

PARISH OF TONGUE.

PRESBYTERY OF TONGUE, SYNOD OF SUTHERLAND AND
CAITHNESS.

THE REV. HUGH MACKAY MACKENZIE, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THIS district, previous to its erection into a separate parish in 1724, and while it constituted but a portion of the original parish of Durness, was called Kintail,—a term signifying *the head of the sea*, (*Ceann an t'sàil*). The name was derived from the arm of the sea, which, for many miles, stretches inland into the parish from the Northern Ocean. The modern name (*Tongue*,) which at first was written (*Tung*,) is in all probability derived from a narrow neck of land jutting out transversely for a considerable distance into the Kyle near the House of Tongue, which bears a resemblance to a protruded tongue. The Gaelic

as well as the English name of that organ justifies this derivation.

Boundaries, Extent.—It would seem by the record of erection, that the boundaries of this parish extended from Torrisdale, in the east, to the water of Polla, in the west; from the Whiten-head, in the north, to the great deer forest, in the south. By use and wont, however, these boundaries are greatly contracted on the west, in which direction the parish is considered now only to extend to the top of the Moin or the Ben Hope mountain range. The parish of Farr is contiguous on the east and south-east, and the parish of Durness on the west and south-west. On the north, it is bounded by the Northern Ocean. Its figure is irregular, somewhat resembling, as is mentioned in the former account, a spherical triangle. The extreme length from north to south is 20 miles; average 15. The extreme breadth from east to west is 12 miles; average 8. As nearly as can be computed, its superficial extent is 140 square miles.

Topographical Appearances.—The general aspect of the parish is mountainous. In topographical character, however, it is divided into two districts, distinct from each other. The first embraces all that is peculiarly alpine, and is the principal part of the parish as to extent, population, culture, and beauty. It lies towards the west, and consists of the great valley of Tongue, formed by the arm of the sea already mentioned, with the streams which flow from the interior into the head of it. On either side of the bay, two mountain-ranges, rising abruptly and boldly from the ocean, stretch along its whole length, and continue taking nearly a parallel direction, till interrupted by a third range, stretching from east to west, which consists of the mountain of Ben Laoghal and its arms. The whole constitutes a semicircular chain of hills, apparently continuous, and gives to the valley the form of a spacious amphitheatre. The western range, commencing with Ben Hutig, which is 1345 feet high, is for some miles of nearly an uniform height, and somewhat monotonous, till it reaches its southern extremity, when it suddenly terminates in the huge mountain of Ben Hope, 3061 feet high. The eastern range is a series of rounded hills, not very lofty, rising above the bay sometimes abruptly, but in general receding so gently, as to afford scope for considerable cultivation on their sides. The Ben Laoghal range is the most picturesque. This noble hill, the queen of Highland mountains, occupies the central point of the whole semicircular chain; there

fore, from its position as well as from its romantic outlines, it is the most prominent and striking object in the whole scenery. At the southern extremity of a low extensive valley, it starts up majestically to the height of 2508 feet, presenting towards its base an expanded breast of two miles in breadth, and cleft at its top into four massy towering and splintered peaks, standing boldly aloof from each other. These gradually diminish in height, one after the other. The highest stands proudly forward to occupy the foreground; the rest recede a little, as if each were unwilling to protrude itself, from a conscious inferiority to its predecessor. As a graceful finish to its outlines, it stretches forth an arm on either side, as if to embrace condescendingly the other mountain ranges, which may well acknowledge it as chief, and which may readily be fancied as doing it homage. On a summer morning, or after a sweet summer shower, when the transparent mist is reposing on its bosom, or coiling among its peaks, the appearance of this hill is very beautiful, and often singularly fantastic. Within this great chain, there are various objects which constitute marked features in the scenery of the district. Amongst these, the Kyle occupies a prominent place, so studded with islands at its mouth, that, from some points of view, its connection with the ocean seems wholly intercepted. Towards its centre, the point of Tongue and a small island adjacent thereto, tend farther to charm and relieve the eye, by breaking in upon the continuous sheet of water. Another interesting and conspicuous object is the promontory of Castle Varrich. It consists of a small hill range, running south and north, rising gradually from the low ground at the foot of Ben Laoghal, and terminating at its northern extremity in a bold rock of considerable altitude, which is washed at its base by the water of the Kyle, and has its conical summit surmounted by a fine old ruin, which imparts a pleasing effect. Altogether, the scenery of this part of the parish is much and universally admired. The hand of man has undoubtedly done somewhat to embellish it; but little, very little, to what might be effected. Even Macculloch, with all his antipathy to the north, has admitted, that, were the Moin, on west side of the Bay, to some extent planted, this place would not be exceeded in beauty by many parts of the Highlands.

The second or eastern division of the parish is rather tame and monotonous. In the interior, this is partially relieved by lochs of various sizes, which are scattered with profusion in every direction, and the ground, moreover, is of a softly undulating character; the

rocks being clothed with an almost unbroken surface of verdure and of heath. Towards the sea-coast, the country becomes craggy and fretted-like, uninteresting in its general aspect, and apparently barren. Yet in the midst of this district, when more closely examined, there will be found numerous little glens, bearing a rich soil and a large population.

The coast is in general high and rocky, and round the promontory of the Whiten-head exceedingly bold and picturesque. The rocks are frequently intersected by creeks, and formed into caves and arches. The caves of Freasgail, which are described in the former Account of this parish, have been noticed in the Account of the parish of Durness, in consequence of the modern ideas regarding the boundaries of the two parishes. The islands are *Eilean na naoimh*, (saint's island)—*Eilean na roan*, (seal island,) and the rabbit islands. *Eilean na naoimh*, situated close by the eastern coast of the parish, "had formerly a chapel and burial-place on it, the traces of which are still to be seen. On the south side of the island, the sea, after passing for several yards through a narrow channel, spouts up into the air, sometimes to the height of thirty feet, through a hole in the rock, which, in shape and size, is like the moon at full, and a few seconds afterwards, there is a discharge of water from the east side of the island, with a noise resembling the explosion of cannon." *Eilean na roan* is of considerable size, and has the appearance of two islands, particularly at high water. Part of it is scooped out into the form of a basin, in which the soil is very fertile, and cultivated by a few small tenants. Its rocks are high and precipitous, and to the north side abound with deep narrow fissures, through which the wind rushes with great violence. As this wind, besides being sharp and piercing, is impregnated with saline matter, from its blowing across the ocean, or perhaps from carrying along with it the spray which dashes from off the rocks beneath, the natives take advantage thereof for economical purposes. In these fissures, they season their fish without using salt. On this north side also there is a spacious and elegant-looking arch, about 150 feet span, and 70 feet broad. About the middle of the island, there is a large circular hole, which has fallen in many years ago, and is supposed to communicate with the sea by a subterranean cavern.* The Rabbit Islands, three in number, are farther within the mouth of the Bay

* This island is well worthy of being visited by travellers who are desirous to see the natural curiosities of the country.

than the former, and so in some measure removed from the raging of the ocean. The rocks are not very high. The soil is sandy, though covered with verdure. The present name of these islands sufficiently indicates who are their principal inhabitants. The ancient name was *Eilean na Gaeil*, the island of strangers, from the Danes having been said to have landed upon it. The principal bays are those of Torrisdale and Tongue; the former is open and tempestuous, affording little or no shelter for vessels; the latter is the Kyle, or arm of the sea, already noticed. Its length is about ten miles, the average breadth about a-mile and a-half. Its depth is nowhere great, and, from the shifting nature of its sand banks, navigation is difficult and often perilous. There is, however, good anchorage for ships of any burden at the Rabbit Islands, where they may ride with safety in storms from most directions. A fine roadstead is also to be found in its neighbourhood at Talmine, a pretty bay that branches off the west side of the Kyle. It has a smooth beach, and a fine bottom,—is much sheltered from the most tempestuous winds,—and commands a ready exit to the ocean. At present, it is one of the principal fishing stations on the coast. By the erection of quays, and by connecting the mainland with a small island lying close by on the north side, it might be made one of the most commodious harbours in the north. Almost opposite to Talmine, on the east side of the Kyle, there is the creek of Sculomy, which at present shelters a few fishing-boats, but which an inconsiderable expense might render a safe station for many more.

Meteorology.—Considering the latitude of this parish, its temperature is mild, and the climate is very salubrious, though the state of the atmosphere is in general extremely changeable. The heat is not so great in summer, nor the cold so intense in winter, as these seem to be in some of the southern parts of Scotland. Placed in a central position between the west and east coasts of the island, it is not visited by those frequent deluges of rain which are peculiar to the former, nor so exposed to those piercing blighting winds which prevail in the latter. The prevailing winds are the south-west and north-west. The severest storms are from the south-west,—the most frequent from the north-west. The prevalent distempers, as connected with the climate, are rheumatism and inflammatory complaints; but more common than either are disorders of the stomach among the poorer people, arising from a diet often too scanty, and sometimes unwholesome. Luminous

meteors are frequent. The circle round the moon and the aurora borealis are sometimes brilliant in winter. When the latter is fiery and lurid, it is an invariable sign of stormy weather. The former generally prognosticates the same, so also does the fragment of a rainbow when seen in the north, called "Boar's head."

Hydrography.—The parish abounds with springs, which are generally perennial, but sometimes intermittent. Chalybeate springs are quite common. Sulphureous ones are found in several places, chiefly around Ben Laoghal, and there are some which seem to be a compound of both. None of these have been properly analyzed, but some of the sulphureous seem of such strength, that, were they more accessible, they might be found medicinally of considerable service. Lochs are so numerous, that from a single eminence, which does not command a view of the whole parish, I have counted more than 100. The most deserving of notice are the following:—Loch Maedie, in the southern extremity of the parish, which may be about six miles in circumference. Its appearance is striking, from its margin being singularly indented by numerous little bays and projecting points of land, and from its bosom being studded with islands, on which grow trees of considerable size. Loch Diru lies at the foot of the Diru rock, which is a part of the west arm of Ben Laoghal. The loch is two miles long, and the rock, which is nearly the same length, towers majestically above it to the height of 200 feet,—its brow adorned at pleasing intervals with solitary trees of birch and mountain-ash. This loch is one of the unobserved beauties of the parish, lying in a secluded spot, and inaccessible to any but the pedestrian. On the east and south-east sides of Ben Laoghal, there is a chain of lochs of considerable extent, called Lochs Cullisaid, Laoghal, Craggy, and Slam, which communicate with each other by narrow fords or small rivulets. Loch Laoghal is the largest of the four, and, indeed, the largest in the parish,—being five miles long and upwards of a mile broad. There are two islands upon it, where wild-fowl nestle in great numbers. The verdure in its neighbourhood is rich. A few trees fringe its margin on the west side, and on the opposite there rises a hill of considerable height, green to the top, with a thriving birch-wood at its base. Loch Craggy is interesting, by commanding a fine profile view of Ben Laoghal. Were this chain connected by a road with Lochs Maedie and Diru, sweeping round the whole of Ben Laoghal, it would form a ride which, as regards loch and mountain scenery,

could, for the same extent, be rarely surpassed in beauty. The rivers are, the Borgie, Rhians, and Kinloch; none of them of much consequence. The Borgie (called in the former Account the Torrisdale) rises from Loch Slam, and, after separating this parish from that of Farr during the greater part of its course, falls into the sea on the west side of the Bay of Torrisdale. The Rhians and the Kinloch, neither of them more than two miles in length, fall into the head of the Kyle of Tongue,—the former on the east side of Castle Varrich, the latter on its west. Cascades are numerous, and some of them pretty, though on a small scale.

Geology.—The principal rock in the parish is gneiss. It constitutes the mountain-range of Ben Hutig and the Moin, likewise the smaller range of Castle Varrich, and prevails throughout the whole extent of the eastern division of the parish. Its mineral character seems to be the common ternary compound of quartz, felspar, and mica; though not unfrequently hornblende is substituted for the latter. The aspect of this rock varies much from the component minerals, and, from the size of these minerals, as distinct concretions. It is regularly stratified, though in some places, as towards the east, this is not so evident, from the strata being intersected by quartz and granite veins, and disturbed and contorted by what appears, in some cases, the action of fire, and, in others, the action of water. The direction of the strata on the west of Tongue Bay is south-east, at an angle of 20° . On the east of the Bay their direction is west-south-west, at an angle of 40° , with the exception of a small district at Sculomy, where the direction is south-south-east, and the angle 60° . In various places garnet is found imbedded in this rock. Ben Hope is composed of mica-slate, being part of a very extensive district where this rock is developed. A stripe of the same formation is also found at the shore side, on the west side of the bay, stretching from a point opposite the village of Tongue to a place called Portvasgo, near the Rabbit Islands. It connects with, and conforms to, the gneiss of the mountain range above it,—the strata being in the same direction and at the same angle. The rocks of Eilean na roan are a fine specimen of the conglomerate, which rests upon red sandstone. The sandstone is only to be seen in the north side of the island, stratified in the direction west-south-west, at an angle of 10° ; at which point the junction of the two formations is very distinct and beautiful. The mountain-range, stretching along the east side of

the Kyle from Coldbacky to Cnoc-Craggy, consists of conglomerate capping the gneiss, and resting horizontally on its fractured beds. The junction in this case is quite visible in some exposed rocks at Coldbacky. Red sandstone has also been discovered at one point in this mountain-range, near Dalcharn. The whole mountain of Ben Laoghal is sienite, "which consists of a light flesh-red felspar, grey quartz, and black or dark-green hornblende, with minute and sparingly disseminated crystals of brown sphene. In several places the quartz almost disappears,—the rock then becoming a binary compound of felspar and hornblende. The structure of this sienite on the small scale is small granular, while on the large it is disposed in a most distinctly tabular manner. Indeed, few localities can be pointed out in Scotland where this beautiful rock arrangement is more characteristically developed. From various parts of its summit the entire structure may be traced with the utmost precision, and the several tabular concretions followed, with little variation, throughout its whole extent. The lateral planes of the tabular concretions are in general nearly parallel, and exhibit an almost polished surface. This mountain might, if other circumstances rendered it expedient, be wrought extensively for building materials. Such would be attended with but little difficulty as far as the raising of the stone is concerned, while the tabular form is so regular, that, for many purposes, very little dressing would be requisite."* Black manganese ore has been found on the top of Ben Laoghal. Bog-iron ore is very common. Granite boulders are frequent about Tongue village. Whence they have come, is a problem not easy to solve. The principal alluvium is peat, which covers a great proportion of the parish: a quantity of fir-wood is found imbedded in it. The soil, which is, or has been, under cultivation, is in some places a black rich loam; in others a sandy loam; but, perhaps, the most common is a soil compounded of gravel and peat, with an admixture either of clay or sand.

Zoology.—The zoology of the parish is such as is common to the whole of this north coast, on which the various species of quadrupeds, birds, and fishes are numerous. Game of almost every description is to be found in the parish, but not in such abundance as formerly, owing, it is supposed, to the extensive moor-burnings upon the sheep farms. Fishing upon lakes and

* Cunningham's *Geognosy of Sutherland*,—a work to which the writer is much indebted in drawing up this article.

rivers has also fallen off; to account for which, many opinions have been entertained, which at best are mere conjectures. The fresh-water fishes generally used at table are, salmon, grilse, trout, and char. Those got on the coast are chiefly herring, cod, ling, had-dock, whiting, skate, and flounder. In September, quantities of coal-fish are caught close to the rocks. Turbot and tusk are occasionally found. The upper part of the Kyle abounds with shell-fish, which are easily gathered, as the sea ebbs a considerable distance. Mussels and spout-fish of excellent quality are to be had; but cockles are the most abundant of all. These are of various sizes and colours. All of them, however, are rich and delicious when in season, which is from April to September. They are highly relished by strangers, who are loud in their praises; and they are an invaluable blessing to those within reach of them, who, during the summer months, use them daily as an article of food.

Botany.—The flora of this parish is not known to contain any plants peculiar to itself, or such as are very rare in other places. Perhaps the following are among those most deserving of notice. Some of them, though rare in this parish, are common in other parts of this country.

Betula nana	Fragaria vesca	Nymphaea alba
Carex hirta	Habenaria viridis	Oxytropis uralensis
—— incurva	Hyacinthus non-scriptus	Primula Scotica
—— limosa	Juniperus communis	Saxifraga oppositifolia
Cherleria sedoides	Lamium album	Silene inflata
Cynoglossum officinale	Listera ovata	Veronica serpyllifolia
Digitalis purpurea	Lycopodium clavatum	Vicia Cracca.
Dryas octopetala	———— alpinum	
Festuca bromoides	Melampyrum pratense	

None of the native plants are now employed for culinary purposes, though formerly mugwort and nettle were made use of in this way. Ragwort is sometimes used as an emollient; and the leaves of ribwort plantain are successfully applied to fresh wounds. Heather is employed to dye green; ragwort to dye yellow; the lichen obtained on stones, to dye red-brown; and alder bark, to dye black, which, by the addition of copperas, is effectually fixed, and made to assume a still deeper hue. The native arborescent species now to be met with, are not numerous, and for the most part rather stunted in their growth. *Betula alba* (birch) predominates. *Salix alba*, *S. cinerea*, (white and grey willow,) *Corylus Avellana* (hazel,) and *Pyrus aucuparia* (the mountain-ash,) come next, in nearly equal quantities. *Alnus glutinosa* (alder,) and *Prunus spinosa* (sloe,) fringe the water courses. *Ilex aquifolium* (holly) is

frequent in rocky burns and cascades. *Quercus robur* (oak) is to be seen in a few places; but, from its being exposed to be trodden down by cattle, it only attains the size of a trifling shrub. It may be mentioned, that *Ulex Europæus* (whin) and *Cytisus Scoparius* (broom) grow freely in several places; but both were probably introduced about sixty years ago. The natural wood, which, for a long time, was neglected and destroyed, and in consequence fast dwindling away, has of late years been well kept and thinned. The only plantations of any extent in the parish are those around the House of Tongue. There are specimens to be seen here of beech, elm, ash, and lime, which, for size and beauty, may vie with any in the north. The greater part of these plantations are of recent date, composed of a mixture of hard-wood, fir, and plane-tree, for all of which the soil seems well adapted. Larch and spruce fir thrive much better than the Scotch. Altogether the plantations are in a most flourishing condition, and prove beyond a doubt the advantages that would accrue to such a country as this from their greater extension. Besides beautifying the scenery, they would ameliorate the climate, and become a fruitful source of revenue. The ordinary fruit-trees thrive well when they obtain the support and shelter of a good wall.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Distinguished Families.—This parish is the birth-place, and was the residence of the most of the noble family of Reay. Some of these signalized themselves for prowess and skill in the military operations of their own times: among whom may be mentioned Donald first Lord Reay, who so distinguished himself in the wars of Gustavus Adolphus. Tradition ascribes to him most singular superhuman powers of body. There were other members of this family who, though not distinguished as public characters, devoted their influence to the welfare of their people, by whom their memories were cherished for several generations, for intelligence, patriotism, and exemplary piety. A full account of them will be found in Mackay's History of the House and Clan of Mackay.

Ministers.—Though erected in 1724, this parish was not supplied with a minister till 1726, when Mr George Mackay was appointed, who only lived two years. His successor was Mr Walter Ross, a man of fine preaching talents, but whose reserved manners and secluded habits were not calculated to gain upon the rough, frank Highlander. He occupied the parish till 1763, when he resigned. After his resignation Mr John Mackay was ap-

pointed, who, being of a weak and sickly constitution, was unable to labour efficiently in the parish, and only lived in the charge for six years. In 1769, he was succeeded by Mr William Mackenzie. As his incumbency forms an era in the history of this parish, his name deserves special notice in such an account as this. A native of Ross-shire, soon after his license, he came to officiate as missionary in the neighbouring parish of Farr; and though possessing highly popular talents, a liberal education, and prospects of advancement elsewhere through influential friends, yet, having formed a strong attachment to his adopted country, he accepted a call to this parish when vacant by the death of Mr Mackay. He found it in a deplorable state of religious ignorance. Scarce could one be found to repeat the Shorter Catechism. There was only one elder within the bounds, and it was impossible to fix on others, bearing the necessary religious character, who could be ordained to this office so as to constitute a session. The sanctity of the Lord's day was grossly violated by persons forming bargains, going and coming to the house of God. A general apathy to the means of grace was manifest; and several gross practices, the relics of a barbarous age, were common at funerals and festivals.

With these evils to contend against, he entered on his charge with zeal and energy, and an untiring devotedness to the interests of his flock. But, for three years, he seemed to labour in vain, and the feeling of his heart was, "Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech." At last, the time to visit this portion of Zion was come. One day he took occasion from the pulpit to remonstrate plainly and faithfully with the people, for their several sins; declared his own ardent hopes of being instrumental in reforming them, when he entered the parish; the bitterness of his feelings in his disappointment hitherto, and his prayer to God, that were this to continue He would remove him from amongst them. Overpowered by his feelings, he could proceed no longer. For the first time, the congregation were seen bathed in tears, and overwhelmed with a feeling of shame, and from that day there was the most marked change; a truly fruitful revival was the consequence. The people showed all docility in receiving the instructions of their pastor; the house of God was thronged by persons from the most distant corners of the parish; respect and attention were shown to the ordinances and duties of religion; barbarous usages were gradually laid aside; and under his affectionate, glowing, and faithful ministry, there sprang up a race of intelligent Christians, so that he was soon en-

abled to form a throng session of elders, who, considering their station in society, were ornaments in the church. Likewise under his fostering care, several young men were reared for the ministry, all of whom, with scarce an exception, he had the pleasure of seeing the instruments of extensive usefulness.

This honoured servant of the Lord laboured for sixty-five years among a devotedly attached people, being able to preach and administer the sacraments to the very last. He died in 1834, at the advanced age of ninety-six. His people commonly spoke of him as "the great minister," and testified their esteem and affection by erecting a handsome monument to his memory.

Parochial Register.—There was no register kept, previous to the year 1775. From that period till 1797 there was a record of births and marriages regularly made up; but the person who was session-clerk at that time became deranged, which was never suspected till it was incontestibly proved, by his being found one morning busily employed in the churchyard distributing papers on the grave-stones, with the sanguine hope of raising an army from the dead. On examination, these papers were discovered to be the parish register, so torn as to be completely useless. From 1797 marriages and births were registered, but not in a permanent form, and many of the loose sheets have been lost through the carelessness of clerks. However, since 1816, a correct register has been regularly kept.

Antiquities.—The most striking ruin is Castle Varrich, standing on the promontory already mentioned, bearing the same name. It is a square building, which originally consisted of two stories, the first arched with stone, the second covered with wood. Its dimensions inside are not great; the walls are thick, and still of a considerable height. Tradition is silent as to its history, on which subject its name has given rise to various conjectures; but most probably the name is merely derived from a Gaelic word signifying *the castle on the eminence*. The remains of several circular towers are to be seen, extending from the coast to the interior, which, from the circumstance of one being always in sight of another, are supposed to have been erected for the purpose of conveying telegraphic information when an enemy threatened to invade the country.—Several subterranean caves have been found in the parish, long and narrow in their construction, with a small entrance. From various circumstances they appear to be artificial, and were probably occu-

pied by the natives, in warlike times, as places of retreat. The only tumuli to be seen, are at a place called Druim na Coup, where, as has been noticed in the former account, a battle was fought between the Mackays and the Sutherlands. Upon the same ground, or nearly so, a party of French were seized in 1746, going south with gold to aid the rebels. The French vessel in which they were conveyed, being pursued off this coast, ran for safety into the Bay of Tongue, and the party, carrying their valuable treasure, landed at Melness, where for a night they were protected by a gentleman of kindred sentiments. Next day, his son went to conduct them by the safest route through the country, but, as soon as their character and object were known, they were pursued by a band of natives from several neighbouring places. When the French came to Druim na Coup, finding that these were in chase of them, and hearing the beating of a drum resounding from the cliffs of Ben Laoghal, indicating the approach of soldiers from the south, they at once surrendered. Much of the gold was lost, being probably thrown into a deep loch in the neighbourhood, but a considerable quantity was appropriated by those who led on the pursuit. A few gold coins have since been found at a considerable distance from Druim na Coup.

III.—POPULATION.

In 1755, the population by return to Dr Webster was	1093
1791,	1439
1831, by Government census,	2030
1838,	2080

Of these 956 were males; 1124 were females. In 1791 it is stated that the births were 47, and marriages 17. Since 1831, births have averaged 44, and marriages 11. It thus appears that, in a population of 1439, there were more births and marriages, especially the latter, than there are now in a population of 2080. The probable solution of this strange fact is, that the population, having increased till it has become a burden on the land at present cultivated, the subdividing of crofts having been prohibited, and the ordinary sources of industry by sea and land having, for some time, either proved unproductive or being shut up, the young of both sexes felt that they could not marry without running the hazard of being soon exposed to hardships and want. When marriages decrease, births of course share the same fate.

The Duke of Sutherland, the only nobleman connected with the parish as proprietor, has a residence in it—the House of Tongue, which he occasionally occupies for a few days in autumn,

when visiting his extensive domains in the north. Part of it is inhabited by his Grace's factor. There are three substantial resident sheep-farmers; a medical practitioner, whom the proprietor encourages by giving a free house and L. 60 annually; and a fishery officer. The peasantry reside in hamlets, and when a road passes through, the houses are arranged in a straight line on the one side, each standing on the croft of land attached to it. 244 pay rent. There are about 116 families, besides, who are mere cottars, having no land, in the majority of cases without any trade, and depending for their sustenance on a little day labour and on the kindness of their neighbours, who often give them patches of their own small crofts for raising a few potatoes. There are 4 carpenters, 10 masons, 8 tailors, 9 shoemakers, 3 smiths, and 1 watchmaker. There are 6 fatuous, none insane, 2 dumb, and none who were blind from birth.

Language.—The language of the peasantry is Gaelic; in it they invariably converse with one another, but, owing to the influx of persons from the south, the influence of schools, and the frequency with which they go south in quest of labour, English is generally understood by the young, and spoken by many of them with considerable accuracy.

Character of the People.—The young of both sexes are ambitious to dress well, so as to make a respectable appearance on Sabbaths and holidays. This is a laudable feeling, though it sometimes leads to extravagance, by inducing them to expend their hard-won earnings in sacrificing comfort to occasional show. When dressed in their best attire they are allowed to be a fine-looking peasantry. At the late Duke of Sutherland's funeral, when numbers from the whole county were invited to attend, and directed to line the road, arranged according to their respective parishes, as the procession passed by, the men from Tongue attracted general notice for their superior dress and appearance. It might hence be expected that their comforts were also superior; but no. They are, indeed, not worse off than their neighbours in this respect. The general standard is, however, wretchedly low. No doubt a few of them are comfortable, but the generality seldom can rise above the commonest necessaries of life; and it is painful to think of how some eke out a subsistence. The consequence is, that poverty is gradually manifesting its baneful effects upon the intellects and morals of naturally a fine and generous people. The taste for music, dancing, and public games, is much on the

decline, and few or no traces are to be seen of the poetic talent and sprightly wit for which their ancestors, in common with most Highlanders, were distinguished. The imaginative powers are crushed under the continued pressure of a poverty that impels the mental energies in the low direction of what shall we eat and what shall we drink; and the habits of reflection and deep-thinking are exchanged for a sharp-sightedness in looking after their little secular interests. It is impossible that circumstances which have thus operated on their intellectual character, should not also affect their morals and religious feelings. They have done so, though not so greatly as might be expected; and it is saying much to their credit, that there is so little amount of crime, and so much security for person and property. There were never but two from this parish tried at a justiciary court, one not a native, and the other only for a breach of trust. The people are kind and peaceable, patient under adversity, submissive to laws, and respectful to authorities. They possess a good deal of religious knowledge, and much veneration for religious ordinances and usages. It is rare now to find one who cannot repeat the Shorter Catechism, and the writer knows not that such a thing exists among the native peasantry as a family without the daily worship of God. Many among them are decided Christians. The generality, it is to be feared, rest satisfied, however, with acquiring vague ideas, and engaging in empty forms; while it is matter of painful experience that the downward earthly tendency of their thoughts, induced so much by poverty, has a fearful effect in deadening their minds to religious impressions. It is manifest, also, that intercourse with the ungodly when south, and at the herring-fishing in Caithness, together with the desecration of the Lord's day by travellers from other places, (a sin till lately happily unknown), are very injurious to their morals and religious sentiments. Laziness is no longer characteristic of the people. They are alive to the advantages of industry. In proof of which many of them annually go south, because so little encouragement is given them at home. Poaching is unknown, and smuggling has been effectually put down through the exertions of the proprietor.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—The number of imperial acres in cultivation is about 1000. It may safely be said, that three times this number might be added with a profitable application of capital. There are 200 acres of plantation, and fully 500 acres under na-

tural wood. The extent of the latter is not easily ascertained, from the irregular manner in which it is disposed.

Rent.—The real rental of the parish is L. 2282, 13s. 11d., of which lotters pay L. 757, 11s. 3d.; and large farmers L. 1525, 2s. 8d. The average rent of arable land per acre is L. 1.

Wages.—Tradesmen are allowed 2s. a-day, and day-labourers 1s. 6d. in summer, and 1s. in winter.

The raw produce which is offered for sale is trifling. Those who do sell, are regulated by market-prices. Very superior Cheviot sheep are reared upon the large farms, which are highly esteemed, and fetch high prices in the southern markets. The small tenants rear the black-faced breed, or more generally a cross between it and the Cheviot. From want of full feeding, their pasture being limited and generally overstocked, both their sheep and their cattle are stunted in their growth. A real Highland pony can now seldom be seen. The system of farming upon the crofts is decidedly bad. The tenants, besides endeavouring to keep more cattle than they can properly feed, employ a rotation of potatoes, bear, and oats, by which the land, thus constantly cropped, is so exhausted, that in many places the force of manure cannot now make it yield an adequate return. Besides, it is seldom properly drained or fenced, so that in winter it is commonly very wet, and injured by the poaching of cattle. As a proof of the deteriorating effects of this system of husbandry, it may be mentioned, that while the land cultivated by the large farmers will yield on an average seven returns in grain crops, the small tenants seldom obtain above four returns of bear, and as to oats, they do not calculate upon more than double the seed. The potato crop is that alone which gives a really remunerating return. The large farmers have leases of nineteen years' duration. Small tenants have only one year's tenure of their land, which is certainly a discouragement to them in improving their lots.

Quarries.—The only quarries that have been wrought are on the Melness, or west side of the Bay of Tongue, a flag quarry at Portvasgo, and a slate quarry at Talmine. Both are of the mica-slate formation. They have been wrought to a considerable extent, and have been found very useful for several country purposes. The expense of quarrying, however, is too great to make this a profitable trade, or to admit of much export, and accordingly it has of late been almost discontinued.

Fisheries.—There is a salmon-fishing upon the water of Borgie,

where on an average 2000 fish are caught yearly. The herring-fishery is that which has been carried on most extensively in the parish. At one time it promised to be profitable; of late, however, it has turned out a ruinous speculation, as the annexed accounts will show.

In 1833, boats fishing,	30	—barrels cured,	3598	—average per boat,	118
1835, do.	64	do.	6304	do.	98½
1839, do.	68	do.	1425	do.	21
1840, do.	68	do.	1233	do.	18

Raw Produce.—

Produce of grain of all kinds,	-	-	-	L. 3450
potatoes and turnips,	-	-	-	1939
meadow and cultivated hay,	-	-	-	500
land in pasture, rating at 15s. per cow, and at 2s. 6d. per ewe or full-grown sheep,	-	-	-	3080
gardens,	-	-	-	140
thinnings of woods and plantations,	-	-	-	60
fisheries, sea and river,	-	-	-	1300
quarries,	-	-	-	20
miscellaneous produce, viz. fuel, sea-weed, and cockles,	-	-	-	541
				<hr/> L. 11,030

Manufactures.—From twenty to thirty tons of kelp were annually manufactured in this parish until 1832; but since then, as its place has been supplied by cheaper substitutes, the price has suffered such a depression as to render it no object for employing labourers.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Means of Communication.—There is no market-town in the parish; the nearest is Thurso, in the county of Caithness, distant forty-five miles. There is a post-office in the village of Tongue, and mails run three times a-week to Thurso, and twice a-week to Golspie. There is also a post to Durness, whose days of arriving and starting correspond to those of the Golspie mail. The vehicle from Golspie carries three passengers; that from Thurso carries four inside and four outside. A lighter vehicle, however, runs on this latter line during winter, which only accommodates five passengers. The length of roads in the parish is 39½ miles. Of these, 11 are Parliamentary, 14½ county trust roads, and 14 private tenantry roads. They are kept in excellent repair. The bay of Tongue is crossed by a ferry 1262 yards broad. In 1830–31, slip quays were built, and proper boats procured. This ferry, which is a great annoyance to travellers, might be shortened to a fourth of its present breadth, by constructing a mound between the point of Tongue, and the island adjacent thereto. As the water here is not very deep, nor the current strong, and as profusion of mate-

rials lie ready at hand, it is believed by many that such an undertaking would not be very expensive.

Ecclesiastical State.—The church is so situated as to be nearly equidistant from the several extremities of the parish. There are, however, two populous districts on either side of it, so remote, that few of the people can attend public worship. The Skerray district to the east, which contains a population of 630, is from seven to eleven miles distant from the church. The Melness district to the west, with a population of 690, is from four to eight miles distant, separated, moreover, by the arm of the sea, the crossing of which is always expensive and often impracticable. Each of these stand much in need of the labours of a resident minister. Melness forms the chief part of a mission connected with part of the parish of Durness. The missionary is supported by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge; and a church and manse were built by the late Duchess-Countess of Sutherland.

The parish church was built in 1680,—was nearly rebuilt in 1731, and repaired 1778. A few years ago, new doors were put in, and some of the pews a little improved. It is seated for 520, being just sufficient accommodation for the proportion of the people who can conveniently attend. There are no seat rents. The pews were originally purchased by the parishioners, and continue the property of their descendants while they remain in the parish. In winter, when the people are all at home, the church is well filled, and the people are diligent in attending the catechetical ministrations of their pastor. There is one catechist chosen by the people, and supported chiefly by a small salary from the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge. The number of elders are eleven, and of male heads of families in communion with the church 45. Collections are annually made for the General Assembly's five schemes, and occasionally for other objects. There are no Dissenters, Seceders, Episcopalians, or Roman Catholics in the parish.

The manse was built in 1787, and has never got a thorough repair; a new substantial house is, however, to be commenced early this season, having been already contracted for. The stipend is L.150, with an allowance for communion elements. When the present incumbent entered on the charge, the glebe was of little value; the hill-grazing was a share of an undivided common, and the little arable land was rig about with adjoining tenants. An excambion being obtained, and quantity given for quality, improve-

ments have since been carried on at great expense, and now the glebe might probably fetch a rent of L.50 per annum.

Education.—At present there are three schools in the parish; the parochial, and two supported by the Educational Committee of the General Assembly. One of the Assembly's schools is at Skerray, the other at Melness. Last year there were three schools besides,—two supported by private subscription, which, for several causes, have since been suppressed,—the third was a Gaelic school, granted by the Gaelic School Society, which has been discontinued by the managers, though only two years in operation, and particularly useful. When the schools were examined last spring, there were nearly 400 children in attendance. The schools at present in existence are efficiently conducted. The common branches of education are taught in them all. The parochial teacher is qualified to teach mathematics, Latin, Greek, and French, but there are very few now who prosecute these studies. His accommodation as to school-room, dwelling-house, and garden, is excellent. His salary is the maximum, but fees are ill paid. The people in general are more alive now to the benefits of education than they have been, though still there is vast room for improvement. Irregularity in attendance, and want of proper school-books, from inability to buy them, are serious drawbacks to the proficiency of the scholars. There is one part of the Melness side where an additional school is decidedly required. It is removed at a considerable distance from the place where the Assembly school is situated, and is separated by a large rivulet, which, from want of a bridge, is, for the most part, impassable in winter. Were a school got for this locality, upwards of forty children might attend it.

Literature.—Two years ago, a subscription library and a reading club were set on foot, through the strenuous and praiseworthy exertions of Mr Horsburgh, the local factor. The members of the library exceed 100. These, however, do not all belong to this parish. Every member on admission pays 5s., and 2s. 6d. of yearly contribution. The number of volumes already amount to 455, consisting of a choice selection of books in theology, history, poetry, travels, memoirs, &c. Many of them are donations received by Mr Horsburgh from his acquaintances in the south, and sent by others who have taken an interest in this promising institution. The gentlemen of the club purchase new standard works, and, instead of exposing them to sale at the year's end, they gra-

tuitously transfer them to the library, and thus, while the country people generally are benefited by them, the members of the club, who are all likewise members of the library, have still access to them. This plan since its adoption has been warmly commended. The noble family of Sutherland are so satisfied of its value that they resolve to patronize it. The Duke and Duchess, their Commissioner, and the Member of Parliament for the county, have severally requested to be admitted members of both library and club, and each propose making a handsome donation to the former. The donation of the Duchess, consisting of 32 volumes, has been already received.

Savings Banks.—There is a branch in this parish of the Sutherland Savings Bank, established in 1834, by the advice and under the direction of Mr Loch, M. P., Commissioner to the Duke of Sutherland. It extends over the whole county, and is divided into three general branches, which again are subdivided according to the parishes. The deposits and drawings in this parish since its commencement, are as follows:

			Deposits.	Drawings.
From February 1834, to 31st July 1834,			L.151 11 5	
do. 1835,	do. 1835,		112 11 4	- L. 23 17 5
do. 1836,	do. 1836,		182 18 5	- 65 16 8
do. 1837,	do. 1837,		89 0 3	- 77 5 11
do. 1838,	do. 1838,		80 15 4	- 132 14 2
do. 1839,	do. 1839,		103 14 1	- 105 3 1
do. 1840,	do. 1840,		187 0 11	- 56 15 6
			<hr/>	<hr/>
			L.907 11 9	L.461 15 9

The number of depositors at present is 35, composed chiefly of tradesmen, servants, and junior members of families. Four per cent. interest is given for sums under L.20. When the amount exceeds this sum, only 2 per cent. is allowed.

Poor.—The average number of paupers for the last six years is 70. The funds for their relief are distributed yearly, and, as these are variable, the sum allotted to each cannot be permanent. The distributions to the different paupers range generally from 2s. to 10s., according to their peculiar circumstances. Church collections and an annual donation of L.6 from the Duke of Sutherland, which, united, amount on an average to L. 24, constitute the sole fund for their relief, at the disposal of the session. From this sum there are to be deducted small salaries for the kirk-officer and session-clerk, and disbursements for assisting in the burial of those who die quite destitute. It is thus evident that the poor are mainly indebted for their support, not to the session funds, but

to the every-day charities and kind offices of relatives and neighbours. Yet, trifling as the sum given by the session is, the demands on them are increasing, and it is not considered now nearly so degrading to receive their aid as it was a few years ago.

Besides those upon the poor's roll, there are a few who receive permanent charity in meal or otherwise, to the annual value of L.14, 1s. 3d., granted originally by the late Duchess-Countess of Sutherland, and continued by his Grace the present Duke of Sutherland. Her Grace's kindness to aged widows and to respectable persons in reduced circumstances, was very considerate, and a most commendable trait in her character. It deserves to be noticed that, in 1837, a season of great scarcity in the Highlands, she gave meal to the poor of the parish to the value of about L.60, and supplied the small tenants with a great quantity at the purchase price,—the arrears of which have lately been remitted, amounting to about L. 200. The object of putting this meal to the accounts of the tenants was, not so much the expectation of ever realizing the money, as the desire that they should not feel themselves therein treated as paupers.

Inns.—There are only two houses licensed to sell spirits. One of these is a neat comfortable inn in the village of Tongue, which was considered a large house when built twenty years ago, though now it is frequently found deficient in the necessary accommodations.

Fuel.—Peat is the fuel commonly used by all classes. From its long continued and rapidly increasing consumption, the labour and expense of procuring it is now very great; and the more comfortable inhabitants seem resolved to purchase coal in future, assured that it will be found less expensive. Free access to peat, however, is a mighty privilege to the common people, as it costs them nothing but their personal labour.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

Many changes have taken place in the parish, since the former Account was drawn up. The first and most important is the introduction of sheep-farming. The character of this change will be variously estimated, as persons are disposed to look at one or other of its effects. That it has rendered this country more valuable to proprietors cannot be questioned,—for certain it is, that in no other way could a great part of it be laid out to such advantage; though it may fairly be questioned whether, by extending it too far, they have not injured themselves. If, however, we are to

estimate this system by its bearing on the former occupiers of the soil, and by the circumstances into which it has brought their children, no friend of humanity can regard it but with the most painful feelings. When introduced here, several hundreds, many of them of a grade quite superior to mere peasants, were driven from their beloved homes, where they and their fathers enjoyed peace and plenty. Some wandered to Caithness, others sought an asylum in the woods of America, but most, clinging with a passion to their native soil, located themselves by permission in hamlets near the shore. In these places the land, already occupied by a few, but now divided among many, was totally inadequate to the maintenance of all, and fishing became their necessary resource. And thus, on a tempestuous coast, with no harbours but such as nature provided, and in a country inaccessible, from want of roads, to enterprising curers, were these people often necessitated to plunge into debt for providing fishing materials, and to encounter dangers, immensely increased by their unavoidable ignorance of navigation, in order to obtain subsistence and defray their rents. The consequences were such as might be expected. Poverty soon overtook them, tending to keep alive their lacerated feelings, and rents, which became gradually extravagant, accumulated into a mass of arrears.

While such was the condition of the people, the proprietor, under whose management these changes were effected, found himself under the necessity of selling the inheritance of his fathers, and the late Duke of Sutherland became sole proprietor of the parish. This truly patriotic nobleman, fully alive to the evils which beset his new people, and the wants of this country, reduced the rents of the small tenants 30 per cent., and commenced a series of improvements, by opening up the country with excellent roads, at an enormous expense, and inducing public vehicles to run in several directions; by which, at once work was afforded for the people, and a stimulus given for a time to the herring-fishing.* Likewise, with the laudable object of rendering the tenantry more comfortable, they were enjoined about the same time to build new houses, all being upon the same plan; and, encouraged by the prospect of work, they soon set about this undertaking, though the houses were upon a scale far too expensive for their slender means.

* These improvements were conducted by Mr John Horsburgh, late local factor, whose business talents, sterling integrity, faithfulness to his employers, and attachment to the people and the country, rendered him one of the most judicious and popular of factors.

In the meantime, the lamented death of the proprietor put a stop to improvements, and many of the people were, by the building of these very houses, more deeply than before plunged into debt. From this cause, from the failure of the fishing, and from a series of adverse seasons, arrears again accumulated to a great amount.

Upon the accession of the present Duke of Sutherland, his attention was arrested by this evil; and, persuaded that, to reclaim these arrears, was impossible, without ruining his people, he determined to cancel the whole. In this parish, the arrears for rent alone amounted to L.1582. This deed of princely generosity has not failed to make a suitable impression upon a people strongly susceptible of gratitude, and deserves to have a prominent place assigned it in any public account of the parish. After such conduct, every one must feel that his Grace has the interest of his people deeply at heart. That their interest, however, may be really secured, it is absolutely necessary to open up for them sources of industry, to encourage such as are desirous to improve, and to introduce a different system of agriculture from the present among the small tenants.

Some of the large farms are susceptible of being extensively and profitably cultivated; but the farmers, from the amount of capital they have already at stake, and from the shortness of their leases, in which there are no extensive improving conditions, are prevented from cultivating as they might, and as some feel inclined; and the people are deprived of much work which they might otherwise have. And certainly it would be more satisfactory to see our labourers thus employed at home, than going to the south, where their morals are endangered; where their expenses eat up a great proportion of their earnings; and where, very frequently, they are disabled for a length of time by diseases caught in the wretched lodging-houses, to which they must have recourse, and whence they often carry infection to their native country.

As to the agriculture of the small tenants, wretched as it is at present, it is capable of great improvement. The foundation of the evils now attending both it and them, is not the amount of rent, but the smallness of the crofts. This it is which debars a proper rotation, and which causes rents to be ill paid. And though, by the concurrence of favourable circumstances, and a powerful stimulus to the feelings, calling forth uncommon exertion on the part of the tenants, the rents may be defrayed once

or twice, this cannot be expected to continue. For it must be evident, that when a people, depending mainly on the land for their sustenance, cannot be supported thereby more than seven or eight months, (which is the case in most seasons with the tenantry of this parish), they must expend whatever little money may be collected in different ways, in providing the staff of life during the remainder of the year. Were, however, the crofts of the tenants enlarged to twice their present size, and fenced in, so as to admit of a proper rotation, then they would be adequate to their maintenance; and the sale of cattle, decently fed, would enable them with ease to pay a full rent; whilst the produce of any day labour would, as it certainly should, be at their own disposal. Now, there is scarcely a hamlet in the parish in which the arable land might not be doubled. That the people themselves, who have only one year's tenure of their land, and who can only liquidate their debts by work, for which they are paid in cash, should improve so extensively, is not to be expected. If done at all, the proprietor must pay them for their labour until a crop is efficiently laid down; then a rent may be exacted, which would bring in a handsome interest on the outlay.

There are many families, however, in great destitution, who have at present no land; who could not, therefore, be benefited by the foregoing plan. Were sources of industry opened up, some of these might thereby be supported. But the most satisfactory method of disposing of these would be, to locate them in villages at the several fishing-stations; to build commodious harbours; to encourage enterprising curers to settle among them; and to secure a market for every species of fish: and thus, while the former depended wholly on the land, these should be made to depend wholly on the sea. Though the herring might occasionally fail, vast quantities of other fish could be caught on the coast, which are at present never brought to market; and, as there is a probability that a steamer will soon ply on this coast from Caithness to Liverpool, a great inducement is held out to prosecute this trade with vigour. By this communication, all the exports of the country could obtain a ready market in the south.

In conclusion, the writer expresses his full conviction, the result of long observation, and many anxious thoughts on the subject, that unless such, or some such plans are adopted regarding the interesting peasantry of his parish, the time will soon arrive when there will be no alternative but emigration, at the expense

either of landlord or Government ; a poor law assessment, or, worse than either, a summary and universal ejection. Yet, relying on the wealth and patriotic feelings of the Noble proprietor, and on the skill and intelligence of his agents, he confidently expects that these sore evils will be prevented, and that the next Statistical Account will have to record an improvement in the aspect of the parish, and an amelioration in the condition of the people, which will be alike profitable and honourable to all parties.

January 1841.