

PARISH OF KILMONIVAIG.*

PRESBYTERY OF ABERTARFF, SYNOD OF GLENELG.

THE REV. JOHN M'INTYRE, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Extent and Boundaries.—THE length of this parish from south to north, is about 60 miles, and its greatest breadth, 20. It is bounded by the parish of Kilmalie on the west; by Fortingal on the south-east; by Laggan on the east; by Glenelg and Kintail on the north; and by Boleskine on the north-east.

Mountains.—This is the most mountainous parish perhaps in the kingdom. The lofty range from Glennevis on the west extends eastward a distance of nearly twenty miles, and is from ten to fifteen miles in breadth. At the western end of this range, is the lofty Bennevis, arising majestically about 4370 feet above the level of the sea. It has tremendous precipices where the eagle builds his eyrie, and sets at defiance the power and ingenuity of man to disturb his habitation. It consists for the most part of fine brown porphyry. It contains plutonic rocks at the very top, and in some parts red granite, of such a beautiful grain as to be capable of the finest polish, and to be unmatched by any in any part of the world. It is supposed to contain also veins of silver. In the fissures of this mountain, the snow has remained from the remotest ages. Some other peaks of this range rise considerably more than 4000 feet above the level of the sea.†

* From notes furnished by the Rev. Donald Cameron, Laggan, and others.

† The most splendid view is obtained from the top of Bennevis on a clear day. Persons that attempt the ascent without a guide often find themselves in awkward and sometimes in perilous situations. A few years ago, the Duchess of Buccleuch, while sojourning in this vicinity, with her brother-in-law, Lord John Scott, and others, set out accompanied only with a guide, on an excursion to the summit. They reached their destination in safety; but in returning, night overtook them, and they lost their way. The party left behind felt alarmed for her Grace's safety, and resolved on setting out in search of her. They applied to John M'Donald, Esq. of the Bennevis distillery for his aid in this emergency. His ingenuity was not long in finding a plan, likely to discover the Duchess if she was alive, and the result proved successful. He took with him a large bell; and with this, he and his party set off

Bennevis and its satellites to the east, form the southern side or section of Glenspean. This glen commences about the foot of Bennevis, and extends to the north of High Bridge, about ten miles. It gradually becomes narrower for fourteen miles, until a little above Keppoch, the whole breadth is occupied by the bed of the rapid river Spean. Three miles above that, it begins again to expand; and it terminates at the west end of Loch Laggan. The hills forming the northern boundaries of this glen are not so majestic, nor so continuous as those on the south side. Near the centre, it is joined by Glenroy. This glen rises in a north-east direction, and terminates at the confines of the parish of Laggan. The two sides of Glenroy are formed of pretty high hills. Through a part of this parish runs the great Caledonian glen, from the west end of Loch Lochy to the east end of Loch Oich, a distance of nearly fifteen miles. Between these two lakes a portion of the Caledonian Canal is cut for about three miles. On each side this glen are lofty mountains rising precipitously from their base. Nearly half way between Inverness and Fort-William, Glenroy branches off to the north, at right angles from the great Caledonian Glen already mentioned, and joins Glenquoich; and at its north-western extremity, it joins the district of Knoidart.

Sheep and Sheep-walks.—The hills and glens of this parish afford the most excellent pasture for sheep and black-cattle,—particularly the former. It is supposed that there are upwards of 100,000 sheep reared in this parish every year. Some of the sheep farms are upwards of 100 square miles in extent. Mr Cameron, Carychvilly, the most extensive grazier in the north, stated a few years ago, that the preceding year he had clipped upwards of 37,000 sheep. Some of his farms, however, are situated in other parishes. Mr Greig of Tullach, and the Messrs M'Donell of Keppoch, are supposed to have each near 100 square miles under sheep; the one on the north, and the other on the south banks of the Spean. Glenquoich at one time paid about L.1200 of yearly rent, and could graze perhaps 10,000 sheep, besides a proportionate number of black-cattle.

Perhaps there is no part of the Highlands where nature has done more, and landlords so little, for the benefit of the inhabit-

in the direction which they supposed the Duchess to have taken. The sound of the bell reverberating against the rocks, reached the delighted ears of her Grace; and she was thus ultimately rescued from the effects of her Sabbath day's excursion.

ants, as some parts of the parish of Kilmonivaig. In Glenspean alone, there are upwards of 40,000 acres of excellent soil, which, by the application of skill and capital, could be brought into cultivation. Thus, in the course of thirty years, the value of land might be increased tenfold. The character might be improved, and so might the habits, comforts, and morals of the inhabitants. Under a proper system of management, the people would have strong inducements to active exertion; and the present practice of spending a great part of their time in idleness, or in balls, raffles, shinty-matches, and whisky shops, would disappear. An improved system of husbandry, introduced into Lochaber, would be of signal benefit to a great portion of the Highlands. It would render meal and potatoes plentiful, and keep in the country the money sent out of it every year to procure these necessaries of life. Great quantities of butcher-meat could be reared, and easily sent to the Glasgow and Liverpool markets by means of the steam-boats. Ireland is not the only country that suffers from the system of middlemen and absenteeism.

Rivers.—Glenspean, which constitutes the principal part of this parish, is in shape somewhat like an hour-glass. At the north-east corner it receives the Spean from Lochlaggan. About a quarter of a mile after it leaves the lake, it receives the Gulbin from the south. Three streams rise at the side of Benalder, in the parish of Laggan, within a few yards of each other. The one travels east and north for ten or twelve miles, and then turns west, and empties itself in Lochlaggan. In this locality, it is called the Pattak. The other runs out of the same black hillock, and, after travelling south for many miles, and receiving many tributary streamlets, it turns north; and at a place called Moy, under the name of Gulbin, it meets the Pattak, coming out of Lochlaggan, transformed into the Spean. From the south-west angle of Glenspean comes the river Treig. This river rises at the south side of Bennevis. It flows eastward to Lochtreig, then travels north, and meets the Spean, near to where the glen becomes narrow. It flows then north-west, till it joins the Lochy, at Mucomer, and after rising at the one side of Bennevis, and travelling upwards of fifty miles, it falls into the sea at Fort-William. Three mountain streams afford excellent trout-fishing. The only river of note in this parish besides the Spean is the Garry.

Parallel roads of Glenroy.—The following account of these celebrated indented lines is taken from the Edinburgh Philosophi-

INVERNESS.

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cal Journal, Vol. xxvii. They are situated in Glenroy, a lateral branch of the larger Glen Spean, about ten miles to the north of Fort-William. Glenroy is about eleven miles in length, and one mile in breadth, with pretty steep sides. The stream Spean falls into the river Lochy, near Loch Lochy, and the Roy falls into the Spean, five miles eastward. On both sides of Glenroy, there are three narrow terraces or roads, formed of gravel and clay, called the "Parallel roads." They project several feet from the sloping side of the mountain, forming three slightly marked lines along the valley from end to end, and exactly parallel to each other. At some parts they are not to be seen, such as when they cross the bare hard rock, where loose soil or gravel would not rest, and where the surface of the hill is gently inclined, because the slope there coincides with that of the alluvial cover. Very often the appearance is so faint, that a spectator may find himself standing on one without being aware of its existence; but, at other parts, they swell out into pretty broad terraces, and, what seemed obscure to a spectator in juxtaposition with it, becomes more distinct when seen from the opposite side of the valley, where the eye takes in the line for a length of some miles. Each of these terraces, by the test of the level, have been found not only horizontal in their individual bearing longitudinally, but also horizontal as regards the corresponding terrace on the opposite side. The first or lowest terrace is 972 feet above the level of the sea; the second is 1184 feet, while the third is 1266 feet. The base of the terraces have an inclination towards the centre of the valley. In the valley of Glen Gloy, in the vicinity, which is separated by a ridge of high ground of about half a mile thick, there is a terrace twelve feet higher than the highest in the former, or 1278 feet above the sea level, but none lower. There is a remnant of a similar terrace at Kilfinnan, four miles northward, which is 40 feet higher than the highest in Glenroy, or 1306 feet above the surface of the sea. The three terraces of Glenroy follow the line of the valley down to its junction with Glen Spean, passing into all its sinuosities and recesses. Here two of them disappear; but the lowest continues its course up to the head of Glen Spean, and down nearly to its mouth, over a space of twenty miles, always preserving the same level. Portions of terraces have also been traced on the sides of the valley of the Spey, many miles eastward of those just described, and at a height of about 800 feet. Sir Thomas Dick Lauder and Dr Macul-

loch,* who both about the same time described these roads, account for their formation thus: In lochs which have steep banks covered with somewhat loose materials, rains and storms hurry down earth and stones, which have their motion checked when they reach the waters, and then form a projecting ledge or shelf, which is nearly on a level with its littoral surface, and slopes gradually onwards below its water, so that if the loch were partially drained a circular terrace would thus be left at its former margin. If a second and third drainage took place at certain intervals, other terraces would thus be formed till the whole waters were evacuated.

It has been supposed, then, that Glenroy, Glen Gloy, and Glen Spean, originally formed distinct lochs, each closed in by a barrier at its end; that the barrier at Glenroy gave way partially, so that the waters of the loch rushed out to a certain extent, and left the highest terrace; succeeding evacuations formed the second and third terraces in a similar manner, till at last the loch was completely emptied. At the period of the formation of the lowest terrace, it is supposed Glenroy and Spean formed one continuous line of water, because the same terrace extends along the side of Glen Spean for twenty miles, while no trace of the higher terraces are found in the latter. Glen Gloy is supposed to have formed a distinct loch, with the water elevated twelve feet above the others, when, its barrier giving way, it was at once emptied without the formation of any more terraces. It must be admitted, however, that no vestiges of terraces or indications in the strata, are now to be found. Mr Darwin has lately proposed another theory: that the terraces are sea-beaches, formed at the period when the now elevated land constituted a low and level bay of the ocean, and that the periodical elevation of this land gave time for the formation of two or three littoral indentations. Mr Darwin illustrates his theory by analogous phenomena in Peru.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Antiquities.—*Inverlochy Castle.*—Many stories are told, that assign a great antiquity to this castle. But since certain documents were brought to light by the late Donald Gregory, author of the *History of the Western Islands*, its claims to high antiquity have been reduced, as it appears to have been in still an unfinished state in the time of Charles II. Near this castle, was fought what

* Transactions of Royal Society of Edin. Vol. ix. Transactions of Geological Society of London, Vol. iv. 1st Series.

was called a bloody battle, between Montrose and Argyle, in the year 1645. At that time, the population of Lochaber was enthusiastically loyal to the unfortunate Charles. Argyle and an army of Covenanters went to Lochaber, to humble the adherents of the Royal cause, and in search of Montrose, who was with an army in the vicinity. Argyle's men appear to have committed some excesses, and to have burned some houses, which roused the ire of John M'Donald, *alias* Ian Lom, the poet, who set off, as is reported, to make his complaint, and to lay the grievances of his country before Montrose. The Marquis was not disposed to give heed to the poet; but Alexander M'Donald, the son of Colkitto, who acted as second in command to Montrose, said, with an Irish oath, "I will go, and see what is wrong in M'Donald's country." Montrose gave him a wing of the army. They kept the ridge of the hill from Fort Augustus, where Ian Lom overtook them, to a farm on the braes of Lochaber, where Alexander M'Donald expected to see the devastations described by Ian Lom. But no such devastations appearing, Ian Lom was considered as a spy, and was in danger of having his poetical career brought to a tragical end on a tree by the son of Colkitto, when he pleaded that they should go to the next farm, then at a short distance, and if they did not see his account verified, they might do with him as they pleased. Fortunately for Ian, the houses there were reduced to ashes; on seeing which, the son of Colkitto, with another Irish oath, said, "Ho, ho, the smell or track of the Badachs is here" (*Tha feuleadh nam bodacha so.*) They then followed Ian Lom, who conducted them quietly to the foot of Bennevis at night. In the morning, Argyle's army, never dreaming that an army was near them, was attacked, and routed with great slaughter. Alexander M'Donald pursued the fugitives for six miles towards the head of Lochleven. And a stone was placed, which even at this day marks the spot where Montrose's men stopped from the pursuit of the Campbells. It is said that this stone still remains as a monument of Highland loyalty.

At the east end of Lochlochy, another battle was fought between the Frasers and a branch of the M'Donalds. This skirmish took place on a hot day in summer, and the combatants on both sides stripped to their shirts. From this circumstance the battle was called *la blar beine*, or the battle of the shirts. The Frasers on that day were almost all destroyed.

The last feudal battle fought in Scotland between two Highland

factions was fought near Keppoch, in the centre of this parish, at a place called Mulray. The circumstances that led to this battle appear to have been the following. M'Intosh of M'Intosh possessed the lands of Keppoch, along with other lands in the vicinity. M'Ronald of Keppoch occupied this farm of Keppoch, as did his ancestors for many generations, partly by force, and partly by the connivance, and perhaps the weakness of the M'Intosh. M'Intosh would have been satisfied, it appears, with a slender acknowledgement of his superiority; but this M'Ronald had too much Highland spirit to yield. After various fruitless negotiations, M'Intosh was resolved to have recourse to the *ultima ratio* with his refractory vassal at Keppoch. He collected some hundreds of his clan, and, proposing to steal unawares on M'Ronald, he procured a company of regular troops commanded by Captain M'Kenzie of Suddy, to aid him in his expedition. But M'Ronald, being apprised of his intentions, collected his own retainers, and met his feudal lord at the mouth of Glenroy. There at Mulray a most sanguinary engagement took place. The M'Intoshes were routed; and M'Intosh himself was taken prisoner.

Eminent Men.—Ian Lom, already alluded to, resided in this parish. He had a poetical genius of a very high order. His songs translated into English would exhibit a striking picture of the period in which he lived. He was, however, a frenzied Jacobite. He was when a very young man at the battle of Inverlochy in 1645, although he did not mingle in the conflict. It is asserted that the son of Colkitto said to him on the eve of the battle—"John, will you go with us?" "No, I shall be a spectator of your prowess, and if you do well to-day, I will tell it as well as I can to your praise to-morrow." He did so no doubt, and in the song he composed on the occasion, he luxuriates like a fiend on the anticipated music of the widows and orphans of the Campbells in Argyleshire weeping and clapping their hands in agony over the fate of their husbands and fathers. John survived the union of the two kingdoms, and composed a song against the measure. In the intervening period, he was engaged in various exploits, some of which led to tragical results. It is reported that some one procured him the office of Gaelic Poet Laureate to King Charles II.,—an office which, I believe, died with himself. We find John describe in a song the march of Dundee from Lochaber to Athole in the year 1689, the year after the Revolution. He appears to have been present at the battle of Killiecrankie, which he describes in a song, composed on the occasion,

in such a manner as an eye-witness alone could describe it. He laments the slaughter of the M'Donalds by M'Kay's musketry at the commencement of the action; and speaks in terms of bitter scorn of the cowardly expedient of blowing out heroes brains by such wretched missiles as leaden balls. He mentions also, that it was in the pursuit that Dundee was killed.

Ian Lom's songs more powerfully influenced the minds of his countrymen than all the legislation which was at that time employed for that purpose. Children were taught to lisp them. They were sung in the family circle on long winter evenings, and at weddings, lykewakes, raffles, fairs, and in every company. They attributed to the Stewarts and their adherents the most exalted virtues; and the opponents of that family they represented as incarnate fiends.

In the year 1745, the parish of Kilmonivaig, and that track of ground lying between its eastern boundaries, and the west coast, was called "the cradle of the rebellion." And this was the very locality where the songs of Ian Lom and other Jacobite bards were allowed to leaven the whole mass of society with Jacobite sentiments.

It may be stated here, that it was in this parish that the first act of rebellion was perpetrated in 1745, by an attack of the M'Donalds of Keppoch, on two companies of regular troops, which the rebels attacked, and took prisoners, after killing two of their men, and wounding their commander, Captain Scott, afterwards General Scott. After the Rebellion was suppressed, Charles Edward found shelter for some time in the sequestered glens of this parish, and some of the inhabitants experienced the tender mercies of the Duke of Cumberland.

Parochial Registers.—There is a register of births and marriages, which commences in 1780. It was irregularly kept till the year 1820. The Roman Catholic population seldom use this record for baptisms; but most of their marriages are entered in it. There is also a minute-book kept by the kirk-session.

Land-owners.—These are as follows:—

| | Valuations. |
|---|-------------|
| The Honourable Lord Ward, proprietor of Glengarry, | L.863 7 5 |
| Edward Ellice, Esq. of Glenquoich, | 310 11 4 |
| Honourable Robert Campbell Scarlett of Inverlochy, | 804 4 2½ |
| John Walker, Esq. of Lochtreig, | 715 18 4½ |
| Andrew Belford, Esq. of Glenfintaig, | 166 4 10½ |
| J. E. Baillie, Esq. Kingussie, lands of Glenturret, &c. | 247 18 8½ |
| A. M'Intosh, Esq. of M'Intosh, lands of Keppoch, &c. | 700 0 0 |
| Lieutenant-Colonel H. J. Cameron of Letterfinlay, | 416 13 4 |

The real rental of the parish is L.10,717, 15s. 8d.

The only resident proprietor is Colonel Campbell of Letterfinlay, who resides in a cottage. Some of the other proprietors visit their estates during the shooting season.

Mansion-Houses.—The only mansion-house in the parish is Invergarry House, belonging to Lord Ward.

III.—POPULATION.

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|-------------------------------|---|------|
| Amount of population in 1801, | . | 2541 |
| 1811, | . | 2407 |
| 1821, | . | 2842 |
| 1831, | . | 2869 |
| 1841, | . | 2783 |

The parish is divided into two districts, Lochaber and Glengarry. The population of Lochaber at this time is 1933; of Glengarry, 850; total 2783. Number of families, 505.

Five illegitimate births are recorded in the session-books in the course of the last three years.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—No improvements in agriculture have lately taken place in this parish, to any considerable extent. The respective quantities of arable and pasture land in these extensive bounds, it is impossible to state with accuracy.

Manufactures.—There are no manufactures in the parish except that of whisky, at the Bennevis distillery, carried on by Mr John Macdonald.

Fishings.—The salmon-fishings of the river Lochy are rented at L.320 per annum. They belong to Mr Scarlett.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Ecclesiastical State.—About one-half the population belongs to the Established Church,—the other half is Roman Catholic. Of Episcopalians there are two families. Stipend 18½ chalders, half meal, half barley, with L.10 for communion elements. There is neither manse nor glebe; but for these there is an allowance from the heritors of L.70 per annum.

There is a mission established on the Royal Bounty embracing the districts of Brae and Lochaber, in this parish, and Locharkaig, in Kilmalie. The missionary officiates in rotation, and as often as circumstances admit, at various stations within his bounds.

Education.—There are three regular schools in the parish,—the parochial at Blarour,—the Assembly's school at Bunroy,—and the Society school at Invergarry. But, besides these, there are a few private schools got up among the people in the winter months.

Three or four more schools are required. The parochial schoolmaster's salary is the maximum: and his fees do not exceed L. 5 per annum. His other emoluments may amount to L. 4 per annum. The Assembly's school is singularly efficient, and a great blessing to the district.

Poor.—The average number of persons receiving parochial aid is 35. Highest rate, 6s. 6d.; lowest, L. 2, 10s. per annum. The fund is supplied by church collections, amounting to about L. 10 per annum. And there is occasionally a voluntary contribution of a few pounds per annum by the heritors.

February 1842.