

PARISH OF DORNOCH.

PRESBYTERY OF DORNOCH, SYNOD OF SUTHERLAND AND
CAITHNESS.

THE REV. ANGUS KENNEDY, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—"THE town and parish of Dornoch," says the writer of the last Statistical Account, "derive their name from the Gaelic words *Dorn-Eich*, which signify a horse's foot or hoof,—there being a current tradition to this effect:—About the year 1259, the Danes and Norwegians having made a descent on this coast, were attacked by William, Thane or Earl of Sutherland, a quarter of a mile to the eastward of this town. Here the Danish general was slain, and his army beaten, and forced to retire to their ships, which were not far distant. The Earl of Sutherland greatly signalized himself upon this occasion; and appears, by his personal valour and exertion, to have contributed very much to determine the fate of the day. While he singled out the Danish general, and gallantly fought his way onward, the Thane, being by some accident disarmed, seized the leg of a horse which lay on the ground, and with that despatched his adversary. In honour of this exploit, and of the weapon with which it was achieved, this place received the name of Dorneich, or Dornoch, as it is now called. This tradition is countenanced by the horse-shoe, which is still retained in the arms of the burgh."

Extent and Boundaries.—This parish extends in breadth 9 miles from E. to W. along the coast of the Frith of Dornoch; and in length from S. to N. or N. W. about 15 miles. It is bounded on the east by the Little Ferry, which separates it from the parish of Golspie; on the north and west by the parishes of Rogart and Crieich; and on the south by the Dornoch Frith, which separates it from the county of Ross.

The parish may be considered as a sort of peninsula; the Dornoch Frith, which extends considerably beyond it, bounding it on the south, and the estuary of the Little Ferry on the east, which

SUTHERLAND.

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runs up to the Earthen Mound, rising with a gradual inclination from the sea to a range of hills behind.

Topographical Appearances.—There are no high grounds in this parish which deserve the name of mountain, although the name has been given to some of them, as Beintarvie, &c. There is a ridge of hills behind Skibo, another behind Rearchar, and a third in the vicinity of Torboll. The ground on the side of the parish next the sea is generally flat; in some places almost a dead level, with the exception of some sandy hillocks, interspersed here and there, some of which are naked, and some half-clad with bent and whins, affording a place of refuge for rabbits.

There are two valleys, or, more properly speaking, straths, in this parish: the one, Strath Cairnaig, formed by the river Cairnaig. This valley stretches south from Torboll for the space of some miles. The other, Strath Achvaich, is near the source of the river Evlix, and is of no great extent.

There is a considerable stretch of sea-coast in the parish, from the extreme point of the Meickle Ferry on the west, down the Dornoch Frith, to the mouth of the Little Ferry on the east,—and thence up that estuary for some miles. The shore is flat and sandy, with the exception of a few small rocks to the east of the town, and on the shore of Embo. At the Little Ferry, there is an excellent harbour, where vessels may lie in great security, after having got over the bar which runs across the entrance. Coal ships also drop anchor below the town to discharge their cargoes.

Meteorology, &c.—The climate may be called mild and healthy,* considering the northern latitude. Snow seldom remains long on the sea-coast; and for several years there have not been the same heavy and long-continued falls of snow and the same intense frosts as in former times.

Among the prognostics of unfavourable weather may be noticed the tremendous noise that proceeds from the sand banks called *Gizzing-Briggs*, so called from the peculiar sound they make. These banks lie almost in the middle of the channel betwixt the northern side of the Frith of Dornoch and the coast of the parish of Tarbet, and render the navigation up the Frith extremely dangerous, especially to strangers, without the assistance of a pilot. It is observed, also, that the appearances of the Aurora borealis,

* As a proof of the mildness of our climate, pheasants have been recently introduced at Skibo: they are doing well, and are likely to increase. Walnuts also frequently ripen in the garden at Skibo; and a very fine Ilex tree growing there is a proof of the favourable climate.

which are sometimes very vivid, are commonly followed by cold and stormy weather.

The prevailing distempers are rheumatism, consumption, and inflammatory fevers.

Hydrography.—The Frith of Dornoch extends at least twenty miles beyond this parish. From the Meickle Ferry to the Little Ferry, the water is strongly impregnated with salt, and is found excellent for bathing during the summer months.—In the hilly part of the parish, there are a few lakes, in which a variety of trouts is found, but generally small, and little sought after.—In this parish there are the rivers Carnaig and Evlix. The Carnaig takes its rise some miles south of Torboll, and empties itself into the Fleet on the sands of Torboll, up to which the tide at one time flowed, till arrested by the Earthen Mound. The Evlix takes its rise about the head of Strath Achvaich; and, after running about eight or nine miles, with a considerable population on each side of it, and its banks beautifully wooded with natural birch and alders, it empties itself into the Dornoch Frith, not far from the Meickle Ferry. These rivers are not large; but during winter thaws, or heavy rains in summer, they rise rapidly, overflow their banks, and in their progress sometimes do considerable damage to corn lands.

Mineralogy.—Coal was found at Clashmore in this parish; it was submitted to Sir Humphry Davy's inspection, and by him pronounced to be similar to that of Brora. The seam is said to traverse Ross-shire, and become visible in Coigach. There is a considerable freestone quarry in the neighbourhood of this town, from which stones for building houses and erecting fences are taken. There is another on the estate of Embo; and several inferior ones, fit for fences, have recently been discovered in other parts of the parish.

Zoology.—In this parish are to be found badgers, foxes, otters, hares, rabbits, roe-deer, and occasionally red-deer; also grouse, black game, partridges, &c.

There is nothing in this parish that deserves the name of a salmon fishing. Abundance of excellent cockles may be found near the town when the tide recedes, and westward to the Meickle Ferry. They are much sought after in their season, and carried to a considerable distance in the interior of the country.

There are also two muscle-scalps near the Meickle Ferry, the property of Mr Dempster of Skibo. The Buckie fishermen re-

pair thither with their large boats for bait, and pay a certain sum to the proprietor for each boat-load.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Eminent Men.—Among the eminent men connected with this parish may be mentioned Sutherland, Lord Duffus, who had a residence in Skelbo, the ruins of which are still visible: also the Gordons of Embo, now represented by Sir Orford Gordon, who resides in England. The heads of these families acted a conspicuous part in the feudal quarrels and wars of their times.

Connected with this parish also, by purchase of lands and by residence, were George Dempster, Esq. of Dunnichen, and John Hamilton Dempster, Esq. his brother. These gentlemen were of a younger branch of the ancient family of Dempster of Muresk, in the county of Aberdeen, as may be seen by reference to Douglas' Baronage of Scotland: * and their grandfather had acquired, shortly after the year 1700, the estate of Dunnichen, in Forfarshire, which is now the property, and gives the designation, of the elder branch of his descendants.

Mr George Dempster purchased the estate of Skibo in the year 1786, and Mr J. H. Dempster shortly after purchased the estates of Pulrossie and Over-Skibo. The estates of Skibo and Over-Skibo had been purchased from gentlemen of the name of Gray. But the estate of Skibo had also been possessed for a few years previous to the last Mr Gray by the Honourable George Mackay of Reay, by whom the older portions of its woods were planted, and to whose taste and industry that part of the parish is much indebted.

Mr George Dempster was for twenty-eight years member of Parliament for the Dundee and St Andrews district of burghs. He was most active and assiduous in devising measures himself, and in encouraging measures planned by others, which had for their object the improvement of his native country. He took an active and leading part in promoting its manufactures, its fisheries, and its agriculture. He was a gentleman of great benevolence and suavity of manners. While he and his brother remained in Skibo, they were much respected by all ranks; and as landlords, they were kind and indulgent to their tenants. Mr Dempster died A. D. 1818, aged 86.

The noble family of Sutherland have a burying-place within the church, where the mortal remains of several of its members are laid. Over it a neat monument has been erected to the memory of the last Earl and the Countess of Sutherland, the parents of the now

Duchess Countess of Sutherland, who both died in the flower of youth, the one ten days after the other, at Bath, in the year 1766, and were buried in one grave in the church at Holyrood-House. His lordship had only attained the age of thirty-two, and her ladyship that of twenty-six. This amiable pair were not less ennobled by their shining virtues than by their high rank. Their humane dispositions and condescending manners had greatly endeared them to all orders of society: and their untimely death was deeply felt and universally deplored.

A melancholy event which occurred in July 1833 added to the number of those belonging to the noble family of Sutherland, whose mortal remains are deposited in the cathedral of Dornoch. George Granville Leveson Gower, first Duke of Sutherland, died at Dunrobin Castle on the 19th day of July 1833. His Grace's remains are laid in a place prepared for them in the south aisle of the cathedral; over which, it is said, the Duchess Countess of Sutherland proposes to raise a statue of his Grace, to be executed by Chantry of London. The death of the Duke of Sutherland produced a deep and universal feeling of regret among all ranks in this country; for his Grace was highly respected by all as a nobleman of most honourable principles, and having the comfort of his numerous tenantry at heart.* His funeral was attended by the gentlemen and tenantry of thirteen parishes in this county, and by the tenantry of four parishes from his Grace's estates in Ross-shire; and the procession strikingly testified to the high estimation in which his Grace was held. †

Land-owners.—These are, the Duchess Countess of Sutherland; George Dempster, Esq. of Skibo; Major George Gunn Munro of Poyntzfield; and Mrs Gordon of Embo. None of the principal land-owners reside in the parish, except Mr Dempster.

Parochial Registers.—A register of baptisms has been kept, though sometimes not very regularly, since 13th August 1730; and a register of marriages, since 13th August 1734. These registers have been always under the charge of the parochial schoolmaster for the time being, who acts also as clerk to the kirk-session, and receives a small fee for every act of registration. When the school

* Vide Golspie.

† While preparations were making in the cathedral for the Duke of Sutherland's funeral, a leaden coffin was discovered in the burying-place of the noble family, having a plate bearing an inscription that it contained the remains of John, the twentieth Earl of Sutherland, who "died June 27, 1733," a little more than a century before the Duke's death. His Lordship's coffin was covered with another, and laid up with all due respect and care in the same burying-place again.

became vacant, the registration was much neglected. Since the year 1817, however, both registers have been kept correctly.

Great inconvenience, and even loss to individuals, having been experienced from the want of a register of deaths, to which reference could be made,—a register of that description has been kept by the minister of the parish since January 1821, which, if continued by his successors, may prove useful to succeeding generations.

Antiquities.—The picturesque remains of the old castle of Skelbo, formerly the residence of the family of Sutherland, Lord Duffus, still remain. This castle was built on an eminence, rising abruptly from the sea side, near the Little Ferry.

The castle of Skibo, once a residence of the Bishops of Caithness and Sutherland, was demolished in the last century. Within its walls the celebrated Marquis of Montrose was confined subsequently to his being taken in Assynt; and from Skibo he was conveyed to Edinburgh, where he was executed.

In memory of the event which gave its name to the burgh, a stone pillar was erected on the spot, supporting at the top a cross, encompassed by a circle, which went under the name of the Earl's cross. The lapse of ages had, however, somewhat defaced this monument. But it has been repaired, and is still standing.

III.—POPULATION.

By the Government census of 1821, the population of the town and parish was found to be 3100. By the census of 1831, it was 3380; and would have been 300 more, had there not been a partial emigration to British America to that amount from the parish during that and the previous year. It is but justice to the landed proprietors to add, that this emigration was purely voluntary on the part of the emigrants; that most of them left the parish in comfortable circumstances; and that the situations which they left open were soon occupied by others. The population, it may be safely asserted, is still on the increase.

The increase of population may be accounted for by persons of various classes coming from the east and south country, and settling in the parish,—by a general inclination to marry young: when out farm-servants, of whom the number is considerably increased by the erection of large farms, get *barracks* for themselves, they marry: when a young man gets a croft of land, he marries: when a fisherman becomes possessed of a quarter share of a boat, he builds a house, and marries. Second marriages also, of which

there are not a few, contribute to the increase of the population. There is one instance of a marriage in which both parties were married for the fourth time.

1. Number of families in the parish,	644
chiefly employed in agriculture,	598
in trade, manufactures, and handicraft,	41
2. The average number of marriages, for 7 years,	21½
births, for the same period,	82½
of the whole number of births during the 7 years, 300 were males, and 279 females.	
average number of deaths, for 7 years,	44½

There is 1 person insane in the parish; 3 fatuous; 3 blind,—2 of them by small-pox; and 1 dumb.

Language, Habits, &c. of the People.—The vernacular language is still the Gaelic; from which also almost all the names of places are manifestly derived. In that language, *bailē* signifies a town. Hence *Tor-baile*, *Kerr-baile*, *Eun-baile*, *Skia-baile*, compounded of that word and others, signifying respectively mount, rock, fowl, wing; and these names indicate the figure, situation, or other circumstances of the places to which they are applied. Some places in the vicinity of the cathedral have been denominated from the offices of those who formerly held them; as *Crot'n Espig*, *Auchintreasurich*, *Auchinchanter*, signifying the Bishop's, Treasurer's, and Chanter's fields. This language has, however, lost ground considerably during the last twenty-five years, owing to the influx into the parish, from various parts of the kingdom, of persons who speak the English language, but especially to the introduction of schools, first Gaelic and then English, into every district of the parish. The predilection for the Gaelic language is, however, still manifest, from the well-known facts, that the common people prefer to use it in their ordinary intercourse, and that larger congregations attend public worship during the Gaelic services than during the English. Nevertheless, the English is making rapid encroachments on our ancient language; and it is not improbable that, in the course of sixty or seventy years, the latter may be extinct.

The habits of the people in regard to cleanliness have improved considerably. Instead of their feal-houses, in which it was scarcely possible to maintain cleanliness, they have now generally neat cottages, built of stone and clay, and harled with lime, having chimnies, instead of the fire-place being in the middle of the house, as formerly,—there being then no outlet for smoke except by the door, or a hole in the roof.

A great improvement has also taken place in their dress, parti-

cularly in that of the young of both sexes. This also they have learned from those who came from other parts to reside in the parish.

Potatoes have become the principal article of food here, as, indeed, they are throughout all the Highlands. They serve as the chief subsistence of the people during one-half of the year, and with some even for two-thirds. Many of the people come from a considerable distance for cockles, of which abundance may be had in their season on the sands of Dornoch. They go also for haddocks to the fishing town of Embo; and since the herring-fishing was established at Helmsdale, many go there, purchase and cure herrings, and carry them home in casks in their own small carts: they thus provide themselves with wholesome food.

The people here are rather above the middle size. They are in general well-made and handsome, and the women, comely. On the whole, they are a moral and religious people; industrious, peaceable, and respectful to their superiors. With very few exceptions they regularly attend public worship; and their decent appearance on Sabbath days indicates their comfortable circumstances.

Poaching and illicit distillation are now scarcely known among them.

During the last three years there were 4 illegitimate births: but in three of the cases the parties were afterwards married.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture and Rural Economy.—During the last fifteen or twenty years agricultural improvements have been carried on with wonderful activity, and to a great extent, in this parish, especially on the Sutherland estate. On that estate, there are 4000 acres of arable land under the plough, besides 2000 acres of waste ground improved, and carrying crops.

Improvements.—Among the improvements on waste-land it may be mentioned that the fresh-water lake, at a place called Balvraid, near the county road, has been thoroughly drained and prepared, and is now laid down in crop. The highly improved appearance of the spot holds out a prospect of remunerating the expense in a few years. It may be observed also, that, by the erection of the earthen mound across the estuary of the Little Ferry, from thirty to forty acres of valuable carse ground, over which the tide formerly used to flow, have been brought under the plough, and are

now carrying heavy crops of wheat, &c. A still greater extent has been reclaimed on the Golspie side of the estuary.

The contents of the principal farms on the Sutherland estate may be stated as follows :—Sidera, 196 acres; Evlix, 154; Farms, (1820, 1821, 1822,) 344; Achley, 91; Pitgrudie, 133; Auchurach and Auchinchaunter, 94; Coull; 203; Skelbo, 323; East Balvraid, 192; West Balvraid, 54; Cambusmore, 104; Torboll, 145; Pronsienain, 89; Pronsienaird, 132; Kinauld, 100; Trentham, 150,—all imperial acres. The parks are, at an average, from 10 to 15 acres each. The average rent of old arable land is L. 1, 5s. per acre;—that of improved waste land, 5s.

Besides the principal farms which have been stated above, there are a great many lots, or small holdings, ranking from two to five or six acres, which are receiving yearly accessions from waste land by the industry of the occupiers; and though the average rent of improved waste land be stated at 5s. per acre, it is a well-known fact, that many of these cottars pay only a rent of 1s. each, some 2s., and so on, in a gradual scale,—an increase of rent not being so much the object of the noble proprietors, as the improvement of the soil, and the comfort of their numerous tenantry; in which liberal objects they have succeeded.

On the estate of Skibo there are 800 acres of arable land: and besides a great number of smaller holdings, there are four large farms, highly improved, and rented each at about L. 150. On this estate also, a good deal has been done in reclaiming waste land; but much more in the parish of Criech, where the greater part of Mr Dempster's estate lies, and in which he has very extensive plantations of firs and hard-wood.

On the estate of the Duchess Countess of Sutherland in this parish, there are plantations to the extent of 2500 acres, consisting of Scotch firs and larches, birch, and hard-wood. To these it is in contemplation to make considerable additions. There are besides 300 acres of natural birch and alder.

On Mr Dempster's estate there are plantations to the extent of 350 acres, a considerable part of which is hard-wood. There are some ashes and planes of great size. The rest consists of Scotch firs and larches. On the estate of Embo there may be from 30 to 40 acres of Scotch fir, but, though old, very stunted in growth.

On the estate of Embo there is only one large farm, consisting of about 200 acres of arable land, of which from 30 to 40

have been reclaimed from waste land. It is enclosed and subdivided by stone fences, and in a high state of cultivation. The rest of the estate is let to small tenants, and they, of late, have adopted a rotation of crops.

Major Gunn Munro's estate in this parish lies in the vicinity of the burgh, and the greater part of it is well-farmed by a gentleman residing in the town. The rest of it is also well-farmed by two industrious individuals, who now grow wheat, where they formerly cut peats.

The steadings on the large farms throughout the parish are generally good and commodious. Attached to several of them is a thrashing-machine. These are of various powers, according to the size of the farm. Some of them are wrought by water, and some by horses.

The ordinary duration of leases here is nineteen years.

Live-Stock.—As to the live-stock in the parish, it is only necessary to observe, that the breeds of black cattle and horses, particularly the latter, have been greatly improved of late years. Cheviot sheep have also been introduced into store farms, and have succeeded well.

Husbandry.—The five-course shift is the rotation of crops adopted in the parish,—1. oats; 2. turnips and potatoes; 3. barley and grass seeds; 4. hay or pasture; and, 5. pasture. On account of the low price of barley, the wheat husbandry has been recently introduced. The produce is sent on consignment to Leith, where it is sold at the prices of the time; but the grower has to submit to a heavy deduction for freight, agency, &c.—not less than 4s. per quarter.

Rate of Wages.—The wages of farm-servants are various. The principal servant has generally L. 8 per annum, six bolls of oat-meal, a pint of skimmed milk per diem, or an agreed equivalent for it,—some eight, some ten barrels of coals, a certain extent of land for potatoes, and a free house. Young men hired by the half-year have from L. 2 to L. 2, 10s., with cost and lodgings. The wages of female-servants for the half-year are generally from L. 1, 10s. to L. 2, with victuals in the house. The wages of able-bodied men for day-labour are from 1s. to 1s. 6d.; those of the women, 6d., except when at harvest work, when they have 1s.; but no victuals in either case.

The daily operations of various kinds that are necessary on

large farms furnish employment to all in their vicinity who are able and willing to work.

Quarries, &c.—There is a considerable freestone quarry in the neighbourhood of this town, from which stones for building houses and erecting fences are taken: and there have been several other quarries recently opened in other parts of the parish; but none of these are equal to that in the vicinity of Dornoch, except one at Embo.

Fisheries.—There is no regular fishery in the parish. There is, indeed, a colony of fishermen at Embo; but they only fish for haddocks, small cods, flounders, &c. which they sell in the fresh state. The women carry the fish in creels on their backs to this town, and throughout the parish, and sell it as they best can. The fishermen also frequently go across with their boats to the shore of Tain, where they dispose of their fish to advantage. Of late years they have engaged in the herring-fishing, by hiring themselves to fish-curers for the season,—the fish deliverable in the fresh state at so much per crane, and the nets being provided by the fishermen. The curers allow a certain quantity of whisky to each boat's crew. To the credit of the fishermen at Embo, it should be observed, that, with a few exceptions, they are sober and industrious, and some of them pious.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Burgh.—Dornoch is the only market-town in the parish, and the only Royal Burgh in the county. It was erected into a royal burgh by a charter from Charles I. A. D. 1628. The council consists of fifteen members, including the provost, four bailies, a dean of guild, and treasurer. By the constitution and practice of the burgh, four of the councillors are annually changed. This is one of five which compose what is called the northern district of burghs. It has no landed property, nor any other source of revenue except the customs levied at six annual fairs held here, and which are on the decline. But this may be accounted for by the recent establishment of two other fairs,—one in the village of Golspie, and another in the parish of Clyne,—and by the great number of retail-shops found here and there through the parish and the county.

The population of the town is little more than 500, but appears to be rather on the increase. The Sheriff-substitute and Sheriff-clerk, one writer, two messengers-at-arms, reside in the town. We have also a post-office. The northern royal mail-coach passes through the town twice every day. This is an advantage to the burgh, as

strangers travelling by the coach for business or for pleasure, may find good entertainment in a commodious and well-kept inn.

There are here also five retail-shopkeepers, two saddlers, one baker, one butcher, (though not in constant employment,) three blacksmiths, three shoemakers, several house-carpenters, masons, tailors, and weavers.

Within the last twenty years there was a considerable number of small uncomfortable feal-houses in the town; but these gradually gave way to neat and comfortable cottages, most of them two stories high. The streets are clean, and the approaches to the town from every quarter have been much improved. The communication with the town is open in every direction by excellent roads and bridges, which are kept in annual repair. The Macadamizing system is adopted on the county roads. Indeed, the whole parish is intersected with roads and bridges; and with these there is another great advantage,—there are no tolls. Not a toll is to be seen in the county of Sutherland. Hence, carriages, gigs, and carts may be seen on Sabbath days carrying some of the good people to church.

Ecclesiastical State.—The church stands in the middle of the town. It consists of three aisles of the old cathedral,—the fourth has been long in ruins; but these venerable ruins point out to the admiring beholder what was their ancient grandeur.

Dornoch was formerly the seat of the Bishop of Caithness. The precise time of the erection of the See is not ascertained. Andrew, Bishop of Caithness, had his seat here in 1150: and in 1222, Gilbert Murray was consecrated bishop. The latter is supposed to have built the cathedral. He died at Scrabster, in Caithness, where the bishops also had a residence in 1245; and was afterwards canonized. A statue of him is still shewn in the church of Dornoch, under the name of St Gilbert, but it is not entire. The last bishop, Andrew Wood, was translated hither from the Isles in the year 1680, and remained till the Revolution in 1688.

In the year 1570, the cathedral, (except the steeple,) was burnt by the master of Caithness; but it "hath been of late re-edified and repaired by Sir Robert Gordon, tutour of Southerland, which work was interprysed and begun by John Erle of Southerland, last deceased, a little before his death." At what time the cathedral received its present roof, which is comparatively modern, I cannot ascertain. For a long time after it was occupied as a Presbyterian place of worship, the congregation met on the

ground-floor,—which was also occupied as a burying-ground for families of distinction. But this was found to be most inconvenient and unwholesome, both for the minister and congregation, the roof being stupendously high, and the house very cold in winter. To remedy these inconveniences, it was agreed by all concerned, about sixty years ago, that the church should be lofted at the height of seven feet from the ground. To this upper story, which is the present place of worship, the ascent is by stairs from without. The last repair which was given to the church was in 1816, when its lofty roof was ceiled, and additional accommodation was given by the erection of a gallery in the easter aisle; notwithstanding which, there is not yet sufficient accommodation for an increasing population. Another gallery is still necessary. The number of sittings in the church cannot be exactly ascertained; they are probably from 1000 to 1100; but it is a well known fact, that the pews are generally crowded to inconvenience, and that, in fine weather, some have to sit on the tops of the pews for want of room. Arrangements are, however, in contemplation, which may remedy this inconvenience. *

The pews have been divided by the heritors according to their valued rents; and their tenants have free access to them. So far as I know, there are no seat-rents exacted. The poor sit on the forms connected with the communion tables, and in the passages.

The great body of the people are within six miles of the church; some at the distance of seven or eight miles, and in one district about twelve miles. The people in this last district are within a mile of the parish church of Rogart, where they attend public worship. They are, however, catechised annually by their own parish minister.

The manse was built about sixty years ago. The last repairs to it were given in the year 1825, when some additional accommodations were given by the heritors. It ought to be recorded here, to the honour of the heritors of the parish, that no meeting of presbytery was rendered necessary during the last eighteen years to obtain the accommodations which the clergyman required.

The glebe is about twelve imperial acres, all arable; but the greater part of it is of little value, the soil being so very sandy and

* Since writing the above, the Duchess Countess of Sutherland has announced her intention of repairing the wester aisle, which has been so long in ruins, at her own expense, and to fit it up as a part of the place for public worship. Also to repair the other aisles of the cathedral. The work is to be commenced next spring. There are to be some free sittings for the poor.

light, that during the high winds which prevail from March to June, it is drifted in every direction like fresh laid snow.

The stipend was augmented on 6th February 1832, from fourteen chalders, and L. 8, 6s. 8d., to seventeen chalders, and L. 10 for providing the communion elements. The victual is half meal, half barley, imperial standard weights and measures.

There is one catechist in the parish, appointed by the Committee on the Royal Bounty, with a salary of L. 7.

There is no chapel of any description here : no Dissenters from the Established church ; and only one family of Seceders, who almost regularly attend public worship in the parish church.

The average annual amount of parochial collections for religious and charitable purposes may be stated at L. 28 or L. 30.

Education.—There are seven schools in the parish, of which three are in the town,—the parochial school, a female school on the second patent of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, and another female school without salary, the teacher depending on the school-fees. In the landward parish are two schools on the General Assembly's scheme, and two on that of the Glasgow Auxiliary Gaelic School Society ; besides which, the people in remote small districts hire a young lad to teach their children during the winter quarter ; after which the school breaks up till next winter. The Holy Scriptures and the Assembly's Shorter Catechism are taught in all these schools. Many are taught also to read the Bible in Gaelic. Dr Thomson's English school-books are introduced into most of them. Arithmetic, book-keeping, English grammar, and Latin, are taught. The parochial schoolmaster has the maximum salary, with a large house and garden. The school-fees are of no great value,—not exceeding L. 6. The teachers belonging to the Glasgow Society have L. 14 each : those employed by the General Assembly's Committee, have each L. 20 of salary, besides fees. Suitable dwelling and school-houses are provided by the heritors in all these cases. The schoolmistress at Dornoch has a salary of L. 8, with a good house and garden.

It may be observed in general, that the fees in all these schools are of very little value ; that, so desirous are the people to give the advantages of education to their children that some are sent to school at the age of five ; that female education is better attended to than formerly ; and that during last winter nearly 500 attended schools.

About 700 persons in the parish are unable to read, above six

years of age; and about 250, betwixt the years of six and fifteen.

Friendly Society.—There is a friendly society in this town of some standing; but it does not appear to be in a prosperous state, as last year its dissolution was talked of.

Savings Bank.—A branch of a general savings bank for the county was lately set up here. Nothing can yet be said of it but that the people shew a desire to vest their savings in it. It is under the patronage of the noble family of Sutherland, who give every encouragement to the people to vest their money in it, and to promote provident habits among the working-classes.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—The number of persons receiving parochial aid may be considered on an average at from 120 to 130. The funds for the poor, which are distributed only once a year, consist of collections made in church on Sabbath days, including what is given on marriage occasions, which may amount to L. 36; the dues for the use of the mortcloths, amounting to about L. 3, 10s.; an annual gratuity of L. 6 from the Duchess Countess of Sutherland; and L. 25, the interest of L. 500. The late Duke of Sutherland, who did not need to borrow money, very humanely took this sum from the kirk-session, and allowed the above liberal interest for it. The lowest sum which is given to any of the poor is 6s., the highest is L. 1, 5s. There is a strong tendency among the lower classes to apply for relief to the parish funds. It must be added, that the Duchess gives also annual gratuities to several poor and aged individuals,—one of which, I know, amounts to L. 4; and that, besides these stated gratuities, the Noble family always gives a liberal supply of victuals to the poor on their estates, in time of scarcity.

Prisons.—The only prison in the county is in this town. It was once the bishop's palace, which, from its remains, appears to have been a stately edifice. In 1567, George Earl of Caithness sent his son John with some of his people, to invest the town and Castle of Dornoch, of which the Murrays, a tribe attached to the noble family of Sutherland, had possessed themselves. The Murrays, no longer able to maintain the ground they had occupied, retired to the castle; upon which the master of Caithness burnt the town and cathedral; but still the besieged defended themselves in the castle for a month. At length, however, they were obliged to capitulate. Whether the castle was dismantled at that time, I have no means of ascertaining; but it is well known that it lay in ruins for

a great length of time, till, in 1814, it was roofed and repaired; it has since been occupied as a court-house, a record-room, and a jail. The number of prisoners in the jail during the year 1833 was 20. Of these three were for debt, six for smuggling, one for theft, and ten for assaults of various kinds. The prison is, upon the whole, comfortable and well-secured. One of the surgeons in the parish has a salary for attending any of the prisoners when sick.

Inns, &c.—In the town there is an excellent principal inn; and also two houses licensed to sell whisky. One of these with the inn would be quite sufficient. There are two other respectable inns in the parish, one at the Meickle Ferry, and another at Clashmore. There are three licensed houses in the parish, all of which could be well dispensed with, as they prove injurious to the morals and the means of the people, particularly of the young, among the working-classes. It should be stated to the credit of the magistrates here, as well as throughout the county, that they have suppressed several of these dram-shops.

Fuel.—Coals imported from Newcastle have been used here by the better classes in town and country, for the last twenty years at least. They are purchased at Dornoch, at from 1s. 10d. to 2s. per barrel, and carried home in carts. Peats are still used by the common people.

September 1834.