

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-

times affords sport to the angler. The narrowness of the peninsula, of which the parish chiefly consists, precludes an accumulation of water sufficient to form a river of any magnitude.

*Botany.*—The only thing worth mentioning under this head is, that the rare plant *Eriocaulon septangulare* is found in a lake near Loch-in-daal.

## II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

*Land-owners.*—Lord Macdonald is sole proprietor of the parish.

*Ancient and Modern Buildings.*—The only ancient buildings deserving of any notice are two, viz. Dun-scaich, on the west side of the parish, and the Castle of Knock, on the east. Both, I believe, were the residences of the Barons of Sleat at a very remote period. Dun-scaich is the more extensive building; and, from the remains of a prison and a draw-well, it must have been a place of considerable strength.

The only mansion-house is Lord Macdonald's castle at Arma-dale. It is a modern Gothic building, erected about twenty-five years ago, after a design by Gillespie Graham, Esq. The lobby and staircase, from the correctness of architecture, and elegance of finish, are universally admired. The staircase window contains an elegant portrait of Somerled, Lord of the Isles, the founder of the family, in full Highland costume, done in stained glass by Egginton of Birmingham. This window gives the lobby and staircase a splendid and dignified appearance. The public rooms are all handsome and well proportioned.

*Parochial Registers.*—The only register belonging to the parish is that of births and marriages, commencing in 1813, and regularly kept since that period.

## III.—POPULATION.

In the year 1755 the population amounted to 1250. When the former Statistical Account was written, the number of souls was 1788. In 1821, it amounted to 2237; in 1831, to 2756; and in 1837 it had increased to 3000.

*Character of the People.*—If the absence of crime be taken as a test by which to judge of the character of a population, the people of Sleat will stand high. Interference on the part of the police of the country among them is unknown. Since my connection with the parish, fourteen years ago, I recollect only one case of theft, and the person then accused was evidently imbecile. The inhabitants may be characterized as sober and active; but it must be admitted that they want that persevering industry which is ne-

cessary to improve their condition. The able-bodied among them, after their potatoes are planted in the end of spring, go to the south in search of employment. They return again at Martinmas; and their earnings go to pay the landlord's rents, and to support the weaker members of their families. The winter is almost altogether spent in idleness. There is no demand for labour in the parish, and hence there is only occasional exertion on the part of the people. As the summer's earnings are spent during the winter, there is seldom or never a fund laid up for sickness or old age; and when either of these comes, there is great poverty and privation. Their clothing consists of cloth of their own manufacture. This they find fitter to resist the weather, than any manufactured in the south. Their food consists principally of potatoes. Oatmeal is a luxury among them, and butcher-meat is seldom tasted. Their poverty arises very much from over-population. There are 500 families in the parish. Of these only 6 pay upwards of L.50 yearly rent; 269 pay from L. 10 to 7s. 6d. per annum; and there are 225 families, comprising upwards of 1100 individuals, located in different parts of the parish, who pay no rents, deriving their subsistence from small portions of land given them by the rent-payers for raising potatoes. These are a burden to the proprietor, inasmuch as they destroy the land in cutting fuel and turf; and are a grievous burden to the inhabitants generally, from the extent of pauperism prevailing among them. An adequate correction for such an evil is difficult to be found. Their abject poverty stands in the way of any stimulus that may be applied for enabling them to better their condition; and if matters are left as they are, there will very soon be such a mass of pauperism as it is alarming to contemplate. The most efficient remedy appears to be an extensive and well-regulated emigration.

#### IV.—INDUSTRY.

The parish consists of 1335 acres arable; 3956 acres green pasture; 18,265 acres hill pasture; and 500 acres wood.

I believe the rental of the parish is about L.2400.

*Husbandry.*—The management of the land depends very much on the tenant. The tacksmen in the parish farm their arable lands regularly,—have a rotation of crops,—and pay great attention to the rearing of their sheep and cattle stocks. The case is different with the crofters. Their principal object is to raise potatoes; and, as they use little manure except sea-weed, the quality of the root is bad, and the ground impoverished. Their cattle and sheep stocks

are also mismanaged. They keep nearly a double stock on their hill pastures; hence the animals are stinted in their growth, and are generally worth little. Were a moderate stock kept, and their arable lands properly tilled, I have no doubt the people's comfort would be materially improved.

*Leases.*—The five tacksmen in the parish alone possess leases, the duration of which is generally fifteen years. The others are all tenants at will.

*Improvements.*—Extensive improvements have been made on Lord Macdonald's farm of Armadale. Much land has been reclaimed, and the fields are regularly divided by ditches and hedges. Planting has been carried on there also on an extensive scale, and the parish has now the advantage of being able, from thinnings of wood, to supply itself with such timber as is required for boat-building and agricultural purposes,—an advantage it possesses over the other parishes in the island. Among some who have made improvements in the parish, Mr Elder of Knock, and late of Isleornsay, is conspicuous. The extensive fields of luxuriant and healthy pasture, both at Isleornsay and Knock, bear ample testimony to his industry, judgment, and enterprise, and form a strong contrast to the poor crops and bare pastures on the farms around him.

#### V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

There are no towns or villages in the parish.

*Means of Communication.*—A parliamentary road runs through the parish, opening the communication from Armadale to Broadford, a distance of sixteen miles. There are also district roads connecting different parts of the parish. A steam-boat from Glasgow to Portree calls once a week in summer, and once in three weeks in winter. Thus an easy access is opened by sea and land to other parts.

*Ecclesiastical State.*—The church is situated at Kilmore about the middle of the parish. It is an old building, and has the date 1631 marked on it. It has been lately repaired, and is seated for nearly 500.

*Manse, &c.*—The manse was built about thirty years ago, and is a handsome building, near to the church. The glebe is arable, and may be of the yearly value of L.6. The teinds amount to L.62, 7s. 4d. per annum. The balance of stipend is made up from the Exchequer allowance. There are 5 families Dissenters, viz. 3 Roman Catholics, and 2 Baptists. The people, for the most part,

are regular in attending on religious ordinances. Many come to church in winter, a distance of five and six miles. The average number of communicants is 200.

*Education.*—There are three endowed schools in the parish : viz. the parochial school, near the church—an Assembly school at Tormore, in the southern part of the parish, and one from the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge. These three schools have suitable houses for their accommodation. A school from the Gaelic School Society has been established at the ferry of Kyle-rhea, opposite to Gieneig. Another school is wanted at Isleornsay, to place the means of education within easy reach of all the inhabitants. A large proportion of the old people are unable to read or write ; but they all seem desirous that their children should be educated.

*Poor and Parochial Funds.*—When the season is good and the crops plentiful, the poor having more or less crop, do not require the same extent of aid as in bad seasons. During the destitution of 1837, nearly 1500 required aid ; but in ordinary years, about 200 are left to depend more or less on others. The average amount of the collections from 1826 to 1836 was L. 10 a-year. Since that period, owing to the landlord's absence from the parish, and other causes, the collections became merely nominal, so that in 1836 the kirk-session came to the resolution of having no stated collection. The poor are now supported by the charity of their neighbours. All the rent-payers consider it a duty to appropriate a certain portion of their potatoes and corn for the poor, and in this way their wants have been hitherto supplied. When a case of extraordinary distress occurs, an occasional collection is made for its relief. This plan for the support of the poor may answer well in good seasons. But should a bad season come, and the crops fail, similar destitution to what took place in 1837 must recur. To afford to the poor the aid of food and clothing which their destitution requires, a permanent fund must be provided, and this can only be secured by an assessment ; but, in the circumstances of the parish from over-population, and its consequent poverty, this would introduce such evils, that other means must fail before it be resorted to. At present, the situation of the people is gradually but surely tending to make an assessment necessary.

*Fuel.*—The only fuel is turf, which is good and abundant.

## MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

Since the former Statistical Account was written, various improvements have taken place in the parish. Excellent roads have been opened—extensive plantations have been made—and a large extent of land reclaimed. Steam-boats ply regularly, and facilities are afforded for the introduction of the comforts of civilized life. But no permanent improvement has taken place in the circumstances of the people generally. Population has increased from 1788 to 3000, and lands which were then possessed by labouring tenants are now converted to sheep-farms. This has reduced the people's means of support. There are no manufactures, and, as they depend on land exclusively for their subsistence, an extent of poverty prevails among them now, to which formerly they were strangers. As yet, however, crime is unknown among them. A high degree of moral feeling has hitherto restrained them; but it is to be feared that grinding poverty will break down this check, and introduce crimes at which they hitherto have shuddered.

*December 1840.*

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## PARISH OF DUIRINISH.

PRESBYTERY OF SKYE, SYNOD OF GLENELG.

THE REV. ARCHIBALD CLERK, MINISTER.

### I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

*Name.*—DUIRINISH, or more properly *Durinish*, is by some resolved into two words of Scandinavian origin, signifying the promontory of Deer; but more probably, the name is derived from the Gaelic *Dur*, which, like the Latin *Durus*, signifies hard or rocky, and *Innis*, a very common Celtic term, signifying indifferently promontory or island. *Dur-innis* in the case before us, then, signifies the rocky promontory; a designation which every one acquainted with the parish will acknowledge to be a very appropriate one,—as it forms a large promontory, singularly rocky and bold. This parish is, both in conversation and in writing, sometimes designated *Kilmuir*, a corruption of *Cill-Mhuire*, i. e. a place con-