

PARISH OF STRATH.

PRESBYTERY OF SKYE, SYNOD OF GLENELG.

THE REV. JOHN MACKINNON, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THIS parish is known by the names of *Srath Mhic Jonmhuinn*, or Mackinnon's valley, and of *Strath-Swordale*, from the Gaelic word *Srath*, signifying a valley through which a river runs, and *Swordale*, a place situated in the centre of the parish. But, for the sake of brevity, it is always called Strath.

Extent and Boundaries.—The extreme length of the parish may be estimated at about 26 miles, and its mean breadth at about 6 miles. It is bounded on the north, by the parish of Portree; on the south, by the parish of Sleat; on the east, by the sea, which divides it from the mainland of Applecross and Lochalsh; and on the west, by the parish of Bracadale.

Topographical Appearances.—To the admirer of nature, this parish presents objects of no ordinary interest. On its western boundary is situated a landscape of unparalleled grandeur. No place, perhaps, affords more picturesque subjects for the painter than parts of this parish. In it he meets with such prodigality of natural wonders, that he must feel as if bewildered, and at a loss to make a choice. The scenery shifts at every step, and each successive view seems to excel the rest. The cloud-capped Cuillin raises its inaccessible pinnacles beyond the other mountains, and is visible in almost every part of the island. Next in order *Marsco*, *Blath-Bheinn* and *Beilig* shoot themselves forth in every variety of fantastic figure and appearance, each struggling for supremacy with its neighbour, and each possessing every imaginable characteristic of native rudeness and grandeur. On entering the Bay of Scavaig, the spectator is struck with the rugged outline presented by the spiry and serrated peaks of the lofty Cuillin. On landing, he finds himself surrounded by rocks denuded of every vestige of vegetation. As he advances, a valley, enclosed by mountains of the most precipitous character, opens to the view, thus encircling and form-

ing the dark lake of Còir-Uisge, which is here and there studded with small green islands, contrasting remarkably with the surrounding barrenness.

—— Rarely human eye has known
 A scene so stern as that dread lake,
 With its dark ledge of barren stone.
 Seems that primeval earthquakes sway
 Had rent a strange and shatter'd way
 Through the rude bosom of the hill
 And that each naked precipice,
 Sable ravine, and dark abyss,
 Tells of the outrage still.
 The wildest glen, but this, can show
 Some touch of nature's glow ;
 On high Benmore green mosses grow,
 And heath bells bud in deep Glencroe,
 And copse on Cruachan-Ben ;
 But here, above, around, below,
 On mountain or in glen,
 Nor tree—nor shrub—nor plant—nor flower,
 Nor sight of vegetative power
 The weary eye may ken,
 For all is rocks at random thrown.
 Black waves—bare crags—and banks of stone,
 As if were here denied.
 The summer sun, the spring's sweet dew,
 That clothe with many a varied hue
 The bleakest mountain side.—*Lord of the Isles.*

A few miles to the south of this scene is a cave which has of late been frequently resorted to by travellers, from being one of the numerous places of refuge occupied by Prince Charles Edward Stuart during his eventful career. Proceeding again to the northward, we soon reach the far-famed Spar-cave of Strathaird. Here we have another most striking specimen of nature's grandest workmanship. Every visitor must admire this lofty vaulted cave, resplendent with pure white icicles of semitransparent spar,—and having its roof supported, and its sides decorated, with massive columns and drapery of the same sparkling material. At the inmost recess, is a circular pond formed of shining spar, which nature has located there as a reservoir to contain the water which oozes through chinks of the roof. But of this fairy spot a more correct idea may be formed from the following lively description of it.*

* "The first entrance to this celebrated cave," says the author of *Waverley*, "is rude and unpromising ; but the light of the torches with which we were provided was soon reflected from the roof, floor, and walls, which seem as if they were sheeted with marble—partly smooth, partly rough—seeming to be wrought into statuary. The floor forms a steep and difficult ascent, and might be fancifully compared to a sheet of water which, while it rushed whitening and foaming down a declivity, had been suddenly arrested by the spell of an enchanter. Upon attaining the summit of the ascent, the cave opens into a splendid gallery, adorned with the most dazzling crystallizations, and finally descends with rapidity to the brink of a pool of the most lim-

Meteorology.—The prevailing winds are the south and south-west, which generally prognosticate rain. North and east winds, on the contrary, are in summer the harbingers of fine weather,—but in winter of sleet, frost, and snow. The climate is cold, damp, and changeable; and the complaints over which it may be said to exercise any influence, are, as may be supposed, acute rheumatism, pleuritic affections, consumption, and other pulmonary ailments. From the purity of the atmosphere, however, as well as from the refreshing nature of the sea air, the climate must be acknowledged upon the whole to be salubrious.

Hydrography.—The parish presents an irregular figure, being much intersected by arms of the sea, all of which afford safe and commodious anchorage for ships of any burden. Fresh water springs are both numerous and copious. Many of them are strongly impregnated with iron. It also abounds with lakes, which, though of inconsiderable extent, are well stocked with trout, and some of them with salmon.

Geology.—The mountains chiefly consist of trap and syenite; the lower grounds and valleys of limestone. A bed of marl of the finest quality extends across the parish from the farm of Torran on Loch Slappen, to Skinidean on the Sound of Scalpay.

In some localities, the calcareous strata are to be found alternating with brown calcareous sandstone, and with shale, containing the organic remains of fish and shell-fish. In the Island of Pabbay, on the eastern shore of the parish, petrified fish, principally eels, from six to eighteen inches long, have been found in a high state of preservation. A variety of other kinds of fish, and also oysters, mussels, welks, and limpets, are frequently met with in the same state.

From the head of Loch Slappen, a considerable alluvial deposit may be traced through the valley of Strathmore to Loch Eynort. Near Kyleakin, a deposition of greater importance occurs, occupying a space of about a mile along the shore. Dr MacCulloch regarded this as the remains of a plain formerly much more extensive. He says that it exhibits the appearances which characterize the alluvial valleys through which active rivers have cut their way; and that the supposition of this being the result of the

pid water, about four or five yards broad. This pool, surrounded by the most fanciful mouldings in a substance resembling white marble, and distinguished by the depth and purity of its waters, might have been the bathing grotto of a *Naiad*.—Note V. Canto III. of the *Lord of the Isles*.

decay of the mountains which back the plain, is invalidated by the presence of gneiss, hornblende, and schist, which do not occur in these mountains.

Zoology.—Mammalia.—Red-deer abound in Lord Macdonald's forest; and roe-deer are to be found in the woods. We have the fox and wild-cat, both particularly destructive to lambs, game, and poultry. We have likewise the weasel; but the only polecat ever seen in the island was some years ago killed in this parish, in the vicinity of one of the ferries to the mainland. From this circumstance, it is probable that it might have unobserved found its way across in the ferry-boat. The otter and seal are common, and are very destructive to salmon.

Land Birds.—These are, grouse, black-game, ptarmigan, and partridges, the eagle, and a variety of hawks; the raven, the hooded-crow, &c. &c. A grouse with white wings was last season shot on the property of Mr Macalister of Strathaird, and a rook with white wings has been observed in the parish.

Aquatic Birds.—Wild geese, the cormorant, the scart, the teal, the mallard, the tern or sea-swallow, and a variety of gulls.

Waders.—The heron, the water-hen, the corn-rail, the woodcock, the snipe, the golden plover, the lapwing, &c. The corn-rail appears early in May, and takes its departure in September. The woodcock appears early in October, and leaves early in March.

Fishes.—These are, the salmon and trout, which ascend the rivers for spawning about the middle of September, and are supposed to return to the sea in February: the cod, haddock, whiting, ling, lythe, coal-fish, skate, sand-eel, conger-eel, thornback, flounder, sole, and, occasionally, a John Doree; the angler or sea-devil, the grey and red gurnard, the mullet, the dog-fish, the king-fish, and cuttle-fish, &c.

Shell-Fish.—At the Sound of Scalpay there is an extensive bed of oysters of a superior quality, but of small size. We have also the mussel, the cockle, the razor-fish, the welk, the crab, the limpet, and the lobster; all of which are of considerable importance in an economical point of view, being much used as food by the lower orders during the summer months in particular, and during seasons of scarcity in general.

Botany.—The only plants peculiar to this parish are the rare *Eriocaulon septangulare*; and the *Dryas octopetala* of the limestone, which occurs in great profusion. All the varieties of planted

timber thrive well when duly fenced and properly preserved. An ash has been observed to grow nearly four feet in the course of one season. Of all the indigenous timbers, the soil seems most congenial to ash, birch, and hazel. Apples, pears, cherries, gooseberries, and currants thrive well, and are found in all the gardens. It is evident that the pine must have, at some remote period, been a native of the parish, as the trunks of fir trees of considerable size are found deeply imbedded in the moss in different parts of it.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

This parish is known to have been, as far back as the year 1354, the family property of the Mackinnons, who took a prominent part in the turbulent proceedings of that period, as well as in the more recent disturbances of 1715 and 1745. The Mackinnon of that day, who espoused the cause of the Pretender, was arrested and taken to London to stand his trial for high treason; and, after being confined for nearly twelve months in Tilbury Fort, the Government, in consideration of his advanced age, and seeing that he had been involved in these revolts rather from a spirit of chivalry than of rebellion, set him at large, with liberty to return home. Being reminded by Sir Dudley Ryder, then Attorney-General, of the debt of gratitude which he owed to his sovereign for this act of clemency, when, by rebellion, he had forfeited both his life and property, Mackinnon quaintly replied, "Had I the King in my power, as I am in his, I would return him the compliment, by sending him back to his own country." William Alexander Mackinnon, Esq. M. P. for Lymington, and author of a work of great merit on Public Opinion, now represents the ancient family of Mackinnon. The late Colonel Mackinnon of the Coldstream Guards, so well known for the elegance of his manners, and for his extraordinary feats of strength and agility, as well as for his distinguished bravery during the peninsular war, and in the ever memorable battle of Waterloo, was brother to the present chief. General Henry Mackinnon, so frequently and honourably mentioned in the Duke of Wellington's Despatches, and who fell at Ciudad Roderigo, after having in the most gallant style secured possession of that fortress, was his uncle.

Land-owners.—The only heritors in the parish are Lord Macdonald and Mr Macalister of Strathaird. This parish, originally the property of Mackinnon, was purchased about eighty years ago by the Trustees of the great and good Sir James Macdonald, then a minor, from the Trustees of Mackinnon of Mackinnon, when a

minor also. The sale was afterwards reduced by the Court of Session, but, on appeal to the House of Lords, it was confirmed. Although the people at the time, from feelings of clanship and attachment to their chieftain, were much displeased with the decision which had been come to by the House of Lords, yet they had no cause to regret the change, as each successive proprietor of the Noble family of Macdonald was invariably kind, attentive, and indulgent to their tenants; and it is pleasant to observe, that the young and Noble Lord who now represents that ancient family, promises fairly to walk in the footsteps of his truly excellent predecessors.

The property of Strathaird was purchased fifty-four years ago by Mr Macalister, who likewise proved a most kind and indulgent proprietor. He is now represented by his grandson, Mr Macalister of Loup, in Argyleshire,—a young man of much promise.

Parochial Register.—The earliest entry in the parochial register is dated 1821; from that period it has been regularly kept.

Antiquities.—There are the remains of several places of worship, which were, in all probability, erected by the Culdees, who are well known to have, many centuries ago, built a great number of “Cills,” or places of worship throughout the Hebrides, which they invariably dedicated to the most renowned of their saints. There is one at a place in the parish called “Ashig.” But there can be no doubt that it was primarily dedicated to Saint Asaph, which appellation was gradually corrupted into Ashig. There is also one at Kilbride, (St Bride); one at Kilmarie, (*cella Mariæ*, or St Mary’s); and one in the Island of Pabbay. On the farm of Boreraig, we have *Teampull Chòain*, or the Temple of St Coan; and in the Island of Scalpay, *Teampull Frangaig*, or the Temple of St Francis. In front of the minister’s house, there are the ruins of a place of worship; and close to it stands a rude obelisk of granite, about ten feet high, perfectly erect. It is known by the appellation of *Clach na h-Annait*, that is, the stone of Annat,—a goddess mentioned by mythologists. Near this stone, is a copious well of excellent water, called *Tobar na h-Annait*, or Annat’s Fountain, in which it is probable the worshippers purified themselves. It frequently happens that the purest and most copious springs of water are dedicated by such worshippers to their tutelary saints; and among the excellent springs with which this parish abounds one is considered superior to all, and is called *Tobar Ashig*, or St Asaph’s Well. We have

also *Tobar Chliamen*, or St Clement's Well. The principal place of worship was at Kilchrist, evidently *Cella Christi*,—a burying-ground consecrated to Christ. This is in the centre of the parish; but, being found inconvenient on account of its remoteness from the more populous part of it, the new and handsome church, now building, is situated at Broadford.

On the west side of the parish are the ruins of seven Danish forts or duns. They are situated on high rocks or lofty headlands, and were built without mortar. One of them was always built in view of one or more of the rest, so that the first alarm of an approaching foe was almost instantaneously communicated to the whole country by the *Crois-tàraidh* or fiery-cross; being a rude process of telegraphing by fire the intelligence of an enemy's approach.

This watch-fire was lighted on the tower from which the danger was first discerned. The process was repeated by the next tower in view, and so on until the intimation was transmitted with inconceivable celerity throughout the whole chain of towers with which the country was surrounded.

On the east side are a number of tumuli, and in all of them which have been opened stone-coffins, containing human bones or urns full of ashes, have been found. In these urns, small copper coins have generally been discovered. An urn, containing ashes and bones partially burnt, and a very thin copper coin, was found when digging the foundation of the minister's house.

It is very probable that those whose remains were thus disturbed were strangers, and that the coins were deposited for the purpose of purchasing a right to the burying-ground. This opinion is greatly corroborated by the fact, that, in many parts of the Highlands still, when the remains of a stranger are committed to the dust, a coin is usually thrown into the grave, so that he may, by purchase, acquire an undisputed right to his resting-place.

A great variety of coins have been dug up at different times and places; but, owing to their being much defaced, it could not be ascertained to what period they belonged. A coin of the reign of Henry VIII., in a state of high preservation, was recently turned up on the glebe, and is now in the possession of the incumbent.

Near the village of Broadford there is a cairn or barrow, in which a very remarkable vault has been discovered. It is arched in with a concave roof, having its top covered with a flag. This curious little chamber is securely although rudely built with stone, without any lime or mortar, and is of sufficient dimensions to permit

a person to stand in it erect. It was evidently the burying-place of some renowned character of old, and within it was found a rude buckle, probably belonging to the shroud of the person consigned to the dust; and also a dark-green stone, about four inches long by two and a half in breadth, a quarter of an inch in thickness, and beautifully polished. It had a hole perforated in each corner, with one side partially concave, and the other convex. It appeared like an ornament belonging to the Highland belt. This stone and buckle were given to the late Donald Gregory, Esq., Secretary to the Antiquarian Society, Edinburgh.

Eminent Men.—I am not aware that this parish ever gave birth to any person eminently distinguished in any walk of life. Some, however, were born in it, who have by their own merits attained a high and honourable rank in the army. Sir John Macdonald, the present Adjutant-General of Her Majesty's Forces, is son to the late Mr Macdonald, tacksman of Scalpay, an island belonging to this parish; as was also Colonel Archibald Macdonald, who held the same situation in India; and a third and no less distinguished member of the same family, Colonel Alexander Macdonald of the Horse Artillery, whose devotion to his profession, as well as his bravery at the taking of Monte Video, the Cape of Good Hope, the whole of the peninsular war, and the battle of Waterloo, repeatedly gained for him the approbation of the Duke of Wellington and Lord Hill. Colonel Macdonald is now Governor of Honduras.

Modern Buildings.—The houses of the tacksmen are comfortable and commodious, yielding in this respect to none of the same class in the Highlands.

A village was commenced at Kyleakin, under the auspices of the late Lord Macdonald, but, from the want of capital in the country, it has made little or no progress. There are, however, about a dozen of good slated houses at this place, including some shops, and a very comfortable well-kept inn. At Broadford, there are likewise a good inn, two shops, a mill, and a smithy.

III.—POPULATION.

Population in 1801,	.	1748
1811,	.	2107
1821,	.	2619
1831,	.	2962

Within the last forty years, the population of this parish has been more than doubled. In 1837, it amounted to 3450 souls; but since that period, about 200 have emigrated to Australia.

The great increase of the population is to be attributed to the lotting system, by which tenants are supplied with small portions of land inadequate for their support. But this is not all, for the possessions which were originally too contracted, were subsequently subdivided by the parents among the various members of the family as they got married. There was in this manner an accumulation of houses and families without any means for their support, or any prospect of comfort. This evil (for evil it must be called, when three, and in many cases four families are to be found occupying the lands which were originally barely sufficient for the support of one family,) has been, and will continue to be productive of the worst effects here, as well as over a great part of the Highlands. And unless some method be devised to provide for the superfluous population, and to check its increase in future, the most disastrous consequences may be anticipated.

Language.—Gaelic is the language of the country, and that for the most part preached; but of late, in consequence of the constant intercourse held by the natives with the low country, it is very much corrupted with a mixture of English words and phrases.

Habits and State of the People.—It is to be regretted that the people have not more regard to cleanliness. The cattle and poultry are generally to be found under the same roof with the rational inmates, and separated only by a *tallan* or partition, for the most part made of stone or wattled-work, a few feet in height. They wear home-made woollen clothes, and are very expert at dyeing almost all colours. Their diet chiefly consists of potatoes and herrings, occasionally varied with meal and milk. They are, however, contented with their condition, and, singular to relate, contemplate with uneasiness a permanent removal from their native soil.

As their possessions are too limited to afford employment for all who are located on them, almost all the young men leave the country annually, and resort to the south, in vast numbers, in quest of any employment which they may procure. In the same manner, many of the young women go to the Lothians in harvest to procure employment in reaping. They are generally most mindful and attentive in sending a part of their earnings home to their parents, to pay the rents, as well as for other useful purposes.

Character.—They are, with few exceptions, of sober and correct habits,—charitable to their less fortunate neighbours,—hospitable and attentive to strangers,—and obedient and respectful

to their superiors. Flagrant breaches of the peace are almost unknown, there being but two instances on record of criminal prosecutions against natives of this parish.

Longevity.—We have had several instances of longevity. A woman of the name of Mary Innes, a native of Ross-shire, died here some years ago at the advanced age of 110. The father of the present incumbent, who was for sixty-five years an ordained clergyman, and fifty-two years minister of this parish, died at the age of ninety-six, and to the last retained all his faculties unimpaired. Mr Macalister of Strathaird, died at the age of eighty-nine, and his sister, who departed this life last winter, attained the age of ninety-two. There are a few others now living between eighty and ninety years of age; and one man in his eighty-fourth year, who never wore any dress but the kilt, and this year walked twenty-four miles in one day.

The number of illegitimate children for the last three years has been four.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—Lord Macdonald's property in this parish consists of 54,768 acres, of which about 1800 are arable, 594 under wood, and the rest almost entirely green and hill pasture. The estate of Strathaird consists of 16,000 acres, of which about 300 are arable, and the remainder green and hill pasture. It is observed, that, where limestone abounds, the pasture is invariably rich and luxuriant; but where whin and granite prevail, it is of very inferior quality.

Husbandry.—The only grain raised is oats and bear. The cultivation of wheat has been attempted, but with no prospect of adequate remuneration.

Potatoes, however, form the principal crop. They are planted in April and May, and are manured chiefly with sea-ware. In favourable seasons they yield an increase of about ten returns; but even in the most favourable years, the supply is inadequate to the wants of the population. It is a remarkable fact, that in wet seasons, the quality of the potatoes is much superior to what it is in dry seasons, although the quantity is diminished. Turnips and clover are cultivated, and are found amply to remunerate the farmer from their efficacy in the prevention of braxy. A considerable quantity of waste land was reclaimed by the late Mr Mackinnon of Corry. The district in the neighbourhood of his residence afforded the means of carrying on improvements, such

as sea-ware, lime, marl, and shell-sand; and of these facilities he amply availed himself, as did his active and vigorous mind of every thing that could benefit the country. He also did much in the way of draining, fencing, and enclosing his fields, as well as in planting hedges and hedge-rows, which are now in a thriving condition.

Although the crofting system was in many respects baneful and injurious, yet it had the perceptible advantage of improving the aspect of the country, as each crofter, by having a small allotment for himself, was anxious to turn it to the best account, which could not be effected by the old run-rig system. Bone dust has been used with encouraging success, and amply remunerated the expense of applying it.

Rent of Land.—The value of arable land may be estimated at 10s. per acre. The grazing of a cow at L.2, 10s. per annum, and of a sheep at 2s. 6d.

Wages.—Good farm-servants receive from L.6 to L.10 per annum; women from L.2, 10s. to L.3, 10s.; carpenters and masons about 2s. per day with their victuals. Shepherds, instead of money wages, are generally allowed a house, 6½ bolls of meal; the grazing of two cows, and of from 40 to 60 sheep per annum.

Live-Stock.—The principal sheep stocks are of the Cheviot breed; but there are some small flocks of the black-faced description, which are esteemed more hardy. To the improvement of each breed their respective owners pay particular attention. A breed of black-cattle, of the most exquisite symmetry and beauty, was produced by the late Mr Macdonald of Scalpay and the late Mr Mackinnon of Corry, who, by much attention and expense in the selection of breeding stock, raised their cattle to a value never before attained in this country. The cattle of the small tenants in this parish are superior to those reared in the northern districts of the island, in consequence of their stocks having been always supplied with bulls by the individuals already mentioned.

Quarries.—Freestone and marble, which abound in this parish, have been worked by Lord Macdonald, the former for building, and the latter for architectural ornaments in his elegant castle at Armadale. The marble quarries have also been worked by the Duke of Hamilton for paving the lobby of Hamilton Palace, and by the Board of Ordnance for powder-mill stones. It was, however, abandoned by the Board, from the impracticability of finding blocks sufficiently large for their purpose.

A lime-kiln is in operation in the vicinity of Broadford, which

supplies an extensive district with lime of a superior quality. To the public it is sold at 9d. per boll; but Lord Macdonald, with his usual attention to the interests of his tenants, binds the lessee of the lime kiln to supply them with lime for building at 6d.; and for land at 4d. per boll.

Fisheries.—The herring-fishing was at one time so productive in the bays of the parish, that 60 or 70 vessels, averaging about 40 tons, were annually engaged in it, and many of them carrying away several cargoes in the course of the year. It is still prosecuted with considerable vigour, but for many years back with very indifferent success; so much so, indeed, that where 60 or 70 vessels could formerly be loaded in a few weeks, one could not now be loaded in the course of a whole season. The failure of this most important source of emolument to many a poor and industrious fisherman on the west coast, is coëval with, and by many ascribed to the destruction of such countless multitudes of this prolific fish at the spawning season, on the east coast of Scotland. The cod and ling fishing is carried on during the months of January, February, March, and April. In favourable years, those engaged in it realize from L. 3 to L. 4 per man, besides having an abundant supply of other fish for the use of their own families. Salmon-fishing is carried on, but not on a very extensive scale. It closes on the 14th of September, and does not generally commence until the middle of May.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Market-Town.—At Broadford three markets are annually held for the sale of black-cattle and horses.

Means of Communication.—Broadford is likewise a post-town, where the mails arrive and are despatched three times a week. Within the incumbent's recollection, letters from London took ten days in reaching Broadford, but now they arrive there on the third night.

From Broadford the mails are carried across Kyleakin ferry, by a runner to Lochcarron, whence they are conveyed to Dingwall by a gig, having accommodation for the conveyance of passengers.

About thirty miles of Parliamentary road, and ten of statute labour, pass in different directions through the parish. During the summer and harvest months we have a regular weekly communication with Glasgow by steam-boats; but in winter they ply only once a fortnight. Not many years ago, the voyage from Skye to the Clyde generally occupied from ten to fifteen days, while now it is usually performed in about thirty-six hours.

Ecclesiastical State.—The church is situated in the burying-ground of Kilchrist, and might accommodate about 200 sitters. It is very old, and was formerly a Roman Catholic place of worship. It is now in a very ruinous condition, so much so, indeed, that for nearly two years back there has been no preaching in it. A very handsome and commodious church, to be seated for 600, has just been commenced at Broadford, as being a locality more accessible to the bulk of the population. In the district of Strathaird, in which divine service is performed every third Sabbath, a comfortable church was last year fitted up by the Trustees of Mr Macalister. But previous to this there was no church in that district; and the incumbent's father when he preached there, officiated in the recess or cavity of a rock, for a period of fifty-two years.

There has never been a manse in this parish, the incumbents always occupying farm-houses in the vicinity of the glebe, which consists of 44 acres, and is valued at about L. 15 per annum. The stipend is L.271, 2s. 6d. The Crown is patron. An intelligent catechist, paid by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, is constantly employed. A Baptist missionary has been stationed here for the last twelve years; but, from the firm attachment of the people to the Established Church, only sixteen converts have been made, and of these six are not natives of the parish.

Public worship is generally well attended; but, owing to the extent of the parish, the ruinous state of the church, and the remote distance from it at which the great majority of the people reside, their attendance is much influenced by the state of the weather.

Education.—There are five schools in the parish,—one parochial, two unendowed, and supported by the parents of the children, and two on the establishment of the Gaelic School Society. The parochial school is in the possession of an efficient teacher, and is well attended, particularly during the winter. The branches usually taught are, English reading, writing, and arithmetic. Very few now prosecute the study of Latin and Greek, although the teacher is well qualified to give instruction in those branches. From the detached position of the different hamlets in the parish, the parochial school can never be generally useful to the inhabitants. Three additional schools would supply all our wants in the way of education, in a manner sufficient for the diffusion of useful and salutary knowledge; and it is pleasant to observe that the peo-

ple in general are becoming more alive to the advantages of education.

Fuel.—The fuel chiefly, it may be said entirely, used is peat, of which the supply is abundant and the quality excellent. It is procured at comparatively little expense, being secured at a season of the year when there is a cessation from all other labour. Coal has been discovered on the estate of Strathaird, but was never wrought. The smith in that district tried its quality, and found it to answer his purpose well.

Inns.—We have three inns, and in situations necessary for the accommodation of travellers. It cannot be said that they have any bad effect on the morals of the people.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

Since the former Statistical Account of this parish was drawn out, various changes of importance have been effected. The means of diffusing useful knowledge have greatly increased, and the facilities for the attainment of general improvement have been extensively afforded. Improvements have taken place in the modes of communication with other parts of the kingdom. The mails have been accelerated—roads have been formed in all directions—steamers and other packets have been established. But although the benefits arising from such modes of communication are great, yet some of them are attended with disadvantages, as they are the means of introducing into the country a variety of vagrants, such as gipsies, rag-men, venders of crockery, tinsmiths, egg-dealers, and old-clothes-men. By characters of this description, manners and habits, which were formerly unknown to the lower orders, are gradually introduced, such as tea-drinking, tobacco chewing and smoking. The disadvantages of such habits are sufficiently apparent; and while temperance and total abstinence societies, in regard to spirituous liquors, are established with such noted success throughout the kingdom, we would earnestly recommend anti-tea and tobacco societies to be set on foot here,—much more money being uselessly lavished on these articles than on intoxicating liquors of any description.

Of late years, the sale of eggs for the Glasgow market has become a general and useful traffic; but it is matter of regret that the money thus realized, which must amount to at least £.100 per annum, should not be laid out more usefully than in the procuring of tea and tobacco.

Great improvements have taken place in the agriculture of the

parish, from draining, trenching, fencing, and the application of lime, marl, and shell-sand. The *cäschrom*, or crooked-spade, is giving place to the plough, which is now drawn by two horses instead of four, as was the case not many years ago. The pannier or creel is also giving place to the cart, which is now in common use. The small oat is also fast disappearing, and, from the different varieties of great oats, we have fair returns; but unless the seed is frequently changed, they soon degenerate, owing no doubt to the moist and cold nature of our climate. The crops, however, in the most favourable seasons, are inadequate to the support of the superabundant population. The consequence is, that they annually suffer privations in a greater or less degree.

In the years 1836 and 1837, this parish, in common with the rest of the Highlands, experienced the effects of the alarming destitution, which was so prevalent in consequence of the failure of the crops in general, and of the potatoes in particular, from some unaccountable causes. And had it not been for the laudable and philanthropic exertions of John Bowie, Esq. W.S., agent for Lord Macdonald, and of Dr Norman Macleod of Glasgow, and the timely relief procured by the appeal of these gentlemen to a liberal public, a fearful loss of life must have been the consequence. The recurrence of similar calamities can only be prevented by striking the evil at the root,—by the establishment of a systematic emigration conducted upon proper principles, and holding out such inducements as will overcome the *amor patriæ* so strongly implanted in the breast of every Highlander.

If the indefatigable exertions of Mr Bowie to benefit the Highlands, and to promote emigration, were responded to by the Highland proprietors, with that energy which his judicious suggestions on this subject so well merit, and which the state of the country so loudly calls for, not only would they find it for their own ultimate advantage; but their people might again be restored to the enjoyment of a competency of the necessaries of life, and to that status in society which they held until the introduction of the lotting system, at which period some of the best of the small tenants of this parish left it for North Carolina, one of whom brought more capital along with him than is now in the joint possession of all the tenants who occupy the farm which he left.

All traces of the feudal system have now disappeared, and most of the ancient manners and customs peculiar to the Highlanders have long ago sunk into oblivion. At one time the feudal lairds

and chieftains had full power over the life and death of their vassals, and their injunctions, however unreasonable and severe, were peremptory. The following is a striking instance of the remarkable habits that prevailed even in times comparatively modern.

Until within the last ninety years, it was customary in this island when a tenant died, that the best horse in the possession of the widow was claimed by the laird, who sent his ground-officer or under factor to demand it immediately after the interment. This barbarous custom was tamely submitted to until it was checked by the following occurrence: A man of the name of Mackinnon in this parish, having died, the best horse in the possession of the poor widow was as usual claimed for the laird by the ground-officer, who, in executing his cruel order, experienced so much resistance from the poor widow, that he beat and bruised her to the effusion of her blood, when she told him that she hoped her son, then about a year old, would some day be revenged of him for the treatment she had that day received. Some years thereafter, the same ground-officer came upon a similar errand to a neighbouring farm, when he behaved with his usual insolence to another poor widow, whom he likewise deprived of her best horse. This having come to the knowledge of young Mackinnon, then in his eighteenth year, and considered the strongest man in the parish, he pursued the ground-officer, whom he overtook within three miles of the laird's house, and desired him immediately to deliver to him the widow's horse, at the same time putting him in mind of the treatment which his mother had received at his hands. The ground-officer refused to part with the horse, upon which battle was offered and accepted, but soon decided in favour of Mackinnon, who, with his dirk, cut off the head of his antagonist, washed it in a well by the road-side, which is still known by the name of *Tobar a'chènn*, or the well of the head,—mounted the horse, and appeared at the laird's gate, having the head on the point of his dirk. Such an unusual spectacle attracted the notice of the servants, who informed the laird that *Donnuchadh Mòr*, alias Big Duncan, was at the gate with the ground-officer's head, very anxious to see him. The laird could not at first believe that such a diabolical deed could be perpetrated, not knowing the causes which led to it. But, upon coming out, he was shocked to find the report correct; and, upon hearing *Donnuchadh Mòr's* account of the recent transaction, as well as the inhuman treatment which the mother had received seventeen years previously, he granted him a free pardon

and appointed him ground-officer, telling him, at the same time, that no widow upon his estate should ever again be deprived of any part of her property.

About thirty years ago, an old man of the name of John Macinnes died in this parish, who was one of the crew which ferried Prince Charles Stuart from Strathaird to the mainland. The Prince was at this time accompanied by the chief of Mackinnon, who remained along with him until he should see him safely embarked for France. Such being Mackinnon's intention, he despatched the boat and crew home. Before, however, they landed on their native island, they were espied by Captain Fergusson, who was at the time in search of the luckless Pretender, and were taken on board his sloop of war to undergo an examination as to their knowledge of the Royal wanderer's movements. Macinnes being the principal man in the boat, and refusing to give any intelligence on the subject, and spurning at the reward offered for betraying the person whom he conceived to be the king of his chief, was ordered to the yard-arm to receive 500 lashes. At every fifty, he was asked to give the necessary information, which he scornfully refused to give; and at last, after having endured the full amount of the punishment awarded to him, he was set at liberty, or rather thrown into his boat apparently more dead than alive. The writer of this Account has a perfect recollection of seeing the marks of the "cat-o'-nine-tails" on Macinnes's back, and of hearing him relate the cruel treatment which he had received. The poor man always became furious when Captain Fergusson's name was mentioned.

There is an immense block of granite on the glebe, weighing at least six tons, which is so nicely balanced on a level lime rock, that it moves by the slightest pressure of the finger. It has been evidently placed there by the ingenuity of man, but in what manner, or by what mechanical power, is a subject for the antiquarian to discover.

Within the last three years, about 200 souls have emigrated to Australia from this parish. It is earnestly hoped that the favourable accounts of those who have settled there, will induce many of the people to avail themselves of the great boon which is now offered to them, viz. a free passage, with every necessary and desirable comfort during the voyage. And so satisfied is the writer of this Account of the prosperity of that colony, that he has done all in his power to persuade his poor countrymen to emigrate to

that country; and, to convince them of his good intentions, as well as to prove the sincerity of his advice, he has himself sent thither three of his sons within the last two years, and, if spared for a few months longer, he proposes to send a fourth.

April 1840.

PARISH OF SLEAT.

PRESBYTERY OF SKYE, SYNOD OF GLENELG.

THE REV. ALEXANDER M'IVOR, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Extent, Boundaries, &c.—SLEAT forms the south-eastern part of the Island of Skye. The parish commences to the north at Kyle-rhea,—a narrow ferry which separates Skye from the mainland of Glenelg, and it extends to the south-west along the sea. To the north, it is bounded by the parish of Strath, from which it is divided by a high ridge of hill from Kyle-rhea to Loch-in-daal. Opposite to Loch-in-daal, another branch of the sea, called Loch-Eishart, comes in from the westward, and is separated from Loch-in-daal by a narrow isthmus, about half a mile in breadth. The parish from Loch-in-daal forms a peninsula, extending westward to the point of Sleat. The population is located on both sides of this peninsula. The length of the parish is about 25 miles, and its average breadth 5.

Topographical Appearances.—The appearance of the parish is in many places interesting. The plantations around Armadale Castle, and towards the manse, give it an aspect of high cultivation, not expected in such a remote district; and the extent of land in culture is considerable. Above the plantations and the cultivated land, the low and bleak moorland forms a contrast to the bold character of the Strath hills seen over it, and more especially to the precipitous and serrated outline of the Cuillin hills, which are at no great distance. The climate is humid, and the people are, in consequence, subject to severe rheumatic complaints.

Hydrography.—There are no lakes of any extent in the parish; but there are a few moorland lochs, containing trout, that some-