*) as has been manifestly proved to us by authentic documents produced before us;” and on this fact are these new grants of confirmation founded. What these *authentic documents* were, we could have no room for conjecturing, but for a fortunate discovery made in the year 1826, of a notarial copy of what we have every reason to believe must have been one of them, which now lies among the records of the Northern Institution at Inverness. Its *authenticity* is unquestionable; for it bears every internal mark of it. It is an inquest held at *Thayne*, on the 20th of April 1439, by a jury of the highest names in the country, (of which the chief are Alexander of Sutherland, Master of that Ilk, William Leslie, Sheriff of Inverness, Hugh Ross of Balnagown, and George Munro of Fowlis,) under the seal of Alexander Earl of Ross, and Lord of the Isles, King's justiciary north of the Forth,—for the purpose of ascertaining the antiquity and privileges of the burgh; which accordingly is found to have been enfranchised by Malcolm Canmore, and confirmed in its rights by several of his successors. The inquest having thus taken place, ten or at most twelve years after the burning of the chapel, and for a purpose which nothing but the loss of charters could have rendered necessary; knowing, too, on the authority of King James, that the charters were actually *burnt* by rebel Irish subjects,*—we are naturally led to identify the two events, and to

* Irish, it is well known, was of old synonymous with *Celtic*, just as the Gaelic language is still occasionally termed *Èrse*. There can be no objection, therefore, to

suppose that, for security's sake, the sanctuary may have been chosen as the fittest place for the preservation of those documents, and that with it they may have perished. The high rank of the jurors sufficiently manifests the importance then attached by the country round to the full authentication of the burghal rights.

Parochial Registers.—There are no trustworthy parochial registers now extant, of a date beyond 1765; at which period we find it recorded that general discontent had been raised by the total want of any registration for nine years before; since that time (except that there is no record of deaths) they have been tolerably well kept. The burgh records commence in 1734.

Antiquities.—Almost the only antiquity worthy of note in the parish, besides the chapel and church of St Duthus above-mentioned, is the beautifully carved oaken pulpit of the latter, which was gifted by “the good regent” Murray, to the inhabitants of Tain, for their zeal in the cause of the Reformation. In what this zeal was displayed, we know not; we have learned only the gratifying fact; and we know that it did not, as in other parts of Scotland, lead to the demolition or even to the defacement of the ancient church; on which several Roman Catholic figures are still to be seen. We regret to state, however, that after St Duthus' church was vacated, between twenty and thirty years ago, it was for a considerable time left in such an exposed state, that boys were able to enter, and wantonly to break down the wood-work of the interior; and thus, ere it was observed, the pulpit itself, the memorial of our ancestors' piety, received more injury from their descendants' negligence, than did the edifice which contains it, from the disturbances and shocks of a religious revolution. Experience has now taught us better to guard this fine relic, mutilated as it is.

Modern condition.—Of the more modern history of the parish, scarcely a fact worthy of commemoration has been preserved. Of its ancient loyalty, and more lately of its Protestantism, proof has been given; both feelings appear to have kept ground. At the period of the Restoration, the minister of Tain was one of a noble band of *four* in the synod of Ross, who preferred suffering deposition and imprisonment to maintaining place with a polluted conscience. The example of the shepherd cannot have been lost upon

applying the title to M'Neill and his followers, who, we know, were actually proclaimed rebels. Besides, James before his accession to the English throne, had no subjects in Ireland; nor, if he had, is it conceivable how Tain should have become the seat of their ravages.

the flock. And ever since the death or displacement of the last Episcopalian minister, the church here has been filled by a succession of pious clergymen, whose names and characters are still held in the affectionate remembrance of many of the people; the consequence of which has been a zealous attachment on their part to the Church of Scotland, and (in no slight degree, perhaps, from the same cause) a disinclination to revolutionary or republican sentiments. At the time of the Rebellion, we find they suffered a little from their loyalty. The burgh records inform us, that the inhabitants were greatly distressed by a large body of "the rebel army," (so it is boldly worded at the very time,) quartering for several weeks in the town, and exacting money and necessaries under all pretences; and the town-council were forced, under pain of military extortion, at a day's warning, to muster L. 60 (about half their gross revenue) for the supply of their guests.

As far as can be traced, there have never been many resident large proprietors in the parish, since much of the land belonged to the burgh itself, and much to gentlemen possessed of additional property in other parts of the country. Most of the land-owners, and in truth most of the people, bore the name of Ross: or, to speak more correctly, almost every body possessed two surnames, by one of which (in general a patronymic beginning with Mac) he was universally known in conversation, though he deemed himself called upon to change it to Ross, or sometimes to Munro, whenever he acquired any status in society, or became able to write his name. (Easter Ross, it may be observed, was of old divided between these two clans; and their two chiefs are among the names of the jurors we have above quoted as present at the inquest in 1437.) From this circumstance of each individual's being furnished with two appellations, seems partly to have arisen the remark, which has found its way into Encyclopedias, that Tain is famous for nick-names; but, partly, the remark was once true; for, when the by-names of those who had risen in society were forgotten, it became absolutely necessary to invent others, (and those often of the oddest description,) to distinguish the multitudes of Rosses and Munroes.

Modern Buildings.—The material now employed in every construction above that of a hut, is the fine white sandstone from the hill. The Royal Academy, which was built about twenty-five years ago, is one of the handsomest and chastest erections in the north of

Scotland ; and is greatly set off by its fine large play-ground, which has been of late tastefully planted, walled in, and railed. The new church is a substantial, but rather heavy-looking edifice ; a tower is its great desideratum. There was erected in 1825, a handsome town and county house, close to the antique five-spired prison-tower, which forms the most prominent object in the town : unfortunately, it was not constructed fire-proof ; and the upper rooms, being appropriated for the confinement of debtors, were, a few years ago, by some accident, inflamed. Several lives were lost, and the building was almost burnt to the ground. It has not since been rebuilt, and what was once an ornament, is now the greatest deformity in the place.

III.—POPULATION.

| | | |
|------------------------|-----|-----------------------------------|
| The population in 1755 | was | 1870 |
| | | 1811 |
| | | 2384 |
| | | 1821 |
| | | 2861 |
| | | 1831 |
| | | 3078 |
| | | 1836 |
| | | 2915; males, 1299; females, 1616. |

The decrease during the last five years may be ascribed in part to the ravages of cholera in the village of Inver, where above a third of the inhabitants were swept off in a few weeks ; and partly to emigration ; while some diminution of trade is thought, besides, to have taken place in the town, in consequence of the non-residence at present of many of the neighbouring proprietors, and perhaps, too, from the number of shops recently opened in the surrounding villages. However occasioned, it is certain that the value of houses in the town has, within the last few years, fallen nearly a half.

| | |
|--|------|
| Population in the town, | 1725 |
| Inver village, | 151 |
| the country, | 1039 |
| Of these, there are under 15 years of age, | 1005 |
| betwixt 15 and 30, | 783 |
| 30 and 50, | 641 |
| 50 and 70, | 396 |
| upwards of 70, | 90 |

- For the last seven years, the yearly average of marriages has been 22 or 23 ; and of births, 71.

There are no insane, fatuous, nor deaf and dumb individuals in the parish ; the blind do not, it is believed, at present exceed 2 in number.

Number of illegitimate births in the parish, during last three years, 15 ; but this includes several cases that were afterwards followed by marriage of the parties.

Land-owners.—Besides the burgh itself, there are twelve land-owners possessing property above the yearly value of L. 50, viz. Hugh Rose Ross of Cromarty ; R. B. Æneas Macleod of Cad-

boll; Hon. Mrs Hay Mackenzie of Cromarty, patroness of the parish; the Duchess Countess of Sutherland; Sir Charles Ross of Balnagown; George Mackenzie Ross of Aldie; Hugh Ross of Knockbreck; Fitzgerald Murray of Pitculzean; Daniel Ross of Hartfield; Donald Kennedy of Bogbain; Malcolm Fraser of North Glastullich; and George Ross of Moorfarm. Only the two last named are permanently resident.

Languages.—The whole town and parish is at present nearly equally divided between the English and Gaelic languages. The latter is generally spoken in the country and in Inver village; but the former, by the higher ranks in the country, and by almost every one in the town. Gaelic has of late rapidly lost ground; in fact, it is rare to find a native of the town, under twenty or thirty years of age, able to speak it with ease; and it is never heard among the children on the streets. In the country, the change has not been quite so marked. The number of individuals able to speak Gaelic only, are, in town, 66; in country, 96; English only, in town, 100; in country, 36. If, however, we reckon those who are unable to speak or understand both languages with ease, each of these numbers must be greatly increased.

Character, &c.—There is nothing very remarkable in the habits or character of the people. Their ancient spirit of loyalty has not quite died away, and a tendency to insubordination in any shape is seldom manifested; while the general tone of feeling, we may add, is decidedly towards religion; and though much of this is, doubtless, a habit of thinking transmitted from the generations gone by, yet much, it is believed, may be ascribed to the genuine workings of a living power, actuating individual minds, and through them leavening society in the mass.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—The number of acres in the parish, cultivated or uncultivated, has never been ascertained. A great proportion of the lands once belonged to the burgh; most of them have been from time to time feued out at a rent of 6d. per acre; and thus, within the last thirty or forty years, much additional ground has been brought into actual cultivation, and still more planted with thriving fir woods. All these lands were before considered by the inhabitants of the burgh as a common right, so that considerable resistance was made to the first attempts of the magistrates thus to deprive them of their ancient privilege of pasture. For a considerable time back, almost all the available burgh land has in this way

been parcelled out, to the extent of 4325 Scotch acres; and except the Morrish Mòr, (which, as already mentioned, has been recently overblown with sand,) together with the quarries and mosses of the hill district, there now remains little or none of the burgh property open to the people, that is not too distant, or too barren to be made use of. The rent of arable land averages about L. 1, 10s. per acre; in different districts, however, varying very considerably. The rate of farm-labour is about 1s. a-day in winter, and 1s. 6d. in summer; the total expense of a farm-servant amounts to about L. 22 per year. The general duration of leases is nineteen years; only that the fields around the town, (being in general cultivated by townsmen, and bringing a higher rent,) are let annually, or at very short terms. Agriculture has, of late years, rapidly advanced. The improved systems have been almost universally adopted, and crops are raised, scarcely if at all surpassed in quality, in any district of Scotland. The cultivation of wheat, in particular, has made rapid strides. Twenty or even ten years ago, it was dealt in only by a very few of the larger farmers; while now, there is scarcely a cottar who does not grow some. It has been found to answer well for the soil; and, in accordance with this, has been the quickness of its reception. There have been many improvements of late on the various estates, chiefly in the way of reclaiming waste land, draining, fencing, planting, &c.; irrigation has been practised only in one large field belonging to Mr Ross of Cromarty, and in it (in consequence, it is thought, of the over-purity of the water,) the experiment has not been crowned with success. The same proprietor has contributed much to adorn the face of the country, by the tasteful manner in which he conducts his operations, so that beauty as well as profit may be the result.

Quarries.—Those at present wrought are the common property of the burghers, being situated in the hill of Tain. The procuring of the finest white sandstone is attended with no expense but that of quarrying it.

Fisheries.—The village of Inver, situated at the eastern extremity of the parish, is the only fishing station, although the town is often supplied, besides, from other quarters. Haddock and flounder are the staple kinds of fish; cod, whiting, skate, are also found in abundance, as is herring in its season. Haddocks sell at the rate of one or two (sometimes even three or four) for 1d. according to the season of the year. No salmon-fishings are carried on. The

proprietor of those farther up the frith purchases the burgh's right to those opposite the town, at an annual rent of L. 10. The mussel-scalp is a more profitable source of income, although the proper mode of management is by no means well understood. It is resorted to, yearly, by great numbers of fishermen from the coast of Morayshire, who pay to the burgh at the rate of L. 2 per boat for the liberty of removing a cargo of the fish. The revenue hence derived is rather unequal, but averages about L. 150.

Manufactures.—The only manufactories, properly so called, in the parish, are an iron-foundry, in which the various descriptions of cast-iron ware used in the country round are produced; and a brewery, which supplies the most of the neighbourhood with excellent ale. The burn of Morangie, beside which it is placed, has been remarked by strangers, for the economy of power shewn in the various uses to which it is applied. After irrigating the field above-mentioned, it is employed to give motion separately to a sawing, a carding, a grinding, and a dyeing-mill, besides affording water to the brewery; and all within the space of a few hundred yards.

Navigation.—There is no navigation carried on in the parish, except by ships hired for the purpose of carrying coal and lime, for the supply of the inhabitants; by these, fir wood is frequently exported to serve for coal-pit props. All other goods are for the most part shipped and landed at Cromarty or Invergordon, so that we are exposed to the disadvantage of a land carriage of eleven miles.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Burgh.—The burgh of Tain serves as a market-town, not only for this parish, but for the whole surrounding district, and for a considerable part of Sutherlandshire; and to this it seems to owe its existence and prosperity,—little trade being carried on, save for the purposes of home consumption. Among the irregularly built towns of the north of Scotland, it used to be remarked for irregularity; for every man seems to have placed his house, just as happened to suit his private convenience. The same character still attaches to it, though in a less degree. The streets have been gradually straightened, and many of the more unsightly edifices pulled down, though a principle of order is by no means even yet predominant in the construction of new ones. The town is neither lighted, nor supplied with water; for, though its gross revenue averages L. 500, the other claims of expenditure in general exhaust the whole.

There are no villages in the parish besides Inver, which contains merely a fishing population.

Means of Communication.—The parish is well supplied in all directions with public roads, which together amount to twenty miles in extent. A mail coach passes daily from and to Inverness, and proceeds north to the Meikle Ferry; and a mail gig runs daily between Tain and Bonar. There has been established lately another daily coach to Inverness, which, in consequence of its lessened fares and more convenient hours, has even already increased the number of stage travellers, and which accordingly has every prospect of success. The bridges, of which there are a considerable number, on account of the numerous streamlets, are generally kept in good repair; and so, in general, are our stone fences; there are now almost no hedges, so much has the Scottish taste, in this respect, prevailed beyond even what we perceive it to have done, of old.

Ecclesiastical State.—From the charter of Charles II. it appears that Tain was formerly a collegiate charge,—though this would appear not to have continued beyond the times of Episcopacy. It is now, however, anxiously wished by many, that some such arrangement should again be brought about; as the almost equal division into Gaelic and English hearers, each class demanding attention equal to what a single congregation would require, renders the field of ministration too arduous for any single clergyman. St Duthus' church, though now vacated, might, it is believed, at a moderate expense, be rendered a commodious place of worship for the Gaelic congregation. The new church was built in 1815, and is situated at the eastern extremity of the town, pretty near the centre of the parish. It was designed to accommodate 1200; and, though not constructed on the best acoustic principles, is, upon the whole, tolerably suitable. In St Duthus' church, all the sittings were free; in this church none are free. The average rent is 3s. The manse, a handsome building, a short distance above the town, was erected in 1824. The glebe attached is of the legal extent of four acres, worth about L. 1, 10s. per acre yearly. The stipend is 18 chalders, half barley and half oatmeal, payable by the fiars prices of the county. There is always a catechist in the parish, who has L. 3, 10s. of salary from the session-funds with what gratuities he may receive from the families he visits. The late catechist (who has died since this account has been commenced) enjoyed

in addition, for the last few years of his life, an annuity of L. 7, 10s. from the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge.

All the families in the parish, with the exception of 3 or 4, attend the Established Church. There may be, besides, 2 or 3 individuals who attend a Secession chapel in a neighbouring parish.

Religious and Charitable Associations.—There are no societies for religious purposes belonging exclusively to the parish, though it is a chief seat of several. The Northern Missionary Society, which is intended to embrace in its range the shires of Inverness, Ross, and Sutherland, was established in 1800, and meets annually at Tain, Inverness, and Dingwall. The late Rev. Dr Mackintosh of Tain, who was, until his death in 1831, its valued secretary, and the late Rev. Alexander Fraser of Kirkhill, were the originators of the institution. The annual subscription of 10s. 6d. is the condition of membership. The yearly contributions from the Tain district average from L. 70 to L. 80; of which sum, probably more than L. 30 are from the parish itself. The Easter Ross Ladies' Missionary and Bible Society, established in 1818, meets annually at Tain; its collections average near L. 30; half the sum may be considered as the contribution of this parish. The ladies usually devote about L. 6 of it to local objects, such as the education of the children of the poor. There is also a Society for the Relief of the Destitute Sick, established about seven years ago; of which the annual subscriptions amount to about L. 12. In addition to all the above, and exclusive of the poor funds to be afterwards mentioned, the church collections for religious and charitable objects, may average L. 50.

Education.—The parish is supplied with the means of education, to almost as great an extent as could be desired. Besides the parochial school, there is an academy, established in 1813, erected and liberally endowed by subscription; two female day and boarding schools, one supported by the burgh funds, and the other private; two private English schools; a private class for young children of both sexes; and a Gaelic Society school; in all eight, and all, except the last, situated in the town. The number taught to read under five years of age are, 49 males, 40 females; the number from five to fifteen, 253 males, 144 females; the number taught to write, 148 males, 76 females. The instruction given in the parochial school consists chiefly of English reading, writing, and arithmetic; and there are in general several Latin and Greek scholars. The schoolmaster's salary is L. 44, 10s., with school-fees as follows: viz. for teaching English, 2s. per quarter; with the addition of

writing and arithmetic, 3s. 6d.; with book-keeping, 4s.; and any of the above, with the addition of mensuration or the languages, 7s. The school fees may amount to L. 25 or L. 28 per annum. At the academy, there is a rector who teaches arithmetic, geography, mathematics, and natural philosophy; and, for the last purpose, he is provided with an excellent philosophical apparatus. There is also a teacher of the languages, namely, Latin, Greek, and French, and a teacher of English reading, grammar, and writing. At the boarding-schools, the usual female accomplishments are taught. The Society school has been established chiefly for behoof of the village of Inver, which is wholly a Gaelic population, and which is, besides, at an impracticable distance from the town.

The people are in general very anxious to secure for their children the best education their circumstances will permit. It has been remarked, that notwithstanding—or perhaps more correctly, *in consequence of*—the facility afforded by the academy for attaining what is usually termed a finished education, the number of boys from the parish who pursue their studies at the university is not increased, but rather diminished. The knowledge acquired here is generally deemed sufficient for those who do not intend to embrace a profession *demanding* a college curriculum. It is not easy to tell how much of any improvement in the conduct of the people may be owing to the increased facilities of education; that a higher tone of thinking has been communicated seems certain, and the *degrading* vices, such as drunkenness, appear, among the respectable classes, to have much decreased.

There is a library attached to the academy for the use of the pupils. More than one library, parochial and circulating, have from time to time been set on foot, but, from bad management, they have dwindled away. There is a public reading-room maintained, at which several newspapers are received.

Friendly Societies.—Of these, there are three, namely, the Guildry Society, the Friendly Society, and the Mason Lodge. The first has existed since 1738, and is designed chiefly as a widow's fund; the entry-money is L. 5, the quarterly subscription 1s., and the annuity granted to the widow (or to the children, until the youngest reach the age of twelve,) L. 5. The second was established about twenty-five years ago, chiefly among the operative classes. It assists the impoverished members in sickness and old age, and inters them at death. The Mason Lodge, which embraces only free-masons, has acted for above seventy years on a similar principle.

Poor Funds.—The average number of persons receiving parochial aid, is about 145, among whom about L. 70 is annually divided. In addition to this, the sum of L. 5 is yearly entrusted to the kirk-session from the estate of Macleod of Cadboll for behoof of the poor; the interest of L. 300 is distributed by the executors of the late George Murray, Esq. of Westfield; and a sum of L. 500 has been left by a Mr Robertson, that its interest may be yearly applied at Christmas for the relief of reduced householders. Unfortunately, the reception of public charity is by very few considered a humiliating circumstance, chiefly, perhaps, in consequence of a munificent annual donation which used to be given by a benevolent gentleman of the name of Ross, residing in London, to be distributed among his poor *namesakes*. The result was an influx into the parish from every quarter of those (not a few) who could lay any claim to the title of Ross.

Prisons.—There is one prison in the parish, which serves for the whole surrounding district, and has of late been used for the greater part of Ross-shire. In 1836, the prisoners for poaching and breach of excise laws were 16; for theft, 7; for defrauding of creditors, 1; for assault, 9; for homicide, 2; in all, 35. Of these, but 3 belong to the parish, viz. two for theft, and 1 for assault; and of these 3, NOT ONE is a native. We mention the circumstance particularly, as showing a moral character rarely to be met with in towns of an equal size. The walls of the prison are strong, yet it has been broken through. The principal insecurity arises from the want of an *inclosing* wall. The management of the jail is not very good. The prisoners receive their allowance of aliment in money, and are permitted to purchase with it what they please, with the exception of ardent spirits. There are no special means employed for preserving their health, so that it not unfrequently happens that some are released on the ground of dangerous distempers contracted in jail. The magistrates of the burgh have the government of the prison.

Fairs.—Of these, there are three principal ones still held in the parish, which, though at one time of great importance—having been resorted to by dealers from all quarters, with every variety of goods—have now degenerated into comparatively insignificant markets for country productions. They are held at Midsummer, Lammas, and Michaelmas. The two first are now useful, chiefly as established resorts of farmers and labourers, respectively to hire and to be hired for the harvest work. The rapid decline of these fairs is a matter of gratification to every sober-minded individual, since they used formerly to be, and to some extent still are, scenes of abominable drunkenness and riot.

The inns and alehouses in the town amount to 16; in the rest of the parish to 3. Here, as everywhere else, there have been complaints of the pernicious effects of the large number of these houses upon public morals; and accordingly, they have been of late considerably restricted by the functionaries.

Fuel.—That generally used, except by those persons in the parish who reside near the peat mosses, is English coal, at the rate of about 1s. 8d. per barrel; (the herring barrel is the measure still employed.) It is found cheaper than peat used alone, though of it, too, a large quantity is almost daily brought into the town, for sale, in small carts, chiefly from the neighbouring parish of Edderton, and is purchased to be used along with the staple fuel. A coal storehouse is at present in the course of erection.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

In comparing the present state of the parish with that which existed at the time of the last Statistical Account, a very striking advance in almost every department may be perceived. The most important change, however, seems to be that of *language*. That from the peculiar situation of the Highlands of Scotland, the change is a necessary one, and that by it the avenues of knowledge are being opened up, and the power of doing good proportionally increased, may readily be allowed; but no Highlander watching the process in its *immediate* effects can look on it without regret. The stream of traditionary wisdom descending from our forefathers has been interrupted in its flow; the feelings and the sentiments of a race, distinguished for high feeling and noble sentiment, will not transfuse themselves into a foreign tongue; and the link of connection between the present and the past generations has been snapped. The prejudices and superstitions of the Highlander are indeed perishing along with his better characteristics; but even this will not be contemplated with unmixed satisfaction, by those who believe that there are prejudices that elevate, more than they darken the mind. Before now, the Gael was debarred from fame, because he could speak only an uncultivated, though copious and nervous tongue; now, he may chance as effectually to be debarred, because the fountain of Highland prejudice and Highland enthusiasm has been checked and rendered turbid at its source, and it may be long ere its inspiring waters renew their ancient flow. Still the change, we have said, is a necessary, and will in the end be a beneficial one; and the sooner, therefore, it be accomplished now, perhaps the better.

August 1837.