

## PARISH OF KILMORACK.

PRESBYTERY OF DINGWALL, SYNOD OF ROSS.

THE REV. SIMON FRASER, MINISTER.

---

### I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

*Name, Situation, and Extent.*—THE parish of Kilmorack, like many other parishes in the Highlands of Scotland, derives its name from its having afforded burial ground to some reputed saint or person of distinction—*Kill Mhorac*, signifying the burying-ground of young Marion. From what family the lady sprung, cannot with certainty be determined; though it seems most likely she was a descendant of one of the lairds of Chisholm, who, long before the Reformation, was the principal resident heritor in the parish, and to whose family a large proportion of it still belongs.

The parish is bounded on the south, by the River Beauly, the parishes of Kirkhill and Kiltarlity; on the north and east, by the parishes of Urray and Killearnan; and on the west, by the parish of Kintail.

*Topographical Appearances.*—To a spectator placed on an eminence where an extensive view of this parish could be obtained, it would present a scene of sublimity and grandeur, united with richness and beauty, almost unrivalled. Its eastern extremity consists of a large open plain, about three miles in diameter. Along its southern boundary, the river Beauly gently glides. About two miles west from the village of Beauly are situated the celebrated Falls of Kilmorack, which are annually visited by hundreds from all parts of the empire. They are less remarkable for their height than for their breadth, and the great volume of water poured over the precipice. The beautiful accompaniments of lofty rocks, green banks, and hanging woods, which encircle them, greatly add to the charms of the scene. As the water approaches the precipice, 20 feet in height, it “hovers doubtful, as it were, for a moment over the gulf, and as if forced reluctantly by the unconscious river behind, it is poured down without resistance, in one unbroken ponderous mass,” into a deep cavern, which cannot

be viewed without feelings of apprehension. It then, for a short distance, gently pursues its course, and slowly forces its passage through a narrow opening between two lofty precipices, when it suddenly expands into an open semicircular basin, through which it glides with a sluggish motion, and is then precipitated over the lower falls in a variety of cataracts. On the northern brow of the cliff, stands a little handsome summer-house, from which an advantageous view of this romantic scene can be obtained. The falls not being sufficiently high or powerful, when the river is in any measure flooded, the salmon attempt to leap over the cascades; often, however, in the act of springing, they fall a prey to those who stand watching them on the banks with hooks, or spears fixed to long rods; or from the constant agitation of the water where they swim, on account of the height from which it falls, they mistake their direction and land on the dry rock. Branches of trees have been arranged along the edges of these shelves, to prevent them from regaining the river, and by this means from eight to twelve of them have been caught in one night. It is reported of one of the Lords of Lovat, that, having met, on a certain occasion, an English gentleman, and the conversation turning on the objects of curiosity on their properties, he (Lovat) boasted that there was a kettle of boiling water on the south side of the river which flowed through his estate, into which the salmon from the river frequently leaped. The true account of this apparently wonderful fact is, that, at the bottom of the southern precipice, there is a circular pit, kept constantly in a state of agitation by the descending volume of water, into which the salmon are driven back, when attempting to ascend the stream.

For the space of two or three miles west of the parish church, the course of the Beaully is most romantic. This spot is called the Dhruim, (the back.) On either side the mountain acclivities are covered with birch and fir, and the edges of the river are beautifully lined all along with rows of oak, weeping-birches, and alders. The river, during this part of its course, consists of a series of cascades, precipitated over shelving masses of red sandstone, while in the middle of the strath, close by the farm-house of Teanassie, the waters plunge through a rocky passage, encircling high pyramids of stone, standing in the midst of the stream. At the farther end of the Dhruim, stands the Island of Aigrsh, on which the present proprietor has built a beautiful dwelling-house.

The western division of the parish assumes a wilder and rougher aspect: it is of decidedly Alpine character. It consists of the

three great glens of Strathglass, Glenstrafarrar, and Glencannich, so called from the different streams which run through each.

*Meteorology.*—The climate may be said to be generally humid and mild. The thermometer in the hot season ranges between  $70^{\circ}$  and  $80^{\circ}$ , while in the depth of winter it has not for some years past been observed below  $24^{\circ}$  of Fahrenheit. The average temperature may be stated about  $48^{\circ}$ . The changes in the barometer are frequent and rapid, often rising and falling half an inch in the course of an hour.

*Hydrography.*—The principal river is the Beauly, composed of the three lesser streams Farrar, Cannich, and Glass, including Dheaick. Lakes are found almost in every district of the parish. The principal of these, are Loch Monar, Loch Beinevean, and Loch Affric, which are surrounded by the remains of an extensive pine forest. The scenery of these lakes is of singular grandeur: and perhaps, in that respect they are unequalled by any in Scotland. On the mountain of Maum Soule, on the north side of Loch Beinevean, is the largest known body of perennial snow in Britain. In the middle of June, when the sun is vertical, a very little part of it only is dissolved. At the remote end of Glen-Strathfarrar lies Loch Muilie. In the centre of this loch, there is a small island, to which it is reported the late Lord Lovat retired, after the total defeat of his party at Cul-loden. Here, there is now a very neat shooting-box, which the present proprietor erected. Four or five miles further to the west, Loch Monar occupies a wild hollow a little to the north of the mountain Scour-na-lapich, which in height almost equals Bennevis. Here there is an excellent fishing station, which is frequently resorted to by those who are fond of this sport.

*Geology and Mineralogy.*—The prevailing rocks in the parish are gneiss, the old red sandstone, and the conglomerate rock, near Little Struy. A black lead mine, situated in a thick vein of heavy spar, traversing gneiss, was opened some years ago by Lovat, but it did not turn out profitable, the rock being exceedingly tough and hard, and the quality of the plumbago rather inferior. The soils in this parish are various—rich loamy, clayey, sandy, and gravelly.

*Zoology.*—Most of the animals found in this parish are such as are common to the Highlands in general. In the western glens the red-deer are found in abundance;—polecats, weasels, and hares are numerous. In many parts, the rabbits are a nu-

sance. They excavate their burrows in the lower slopes of sandy hillocks, whence they issue in scores, greatly damaging the corn in the neighbourhood. Two or three hundred of them have been often killed on some farms, in the short space of ten days. The fox is still an inhabitant of our glens. In the precipices among the higher mountains, the eagle builds its nest; hawks of different species abound, as do also the owl, rook, hooded-crow, jackdaws, and raven. Magpies are not unfrequent. Blackcock and grouse of different varieties are numerous; the ptarmigan is frequently met with; and partridges are abundant. The rock and wood-pigeon often occur.

*Fishes.*—The Beaully abounds in salmon, grilse, and trout. The fishing season of the salmon commences on the 1st of February; of the grilse, on the 1st of June; and of the trout, on the 1st of July. A stray pike is found now and then. Yellow trout are also sometimes met with. The lakes in the different districts abound in pike and trout.

*Botany.*—There is nothing very peculiar in the Flora of this parish. The *Vaccinium oxycoccus*, called the badge of the clan Grant, is found in the hills of Strathglass. The edges of many small pools are encircled with broad and beautiful belts of the *Nymphaea alba*, or white water-lily. The trees indigenous to the soil are, oak, birch, fir, and alder. Larch, hazel, and spruce were some time ago introduced, and seem to be quite congenial. In the upper districts of the country, there were formerly extensive pine forests; the only relics of which are a few solitary trees, that still cling to the precipices, or trunks dug up from the mosses.

## II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

*Eminent Persons.*—The first individual worthy of notice, is the Rev. John Farquharson, well known as the first collector of Gaelic poetry. He resided, for upwards of thirty years, in the Strathglass district of the parish, in the capacity of Jesuit missionary. Some time after the Rebellion of 1745, Mr Farquharson was appointed Prefect of Studies in the Scots College of Douay, where he remained till the year 1773. Having returned to Scotland at this period, he left his MSS. behind him; but these papers having fallen into the hands of persons unacquainted with the language, were totally mutilated and destroyed. Information, however, was afterwards obtained from those who were students at Douay during Mr Farquharson's residence there, that after Macpherson's translation of Ossian's Poems appeared, they had a distinct recollection of Far-

quharson comparing them with some of those in his collection; and remarking, that in many places, the translation fell far short of the original. The poems of Fingal and Temora were particularly mentioned as having been thus compared.

The late Chisholm of Chisholm, chief of the clan of that name, cannot pass unnoticed in any account of this parish. His eminent classical and scientific attainments, graced and sanctified by his unostentatious and unfeigned piety, rendered him peculiarly fitted for the honourable situation of representing his native county in Parliament. To that situation he was called at an early period of his life; but death cut short his career almost in its commencement. The schemes of usefulness which he projected and carried on in the midst of his poor tenantry, remain, however, to testify his unbounded generosity and philanthropy.

*Antiquities.*—In different parts of the parish, are to be seen the remains of many Druidical temples; and there is a chain of walled structures within sight of one another, proceeding up the river Beaul, and along the course of its parent streams, the Farrar and the Glass, and from the latter to Glen Affric. But what most attracts the attention of the traveller is the ruins of the Priory of Beaul, which rears its venerable walls above the aged trees which surround it. It belonged to the order of Valliscaulium,—a reformed portion of the Cistercians, following the rule of St Bennet, who were brought into Scotland in the beginning of the thirteenth century, by Malvoison, Bishop of St Andrews. This priory was founded by James Bisset of Lovat in the year 1230. The conditions in behalf of its founder were, “ut pro ipso, dum viveret, orarent Monachi; post mortem, funus corpusque exciperent, atque animam de corpore abeuntem, per continua sacrificia et opera pietatis prosequerentur.” His charter is confirmed by Pope Gregory III. Rom. Julii, pontificatus sui anno quarto. The ruins bear no trace of turret or steeple, and are entirely destitute of sculpture or ornament; but the area they enclose is nearly covered with tombstones of an unknown antiquity. The north aisle belongs to the Mackenzies of Gairloch, and the effigy of a recumbent knight in full panoply under an arched canopy, marks the resting-place of Sir Kenneth Mackenzie, eighth laird of Kintail, who died in 1493. The other divisions of it consist of the burying-grounds of the principal branches of the clan Fraser, of the Chisholms, and other tribes of Strathglass. From the total absence of letters on many of the tombstones, it may be inferred that writing was unknown



in this country when these were constructed. The earliest inscriptions are dated 300 years after its foundation. They are all in the Saxon character, and are formed on the margin of an effigy of the deceased. On the north side of the front door, there is an impression similar to that made by the fingers of a man's hand: and the following legend commemorates the origin of that impression: A report having gone abroad that a stranger from the invisible world was paying his nightly visits to the priory, there was a general dread of approaching it after sunset. A tailor in the neighbourhood, engaged, however, to finish two pairs of hose in it on a certain night, at an appointed hour. While he was busily occupied in performing his task, there appeared before him a huge spectre, stretching out its bony arm, and exclaiming, "See, tailor, a great hand without flesh and blood;" to which the valiant tailor replied, "I see that, and I sow this." The same expression was uttered thrice, and the tailor's work being finished, he rose to depart, when the spectre pursued with uplifted hand, attempting to strike him. The hand, however, missed its aim, and struck the side of the door, upon which it left the impression of its fingers.\*

On the Muir of Ord, to the east of Beaul, there are two upright stone pillars, nearly six feet high, commemorative of a feat of ancient warfare, and connected, it is said, with a prophecy regarding the extinction of the clan Mackenzie.

*Parochial Registers.*—The parochial registers of this parish extend as far back as the sixteenth century; but, from the irregular manner in which they have been kept till within the last thirty or forty years, no information of importance can be derived from them.

*Land-owners.*—The landed proprietors of the parish are, the Honourable Lord Lovat, and Chisholm of Chisholm.

### III.—POPULATION.

The population of the parish at the time of the last Statistical Account was	2318
by the census in 1831,	2709
of the village of Beaul,	508
Consequently the country population amounts to	2201

The increase of population during the last thirty years has been principally owing to the influx of people from other quarters into the village of Beaul. The native inhabitants have increased but

\* In the house of the priests who officiated in this priory, Queen Mary, it is said, was entertained for a night; and upon seeing in the morning the beautiful view from its windows, she exclaimed, "C'est un beau lieu;" and hence the name, Beaul, was given to the village and river.

little. The letting of large tracts of land to single individuals has occasioned the banishment of many of them, who, for many generations, possessed the soil. They have been forced to seek an asylum in a foreign land, where they enjoy Nature's bounties in richer abundance.

In a parish of such extent, it is impossible to ascertain with exactness the number of deaths, marriages, and births. Of the first no register is kept; and there are so many Roman Catholics in the Highland part of it, that even the marriages and births cannot be ascertained. Of the Protestant population, however, the average number of baptisms for the last seven years may be reckoned at 46 annually; and marriages, 9.

The number of insane persons in the parish is 14, and of blind, 4.

*Character and Habits of the People.*—In many of the western parts of the country, the march of improvement has been very slow, and the strongholds of superstition are not yet demolished. The people are in general below the middle size, but uncommonly hardy, and capable of enduring privation. They are fond of performing long journeys in the night season; and it is nothing strange to see a married man travelling with his horse and cart a distance of thirty miles, without a bonnet on his head. The language generally spoken in the inland part is the Gaelic, while, in the eastern extremity, few are found, who cannot speak the English. There is among all classes an earnest desire that their children should acquire a knowledge of the latter. Little can be said in praise of their sobriety. The quantity of ardent spirits consumed is immense. A great deal, however, of that rioting at marriages and funerals, which formerly existed, has been done away with. Their favourite amusements are shinty matches and dancing. They are particularly fond of being neat and clean: and the ambition for articles of finery is widely spread among the rising youth. Poaching and smuggling are now almost discontinued.

#### IV.—INDUSTRY.

From the great extent of this parish, and the various directions in which the large and small farms lie, the number of acres which are cultivated, in pasture, or under wood, cannot with any certainty be determined. On the Lovat property, about 2000 acres may be in tillage; while, on the estate of the Chisholm, the average is about 900. The upper district of the parish is in general pastoral; and much attention is not paid to tillage.

except to obtain what is requisite for family use. There are many thousand acres under wood, partly natural and partly planted. Great attention is bestowed on the management of trees; they are thinned annually, and most of the fir trees felled are sold for railway sleepers; while the birch is manufactured into staves for barrels.

*Rent of Land.*—The rent of arable ground varies with the quality of the soil. A few lots are rented at L. 4, 10s. and L. 4 per acre; many large farms at L. 2, L. 2, 5s. and L. 2, 10s.; many others from L. 1, 10s. to L. 1. The average rent may be stated at L. 1, 15s. per acre. The average rent of pasture is reckoned at L. 4 or L. 4, 10s. for each ox or cow, including provender for winter. Hill pasture, however, in summer, with provender in winter, may be obtained for L. 1, 10s. The average rent paid for a ewe or full-grown sheep pastured for a year, is from 2s. 6d. to 3s.

*Wages.*—Farm-servants are usually hired for the year. If married, they receive, together with a small dwelling-house, from L. 12 to L. 15 a year; 6 barrels of coals; 6 bolls of oatmeal; and 6 bolls of potatoes. Some also receive pasture for a cow. Unmarried farm-servants frequently, and female-servants commonly, are boarded in their master's house, and receive only money wages, the former from L. 8 to L. 10, and the latter from L. 3 to L. 4 per annum. Common labourers receive 1s. 6d. per day in summer, and 1s. per day in winter without victuals. Masons and carpenters 2s. 6d. per day. Cheviot wool sell at 14s. per stone, cross 12s.; cheese 6s., and butter 18s. per stone; meal from 17s. to 20s. per imperial boll; and potatoes from 7s. to 10s. per boll of 4 barrels (each barrel containing 32 gallons.).

*Live-Stock.*—Formerly, the sheep in the parish were the few possessed by the farmers for their own consumption; the rearing for the use of others was little attended to; while now, the rich pasture of our country is occupied by thousands of the different breeds. The most common are the Cheviot and black-faced. Much attention is bestowed upon the improvement of this stock.

*Husbandry.*—Improvements in agriculture have made rapid progress in this parish, of late years. The mode pursued is not inferior to that in the most improved districts. Lime is generally used. Bone dust has also been lately introduced, for raising turnips, and with good effect. As the soil, in many places, is rather wet, a great deal of draining is required, which has only as yet been



partially effected. According to the terms of agreement, a regular rotation of cropping is observed so far as soil and season will permit. The shift is every five years. The first year is generally bare fallow or potatoes; 2d, wheat or barley; 3d, grass; 4th, grass; and the 5th, barley or oats, but most commonly oats: after that, the land is dunged before the rotation commences again. The general duration of leases is fifteen years; latterly, it has been increased to nineteen. The former of these is very unfavourable to the tenant, as it affords little time for making improvements. There are scarcely any enclosures in the parish; and, with very few exceptions, the farm-buildings are very indifferent. The deficiency of capital with many, and the want of encouragement by proprietors, are greatly felt as drawbacks to improvement.

*Quarries, Fisheries, and Manufactures.*—The only quarries in the parish are of red sandstone: it is of inferior description, and used for common purposes. The only fishery is on the Beaul; the annual rental of which is L.1600. Many thousand trees are annually cut down in the Lovat and Chisholm woods. These are sawn into square timber, planks, deal, staves, sleepers, &c. for the home and English markets.

*Navigation.*—There are only two small vessels belonging to the parish. A great number of vessels, however, from other quarters, trade to the place with coals, lime, &c.: and in return, they are supplied with cargoes of wood.

#### V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

*Market-Town.*—The nearest market-town is Inverness, which is situate at the distance of eleven miles. The means of communication are excellent, inasmuch as the Parliamentary road traverses the whole length of the parish, and is kept in such excellent repair, that it may vie with the roads of more southern districts.

The village of Beaul is pleasantly situate at the eastern extremity of the parish. It is a village of some extent—having its principal street formed generally of slated houses, and exhibiting some well-stocked shops. A post-office has been established in it for the last fifty years; the north mail daily passes through it; and foot-runners go from it through various parts of the country. A sheriff-officer constantly resides in it; and there has lately been established a branch of the North of Scotland Banking Company, which promises to be of great advantage to the agricultural and

mercantile interests of the district. The harbour is small, and not of the best description. The principal bridges in the parish are, the handsome granite one, of five arches, erected some years ago near the influx of the Farrar into the Glass; and the Lovat Bridge, built in 1810, across the Beauly. This latter bridge was built at an expense of nearly L.10,000.

*Ecclesiastical State.*—The parish church stands a few miles from the eastern extremity of the parish, in a very convenient situation for the greater part of the population. The village of Beauly, and the space of four or five miles round about it, comprise nearly two-thirds of the population of the parish, that is a population of about 1800. Of these, upwards of 100 are Roman Catholics, and about 50 Episcopalians. The accommodation afforded by the church falls far short of what is required, as there are not sittings for one-third of the population. A few years ago, it underwent a thorough repair; and now, as far as it goes, the accommodation is very comfortable. The attendance on worship is generally good. The population of the upper district of the parish is chiefly Roman Catholic. The Committee of the General Assembly for the management of the Royal Bounty has, for many years, supported a Missionary to this and the neighbouring parish of Kiltarlity. He officiates for three successive Sabbaths at Cannich school, and the fourth at Glenstrathfarrar.

The late Chisholm of Chisholm, two years ago, built a very neat church on his own property, which affords accommodation to 300 individuals. Though built in the parish of Kiltarlity, it is accessible to the inhabitants of Kilmorack. A fixed stipend of L.70 per annum, with other perquisites, which amount to L.30, is to be granted by the present proprietor; and it is expected, that, in a very short time, a minister will be ordained to the vacant charge. Worship has been performed in it, since it was opened, by the aid of the neighbouring clergy.

In this district, also, two Roman Catholic priests officiate. They have two places of worship, capable of affording accommodation to upwards of 500. The one is situated at Wester Eskadale, on the south side of the Beauly; the other lies at no great distance from the house of Fasnakyle.

The manse is an old building, situated close by the parish church, on a rising eminence, whence a commanding view of the exquisite scenery around it may be obtained. The glebe is very small, and worth only L.5 per annum. The amount

of the stipend since its augmentation, in 1815, is, in money L.212, 5s. 6d., 9 bolls of bear, and 24 bolls, 2 firlots, 1 peck, 2½ lippies of meal, which includes L. 8, 6s. 8d. for communion elements. The number of communicants connected with the parish is 84; but, including those from the neighbouring parishes, it amounts to about 300. Collections are occasionally made for the General Assembly's missionary schemes; and there is a contribution made to the Inverness Royal Infirmary once in three years.

*Education.*—The number of schools is three—two parochial, and one supported by the Chisholm; but the parish has also the benefit of two schools which belong to the neighbouring parish. The salary of each parochial teacher is the minimum, with the legal accommodations. In some of the schools, the amount of school-fees does not exceed L.8 or L.10, while in the principal they fall little short of L.20. The branches taught are, English and Gaelic reading, writing, arithmetic, book-keeping, the elements of Algebra and mathematics, Latin and Greek. The immense advantage in respect of education which the Strathglass district of this parish, for the space of twenty-three miles, possesses over many parishes in the Highlands, is entirely owing to the munificent generosity of the family of the Chisholm,—a family which it is impossible to mention without gratitude, for the benefits it has conferred on so large a portion of this dark and unenlightened district. There is still, however, a great deficiency of school accommodation in the village of Beaully.

*Poor and Parochial Funds.*—The average number of persons receiving parochial aid is 61; but occasionally, assistance is given to many others. The average sum allotted to each of those upon the poor's roll is 6s., 8s., and 10s. per annum. The only funds possessed by the parish are the collections at the church doors. They never amount to more than L.12 Sterling per annum; occasional donations are granted by the heritors. Few of the inhabitants go out of the parish in search of relief, and these only when compelled by necessity.

*Fairs.*—On the Muir of Ord, is now held the most important cattle fair in the north of Scotland, for the purpose of accommodating dealers from the south, and every part of the country. The following have been appointed as the days on which the market holds: 1st market, the Muir of Ord, on third Wednesday of April; 2d, second Wednesday of May; 3d, second Wednesday of June; 4th, third Thursday of July; 5th, third Tuesday of

August; 6th, third Tuesday of September; 7th, third Tuesday of October; 8th, second Wednesday of November. There are also four fairs annually held in the village of Beauly, during the months of May, August, October, and November. The October and November markets are for the sale of country produce, that of August for engaging shearers. Little business is done at any of them.

*Inns.*—There is one principal inn in the parish, which is kept in the most orderly manner; but there are also nine public-houses, the effect of which upon the morals of the people is pernicious.

*Fuel.*—Peat is the principal fuel, which costs per cart load from 1s. to 1s. 6d. A great quantity of coals and wood is also consumed.

#### MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

Since the former Statistical Account was published, a better system of husbandry has been introduced—extensive lots of waste land have been reclaimed—the facilities of internal communication have been, and are increasing—farm-houses and steadings exhibit a more cheerful and commodious aspect—and there is more happiness and comfort in the abodes of the people. Still, however, there seems wanting among the tenantry, that sociality and mutual co-operation which can alone ensure success in any undertaking: for there is a deep-rooted antipathy in the bosom of Highlanders to all those strangers from the south, who now occupy so many of the townships in the Highlands. The establishment of a district Agricultural Society would greatly tend to diminish this hostility, and diffuse a good feeling and unanimity amongst its members, which would be productive of immense advantage to the country.

*January 1841.*