

designate him by his surname, but by his genealogy, perhaps four or five generations back, and many of them can trace them much farther. Such names, therefore, are frequently heard, as Aonghas mac Alasdair, mhic Raonuill, mhic Uistein, mhic Cholla; Angus, the son of Alexander, the son of Ranold, the son of Hugh, the son of Coll. In the same manner, when speaking of the Highland chiefs, they designate them patronimically; as, Lord MacDonald, MacDhonuill; Rasay, MacGhille Chaluim; Glengarry, Mac mhic Alasdair; Glenmoriston, Mac mhic Phatric; Argyle, Mac Chailein Mhòir, &c.

November 1840.

PARISH OF SNIZORT.

PRESBYTERY OF SKYE, SYNOD OF GLENELG.

THE REV. RODERICK MACLEOD, MINISTER.*

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Extent and Boundaries.—This parish, which is of an irregular form, is about 14 miles long, and from 6 to 10 broad. It is bounded on the south, by the parish of Portree; on the south-west and west, by the parishes of Bracadale and Duirinish, and Loch Snizort, an arm of the sea; on the north by the parish of Kilmuir; and on the east, by that of Steinscholl, and the channel which divides Skye from Rasay.

Topographical Appearances.—Its surface is diversified by flat hills, clothed with heath and green pastures, and is intersected by narrow valleys or glens, through which small streams or rivulets wind their course to the sea. Most of the hills are not remarkable for their elevation. In the south-east part of the parish is a huge and lofty mountain ridge, called the Storr, which is one of the most interesting formations of nature in the whole island. The isolated peak of Stórr, projecting to an immense height from the bosom of the adjacent hill, is seen from afar, and its ragged irregular outline cannot fail to attract the traveller's notice at a distance of many miles. Towards the east, the Storr presents a range of rugged cliffs, broken into irregular formations,

* Drawn up by Mr Donald Fraser, Parish Schoolmaster of Kilmuir, Skye.

and rising to the height of several hundred feet. The various recesses and projections of this remarkable place render it, from whatever point it is viewed, a scene highly grand and picturesque. While a fog happens to sweep the bosom of Storr, appearances like those of lofty spires, walls, and turrets are seen emerging in majestic forms from the driving mists.

The valleys or glens, of which there are three, Glenhaltin, Glenhinistil, and Glen Uigg, besides abounding with excellent pastures, on which a vast number of sheep and cattle are reared, contain large tracts of arable land. The last of these strongly suggests the idea of its having been formerly a lake, the waters of which escaped by wearing a channel to themselves, and left the bottom dry.

The shore is bold and rocky, except at the heads of the lochs or bays, where it is low and sandy. From Loch Snizort, which partly intersects the parish, a number of small bays or lochs branch off in every direction. Of these the bay of Uigg deserves particular attention. It is a circular basin, opening to the west, and is upwards of a mile and a half in circumference. About five or six hundred yards from the edge of the water; the ground, rising with steep ascent, extends in the form of a semicircle round the head of it, and encloses a level space of more than two hundred acres of arable land of the finest description. This may be said to be one of the most interesting places in Skye. Within the area of this natural amphitheatre, more than six hundred people live together as in a hamlet.

Climate.—The parish partaking of an insular situation, its summers are cooler and its winters less severe than in inland situations of the same latitude. Snow seldom remains longer than a few days on the ground near the shore. The sky is generally clouded, and overcast with vapours wafted from the bosom of the Atlantic Ocean, and these descend in such constant rains, as to interrupt the labours of the husbandman. The soil is naturally cold and moist. In seasons uncommonly wet sowing is late, and the progress of the crop to maturity is retarded; and a late season is generally attended with the evils of scarcity, and even with famine. The most prevalent winds are the west and the south-west. The east and north-east winds are distinguished by their dryness. From the moist state of the climate, the people are subject to inflammatory complaints, diseased action

of the lymphatic system, and rheumatism. Fevers, and other diseases, occasioned by the want of cleanliness, are also frequent.

Hydrography.—The only arm of the sea which intersects the parish is Loch Snizort. It is nine or ten miles long, running in a direction nearly south-east, and narrow and shallow. Springs are abundant, and their waters are of an excellent quality, clear, light, and salubrious. The rivers, of which there are seven, having not far to descend to the sea, are necessarily small, and their rocky channels are often nearly dry; but in rainy weather, when swelled by the mountain torrents, they flow with great impetuosity.

There is on the east side of this parish a beautiful fall of water, the perpendicular height of which may be about 90 feet. The most remarkable circumstance regarding this fall is, that, nearly opposite to the middle of it, there is an overarched path across the rock, along which five or six persons may walk abreast with the greatest safety. The traveller when he gains this position sees the body of water roll over, and might take it for a pillar of smoke, did he not see it dash on the rocks below.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Eminent Characters.—The most remarkable character connected with this parish is Flora Macdonald, a name which will ever be recorded as an ornament to her sex, for the fortitude and heroism which she displayed in favouring the escape of Prince Charles Stuart, after the memorable battle of Culloden. She was the daughter of Macdonald of Milton, in South Uist, of which island she was a native.

Land-owners.—There are five land-owners in the parish; the principal one is Lord Macdonald.

Antiquities.—On the farm of Peinduin, on a rock near the shore, may be seen the remains of a castle, which, it would appear, had never been wholly finished. This castle was built a little after the middle of the sixteenth century, by a bold and powerful character named Huistean Mac Ghilleaspuig Chléirich, (*id est*) Hugh, son of Archibald, the clerk. He was called Cléireach, or clerk, on account of his being able to write, which was a rare accomplishment at that time. Although Huistean was nearly related to the Macdonald family, he never was on good terms with them. Confiding much in his own strength and military prowess, he entertained the bold design of cutting off his chief, and of seizing by force upon his estate. With this view he commenced the building of the stronghold already mentioned, and not supplying

it with either windows or doors, but, leaving an aperture in its roof to enter it by a moveable ladder, he foolishly imagined that he could defend himself therein from the enemy's attack, and flee to it as a place of safety, should he be pursued by his countrymen, whom he wished to reduce to absolute subjection. Soon after King James VI. assumed the government, a bloody feud arose between the Macdonalds and Macleans, which became so serious that the King's interference was loudly called for to effect a reconciliation. It happened that Donald Gòrm Mòr of Sleat set out from Skye, with a retinue befitting his rank, to visit his kinsman, Angus Macdonald of Dunyveg, in Isla; but, in consequence of a sudden storm which ensued, he was forced to take shelter in that part of Jura belonging to Maclean of Duart. At the same time, Huistean Mac Ghilleaspuig Chléirich and some attendants, with whom Donald Gòrm had lately quarrelled, were likewise at sea, and were driven by the same storm into a neighbouring harbour in Jura. Huistean and his retinue, on finding that their chief lay so near them in a bay on Maclean's property, secretly carried off, by night, a number of Maclean's cattle, and took to sea, anticipating that Donald Gòrm and party would be blamed for the robbery, and would suffer accordingly. Their wicked plot was attended with the desired success, for next day the Macdonalds were attacked by a superior number of armed Macleans. A bloody fray took place, in which sixty of the Skyemen were killed, and their chief very narrowly escaped with life. Soon after this, a diligent pursuit was made after Huistean. He was at length taken, and carried to the Castle of Duntulm, his chieftain's residence in Kilmuir. As he could not look for mercy from a kinsman against whom he had so frequently rebelled, he was cast into one of the dungeons at Duntulm, where he was a long time kept without food. At length, a quantity of salt beef, and a covered jug, were let down into his cell. It is said that, after partaking plentifully of the beef, he examined the jug, but, to his great mortification, found it empty, and in this manner he died of thirst.

In a small island, formed by the River Snizort, are the ruins of a large cathedral, which, in all probability, was formerly the metropolitan church of Skye, but is now, with the island, used as a place of sepulture.

Cairns of stones, under which, it is said, the ashes of renowned chieftains are deposited, and the remains of Druidical temples, are to be seen in many places. In the last Statistical report of

this parish, there is the following interesting account: "In a cairn lately dug up, was found a large stone chest, or coffin, made of four stones, about 5 feet long, and $4\frac{1}{2}$ broad. Upon the layer, which is a large single stone, of nearly 6 feet by 5, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ foot thick, was found the handle of a small weapon, resembling much the hilt of a sword, quite corroded with rust, and a pin, which seemed to be compound metal, about 7 inches long, somewhat rounder than a pretty large probe; the one end was flat and broad, and the other round and sharp-pointed. Within the coffin was an urn of burned clay, nicely carved, but without any inscription. The urn being broken by the tools employed in removing the layer, none of its contents were discovered."

About fifty years ago, there was found in a moss dug for peats, on the farm of Sheader, a small box full of arms, which were not shaped like the modern ones, but short and broad. On one of them, when cleared of rust, was the name Bocchus, who is said to have been sheriff of Ross-shire; for Skye at that time formed a part of that shire, when the Macdonald family held the Earldom of Ross. That which had the name Bocchus seemed to be the principal sword of justice, which used to be laid before the sheriff on the table, when holding his courts, and the other arms appeared to belong to inferior officers. The box and arms were given to Lord Alexander Macdonald, grandfather of the present Lord.

Many of those circular duns, which the traveller meets with in other parts of the Highlands, are to be seen here.

III.—POPULATION.

The population in 1755, was	1627
	1794, 1808
	1801, 2144
	1811, 2275
	1821, 2789
	1831, 3487

Among the superstitions of the people, it may be noticed, that there is nothing so much dreaded by many as what they term an evil eye. As an antidote against this, the following verse is to be repeated by the person who dreads it, when washing in the morning:—

Gu beannaichidh Dia mo shùil,
'S beannaichidh mo shùil na chi:
Beannaichidh mise mo nàbhidh,
'S beannaichidh mo nàbhidh mi.

Let God bless my eye,
And my eye will bless all I see;
I will bless my neighbour,
And my neighbour will bless me.

The belief in the second-sight, which formerly prevailed here, as well as in other parts of the Highlands, is wearing away. Such as pretended to be gifted with this supernatural quality seem now to think their first sight is quite sufficient for all necessary and useful purposes, without the aid of the second; and that the realities of the present world give them enough to do, without troubling themselves about what is going on in the world of spirits.

Habits.—In cleanliness and other domestic comforts, there is ample room for improvement. The Highland dress is wholly extinct, and their clothing now consists of kelt or tartan of their own manufacture. The walls of their mean huts are commonly built of stones, and, instead of mortar or lime, the middle is crammed with earth to keep out the cold air. The interior is divided into two or three apartments by a thin partition of boards, or a few small sticks woven with straw. The apartment next the door being appropriated to the cattle, is much lower than the rest of the house, in order to give room to the dung to accumulate, which is seldom removed oftener than once or twice a year. Of the other two apartments, one is the sitting-room of the family, and the other both bed-room and barn; but some have a separate place for thrashing their corn. The fire is placed in the middle of the floor, and the smoke finds its way through a hole in the roof, or by the door. The leading articles of furniture, which is of the humblest description, consist of a table of very rough workmanship, a few stools, two or three chairs, and an easy chair called *sunna*, made of straw, and the sole property of the goodwife. In the more respectable houses, there is along the wall a bench made in the form of a sofa, on which half-a-dozen of people can sit. In such as want this convenience, there is a row of stones covered with turf. The door is the principal aperture for the admission of air, which, as the cattle enjoy the benefit of it first, cannot be of the purest description when it reaches the rational inmates. Light is admitted through a few panes of glass placed in the thatch.

Character.—The people are kind and hospitable as far as their limited means permit. The stranger is always a welcome guest. It must, however, unwillingly be acknowledged, that they do not live upon terms of such sincere and cordial friendship with one another as they did some thirty or forty years ago. Passions which interrupt the peace and harmony of the neighbourhood prevail; petty thefts are on the increase; litigations are more frequent; and disputes, which used to be amicably settled

through the intervention of kind friends and neighbours, are now brought for decision before courts of justice. For the truth of this statement, the great number of cases brought before the local courts is a sufficient proof. This decline of morals is chiefly to be attributed to their poverty. In consequence of the crowded state of the population, the tenants have sunk to the rank of lot-terers, having but a small portion of the land which they occupied when there were but few to cultivate the soil. Want is driving many to seek in the wilds of America for the comforts denied them in their native land.

The ordinary food of the peasantry consists of oat-bread, fish, and potatoes, the last of which constitutes the principal part of it.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—From the physical quality of its surface, a great part of this parish must remain an uncultivated waste. Pasturage forms the principal employment of a great part of the inhabitants. Like the Germans of Tacitus, “their pride consists in the number of their flocks and herds: these are their only riches, and in these they place their chief delight.” Their cows are more celebrated for their fine symmetry, than for the quantity of milk which they yield. On the large farms, agriculture is now conducted on scientific principles. Carts, ploughs, and other improved implements of husbandry have been introduced, and the system of cropping in rotation is practised to a considerable extent. But on the small lots, the mode of tillage pursued is tedious and extremely defective. Crooked ridges, stretching in every direction, and separated by broad useless spaces, from which the soil has been scraped to enrich the arable portion, meet the eye. The soil is broken up by the *cäschròm*, and when sown is harrowed by women, who are also employed in carrying out the manure in creels to the field, and other drudgeries of the same nature. It cannot but give pain to every benevolent mind to see not only young women whose delicate frame should exempt them from such hard labours, but even mothers employed as beasts of burden.

Fisheries.—There is a fishing-station at the head of Loch Snizort, where salmon are caught. Several tons of cod and ling are annually sent to Glasgow and Liverpool. The herring-fishing at one time, besides affording a plentiful supply of provisions to the people, formed a very lucrative article of commerce. Herrings were, some years ago, caught in such abundance in the yares or *cairidhs*, (large circular mounds erected at the head of the bays

in shallow water), as to become a nuisance before they could be salted; but now they seldom visit the coast.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Means of Communication.—There is an excellent road running through the whole length of the parish, and affording an easy communication with Portree, the nearest market-town; and there is a receiving-house at Uigg, to which the Harris packet comes once a-week for the mails.

Ecclesiastical State.—The church, which is situated at the head of Loch Snizort, near the southern extremity of the parish, was built about forty years ago. It was originally intended to accommodate 450 sitters; but, from the great increase of population, being considered too small, it was lately enlarged by the addition of 300 sittings; the expense of which was defrayed by private subscription. The manse, which is situated near the church, was built at the same time, and has lately undergone repairs. The stipend amounts to L. 150, and the value of the glebe is about L. 15 a-year. The minister of the parish preaches also every third Sunday at Uigg, one of the most destitute localities in the Highlands. The Antipædobaptists, who are the only Dissenters in the parish, have a meeting-house here, and have been making some converts; but, from recent events, there is reason to believe that their progress is more rapid than lasting. There are not more than thirty members in full communion with their church.

Education.—Besides the parish school, there are two other schools in the parish, one at Uigg, on the Assembly's scheme, and the other called Macdermid's Institution, from the name of the benevolent individual who endowed it, in the district of Borge. Mr Donald Macdermid, late of South Carolina, bequeathed L.1000 to endow a school in Borge, where he was born, for the purpose of teaching English, writing, and arithmetic gratis to the poor children of that district. In building a suitable school-house, and improving an acre of land for the schoolmaster, about L.200 were expended by the trustees, which lessened considerably the original fund; yet, by accumulation of interest and good management, they expect to give a salary of L.35 to the schoolmaster, who is allowed to take moderate fees from such scholars as can afford them. The school is in high repute and numerously attended. Lord Macdonald's factor, the ministers of Portree, Snizort, Kilmuir, and Donald Macdonald, Esq. of Skeabost, his

heirs and successors, are trustees, with unlimited power as to the management of the school, and appointment of the teacher. Owing to the poverty of the people, the fees in each of these schools are very inconsiderable.

Fuel.—The fuel is peats, which the women carry home in creels on their backs, from a very great distance.

April 1840.

PARISH OF BRACADALE.

PRESBYTERY OF SKYE, SYNOD OF GLENELG.

THE REV. JOHN R. GLASS, MINISTER.*

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THE name of the parish, which appears to be compounded of the Celtic adjective *breac* (spotted,) and the Norse word *dale* (field,) has been the same from time immemorial.

Extent.—Its length is about 20, and its extreme breadth about 8 miles.

Boundaries, &c.—It is bounded on the south and south-west by the sea; on the north, by the parish of Duirinish; on the east, by the parishes of Snizort and Portree; and on the south-east, by the parish of Strath. Its form is very irregular, being intersected by arms of the sea in various directions. The only hills in it of particular interest are part of that ranged called Coullin, stretching along the boundary between it and the parish of Strath, and so justly celebrated for their picturesque appearance; and a hill called *Prismheall*, overhanging the farm-house of Tallisker. But the surface is in general very hilly.

In that district of the parish called Minginish, there are various valleys which form almost the only low and flat lands; but that of Tallisker is the only one worthy of particular remark, its formation being highly romantic, and its soil particularly fertile. In the other district, there are several detached fields along the coast.

* Drawn up by the Rev. Roderick Macleod, formerly Minister of Bracadale, now of Snizort.