

PARISH OF ORPHIR.

PRESBYTERY OF CAIRSTON, SYNOD OF ORKNEY.

THE REV. JAMES ANDERSON, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THE name Orphir, formerly written Orfer, is said to be of Norwegian origin, and to signify *fire land*, or *mossy soil*.

Situation.—The parish lies west of Kirkwall on the mainland; and the church and manse are about nine miles distant from Kirkwall.

Boundaries, &c.—It is bounded on the west and north, by the parishes of Stenness and Firth, from which it is divided by a range of high hills; on the east and south, by the parish of Kirkwall, the bay of Scalpa, and the sea that intervenes between it and the parish of South Ronaldsay, from which it is distant about twelve miles. The average length, by accurate measurement, is 6 miles, 6 furlongs, and 200 yards; average breadth, 2 miles, 5 furlongs, and 13 yards; and it contains about 18 square miles. The length along the coast, from Claistran to Scalpa is 13 miles, 7 furlongs, and 13 yards; the length, on the land boundary, is 10 miles, 2 furlongs, and 40 yards. The circumference of the whole is 24 miles, 1 furlong, and 53 yards.

Topographical Appearances.—From Houton head, the south-west point, there is a succession of hills and valleys north-east, not only through the whole length of the parish, but to the opposite shore of the mainland, where the parishes of Kirkwall and Firth meet.

Mountain Ranges.—Houton head is about 300 feet above the level of the sea. The next hills in succession rise gradually; and the Wart hill, which is the highest of the whole, is about 700 feet. From the top of this, when the sky is clear, there is a very extensive, varied, and delightful view, not only over the greater part of the county, but also along the west coast of Caithness, from Dungs-bay head to Cape Wrath, and over several of the loftiest hills in the interior of Caithness and Sutherland. The scene is also

agreeably varied by the frequent view of ships passing through the Pentland Frith, and vessels belonging to the country, on their departure and return. The eagle is frequently seen soaring high over the hills, and sometimes darts on the poultry about the farmers' houses.

Valleys.—As the parish is bounded on the west by a succession of hills and valleys, these valleys began to be cultivated soon after the division of the common, which took place in 1818, at the instance of the late Sir William Honyman, the principal proprietor; and twenty-six small farms have been cultivated in these valleys, where there had been no dwelling-house before. In these valleys, the soil is in general rich and deep, and yielded rich crops from their first cultivation. In different parts of the valleys, the cultivation has not yet been carried to the extent that it admits. There are small burns issuing from springs, and running in a southeasterly direction. At their sources, the ground is comparatively steep, and becomes more level, as they approach the shore.

Caves.—These are few, and excite no great interest in the mind of the spectator. In Houton head, there is a small cave in the face of the rock, the mouth of which is about 90 feet above flood mark, narrow at the entrance, but widening, and becoming higher towards the inner extremity, which extends to the distance of about 14 feet from the mouth. It acquired some celebrity in 1803, from affording a temporary shelter to two young men in the neighbourhood, who endeavoured to escape from being impressed.

Nearly a mile east from the church, there are three small caves in the face of the rock Bernory, which rises to the height of about 30 feet. One of them may be entered on foot at low water, and extends but a small distance under the rock. The other two can be approached only by boat, extend farther under ground, and at the lowest ebb the sea is about two fathoms deep at their mouths, becoming more shallow as the caves recede from the shore. The sides are irregular, composed of sandstone; the roof a coarse species of freestone, and in general flat; the sides converging towards the top. On the sides and in the crevices, a few wild pigeons build their nests, and lodge at all seasons.

On the side of Scalpa bay, near the line of boundary between this parish and the parish of Kirkwall, there is a cave called the Salt Pans, running parallel to the shore to the distance of twenty paces. The front has the appearance of freestone pillars at irregular distances about five feet high. Above and below, and also behind

these pillars, there are rocks of harder stone. The name is supposed to have arisen from the practice of manufacturing salt by boiling the salt water; but no such manufacture is now remembered to have been carried on at the place.

Coast.—From Houton head, westward to the parish of Stromness, the coast is nearly level, and for the most part wholly so. The banks nowhere rise above ten feet, and consist of thin strata of sandstone. Here the strata dip to the east and north. Below flood-mark, some parts are sandy, others covered with small pebbles, and frequently with rugged rocks, on which grows a considerable quantity of tang, of which kelp is made.

At Houton head, the strata dip to the west and south. From this, eastward, is a succession of small bays, in some degree corresponding to the valleys on the west. The shores of these bays are in some cases sandy, but more generally covered with pebbles, and in some cases the banks are from 12 to 14 feet high. The headlands between the bays generally rise to a greater height: the highest, however, do not exceed 40 feet, and few of them reach 30. There is nothing particularly striking in the appearance of these bays and headlands. The strata in the headlands, which consist commonly of grey slate or greywacke, are generally regular, though in some cases they have a waving direction, and sometimes there is a perpendicular line of junction, where the strata, on each side of this line, rise a little, as if compressed by some external force during their formation. Here, the strata dip to the west and north. In the bay of Swanbister, which is the largest of the whole, and nearly two miles broad, there is a sandy shore; and a considerable number of cockles and some spouts are obtained during stream tides.

Island.—Cava, the only island, is about a-mile and a-half south-east of Houton head. There are only twenty Scots acres cultivated in it, and these lie in the middle on the south side. It contained twenty-one inhabitants at last census. The cultivated soil is a rich black loam, producing excellent crops, both of oats and bear, there being abundance of sea-weed for manure. Part of what is uncultivated consists of excellent peat moss. The rocks around the shore are chiefly common sandstone, freestone, and some limestone. The circumference of the island is 3 miles, 1 furlong, and 80 yards.

The holm of Houton lies in the bay of Houton, not a quarter of a mile in length and less in breadth; it is covered with a coarse kind of grass used for pasture. Part of it was cultivat-

ed, a few years ago, for one season ; but the soil being near the rock, and the summer dry, the crop was poor, and therefore the cultivation was discontinued. The channel which separates the holm from Houton head becomes dry for about two hours at low water. The inlet on the side next to the church admits sloops into the bay, even at low water. For many years past, it has been in contemplation to convey the mail from Thurso, by a decked vessel, direct to the bay of Houton, from whence runners could bring it soon to Kirkwall and Stromness. This bay was lately surveyed for the purpose, but the result is not yet known.

There is a small skerry, about two miles south-east of the church, called the *barrel of butter*, the origin of which name is said to be, that the tenants on the lands of the Bull, which surround the church, paid to the proprietor a rent of a barrel of butter for the privilege of killing seals on this skerry. It is never completely covered by the sea at stream tides. There is a spot of coarse grass in the middle. On this, seals are seen to bask on a sunny day, but of late, no attempt has been made to disturb their repose.

Hydrography.—The frith between Houton head and the island of Walls, is about four miles broad. By this, all vessels from the south and east pass to Stromness, and approach either between the island of South Ronaldsay and the islands of Walls and Flotta, or by Holm sound.

Springs.—There is a great abundance of copious springs of pure water. There are also a few chalybeates, which are reckoned salutary and beneficial in nervous complaints.

Lakes.—There is but one lake ; the lake or loch of Kirbister, 1 mile, 1 furlong, and 116 yards long ; circumference, 2 miles, 3 furlongs, and 170 yards ; surface, 180 Scots acres ; the depth varies from 3 to 9 feet. It is supplied by small burns in various directions ; and near the south-east, there is an excellent mill. It abounds in small trouts, which are taken by hooks and flies by the people in the neighbourhood : and anglers from Kirkwall occasionally resort to it in summer.

Geology.—The rocks along the shore are nowhere high, few above 30 feet. They are generally of sandstone ; in some places, slaty. In the bay at the church, at low water, there are several rocks of the schistose kind, running nearly in a south and north direction, about six feet in breadth, rising from their bed about two feet, sloping on the sides, and exhibiting in the middle the appearance of having been pressed to-

gether in their formation, by some very powerful force from beneath. The distance between these ridges is from four to five feet. There are several of these ridges, and they run parallel to each other. On the west side of this bay, there is a rock of this kind of stone, from 25 to 30 feet high; and about the middle, there is a perpendicular line where the junction exhibits signs, on each side, of great pressure in the formation. Of the freestone, some is coarse grained, and some fine and white. The shores of Swanbister, belonging to Thomas Sands, Esq. abound in this last, and are carried to Kirkwall and Stromness, for various purposes.

There was lately discovered a quarry of excellent gray slate on the side of the hill of Midland next to Houton, at an elevation of about 400 feet, belonging to Hector Moncrieff, Esq. of Houton. In summer 1834, 6000 slates were sent to Kirkwall and South Ronaldsay; 1835, 12,000 were sent to the same places; and last summer, about 12,000.

Soil.—In the fields, which have been longest in cultivation, the soil is generally a rich black loam, yields fair crops of corn, rich natural grass; and ryegrass and clover have been tried with success. In some parts, the soil is a cold clay; but a large proportion is sandy and shallow, over rocks of sandstone, and yields light crops.

Birds.—The chief of these are: hawks (*Falco*), both dark-brown and grey. Owls (*Strix ulula*), dark-grey. The royal eagle (*Falco fulvus*). Crows (*Corvus cornix*). The starling (*Sturnus*), thrush (*Turdus*), wagtail (*Motacilla alba*), lark (*Alauda arvensis*), linnet (*Fringilla*), swallow (*Hirundo*), cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), landrail (*Rallus crex*), wild pigeon (*Columba ænas*), moor-fowl (*T. Scoticus*), plover (*Charadrius*).—Of water-fowls are gulls (*Larus ridibundus*), wild goose (*Anas anser*), duck (*A. boschas*), solan goose (*Pelecanus Bassanus*), puffin (*Alea arctica*), auk (*A. torda*), crane (*Grus*).

Fishes, &c.—Haddock (*Gadus Æglefinus*), cod (*G. morhua*), ling (*G. Molva*), skate (*Raiu*), dog-fish (*Squalus Acanthias*), eel (*Muræna anguilla*), whiting (*G. merlangus*), mackerel (*Scomber*), turbot (*Pleuronectes hippoglossus*), flounder (*P. flesus*), coalfish (*G. carbonarius*), trout (*Salmo fario*).—Shell fish; cockle (*Cardium*), razor or spout-fish (*Solen*), lobster (*Cancer gammarus*), crab (*C. pagurus*), and buckies of various species.

Reptiles, &c.—The frog (*Rana*), toad (*Bufo*), are sometimes to be seen, though rarely; particularly the latter. Gnats or midges are

very numerous in the warm summer evenings, and often troublesome to those occupied in the open air.

Botany. — There is a great variety of plants in the pasture and meadow grounds, and they are general over the whole county; some of which are, mint (*Mentha*), marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*), thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*), foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*), scurvy-grass (*Cochlearia officinalis*), water-cresses (*Nasturtium officinale*), cranesbill (*Geranium cicutarium*), trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*).

There are no trees except a few in gardens, which become stunted when they rise above the walls. The willow (*Salix repens*,) is found in low ground along rivulets; also (*angustifolia*,) but this appears to have been planted. Hazel-nuts have been, of late, turned up by the plough, though none of the trunks have been discovered. Whins (*Ulex Europæus*,) are found in some places, and no doubt is entertained that they have been raised from seed. Turnips of different kinds thrive well, as also carrots and cabbages. The soil and climate seem abundantly favourable for leguminous crops.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Earl Paul, the second of that name, who lived towards the close of the eleventh century, had a magnificent palace in this parish, the ruins of which are still perceptible on the shore of Swanbister.

Eminent Men.—The late Sir William Honyman, Lord Armadale, an eminent Judge in the Court of Session, was a native of this parish, and the principal landed proprietor in it. The residence of his ancestors was in the Hall of Claistran.

Murdoch Mackenzie, Esq. author of the Charts, though a native of Kirkwall, was proprietor of Groundwater in this parish, and of lands in different parts in this county. Thomas Mackenzie, Esq. the present proprietor, is his direct descendant.

Parochial Register.—The earliest date of baptisms is 1711; of marriages, 1718; of deaths, 1817. This last was begun, in consequence of the express orders of the General Assembly.

Antiquities.—Besides the ruins of Earl Paul's palace, already mentioned, there are, in various places along the coast, from Houton-head eastward, the ruins of various buildings, which are supposed to be the remains of Popish chapels, and have nothing striking in their appearance. There are three tumuli which have not been opened,—one near the church on level ground,—another near the manse, a little more elevated; and both may be seen from

the third, which is on the top of the highest hill. There is no tradition concerning them.

Buildings.—The Hall of Claistran is a double house of modern construction, at present occupied by a tenant. The principal landed proprietors have neat comfortable dwellings and commodious gardens, in which a good deal of taste is displayed. As the farms are in general small the dwelling-houses correspond with them, being built of stone and clay, and sometimes not plastered on the inside, with the fire-place in the middle of the floor, or towards the inner end of the apartment, where the family usually sit, with a stone fence of from four to five feet high, and about the same breadth, on the inner side of which the fire is placed. In later times, some improvement in these erections has taken place.

III.—POPULATION.

In 1795, the population was	826		
1811,	889		
1821,	917		
1831,	996		
By the last census, 1841, the number of males is 482; females, 582; total, 1064			
The average of marriages for the last three years,			17
baptisms,			16½
insane persons,			1
	Males.	Females.	Total.
Number of souls in 1831 below 15 years of age,	178	169	347
from 15 to 30,	106	123	229
30 to 50,	89	134	223
50 to 70,	60	77	137
above 70,	27	33	60
	460	536	996
The average of marriages for the last seven years,			6½
baptisms,			18½
Number of bachelors and widowers above 50,			15
unmarried women above 50, exclusive of widows,			12
insane persons,			1

Character, &c. of the People.—They are active, industrious, frugal, cheerful, and contented, quiet and social in their disposition. It is rare to hear of any quarrel among them. They have, in general, a deep sense of the principles of religion, and their punctual attendance on public worship, their decency of behaviour, and close attention while there, are exemplary. It follows that intemperance, or petty thefts are rarely heard of, and those who are addicted to such habits, are treated with the contempt they deserve.

The number of artisans is considerable. Many of the young men are much occupied in winter, in making shoes for themselves and others. Weavers and tailors have abundance of employment. There is a great number of masons, and several of them go in summer to work in the neighbouring islands. There are several joiners,

3 smiths, and 1 cooper. Most of the artisans have small farms, but not sufficient to maintain their families. Almost all the young women have, for many years, been employed in winter in plaiting straw for bonnets.

The habits of the people are gradually improving. There is, however, a propensity among the young of both sexes to extravagance in dress. Umbrellas are in general use. English cloths, prints, and merinos are common.

While kelp was in demand, and brought a high price, a considerable number of men and young women was employed in the manufacture of it; but now little is done in this way.

The young people are usually prudent enough in entering into matrimony, and seldom take this step, until they have a tolerable prospect of the means of subsistence. An unfortunate habit, however, has long prevailed among some of the young men, of going in the winter evenings to tippling-houses. This, doubtless, operates unfavourably in various ways, and deprives the individuals of that respectability of character to which they would be entitled, from their industry and economy in other respects. Resolutions were issued by the county gentlemen a few years ago, to put a stop to such practices, by diminishing the number of licensed ale-houses. Their resolutions, however, have not yet produced the salutary effect intended.

A Sunday school was commenced some time ago, which, it is hoped, will have a very beneficial influence.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture and Rural Economy.—The greater part of the farms are from six to eight Scots acres in extent, and at a rent of from 10s. to 15s. per acre, according to the quality of the soil. The common rotation is oats and bear, with a few potatoes: of these, seldom more are raised than what the family requires. Some also raise a few turnips for family use. There are three large farms, paying a rent of from L.50 to L.80 each. On these, there is a rotation of rye-grass and clover, which are not broken up for two or three years: then oats, next potatoes or turnips, and then bear, with which the grass and clover are sown. The greater part of the first year's crop of sown grass is cut for hay, and the field is afterwards used for pasture. Wheat has been tried, but with indifferent success. In some cases, it grew luxuriantly, but was never well filled or fully ripened. In ordinary seasons, it is common to see

the fields cleared against the end of September, and a late crop is always an inferior one.

Breeds of Live-Stock.—The black-cattle are, in general, such as are common over the county; and, as an over-stock is frequently kept, they have rather a stunted appearance. A few of what are called the Dunrobin breed have been introduced, and though they do not grow to a large size, they have a sprightly appearance. The price of the latter, compared with the former, is usually as L. 5 to L. 3. The native horses are generally of a small size. Those on the larger farms are of a superior breed, and, compared with the former, may be rated about two to one as to price, that is as L. 8 to L. 16. The native sheep are of a small size, live on the common at all seasons,—on the hills in summer, and along the shore in winter: they are never housed. At Lammas a wedder brings about 5s. A few Cheviots have been tried, but have not thriven well, except on the larger farms. These, in their best condition, bring L. 1, 1s. each.

Husbandry.—The one-stilt plough, drawn by three horses, was used on some of the smaller farms, about twenty-five years ago. It is now wholly out of use. Though it had a clumsy appearance, it had this advantage, that it broke the ground in some soils more completely than those now in use. Iron ploughs are coming into use, and are expected to prove more economical than those made of wood. There are a few leases for nineteen years, but they are more generally for shorter periods, fourteen, eleven, or seven years. Very few of the farms are inclosed except the larger ones.

The method of preparing the crop for drying when cut, before it is put into the stack, deserves attention. The band of the sheaf is made in the usual way and pulled by the root, except when the crop is luxuriant, and then it is cut. The sheaf is made of rather a large size. The band is drawn nearer the crop end than the root, and when the ends are pulled and crossed, they are then twisted and turned with dexterity so as to rest against the sheaf; but the ends thus twisted are not turned within the band. The sheaf thus formed is set on end by itself, and the root end spread out a little. It is so placed, that the root end of the band is on the lee-side, from whatever quarter the wind is blowing at the time, and the crop of the sheaf gets a gentle pressure to the lee-side also. The sheaf thus placed is not apt to fall, and after having stood five or six days in this position, in favourable weather, it is fit for being screwed, that is, for being built into ricks on the field. These

ricks consist of twenty-four sheaves, which when put together receive the name of threave. The two last sheaves of the rick are put across each other, and so tied together by portions of themselves, that they are not apt to fall even when the wind is high. The ricks, after standing for a week, in favourable weather, are fit for the stack. It is obvious, that, in rainy harvests, which are frequent in this climate, this method of placing the sheaves and ricks is most favourable for preserving the grain from being injured by the heavy falls of rain. The consequence is, that the crop is rarely injured, in harvest, to any great degree, in the most unfavourable weather.

Fisheries.—The principal fishing, of late years, has been of herring. About thirty years ago, herrings were got in Scalpa Bay for a few days in a season; but more lately, they have not been sought for there, nor are they ever found on this coast. There are, however, eight boats, with four men each thus employed.* They repair to the island of Stronsay toward the end of July, and about two weeks after go to South Ronaldsay, where they remain about a month, or till the herrings leave the coast of that island. Vessels from Rothesay and from Ireland attend to receive the herrings, as soon they are barreled. The price for some years past has varied from 9s. to 12s. per cran or barrel. The average, for each boat this season, has been fifty-five crans. About eighteen years ago, when the spirit of enterprise in this employment became prevalent, a boat completely rigged, with a set of nets, cost L. 90. The price has now fallen to L. 70. This fishing has been found to be a precarious concern, and less lucrative than was expected.

Lobster Fishing.—This fishing has been continued for many years on a small scale, on this coast and the shore of Cava. For a few years past, there has been but one boat with two men thus employed. During the fishing season, they carry the lobsters, weekly, to Stromness for the London smacks. Each night's catching is kept in a chest, which floats in the Bay of Houton. The number taken annually is by no means considerable. A few small cod are occasionally got at no great distance from the shore, so are some haddocks and skate. Sillocks and kewths, being the coal-fish of one and two years old, abound along our shores, and in winter most of the men, near the shore, are employed in catching them. They are delicate and wholesome food at this age.

Produce.—It would be difficult to ascertain, with any degree of

* There are now, (1841,) nine such boats.

precision, the quantity of grain raised. Suffice it to say, that, besides supplying the demands of the parish, there are upwards of 240 bolls of meal and grain frequently sent, annually, to Kirkwall and Stromness; and in plentiful years, the tenants of the large farms send grain to the Leith market. The average price of oat-meal is 2s. per stone of 17½ lbs. Avoirdupois, and of bear meal, 1s. 6d. Both sometimes sell for less; but after bad crops, both kinds of meal are imported, commonly from Leith, to Kirkwall and Stromness, to which supplies even some of the farmers are obliged to have recourse.

When there is an extraordinary demand for black-cattle, from sixty to seventy head are sold, early in the summer, chiefly to farmers from Caithness, at a price from L. 2, 10s. to L. 3. A few horses are sold at the Lammas market at Kirkwall, commonly to Caithness people, at from L. 8 to L. 10; and some, in rare cases, bring double this price.

Kelp Manufacture.—When kelp was in demand, there were about seventy tons manufactured annually. The tang, on the same part of the shore, was cut only once in the two years. Only about twenty tons have been manufactured annually for some years past, as the price has been small, being only L. 5 per ton at market, whereas it used to be from L. 10 to L. 12. This is a great loss to the proprietors, and also to the tenants who were employed in the manufacture. This loss is on the increase, as the tang, which is not cut once in two years, is apt to be so completely torn from the rocks by the winter storms, that it does not vegetate again.

Navigation.—There is no sloop belonging to the parish. Besides the eight herring boats, and one lobster boat, there are 43 employed in taking sillocks, kewths, and other fish; 52 in all; they are also employed in carrying farm produce to Stromness.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Means of Communication.—The post crosses from Huna, in Caithness, to South Ronaldsay, where there is a post-office, and proceeds by a runner to Kirkwall and Stromness. There was no public road, by which a cart could pass, until about twenty years ago. Since that period, the statute labour has been employed in forming a public road; and this has for some time past been formed, and the greater part kept in a good state of repair. There is only one harbour, and it is situated in the Bay of Houton,

where sloops and larger vessels lie in safety, and are protected by the Holm from south and south-east gales.

Ecclesiastical State.—The church stands on a bay, on the eastern shore, upwards of a mile east of Houton Head. The manse is delightfully situated on a rising ground, about half a mile west of the church, and well sheltered by hills on the west and north. The church was built in 1829, and contains 574 sittings, the accommodation allowed by law, and is every way comfortable. The sittings are all free. The manse was built in 1789, and is in a good state of repair. The glebe, with hill pasture, would bring L. 15 of rent annually. The stipend is L. 150, of which L. 34, 3s. 8d. is paid by Government annually. The number of Dissenters is considerable, being, by a late census, 107 above fifteen years of age, and 142 below this age.* They belong to the United Associate Synod. Part attend at Kirkwall, and part at Stromness. There is also one Baptist.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is dispensed once a-year, in summer. The number of communicants is about 300, and about 100 attend on this occasion from neighbouring parishes. Collections are occasionally made for various purposes, and amount annually to from L. 1, 10s. to L. 2.†

Education.—There are three schools; one parochial, and two maintained by mortifications. The salary of the parochial school was, at the last augmentation, raised to L. 26. The fees, though fixed, are not demanded; the master accepting, in place thereof, the gratuities, which may amount to from L. 5 to L. 6. The common branches of education are taught, and the master has the legal accommodation. The Mortification schools were founded by natives. The first by Magnus Twatt, who lived and died in the service of the Honourable Hudson's Bay Company. He appointed by his will the heritors and kirk-session patrons. This school has been in operation upwards of thirty years, and has a fund of L. 700 laid out on landed security. The other has been only two years in operation, and was founded by James Tait, who, after having been many years in Hudson's Bay, died in Stromness, soon after instituting the school. The sum left by him for this purpose is L. 100, and he appointed the kirk-session patrons.

* The Dissenters have increased in the same proportion as the rest of the population, and are still about one-fourth of the population, 1841

† In 1840, L.3 were collected for the five schemes of the General Assembly, and L.4 were collected by subscription for cases of destitution.

This sum is lent on landed security, and the teacher receives the interest as salary. He is bound to teach for only one-half of the year, from October to April. He continues, however, teaching the whole year, in consequence of the liberality of the people. James Tait also left L. 100 to the parish of Stromness, for the same purpose.

Till of late, there were a few elderly people who could not read; but, strange as it may appear, some of them could answer the questions of the Shorter Catechism correctly.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—The number of the poor receiving supplies is 15, and distributions are made twice a-year, in March and August. As their circumstances are nearly equal, they receive 4s. or 5s. each at each distribution. The weekly collections amount annually to from L. 9 to L. 10. There is a fund of about L. 50 at interest, which arose from savings from the collections, when the number of the poor on the list was less; and a donation of L. 10 from Lieutenant James Robertson, a native. The poor are not forward in applying for parochial relief, unless when their case is urgent.

Inns.—There are three licensed inns, two of which retail ale only, and the other ale and whisky. The last is sufficient for the accommodation of travellers. The others are rather tippling-houses, and do not contribute to the improvement of morals.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

The progress of improvement since the publication of the last Statistical Account has been considerable. Green crops have increased a little, and will be more abundant when inclosing becomes more general. Much of the pasture grass around the old cultivated fields might be broken up to great advantage; but this cannot be done, till green crops are more extensively raised. Some improvement in this respect may be expected, as the farmers' attention is now in a great measure withdrawn from the manufacture of kelp. Every tenant has the privilege of hill pasture.

The whole extent of the parish, exclusive of the Island of Cava, is 1250 Scots acres in cultivation; pasture, 1960; common, 6394: in all, 9604 Scots acres. The rental was ascertained, a few years ago, to be L. 575.

It was long the practice of many of the young men to go to Hudson's Bay as labourers and mechanics, as carpenters, blacksmiths, and brick-layers. Few have gone in later times, though the wages have been raised. A labourer receives L. 16 a-year

annually, for the first three years, with maintenance, while employed at the factories. A mechanic L. 25 a-year. The engagement is now for five years, and at the end of three years every one is advanced according to his merit. The great object was to save as much as might render his future days at home, easy and comfortable.

Many of the young men also used to engage at Stromness for Greenland and Davis's Straits. There are only ten thus employed, this season.

The forming of the public road has been a great improvement, so that carts are now in general use; whereas, formerly, loads were carried on the backs of horses. The lately built cottages are much neater than the old ones. The division of the common is also an improvement, and has induced a few families to come from neighbouring parishes to settle where the ground may be cultivated.

It is also pleasant to observe the importance given to education, which will give the rising generation and their succeeding race a very great advantage over their forefathers.

June 1841.