

PARISH OF LOTH.*

PRESBYTERY OF DORNOCH, SYNOD OF SUTHERLAND AND
CAITHNESS.

THE REV. DONALD ROSS, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THIS parish appears to have taken its name from the farm on which the church stands, now known as Loth-more, to distinguish it from the neighbouring farm of Loth-beg. Until the beginning of the seventeenth century, these two farms bordered upon two lakes, which were formed by the river of the Glen of Loth being retarded in its progress to the sea, and hemmed in, in hollow spaces of the low flat grounds, by a rocky eminence that runs parallel to the sea shore. A new course for the river was cut in a direct line to the sea, and through the solid rock, at the above period; and since that alteration, the spaces occupied by the lakes have been converted into rich arable land, although the extent and banks of the lakes can still be traced. The present name of *Loth*, which in Gaelic is still pronounced *Logh*, is, therefore, believed to be a corruption of the word *Loch*, which, in the Scotch dialect, is descriptive of a sheet of water, in the same sense as the word in old German signified,—namely, *apertura, hiatus, or cavitas rotunda*; or, as Cambden has it, “*a place where rivers are stopped.*” This etymology also agrees with the spelling of the name in ancient writings; and thus, in a Crown charter of the year 1451, the present Loth-more,—the site of the church and

* Drawn up by George Sutherland Taylor, Esq. Golspie.

manse,—is called “*Ville de Estirloch*,” the same being situated to the eastward of Loth-beg. The glen, also, through which the river of Loth flows is, in old writings, called “the Glen of Loth,” and not *Glen-Loth*, as it is now most frequently named; thereby denoting that the glen was an appendage to the farm of Loth, instead of having a descriptive or distinct name of its own.

It may be added, however, as a remarkable fact connected with this name, that Ptolemy places the *Logi* along the sea coast, of which the south boundary of the present parish of Loth forms a part; the *Ila flumen* (the river Ullie or Helmsdale) being in their country, which seemed to extend between *Verubium promontorium* (the Ord of Caithness) and *Ripa alta*, (the Ardross range of mountains towards Tarbetness). And Richard of Cirencester, in his description of Caledonia, assigns the same locality to the *Logi*, and says, after naming the *Cantæ*, and Promontorium *Penozullum*, (the high ground of the present Oykill,) “*Huic ordine proximus est fluvius Abona* (the Dornoch Frith) *ejusdemque accolæ Logi. Hinc Ila fluvius,*” &c.

Boundaries, Extent, Topographical Appearances.—The parish extends in a straight line from west to east, about eleven miles in length; and its breadth, where broadest, from Ben-Uarie to the sea, is about five miles. The boundary line, if taken at the sea shore at the Bay of Kintradwell, proceeds northward to the top of Kollieben, and thence along a ridge of high hills, and in a half-circular sweep, by west and north, to the top of Ben-Uarie, (1923 feet high,) and then eastward by the summit of the high ground between the Strath of Kildonan and the glen of Loth, and, intersecting the top of the Crask, on to Ben Veallich, (1888 feet high,) and to the top of Knock Elderaboll; thence, down to the plane of the Strath of Kildonan and the river Helmsdale, at a point about three miles above the mouth of that river. Thereafter, following the river downwards for about one mile, the march ascends the east side of the valley, and, running nearly parallel with the line of sea coast, and at a distance of about two miles from it, terminates to the north of the Hill of the Ord, at the march with the county of Caithness. From this last point to the sea, the boundary between Sutherland and Caithness forms also the eastern boundary of the parish, and runs southward to the steep front of the Ord at the sea, and is marked out by a low turf wall, erected about thirty-five years ago, when this part of the march between the two counties, as to which there existed some

differences, was finally adjusted and fixed by arbitration. From the Ord to the Bay of Kintradwell, the sea shore is the southern boundary. The parish of Loth is therefore bounded on the west by the parish of Clyne; on the north by the parish of Kildonan; on the east by the parish of Latheron; and on the south by the German Ocean, or rather by that part of it distinguished as the Moray Frith, which is here about forty miles broad.

The whole length of the parish along its northern boundary is distinguished by a ridge of high hills, which slope down towards the south with a steep descent, except at the contracted opening formed by the Strath of Kildonan, where the march crosses the low grounds of the valley from the summits of the hills that enclose it. This lofty range is placed nearly parallel with the line of sea coast which limits the parish to the south, and at a distance of from one to three miles from it; the intervening space between the hills and the sea being either gently sloping ground, partially cultivated, and otherwise yielding sound natural pasture; or a level flat of rich alluvial soil, all arable, and in a high state of cultivation; but at the eastern extremity of the parish, the huge headland of the Ord leaves no intermediate space between the mountain and the sea, but forms a sheer and abrupt wall, rising with great majesty from, and towering above, the ever-heaving and deep sea, whose only strand, at the lowest tides, is the perpendicular face of the rock.

This headland of the Ord* has been at all times an object of great interest to strangers; and before the present Parliamentary road from Sutherland into Caithness was formed, in the year 1811, the path—for it did not deserve the name of a road—along the

* The oldest name of the Ord, with the exception of *Verubium promontorium* of Ptolemy, to be found in ancient writings, is *Mons Mound*, which appears in the curious geographical fragment headed "De Situ Albanie," and which has been attributed to Andrew Bishop of Caithness, who died in 1185. He divides Scotland into seven parts; and, no doubt, alluding to the *Diocess of Caithness*, which included the counties of Sutherland and Caithness, says: "Septima enim pars est Cathanesis citra montem et ultra montem; quid *Mons Mound* dividit Cathanesiam per medium." In the geographical collections in the Advocates' Library, called Macfarlane's MSS., several references are also made to the Ord. Thus: "All that tract of land which lies betwixt Port-na-couter (the Dornoch Frith) and Dungsby, (Duncansbay head,) was of old called Cattey. That part of it which lies eastward from the hill Ord was named Catteyness, and afterwards Cathness, the Promontory of Cattey. That on this side the Ord, was called simply Cattey, and afterwards, for distinction's sake, South Cattey and Sutherland, which to this day, in the language of the natives and Highlanders, retains the name of Cattey, as the Sutherland men were called Catteigh, and the Earl of Sutherland Morvar Cattey." And again,—"Sutherland is separated and divided from Catteyness by the brook or stripe called Aidituver, (should be Ault-in-uder,) and by the hill called Ord or *Mond*, with a range of other hills which do stretch from the south sea to the north ocean."

outer edge of the rock, and without any protection from the precipice that overhangs the sea, could not, with any degree of safety, be passed in stormy weather, and never failed to inspire individuals not accustomed to such passes, with great dread; and among other travellers of the last century who describe the terrors of the passage across the Ord, the Rev. John Brand, in his *Description of Orkney, Shetland, and Caithness in the year 1701*, says, "The Ord which divideth Caithness from Sutherland is a high mountain, as the name Ord, which in Irish signifieth an height, doth imply, down which our way from Caithness to Sutherland doth lie. The road is but narrow, and the descent steep, and if any stumble thereupon, they are in hazard of falling down a precipice into the sea at the bottom of the rock, which is very terrible to behold; but who pass it for the more security, use to lead their horses to the foot of the hill, which is about a short mile in length, and no other way there is from Sutherland to Caithness, or from Caithness to Sutherland, but this, except we go 12 miles about."

The Glen of Loth is a narrow opening of about three miles in extent, surrounded by the highest hills in the parish, and is one of those wild glens, characteristic of a Highland district, which the superstition of former ages invested with traditional tales of wonder and terror. The glen, at the foot of an abrupt and prominent hill called Drumderg, was the scene of a bloody conflict between the men of Strathnaver and those of Loth in the sixteenth century; and it possesses several objects to which the traditions of the country have given celebrity. Thus, a large cairn, called *Cairn-Bran*, marks the place where Ossian's dog Bran is said to have died, and been buried. At *Cairn-in-uag*, an ancient hunting-house stood. *Tober Massan* is the name of a well of excellent water, which, in former ages, was resorted to as a specific for almost all diseases, provided silver or gold was left in the water for the officiating priest. *Clach Mac-meas* is a huge upright stone, which a precocious youth, at the tender age of one month, in that interesting period of the world's history, when "giants of mighty bone and bold emprise," dwelt in the land, hurled to the bottom of the glen from the top of Ben-Carie. *Carriken-cligh* are four stone pillars on an elevated barrow, that point out the resting-place of some leading men of a remote period; and connected with this glen, and forming the very close and singular sides of a small burn that runs into it, are the lofty cliffs called *Craig-Boddich* and *Craig-Bhokie*, remarkable not only for their

towering and perpendicular height, but for the very narrow space that separates them.*

The arable portion of the parish, between the hills along its northern boundary and the sea, is generally flat, and its naturally rich and fertile soil is well cultivated. The ravines formed by mountain streams, which intersect the south side of the hills at distances of two or three miles, are striking features in the landscape; particularly one of them, *Aultkollie*, which is a remarkably deep, tortuous, and romantic *gully*. The sea coast is, with the exception of a few low rocky headlands, sandy and shallow, from the western extremity of the parish to Port-Gower; and thence to the Ord, the shore is one continued line of rock or rough gravel; but no part of the coast affords any natural protection for shipping.

Meteorology.—The changes of the atmosphere have not been registered or ascertained by continued observations in this parish. The complete range of high hills that forms the northern and eastern boundaries of the parish, affords great shelter from the cold and piercing winter, and spring winds from these quarters; and consequently, during the prevalence of such winds, the greater mildness of the atmosphere in this parish, compared with that along the more exposed sea coast on the Caithness side of the Ord, is often remarked by persons travelling between the two counties. The opening of the Strath of Kildonan at Helmsdale may be an exception to this remark, for there the wind, when high and coming down from the strath, is felt with peculiar violence. The parish is decidedly healthy, and instances of longevity are common; and at present, a small tenant and his wife, whose ages are not correctly known, have been united in marriage for the long period of eighty years. There are no distempers peculiar to the parish; but in 1832, Asiatic cholera appeared very suddenly, and for the first time north of Aberdeen, at Helmsdale, during the busiest period of the herring fishery, and in that town and neighbourhood between thirty and forty persons died of it. This mysterious disease was believed to have been introduced into the parish by some fishermen who then arrived at Helmsdale from the Frith of Forth, where the disease was raging at the time; and it is certain that the first person who was seized with it in the parish, was a female while in the act of washing clothes, belonging to

* The writer of this report furnished notices of the forest traditions connected with the Glen of Loth for Mr Scrope's *Art of Deer Stalking*, which are inserted in that work.

one of the fishermen who came from an infected quarter near Edinburgh.

Hydrography.—The Moray Frith, the *Æstuarium Varavis* of Ptolemy, and the *Breidafjord* of the Northern sagas, is here a wide and stormy sea, without any islands. The projecting and bluff headland of the Ord affects the currents along the shore; and these currents, in the opinion of many practical fishermen, influence and direct the progress and course of those shoals of herrings which annually visit this coast; and hence, a continuance of the success which has attended the herring fishery at Helmsdale, since it has been regularly prosecuted there, may be found to rest on more certain and durable causes than are generally supposed to exist. The saltness of the sea water off the Ord has been analyzed, and it has been ascertained to be much greater than that of water taken at Tarbartness, at the opening of the Dornoch Frith; while the water at the latter point contains about double the quantity of salt found in water taken within the Frith, between the towns of Dornoch and Tain. There are now no lakes within the parish, and the only rivers are those of the Glen of Loth and the Helmsdale, which last flows for about three miles along or within the parish, before it enters the sea at Helmsdale. The Helmsdale is a large and handsome stream; but, having had no bridge across it until 1811, it retarded travellers; and Pennant, in his tour in the northern counties in 1769, records, that he had to “ford the very dangerous water of Helmsdale, rapid and full of great stones.”

Geology.—The high hills of the parish present a steep front to the south, and are of primary formation, being composed of porphyritic granite, chiefly of a brown colour, but often reddish and sometimes gray. This stone is fragile, and, as it cannot be quarried in large blocks, or formed into well-proportioned shapes, it is of little use for building. This stone is also distinguished by different degrees of coarseness in its grains, and by the presence of veins of a large size. Thus, in the bed of the river Helmsdale, close to the march with Kildonan, a fine-grained porphyry occurs; and at Lothbeg, and thence to the west end of the parish, the same rock is a very rude compound, with large veins, in which felspar predominates, and which yield readily to the action of running water.

In Mr Cunningham's *Geognostical Account of the County of Sutherland*, published in the *Quarterly Journal of Agriculture*, No. 46, that gentleman includes the coast side, or low-lying section of this parish, as part of the district in which the oolite se-

ries which he describes is developed ; and as his description is minute and interesting, it is added in a note below.*

About one-half of the whole stretch of sea coast in this parish, or from the west end of it to Port Gower, is a sandy beach, with the exception of low rocks covered during full tides, but forming narrow promontories during low water, which, at irregular intervals, break the uniformity of the sandy beach ; and, with the exception also of occasional deposits of boulder stones of various rocks, pri-

* " After leaving Brora, the oolite strata are completely covered, until we arrive at Kintradwell, where a series is to be found dipping, in general north, at an angle of about 20°. At a short distance from the House of Kintradwell, there is a beautiful example of what may be termed a false or pseudo-vein, which consists of a mass of quartzose sandstone, 76 yards in length by two feet in breadth, and traverses vertically slaty sandstone strata, inclined to the north north-east at 20°. Laying aside the species of rock which forms this veinous mass, every variety of form exhibited in the usual trap dikes, is to be found. It runs the same uninterrupted course, has the same definite lines of boundary, and in several places sends out lateral branches. Indeed, if we keep theory apart from facts, this is, as far as visible, as perfect a vein as any composed of a rock whose origin is considered consonant with an eruptive and veinous form. As a proof that the present position of this sandstone vein is not its original one, we may state that the remains of plants which occur in it are all arranged parallelly to the sides of the vein ; whereas, if it had been quietly deposited in a previously existing rent, they would all have had a more or less horizontal arrangement.

" Between Kintradwell and Helmsdale, the oolite series, when visible over a considerable extent, affords marks of much derangement, and frequently dips within short spaces to various points at various angles. Associated with the white lias sandstone near Port Gower, one of the brownish-red colour is to be met with, having the usual character of the red sandstone of the coal formation ; shale also of green, purple, and brown shades, is found to alternate with it. On the shore at Helmsdale, at Loth, and several other points, the oolite sandstone occurs, containing beds of conglomerate, composed of variously sized masses of the sandstones, shales, and limestones of the series ; but this may easily be explained, by supposing, that, after the deposition of some of the strata, they were acted upon by destructive agents, and again re-consolidated. After leaving the junction at Clyne, no other is discoverable until we arrive at the ravine of Alt Colle. Here the same conformability again appears, both series dipping in a disturbed manner. The quartz rock is the same as that already noticed, and in this and an adjoining glen, is found to afford numerous well-marked contortions. At the bridge of Loth-Beg, the quartz rock is replaced by granite, and an almost immediate junction of the oolite and the granite may be observed, the strata of the former dipping north north-east at an angle of 40°. At Port Gower, this position is completely reversed, the lines of stratification, if prolonged, sinking under the granite.

" At the Green Table near the Ord of Caithness, and at several points along the shore, a conglomerate of the oolite series is found to rest immediately on the granite at angles of 40°. Its apparently disturbed arrangement and mode of formation, have, by Professor Sedgwick and Mr Murchison, been explained by referring them to the action of the granite ; the fact of its not being indurated or traversed by veins, being considered as explicable by supposing that the granite had been elevated in a solid state after its original fluid protrusion through the primitive strata. One reason for not adopting this theoretical view, exists in the fact, that the same conglomerate may be found, connected with the sandstones of the series, at points where there is no granite in the neighbourhood. To say that highly inclined and mineralogically unaltered strata, when in connection with granite, have assumed their angular position, by the granite being upheaved in a solid state, is a doctrine which is completely unsupported by all that is known in regard to volcanic dynamics, and exists only as a very unwarrantable hypothesis. To imagine that all rocks inclined at high angles have been upheaved subsequently to their formation, must lead to very false conclusions ; and can never be adopted to its full extent, by any who have examined the disposition of mountain debris, and the high angle at which a talus may be accumulated."

mitive, transition, and secondary, which the storms of centuries have collected in the bay of Kintradwell, and in one or two similar localities. From Port Gower to the extremity of the parish at the Ord, the sea shore is formed of one continued and rugged margin of limestone, part of the oolitic formation referred to by Mr Cunningham. This stone has often been burnt into lime, which was found to be of excellent quality; but the extra expense of fuel at a place remote from coal markets, increased the expense of the manufacture beyond the price at which English lime can be delivered in the parish; and besides, the encroachments of the sea on this coast require that the natural rocky barrier, which presently exists, should not be weakened or reduced by the removal of any part of it.

Zoology.—The only rare species of animal now found in the parish is the red-deer (*Cervus elaphus*), which occasionally wander from the interior recesses of the county, into the corries and passes of Ben Uarie and Ben Veallich. The fox, once so destructive to the farmer, has been extirpated; and one of the last wolves killed in the county of Sutherland was destroyed in the Glen of Loth, some time between the years 1690 and 1700.*

The cattle, sheep, horses, and hogs, reared in the parish, are all superior animals, and often obtain the highest prizes, when exhibited at public competitions. The fishes that may be said to belong to Loth are extremely important and valuable. The salmon of the Helmsdale are of a large size, and the river being fished by the proprietor, the Duke of Sutherland, the utmost attention is directed to the proper mode of fishing, which annually closes two weeks before the legal period, in order to allow a greater number of spawning fish to ascend the river; and the spawning-beds and fry are afterwards carefully protected; but no peculiarity in the habits of the fish have been observed in this river. Of sea fish, the herring is the most valuable, and when they approach this part of the coast in the months of July and August, are in prime condition, and of very superior quality. Cod are also got in great numbers, and excel in quality and size those obtained in the upper waters of the Frith; and abundance of had-dock, skate, and whiting are constantly obtained. Turbot are plentiful at a distance of some miles from the coast; but the fishermen have no inducement to follow the deep-sea fishing. Lobsters and crabs are, at present, very numerous, but the former were so

* Scrope's Art of Deer Stalking contains an account of this occurrence.

severely fished some years ago, by fishing-smacks, for the London market, that it was, for some time thereafter, thought that the lobster had been exterminated along the coast.

Botany.—Rare native plants are seldom met with in the parish; but the cultivated vegetable productions are important and of the best quality. With the exception of a clump of Scotch firs at Kintradwell, and some stately sycamore and ash-trees at Kilmote, and a few straggling young trees at Midgarty and Port Gower, there is no growing wood in the parish. The grains raised in the arable lands, are of superior quality, and ripen early and with little risk, even in unfavourable seasons. The deep carse soil in the centre of the parish, yields all descriptions of grain,—wheat, barley, oats, beans, and pease; but the quality of the barley of this district is so superior, that its cultivation is the chief object of the farmer; and large parcels of this grain have been raised of late years in the parish, which weighed $57\frac{1}{2}$ lb. per bushel; while one small parcel raised at Crakaig weighed 59 lb. The herbage of the hills and moorlands, however, do not excel similarly situated pasturages in their neighbourhood; and no rare plants appear in the uncultivated lands, unless we enumerate as such, *Eriophorum*, in boggy places; *Primula farinosa*, in two or three plats of meadow; *Viola lutea* in sheltered slopes of rivulets; and the fragrant *Myrica gale*, in marshes and soft grounds. *Vaccinium myrtillus*, the blaeberry, and *V. oxycoccos*, afford their wild native fruits, along some of the sides of the highest mountains; and *V. vitis-idaea*, the red bilberry, is common in less elevated moorlands. The steep and comparatively dry sides of the hills to the north of Navidale are adorned with some of the richest and most luxuriant furze-bushes, *Ulex Europæus*, to be met with in the north of Scotland, and which, when brilliant with their splendid golden blossoms, far exceed in wild beauty and richness, any other of our native plants, and invest with credit the anecdote of Linnæus, who, for the first time, saw the furze on his visit to England in 1736, and was so enraptured with it, that it is said he fell on his knees in order to admire its bright blossoms. Another common plant, the spear-thistle, *Carduus lanceolatus*, rears its stately and barbed-head, along the line of the old road across the Ord, in such great numbers as to justify the assertion, that the national emblem of Scotland is the decorative crest of the bold sea-front of the Ord,—one of the most characteristic headlands of ancient Caledonia. In the barren shingle along the sea shore,

between Helmsdale and the Ord, *Pulmonaria maritima*, a rare plant on the northern shores, attracts attention by its beautiful azure leaves. The rocky parts of the coast of the parish also furnish several species of *Fuci*, and, in such abundance that, before the reduction in the price of the kelp, about thirty tons of kelp were annually manufactured in the parish; but the present price of the article would not pay the expense of manufacturing it; and no seaweed has been burnt for several years past. The best known species of *Fuci* on this coast, are *Fucus digitatus*, *F. palmatus*, *F. vesiculosus*, *F. nodosus*, *F. serratus*, and *F. filum*.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

There is no separate history of this parish known to exist; but many events and occurrences connected with its annals are recorded in Sir Robert Gordon's History of the Earldom of Sutherland, which was written in the year 1630.

The only direct land route to Caithness, and by the Pentland Firth to Orkney, being through this parish, it has, at different times, witnessed the march of hostile forces, and has often been the scene of disturbance and violence. During the inroads of the Northmen in, and preceding, the twelfth century, the coast of Loth appears to have been often visited by these daring invaders; and Helmsdale, a name evidently derived from them, is believed to be identical with the name "*Hialmaidal*," which occurs in one of the northern sagas. In the year 1198, the parish received a royal visit, on the occasion of King William the Lion's march into Caithness, to revenge the cruel death of John Bishop of Caithness;* for an ancient MS. descriptive of his expedition states, that the King had a great army, "and marched till he came to Eysteinsdale,—there are the boundaries of Katanes and Sudrland, —the camp of the King of Scots stretched along the Dals, and that is a very long way." These Dales are believed to have been the valleys of Kildonan, terminating at Helmsdale, and Strathmore in Caithness, which communicate with each other, "and that is a very long way;" and in the last of which valleys, there is a place still called Easterdale.

During the turbulent ages that succeeded King William's ex-

* "During King William's absence, Harold Earl of Orkney and Caithness apprehended John Bishop of Caithness, cut out his tongue, and put out his eyes, for having opposed some designs of his at Court. For which King William upon his return, caused the Earl to be apprehended, cut out his tongue, pulled out his eyes, and then hanged him upon a gibbet. These things happened in the year 1198."—*Bishop Elphinston*.

pedition, Loth, being a *border* parish, was exposed to all the sudden inroads and *cratches* arising from the hostility which the inhabitants of two adjoining districts, separated by a marked natural barrier, such as Sutherland and Caithness are, fostered against each other, before the blessings of regular government and the impartial administration of equal laws, were experienced; and the parish also suffered very much from the lawless depredations committed by fugitives, and persons of desperate character, who sought for temporary shelter amidst the solitary recesses of the Ord; and the tales still, or very lately, lingering in the neighbourhood, with reference to these freebooters between the two counties, agree in spirit and tendency, with the sympathy expressed in some of the popular ballads of the period, in such terms, as,

Alas! that e'er such laws were made,
To hang a man for gear;
Either for stealing cow or sheep,
Or yet for horse or mare:
Had not the laws then been so strict,
I had never lost my joy;
But now he lodges with Auld Nick
That hanged my Gilderoy."

But, notwithstanding the existence of this popular feeling, it is stated in Sir Robert Gordon's History, that, in the year 1617, a gibbet was erected on the top of the Ord, where "some notable robbers that exercised all kynd of thift, and other misdemeanors in Southerland, Catteynes, and Rosse, were hanged."

The disastrous battle of Floudden was fought on 9th September 1513, and, shortly before then, a gallant body of Caithnessmen, headed by their Earl, marched through this parish on their way to join the Scottish army. These brave men and their leader met with an honourable death on the field of battle; but as they happened, when leaving Caithness, to cross the Ord on a Monday, and were dressed in a green uniform, there still exists a popular aversion among the natives of the district, to take a journey over the Ord on that day of the week, or in a green-coloured coat.

Passing over those other historical events connected with this parish, which are already before the public, in Sir Robert Gordon's History, the next prominent occurrence was the appearance of about 700 Argyle Highlanders on their march into Caithness, in the summer of 1679, in order to support the King's patent to the Earldom of Caithness, which had been granted on 28th June 1677, in favour of John Campbell of Glenorchy, afterwards creat-

ed Earl of Breadalbane. This expedition, which terminated in the battle of Altimarlach, to the westward of Wick, is remarkable as indicating the peculiar condition of Scotland at that comparatively recent period, which admitted a subject to arm his vassals, and wage war, in support of his private legal claims. It was during the march northwards of the men of Glenorchy, on this occasion, that the well known quickstep airs, "The Campbells are coming," and "The Braes of Glenorchy," obtained their names.

The Rebellions in 1715 and 1745, occasioned the arming of the male population of this parish, in support of the reigning dynasty. During the retreat of the insurgents before the battle of Culloden, in 1746, Lord Loudon was stationed in Dornoch, with some companies of the King's troops; but, hearing of the advance into Ross-shire of a large force under the Duke of Perth, with the intention of attacking him, Lord Loudon and his men abruptly retired to the westward, leaving the whole county of Sutherland unprotected. The Earl of Cromarty, with a considerable force, instantly marched through Sutherland into Caithness, with the intention of collecting together such men in that latter county, as might be inclined to join the rebel army; and the Earl's men, among other outrages committed by them against individuals and private property, burnt, in this parish, the mansion-houses of Kintradwell and Crakaig, and disinterred the corpse of a person recently interred in the burying-ground at Navidale, who had been the relative of a zealous royalist at that place, and left the partly decayed body in his bed,—he having previously fled from his home on the approach of the enemy. These proceedings exasperated the parish people; and two of Lord Cromarty's officers, who had wandered into the glen of Loth, on their return from Caithness, were killed there by three countrymen who met them. Before the return from Caithness of this invading force, the militia of the county had time to assemble, and having attacked them to the west of Golspie, the Earl of Cromarty's forces were defeated in a running fight between Rhives and the Little Ferry, and the Earl, and almost all his officers and men who were not slain, were taken prisoners. This occurred two days before the battle of Culloden was fought; and while the Earl was hurrying south to join the rebel army.

Land-owners.—His Grace the Duke and Earl of Sutherland is heritor of the whole parish, which, at all times, formed part of the ancient Earldom of Sutherland.

Parochial Registers.—There is no register of births and mar-

riages for this parish, of any earlier date than the close of the last century; and this is a defect common to almost all the neighbouring parishes, which has been often attended with the most vexatious and injurious consequences to persons in humble life, who required to establish their propinquity to deceased and remote relatives. Older registers may have existed; but, as there was no legal provision for the care and preservation of such records, the system under which they were entrusted to the parish schoolmasters, afforded little or no security for their preservation. All parish registers are now under better and safer management than formerly; but many persons who have directed their attention to the matter, are convinced, that, as national records, the parish registers of Scotland admit of being placed under more strict control, and more certain protection, than have yet been devised for insuring their full public benefits.

Antiquities.—The old Castle of Helmsdale, situate on an elevated green bank, close to the River of Helmsdale, where it mingles with the sea water, is the only remarkable ruin now remaining in the parish. The date of its erection is not known: but the building is of that square form, with sharp angles, generally attributed to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in the north of Scotland. It was a hunting-seat of the Sutherland family, adjoining the old deer-forest of Sledale, and the Ord, and is distinguished in the annals of the county, as the place where John, the eleventh Earl of Sutherland, and his Countess, were both poisoned in July 1567, in a diabolical, but fortunately abortive attempt to poison the whole family, and thereby divert the succession to their honours and estates, out of the direct line of descent. Several of those very ancient edifices, known as circular or Pictish towers, stood formerly in the parish of Loth, and one of them, at Lothbeg, was entire at the time Pennant visited the county in 1769. It is now only distinguished as a circular cairn of small stones. Another of these towers stood at Wilkhouse; one to the east of Midgarty; and a very large one, called *Dun-Phail*, crowned the brow of the high ground, close to the public road, and about half-way between Port Gower and Helmsdale. The foundation of this last tower could only be traced of late years, and the large stones forming that foundation have been dug up recently for building purposes. The old Hunting House in the Glen of Loth, of which Pennant gives a plan, has also disappeared. *

* Pennant's description of the above hunting houses is, that "They consist of a gallery, with a number of small rooms on the sides, each formed of three large stones,

In the west side of the steep bank of the Kintradwell Burn, an artificial opening or cave, and built and roofed with stone, called *Cosh-geavag*, now shut by an accumulation of soil and rubbish, is said to lead to subterranean apartments, which, from descriptions given by persons who entered them, before the mouth of the cave became impeded, are supposed to have been places of refuge or sepulchre. At a remote period, a chapel, called after St Ninian, stood at Navidale, and another, called John the Baptist's Chapel, close to the present bridge of Helmsdale; and at both these places, there are burying-grounds, still used as such. Another of these chapels stood at Easter Garty, the ruins of which are still recollected; and it is said that a fourth stood at Kintradwell, called St Trullev's Chapel, although the existence of this last one is not certain. Several barrows and tumuli are scattered throughout the parish, and the heads of ancient stone battle-axes have been found in some cairns supposed to point out the resting-place of persons slain in conflicts; and at *Strone-Rungie*, a low-lying point of the coast between Culgower and Wester Garty, a number of battle cairns still mark the place where it is said foreign invaders were successfully opposed and overcome.

III.—POPULATION.

The population of Loth has been, for several years past, and is rapidly increasing. The early state of its population cannot be traced satisfactorily; but some occasional facts have been ascertained, which warrant the conclusion, that the number of inhabitants was stationary for the last two hundred years, until about the year 1811. Thus, in February 1651, the "Committee of War," for the shire, in fixing the number of men for a militia regiment, allocated those from the parish of Loth as follows:

" Clynetraidwall and two davochs of Lothbeg,	7 men.
The three davoch lands of Cracaik and ye davoch of Lothe and ye glen,	7
Lothermore and Eister Helmsdaill,	7
Culgor, West Garthie, and West Helmsdaill,	7
Marle, Midgarthie, and East Garthie,	7
Navidaill,	2

37

These numbers of selected fighting men bear about the same proportion to the strength of the regiment then raised, which the

viz. one on each side, and a third by way of covering. These are made with the vast flags this country is famous for. At the extremity, is a larger apartment, of an oval figure, probably the quarters of the chieftain. The passage or gallery is without a roof,—a proof that they were only temporary habitations. Their length is from fifty to sixty feet. These buildings are only in places where the great flags are plentiful. In Glen Loth are three, and are called by the country people *Uags*."

SUTHERLAND.

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parish afforded of males able to carry arms, and between the ages of 16 and 60, in the year of the last Rebellion 1745, when nearly 3000 men were enrolled as militiamen, on the estate of Sutherland. At this last period, the relative proportion also of men from each of the townships, does not much differ from the allocation in 1651,—thus :

Kintradwell, and part of Lothbeg,	33 men.
Crakaig, Loth, and the Glen,	41
Lothmore and Easter Helmsdale,	33
Culgower, Wester Garty, and West Helmsdale,	33
Marril, Midgarty, and East Garty,	22
Navidale,	14

 176

The Government returns give the following result for this parish :

In 1801, the population was	1374
1811,	1830
1821,	2008
1831.	2234

This increase is to be attributed to the successful establishment of the herring-fishery at Helmsdale, and to the settlement of several small tenants in that track of improvable land, chiefly near the coast, from Port Gower to Navidale. These causes of the increase have been in very active operation since the date of the last Government census, and, without attempting to anticipate, in exact numbers, the probable increase since that period, by trusting to any less authentic data than the census to be taken in the present year, it is believed by the reporter, that the increase will at least equal that which has occurred during the last two decades, or between the years 1811 and 1831.

The erection of houses in Helmsdale, which, with the exception of Port Gower, is the only village in the parish, is not only annually on the increase : but the accommodation they afford, and the style of building, are improving. This town, begun in 1818, has been regularly and steadily increasing since then ; and the houses being all new, and substantially built, and all roofed with slates or tiles, and the streets regular, the general appearance of the whole place is as pleasing to a stranger as the prosperity of its principal trade, and the internal comforts of its dwellings, have been important and creditable to the inhabitants.

There is no marked peculiarity in the habits of the people of the parish, or in their style or manner of dress. They are generally frugal in their mode of living, but have a laudable anxiety to ap-

pear at all times in becoming and respectable apparel. The native language of the country people is Gaelic, but almost all of them speak or understand English, and it may be said that all young persons, male and female, are able to read and write. The baneful but often alluring vices of poaching and smuggling have long ago ceased within the parish, in consequence, chiefly, of the superior and comfortable condition in which almost all the heads of families in it are placed, as tenants holding directly, at very moderate rents, under their landlord, independent of intermediate dictation over their time and industry; and which healthy position precludes all desire to engage in the ruinous practice of illegal offences. The general character of the population is that of a decidedly moral, religious, and industrious people; and nowhere are the safety and security of individuals, and the rights of property, more respected and upheld, and less interfered with, than in the parish of Loth.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—The arable lands may conveniently be classed into large farms, and the allotments possessed by small tenants. There are seven large farms in the parish, which, besides valuable ranges of low-lying and hill pastures, have among them 1182 acres of arable land, equal in fertility to any others in the county. These farms are held under leases of nineteen years endurance, and are laboured under the five years shift of husbandry, having annually one-fifth part in fallow, turnips, potatoes, or other green crop; one-fifth part in grass one year old; one-fifth part in grass two years old; and not more than two-fifth parts in corn crop. All the farms are conveniently subdivided, and enclosed with substantial stone dikes, and the farm buildings are modern and suitable.

The lands held by the small tenants are also laboured with considerable skill and industry; and each tenant raises annually barley or bear, oats, and potatoes, besides small patches of turnips and sown grasses, and maintains one or more cows, and often rears his young cattle, and possesses one of the small hardy horses of the country, and a few of the small native sheep, besides swine and poultry in abundance. Their cottages, formerly very rude and mean, have been wisely removed by themselves, in situations where they were placed on improvable land, to more sterile parts of their lots, in order to convert all that can be rendered arable into corn land; and hence, the comfortable stone cottages, of improved construction, which they now occupy, are generally placed on the

highest ridges and more rocky eminences of the different townships. The industry with which the trenching and improving of hitherto waste land is carried on by these small tenants, is easily accounted for, when it is stated, that no advance of rent follows in consequence of any improvement or progressive amelioration of the soil; that the whole benefits resulting from these causes have been enjoyed exclusively by the tenants, and that the rents have been placed on such a reasonable scale, that there was not a single sixpence of the rents of the whole parish left unpaid on last audit day; and that such a proceeding as a distraint for rent has not been known among these tenants, for a long period of years. In addition to these mighty advantages, the whole allotments of the small tenants are very judiciously intersected by branch roads, along which the important article of fuel,—peats of excellent quality,—are readily carted home from the neighbouring hill mosses, and the necessary removal of manure and other field operations are effected with great facility.

Fisheries.—The most important fisheries belonging to the parish, are those of salmon in the river Helmsdale, and the herring-fishery at the village of Helmsdale. The former has been celebrated from the oldest period of which we have record, as productive and valuable. For several years past, the river has been fished directly by the servants of the proprietor, who, avoiding all close and severe fishing, and taking every means to protect the spawning fish when ascending the river, and the fry afterwards, besides closing the fishing season, at least two weeks before the time fixed by law, (and which is also done in all the other rivers on the estates of Sutherland,) thus guard, by all available means, this fine salmon stream from the evils of too close and exterminating a system of fishing, so often complained of, when tenants occupy such fishings. The fish are disposed of by contract, at a certain price per pound, and are sent off in a fresh state in ice to the London market.

Herring-Fishery.—This very important branch of industry has been conducted with such spirit, and such signal and increasing success, since it was established and prosecuted, on a regular system at Helmsdale, that its history and present condition claim particular notice in any account of the parish of Loth. The unsettled state of the north of Scotland before the suppression of the Rebellion in 1746, may alone be adduced as a sufficient reason for the neglect, down to that period, of the fisheries which now add so materially to the prosperity and well-being of the population of

our sea coasts; but from that date to the beginning of the present century, there was a period of fifty-four years of uninterrupted internal peace and public security, favourable for the pursuit of most branches of industry, and which could not be materially affected by a distant war such as that with America, during which the fisheries were as completely neglected as ever; and in this state, it is probable, they would have continued much longer, had not Government and patriotic individuals interfered. Capital is seldom embarked in hazardous and doubtful speculations, unless there be a chance of extraordinary profits. The ultimate success of the herring fishery was by no means certain; great profits could not, with probability, be calculated upon; and the Dutch, who, before the present century, supplied the continental markets, were, from their experience and perseverance, and more especially from their superior mode of curing, (then supposed to be known to them exclusively,) competitors of the most formidable description. The herring-fishery was, therefore, generally looked upon as an important national concern, in so far as it reared a hardy class of seamen; but as possessing few attractions for individual speculators. Hence, the first efforts of Government to advance the fisheries were attended with partial success only; and such is the difficulty of selecting the most efficient means, at a first trial, in some legislative measures, that the principle upon which the Government bounties for the encouragement of the herring fishery were granted, has been subsequently found to be an erroneous one. Busses of not less than sixty tons burden were the description of vessels encouraged; and all such, when fitted out for sea in a particular manner, were entitled to a bounty of L. 3 per ton, whether fish were caught or not. Consequently, it often followed that busses, after being passed for the deep sea fishery, skulked along shore, or lingered in safe retired creeks, among the Orkney and other islands,—only going to sea when the weather was inviting. The crews also were exempted from impressment; so that a number of lazy hands were thus obtained by the master, to man the busses, at a trifling expense. This system was directly the reverse of the active and vigorous mode of fishing now prosecuted. The next measure, being a bounty of 4s. on the cran of fish, gutted, cured, and packed, in an improved manner at stations on shore, was, however, a most important and serviceable enactment, and may be considered as giving the first well-directed impulse which the present fishery system received. The curing, at first, when the busi-

ness was imperfectly understood, and when he could only command a limited number of fishermen, sufficiently skilful and experienced, had to incur expenses and run risks, now guarded against; and, at that time, the bounty often formed his only profit,—while without it, it is probable that the business would have lingered or decayed. As the trade prospered under the bounty system, several individuals without capital appeared as curers. They engaged a few inefficient boats, and the premium promised to the crews was often made a postponed payment, consequent on the sale of the cured fish. If regular curing premises could not be procured, an open area with portable sheds was used. The staves, the salt, and the other curing materials were obtained upon credit; and whenever the barrels were packed, and branded by the fishery officer, the bounty was payable and obtained, and this advance paid off the pressing current expenses. Latterly, curers of this description increased too rapidly; but the bounty, which originally worked so much good, (although as the trade increased and was understood, it fostered unsound speculation,) was withdrawn in time to place the herring-fishery on a more safe foundation; because now, few persons will or can adventure in it, who are not possessed of some capital or credit.

The regulations as to the size of the barrel, the curing and packing of the fish, and the branding of the barrels, are still attended to; and indeed, these regulations are so well calculated to secure the proper curing of the fish, that self-interest alone must compel the respectable curer to observe them strictly. Fishery officers are still retained at the different stations, whose duty it is to brand all cured herrings submitted to them, in barrels of the legal size, if of good quality, and regularly cured; and their brand, a crown, stamps them as of prime quality; and thus the fish acquire a character, without which the curer could not obtain the current market-price. The barrel is, in all respects, the same as when the bounty was granted. The breadth of the staves is generally about three inches and a half, and the number in a barrel is 18. The barrel contains 32 gallons; and the number of hoops varies from 16 and 17 to 18. For the West India market an iron hoop at each end is added. The effect of these regulations is equally beneficial to the public as to the curer; for, without them, or similar checks, boatmen and inexperienced persons would pack fish, without regard to quality, mode of cure, or size and description of barrel; and a quantity of inferior and bad fish would get

into market, which might ultimately create a prejudice against all British cured herrings, and lower the price of the commodity so far, that no profit would be obtained for those regularly cured.

The Helmsdale cured herrings are equal in quality to any in Britain, and have attained a very high character in the market. This excellence may be attributable, in a great degree, to the very superior curing-yards, with which all the curers in Helmsdale have supplied themselves. No fish are cured here in the open air, as is frequently done, from the want of accommodation, at other stations, greatly to the prejudice of the commodity; because the rich and admired qualities of the herring are of so volatile a quality, that the slightest exposure of the fish to the sun, or even to the glare of strong daylight, before or during the process of curing, deteriorates the fish. The Helmsdale curing-yards are all perfect in their accommodation, and are cool and ample in their construction. The success attending the Helmsdale fishery has been so steady and progressive, that, although it did not commence until so late as the year 1814, when the first doubtful trial was made there, the number of barrels cured at Helmsdale, and the creeks within what is called, under the Fishery Board Control, the Helmsdale District, have increased more than nine-fold, up to the year 1840, the numbers, as appears from the subjoined table, in the year 1815, being 5318 barrels, and in the year 1839, being 46,571 barrels; and of this last number, no less than 23,815 barrels were exported. This rate of increase considerably exceeds that of the success over the kingdom generally, the latter having only had an increase of six-fold since the establishment, in 1809, of the Fishery Board, which has so materially advanced the true interests of the trade; the numbers at that time, throughout the whole kingdom, being only 90,000 barrels, or not double the number now cured in the Helmsdale District alone; while, last year, the whole quantity cured in Britain were 550,000 barrels.

Table of the Numbers of Barrels of Herrings cured, branded, and exported, in the Helmsdale District, in each year, from 1815 to 1840.

Year.	Barrels Cured.	Barrels Branded.	Barrels Exported.	Year.	Barrels Cured.	Barrels Branded.	Barrels Exported.
1815,	5318	2121		1821,	20561	12863	6565
1816,	14796	3280		1822,	19632	11968	4961
1817,	14176	5344	2445	1823,	25647	16583	8700
1818,	22876	11770	5642	1824,	28804	18891	6508
1819,	28586	13940	4911	1825,	34492	23972	9749
1820,	28199	17318	6447	1826,	12071	6663	1266

Year.	Barrels Cured.	Barrels Branded.	Barrels Exported.	Year.	Barrels Cured.	Barrels Branded.	Barrels Exported.
1827,	25753	17822	5896	1834,	7302	3316	920
1828,	17476	10077	3204	1835,	28377	17985	6517
1829,	19857	12830	5405	1836,	19800	9516	7971
1830,	23310	13637	6923	1837,	36247	19357	14820
1831,	20030	8924	5890	1838,	46345	28114	24294
1832,	11198	6100	3131	1839,	46571	27647	28815
1833,	27432	14315	7990				

The future prosperity of this most valuable addition to the industry of the parish may, with great confidence, be augured, from our knowledge of the sure and judicious foundation upon which it commenced, and also from the efficient means and resources which are now provided, on a permanent footing, for supporting the extension and high character of the trade at Helmsdale, including the settlement of native and regularly bred boat-builders and coopers, and the establishment also of a steam-mill for sawing barrel staves, in the village.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

The only villages in the parish are Helmsdale and Port Gower, which are both on the sea coast, and distant about two miles from each other. Port Gower is partly supported by some excellent land adjoining it, which is divided among a few of the villagers, and by a settlement of active fishermen. It possesses a comfortable and pleasantly situated inn; and the Parliamentary road along the coast, towards Caithness, runs along it. Helmsdale enjoys ample means of communication with all parts of the kingdom, having the great North Parliamentary Road running through it, which, on one hand, leads to Wick and Thurso, and on the other, to all parts of the south of Scotland and England; while a large steamer frequents Wick from Edinburgh, during eight months of the year; and the harbour of Helmsdale is often frequented by shipping from various ports of Britain and Ireland. The Parliamentary road through the parish, called the Dunrobin road, was completed, under one contract, in the year 1811, and extends from Golspie to the Ord, a distance of 21 miles and 880 yards, and originally cost L. 6000; and 13 miles of this road run through the parish of Loth. Another road leads from Helmsdale, through the Strath of Kildonan, to the North Sea at Bighouse; and a branch road, leading from Lothbeg, through the Glen, joins the last-mentioned line of road, to the north of the church and manse of Kildonan. The bridge of Helmsdale is a handsome

structure of two arches, and each of a span of 70 feet, and its erection cost L.2200. It was finished in 1811.

The first improvement on the harbour of Helmsdale took place in 1818, when a pier and breastwork were erected, at an expense to the proprietor of L. 1600; but since then, several other sums have been expended in extending and enlarging the harbour; and other improvements connected with it are understood to be in contemplation.

Helmsdale has a post-office, one principal and commodious inn, and several other public-houses; and the mail-coach passes and repasses through the village, daily.

A large distillery, close to the town, had been in active operation for several years, until last summer, when the circumstances of the distillers caused the work to be stopped; and since then, this distillery, and a beer brewery connected with it, have not been in operation.

Ecclesiastical State.—The parish church is now, owing to the great increase of the population of late years in and around Helmsdale, at an inconvenient distance from the greater part of the inhabitants, although it is locally situated nearly in the centre of the parish. It is a new and very handsome church, and in a complete state of repair. In order to accommodate the inhabitants of Helmsdale, and the increasing population of the eastern extremity of the parish, the late Duchess-Countess, and the present Duke of Sutherland, have erected a large, convenient, and substantial church in Helmsdale, which is now about being finished; and of late years, a clergyman of the Church of Scotland has been resident in Helmsdale, who regularly performs divine service there, so that church accommodation is amply provided for in this parish. The present parish of Loth does not appear to have been a distinct religious district before the Reformation, and it is not even named in the charter of Erection of the bishopric of Caithness. It possessed, however, at that period, several religious chapels, of which, that called St John's Chapel, at Helmsdale, was the most important and best endowed; and it is probable that, with the aid of these minor religious houses, the present parish of Loth was, in Catholic times, divided, *quoad sacra*, between the jurisdictions of the Prebendaries of Clyne and Kildonan. A church existed, however, at Loth in 1627, for Sir Robert Gordon states, that, in that year, the church of Loth was repaired. During the period of Scotch Episcopacy, the conjunction of Loth and Clyne appears to

have continued; for some entries about the year 1618 mention, that "Andro Andersone, minister" of Clyne, had besides his stipend, the kirkland of Loth, and at the same time, Walter Andersone was "reidar at Clyne and Loth," and had his stipend with the kirkland of Clyne. In a deed granted by the Andrew Anderson here referred to, he is designated "Ministro veriti Dei apud Loithe," and as the paper is only signed by his mark, there is added after it "cannot wreitt myself." Hector Pope, who died about the year 1719, was the last minister of Loth who retained the Episcopal form of appearing in the pulpit in a surplice. The succeeding ministers of Loth were, Robert Robertson, William Rose, George Macculloch, George Gordon, and the present minister, and Rev. Donald Ross.

Before the year 1726, the Presbytery of Dornoch, which includes this parish, formed part of the synod of Ross; but on the 15th May 1726, the General Assembly disjoined this Presbytery from the synod of Ross, and erected the presbyteries of Dornoch, Caithness, and Tongue, into one synod, as they at present stand; and the meetings of the synod to be held at Dornoch and Thurso, *per vices*.

Education.—The parish school is at Port Gower, and is attended by all the children in the neighbourhood of that village, and in the western division of the parish. Another school, supported in Helmsdale by the inhabitants, is well attended by the children in and around that village. There is also a female teacher in Helmsdale.

Poor.—The ordinary church collections and annual donations by the proprietor are the available funds for the benefit of the ordinary poor. In judging of the condition of, and necessary support by money payments to, the poor, in a country parish like Loth, a very misleading mistake is frequently committed, by assuming that their wants and destitution are the same as those of the poor in large towns. In such towns, owners of heritable property never permit part of their subjects to be gratuitously occupied by any indigent person, and they very refuse and offals of all personal effects and articles are sacred, by day and night, against all intrusion. On the contrary, in Loth and similar parishes, the actual poor have ever the gratuitous accommodations from the proprietor, of dwelling-places in healthy localities, and small plats of ground for vegetables, and the rearing of common poultry,—of free access to water, open fields, peat mosses, decayed heather, furze, and brushwood, the products of the shore, and

the gleanings of the harvest; from all which, shelter, constant fuel, and limited supplies of food are certain,—while in most districts, the charitable seldom fail to add considerably, and in private to the necessities of the deserving poor. Under such circumstances as these, a few shillings in addition from the parish funds are more valuable than the same sums among the poor of towns. In this part of the north of Scotland, the indigent poor are never neglected; but in order to continue to act towards them as their wants require, it is now found absolutely necessary to protect the northern inhabitants from the hordes of vagrants who have been wandering, of late years, from the southern parts of the kingdom, over the northern counties, and carrying with them all the moral and physical diseases of crowded cities in their most dreaded forms.

March 1841.