

PARISH OF DUNNET.

PRESBYTERY OF CAITHNESS, SYNOD OF SUTHERLAND AND
CAITHNESS.

THE REV. THOMAS JOLLY, MINISTER.

L.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THE name Dunnet is apparently derived from the Gaelic *Dun*, signifying hill. The names of many places in the parish are, however, of Danish extraction, as Ratter, Syster, Reaster, Sunnigoe, Ashigoe, Getterigoe, &c.

Extent, &c.—The form of the parish is very irregular, its greatest length being about 12 miles, its greatest breadth 6, and the narrowest point, from Dunnet to Brough, 2½ miles. It is bounded on the north and north-east, by the Pentland Frith; on the east and south-east, by the parishes of Canisbay and Bower; on the south, by those of Bower and Odrig; and on the south-west and west, by Odrig and Dunnet bay.

With the exception of Dunnet-head, the whole parish may be considered a level district, the elevations being trifling, and running in nearly parallel ridges, from north-east to south-west. The highest point of Dunnet-head rises about 500 feet above the level of the sea,—the average height of the parish above that level does not exceed 150 feet.

The extent of sea coast is about 15 miles, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles of which to the south of Dunnet are level sand, the remainder rocky. The shore round Dunnet-head is quite inaccessible from the land, for about eight miles, except at two or three places where the inhabitants can go down with difficulty. The remainder along the Pentland Frith is low and accessible at several creeks.

Climate.—The atmosphere is clear when the wind is from the sea; when from the land it is in autumn and spring moist, and the weather variable. The climate is on the whole healthy. Snow seldom lies any length of time, nor do frosts generally go deep into the soil. Crops are late in ripening—in general from fourteen to twenty days behind the Lothians.

The current in the Pentland Frith is exceedingly strong during spring tides, so that no vessel can stem it. The flood tide runs from west to east at the rate of ten miles an hour, with new and full moon. It is then high water at Scarfskerry at nine o'clock. Immediately as the water begins to fall on the shore, the current turns to the west, but the strength of the flood is so great in the middle of the Frith, that it continues to run east till about twelve. These contiguous currents, running with such velocity from opposite directions, have a strange appearance from the land. With a gentle breeze of westerly wind about eight o'clock in the morning, the whole frith seems as smooth as a sheet of glass, from Dunnet-head to Hoy-head in Orkney. About nine the sea begins to rage for about 100 yards off the Head, while all without continues smooth as before. This appearance gradually advances towards the frith, and along the shore to the east, though the effects are not much felt upon the shore till it reaches Scarfskerry-head, which is about three miles distant from Dunnet-head, as the land between these points forms a considerable bay. By two o'clock the whole frith seems to rage. About three in the afternoon, it is low water on the shore, when all the former phenomena are reversed—the smooth water beginning to appear next the land, and advancing gradually till it reaches the middle of the frith. From the strength of the tides, and the surprising velocity of these contiguous currents in opposite directions, Pentland Frith is a very dangerous navigation to strangers, especially if they approach near the land. But the natives along the coast are so well acquainted with the direction of the tides, that they can take advantage of every one of these currents, to carry them safe to one harbour or another. Hence very few accidents happen but

from want of skill or knowledge of the tides. The frith is about twelve miles broad opposite to Dunnet.

Hydrography.—There are ten small lakes on Dunnet-head; they contain no fish of any kind. There are three, of a mile each, or thereby, in length, and about half that extent in breadth, in the lower part of the parish, viz. the Loch of Hayland, Syster, and St John's. The principal mills are supplied by them with water. There are a few trouts in the Loch of Syster; the others are frequented by eels. There is a considerable quantity of marl in Loch Hayland. Loch Syster is also said to contain marl, but it has not been searched. The scenery of Loch Syster is very lonely, being nearly surrounded with deep moss in a barren district.

Geology.—In this parish there are only two distinct formations of rock. Dunnet-head is altogether composed of freestone, chiefly of a brownish colour, but some of it white, very hard and durable. The strata dip or incline to the north-east, at an angle of nearly 45° . This headland contains 3000 acres. The remainder of the parish is the common flag-stone slate of the county, also generally dipping to the north-east, at an angle of from 20° to 60° . No simple minerals have been discovered in the parish. There are a number of springs, much impregnated with iron; but this may arise from the slate containing a considerable portion of that mineral.

There are great varieties of soil in the parish. Dunnet-head is entirely covered with moss, to a considerable depth, betwixt which and the freestone, there is a hard pan of moorland, making the moss retentive of water. The cultivated lands round Dunnet are a dry black sandy loam; also on the shore of the Pentland Frith, the soil is black loam lying on a sandy clay at about five feet from the rock. This soil is generally wet and difficult to drain; it has no pan, but the clay being retentive, keeps the moisture on the surface. The southern districts of the parish are generally a clayey loam, lying on a bed of clay, from 2 to 5 feet in depth. Where the slate is rotten on the top, the land is dry; where it is hard, the land is uniformly wet and retentive. There are also about 3000 acres of moss in the low ground, on the east of the parish, varying in depth from 2 to 16 feet, lying on blue clay—producing stunted heath and other coarse herbage. In these mosses, dwarf birch, hazel, and saughs are found near the bottom, in considerable quantities, which show they were formerly covered with brushwood. To the east of Dunnet Bay, there are 2000

acres of land covered with sand, from 1 to 10 feet, (the debris of Dunnet-head, carried into the bay by the sea, and drifted eastwards.) These links were formerly common, and overstocked and poached with cattle. They were subject to break up and drift into the interior, covering up considerable tracts of arable land, where the vestiges of the houses are still seen. They have since been divided and protected; they are now covered with herbage. Bent grows rapidly near the shore, and arrests the progress of the sand, which is forming rapidly into a ridge of knolls already from 20 to 30 feet above high water mark, and covered to the sea with bent. A small portion is still used as a common by the township of Dunnet; the cattle destroy the bent, and it is still subject to breaking up and drifting. On these links, where spongy, a vast number of the marl shells breed on the surface; but except the Loch of Hayland on the east of the links, there is no pond to retain them: hence, except in this loch, there is no marl, as the shells are swept to the sea by the winter floods.

Zoology.—Numbers of the various kinds of sea-fowl frequent the coast. There are a few eagles, hawks, and ravens, vast numbers of plovers and snipes, with a fair proportion of partridges and grouse, and almost all the varieties of small birds peculiar to Scotland. Of wild quadrupeds the number is few, comprising otters, polecats, and weasels. Foxes have disappeared from the district; hares abound, and there are a number of rabbits in the links—also a few seals along the coast.

There are still about 400 sheep on Dunnet-head, belonging to the small tenants surrounding it on the east, mostly of the original short-tailed breed of the country. They are the same race as the Shetland sheep—are small and nimble—produce a little fine wool, of various colours; their mutton is very fine, but they seldom get fat, or weigh above 36 lbs. The young lambs are covered with a strong coat of curled hair for a few weeks after lambing, exactly resembling Siberian lamb skin,—hence I would attribute to them a Scandinavian origin. They are altogether a worthless breed, and not easily improved by crossing with more improved races of sheep.

Dunnet Bay abounds with haddocks and other white fish. There is likewise a tolerable salmon-fishing at the mouth of the Burn of Dunnet. Salmon are also taken in the Pentland Frith, near Brough, but the fishing there has not as yet been much prosecuted. There are occasionally shoals of herrings in the bay,

in June and July, but they are not to be depended on as affording a regular fishing. Great numbers of cod and ling are taken in the Pentland Frith, as well as lobsters and other shell fish. The lobsters are collected by a London company at 3d. each, from the fishermen, and forwarded by smacks to the London market. Numbers of London fishing smacks also frequent the frith for cod and ling. In the lakes there are a number of eels; and trouts only in the Loch of Syster. A few of these were put into the Loch of Dunnet, or St John's Loch, a few years ago, by Dr John Jolly. It is not yet ascertained if they have bred. St John's Loch is much resorted to on the first Monday of May, and the first Monday of August, November, and February, O. S., by invalids from all parts of the country. They walk round it, bathe, throw a piece of money into the water, and are out of sight of it by sunrise. Hypochondriacs and nervous people may sometimes feel better after this, from the power of imagination and exertion; but those seriously ill are of course the worse for it, and die occasionally by the road.

The secret of the matter seems to be this: there was a Catholic chapel (St John's,) at the east end of the lake, to the waters of which the saint must have communicated virtuous qualities. The money is evidently the offering to the altar; hence the very worthy practice of curing the sick and enriching the church. After the Reformation, the practice of throwing the money into the loch would begin, it being possible that the minister would instruct them to do so. It is astonishing, that in these days such a superstitious rite should be continued; but so it is, and people who should know better have recourse to it. I do not think it does much good to the people in the parish; it seems most efficacious to those at a distance.

Botany.—There are a vast number of rare plants on Dunnet-Head in a dwarf state. It is said to be a field worth the inspection of the scientific botanist. The other districts of the parish possess little rare or curious in this department. There is nothing worthy of the name of a tree in the parish. A few acres of hard-wood were planted three years ago by Mr Traill; and they are promising to grow. Thorn hedges thrive pretty well on the clay soils, and walled gardens produce apples and other small fruit.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

The following inscription occurs on a grave-stone in the church-

yard: "Here lies Margaret Wallace, daughter of William Wallace, who was murdered by Alexander Calder, son of Alexander Calder, in Dunnet, because he could not have her in marriage; August 29, in the year of God 1635." There is still a tradition that the murder was committed on a Sunday morning, and that the murderer, by fleeing to Orkney, escaped punishment.

Land-owners.—The parish is divided into three properties, betwixt James Traill, Esq. of Ratter; William Sinclair, Esq. of Freswick; and the Kirk-session. The valued rent is L. 2309, 12s. 6d. Scots, and the real rent about L. 3600.

The average of births and baptisms for the last seven years has been	61½
marriages for the same period has been	11¼

There has not been a register of deaths or burials kept in the parish. Many of those whose forefathers resided in the neighbouring parishes have been buried with them, and many from the neighbouring parishes have, for a similar reason, been buried here.

Antiquities.—Vestiges of three Roman Catholic chapels are still visible. One of them was situated at Dunnet-Head, and is supposed to have been a place of penance. There are a number of what are called Pictish houses over the parish. One of these at Ham is still pretty entire. They are supposed by Pennant to have been built by the Danes, who at one time possessed all the lower district of the county. Their construction seems to have been a circular room in the centre, contracting at the top like a bottle, by the projection of one stone over another, with a number of out-buildings or cells all around. A doorway and passage, covered with strong lintels of stone, seem to have led into the centre apartment. There is seldom any thing discovered in them when opened, except deer horns, bones, and shells, and occasionally a quern stone. They are uniformly situated in the best land, which leads us to suppose they were the first settlements for cultivation in the county. Another peculiarity is, that there are always several of them to be seen from the one you stand upon. This may have been for mutual alarm. There are tumuli on all the principal heights in the parish, chiefly composed of small stones, which have evidently been in the fire. We are led to suppose they were beacons. There is one on the highest point of Dunnet-Head, one on the Hill of Barrock, and one on the Hill of Greenland.

The principal building in the parish is the lighthouse, on

the north-west extremity of Dunnet-Head, which has been erected at a great expense, by the Commissioners for Northern Lights. It has proved useful for vessels passing the frith,—they frequently mistaking the Bay of Dunnet for it, and getting wrecked on the sands. Here, on a promontory nearly 500 feet above the level of the sea, exposed to the fury of the gales from the Atlantic Ocean, surrounded with moss, and about three miles from the nearest habitation, the art of man has made a comfortable dwelling, a garden on deep moss producing fine vegetables, and parks where tolerable crops of corn and grass are raised on moss twelve feet deep. The principal light-keeper, Mr Adair, deserves much credit for his perseverance as a cultivator.

III.—POPULATION.

The population, till within sixty years ago consisted simply of the proprietors and their tenants. The proprietors farmed the Mains; the tenants had all more or less land allotted them, and the pasturage in common. They ploughed the land for the proprietors, carried the manure on their backs, or in creels on ponies. They reaped, thrashed, and manufactured the crop, carried it to market, and shipped it. They gave the proprietor part of their sheep, cattle, swine, geese, hens and eggs, and a small victual and money rent—they were, in fact, next thing to slaves. However, in this state, it is said, the proprietors kept excellent tables and lived well. The people, too, were not without their comforts. All their clothing was of home manufacture, some remnants of which are still to be seen—a kind of stuff of fine worsted, dyed very dark blue. It served for coat, vest, and breeches for Sundays, and also for gowns to the females; a more comfortable dress for a cold climate than the ruffles, ribbons, and flimsy fabrics now-a-days of Glasgow and Manchester.

Amount of Population,—

	Males.	Females.	Total.
In 1801	589	777	1366
1809	666	774	1440
1811	638	760	1398
1821	873	989	1862
1831	932	974	1906

The great disproportion of males and females in the beginning of this century was occasioned by the number of young men who had gone to the army and navy, or some other seafaring line; and the great increase of population in 1821, was produced chiefly by

about 300 Highlanders from Assynt and Strathnaver, who had been removed from their possessions by the introduction of sheep-farming, and came to this parish. The greater part of them had removed before 1831. Their habits not being adapted to an industrious life, they soon got in arrears with the landlord, and went off, some to the Highlands, others to America. With the above exception, the increase of population has risen partly from the extension of cultivation, and the fisheries, and the abolition of the feudal service which left the people more to their own resources.

The whole inhabitants may be said to be of the agricultural class, though those along the shore side are frequently employed in fishing. The parish is occupied by 84 tenants, paying from L. 8 to L. 350 rent yearly, and 201 paying from 5s. to L. 8 yearly: there are besides ten large farms or mains in the occupation of the proprietors.

Language, &c.—The English language only is spoken by the original inhabitants. The few Highlanders remaining still partly retain the Gaelic. The children all speak English, and that much better than in the southern counties. Playing the knotty (golf) on New-Year's Day is almost the only game practised.

Habits of the People.—The habits of the people in dress and cleanliness have much improved of late years. The ordinary food is oat and barley-meal, with potatoes, fish, pork, beef, and occasionally tea and coffee. The practice of making malt and brewing ale is still understood; but the severity of the excise laws prevents people from a liberal use of this wholesome beverage. There are, no doubt, numbers in the parish who are much pinched in circumstances; but in general, potatoes and fish of one kind or another, and meal and milk, are within the reach of all. Mostly every householder keeps a pig, the pork of which is used in summer, boiled with cabbage, and though there are a number of families very poor, from circumstances over which they have no control, still the mass of the population may be said to live comfortably, and with a considerable degree of independence.

With regard to general character, they are an acute, sagacious, and moral set of people, and possessed of considerable energy in managing their own affairs. With some there is, perhaps, a want of industry, but this originates more from the nature of their situation than from indolence. The fisherman's life is too near akin to the hunter's for constant application, and the smaller te-

nants, having always a home, food, and fuel, do not, perhaps, bestir themselves so much as they ought.

Poaching prevails to a considerable extent among the young men, when there is snow on the ground. Smuggling is unknown, with the exception of small quantities of foreign spirits got by the fishermen from vessels passing the frith, and making a little malt for ale. But all that is done in either way is quite trifling.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

The general employment of the people is agriculture and fishing. On the coast all are, to a certain extent, fishermen. After laying down their crofts in spring, they proceed to the lobster fishing. In the end of May and June, they cut their peats, and prepare for the herring fishing, which commences to the west of Thurso about the 1st of July, and sets in at Wick about the 18th. The whole fishermen and most of the young females set off for that station, and remain there for six weeks. They come home in September, get their crops cut, and potatoes dug, and betake themselves again to the fishing of cod, saithe, and *silags*. This is the ordinary routine with the coast side population. In the interior, most of the cottagers go to the herring fishing, and are employed by the proprietors or larger farmers at the harvest, when not needed at home, and afterwards at draining, ditching, and other agricultural operations. There is also a number of shoemakers, tailors, smiths, wrights, and weavers in the parish, but all hold more or less land, and a great portion of them are at some seasons fishermen. The above is the most numerous class in the parish. The next is the tenant, paying from L. 15 to L. 50 rent, who follows no profession save agriculture, and that generally in its ancient form, viz. bear and oats alternately. Most of them, however, now grow a few turnips and a little clover, and are decidedly improving; but, partly from want of skill, capital, and encouragement from proprietors in leases, fencing, and draining, they have made little progress in improving their farms or bettering their own condition. From the circumstance of the produce of the county far exceeding the wants of the population, especially the growth of beef and mutton, and the means of transport by steam being in operation, it is a question whether this class can long hold land, either with benefit to themselves or the proprietors, unless they exert themselves, and produce articles fit for the market, seeing that land is much lower rented here than farther south. And the southern markets being

now opened up, it is folly to think that the land will lie idle, or only half-cultivated, for any length of time.

The next classes are the large tenants and the proprietors' farm-servants, who are constantly employed in agriculture.

There are two retail shops and two public-houses in the parish.

The extent of the parish is about 17,000 acres, whereof 5000 are cultivated, and the remainder improvable pasture, moss, and links. The links may be stated at 2000 acres; the moss 6000 acres,—which leaves 4000 acres still capable of being brought into cultivation. The rent of land varies much according to circumstances. It may, however, be taken as an average at 12s. per acre; for arable land, varying from 5s. to L.1, 10s.; the average of grazing a cow for a year on good land is L.4, on poor soils L.2. Leicester sheep, of which there are upwards of 700 in the parish, pay about L.1 a-head; the sheep kept on the moors by small tenants and on Dunnet-Head, are of little value, perhaps 1s. 6d. each per annum.

Wages.—Farm servants' wages are, for men L. 6 to L. 8 yearly, 6½ bolls oatmeal, 2 bolls potatoes, with house and fire, and a chopin of milk daily. Boys less in proportion. Out-door women get L.1, 10s., 2 bolls meal, with milk and potatoes for the half year. House servants (women) get from L.1, 10s. to L.1, 15s. half yearly. Shearers in harvest, for eight weeks, (men) get L.1, 10s. with a stone of meal weekly, a few potatoes, and a chopin of milk daily. Women, L.1 wages, half a boll of meal, a few potatoes, and a mutchkin of milk daily. Ordinary labourers get from 1s. to 1s. 6d. per day; women 6d.; wrights 2s.; masons and blacksmiths the same. Mason work, wall height, girth measure, is done for L.1, 16s. per rood of 36 yards, all materials found. Wood, iron work, and saddlers' are fully higher than in other parts of the kingdom.

The common breed of cattle is an inferior description of the Highland, much deteriorated by importations from Orkney. They are generally sleek-skinned and coarsely made. In many instances they come to a good size, and the cows milk better than pure Highlanders. In most cases, they are badly kept, and of course the great proportion of cattle stock in the parish is bad. The ordinary price of small tenants' two year old stots and queys, taken off by drovers, has for the last fifteen years ranged from L.1, 15s. to L.3; the price of cows from L.3 to L.6. On the large farms and mains, where the land is well cultivated, and a regular sys-

tem of alternate husbandry introduced, there are good stocks of cattle of the Teeswater breed, reaching at three years old, from 45 to 56 stones beef, and bringing in the London market from L.15 to L.18.

The general breed of sheep is the Leicester, with those before-mentioned on Dunnet-Head, and a few Cheviots kept by tenants. The Leicesters have hitherto thriven very well, produce wool equal to any in the kingdom, and get to a good weight at 15 months old. Wethers of that age bring from L.1, 8s. to L.1, 10s. each, and best ewes nearly the same.

The breed of horses is of all descriptions, from the pony to the first-rate Clydesdale. Mr Gunn of Ratter imported a stallion twelve months ago from Lanarkshire, of an excellent figure, and at a high price (L. 200). The size of cattle, horses, and other stock, as well as the quality of grain and green crops, is regulated by the size of the farms—where large, things in general are good, where small, bad in the extreme. The breed of swine has been much improved of late, by importations of the best English varieties.

Improvements.—On the farms in the parish, where improvements have been made, or are making, the mode of reclaiming waste land is, to lay it out in suitable fields with ditches and thorn hedges, protected either with flag, which makes an excellent fence, or stone dikes 20 inches high with a Galloway cope, then under-drain with drains from 3 to 5 feet deep, as is necessary; plough and allow it to lie for two years, then fallow and lime or marl, and if dry soil, make turnips with bone dust, which are fed off with sheep,—then a crop and grass seeds, if sufficiently reduced, if not, two crops,—then fallow and dung, and a crop with grass seeds,—then pasture for three or four years.

Substantial farm buildings have been erected and are erecting where improvements are going on. Mr Traill has expended a large sum in buildings, fences, drains, roads, and every thing else connected with the improvement of his estate. Freswick is also improving of late years. The links, moss, and waste ground, where under sheep, have been pasture-drained, which has improved the surface much. The parish, with a trifling exception betwixt Dunnet and Brough, is well provided with roads, and is rapidly improving, and there is little doubt of its continuing to do so, till its whole resources are called out; and, however the occupations of the population may be changed, capital is only wanted

to employ and give subsistence to more people than it contains at present.

The principal tenants have, in general, leases of from fourteen to twenty-one years. The smaller are at will, but are seldom removed so long as they pay their rents, or conduct themselves with propriety, unless to make way for some other arrangement; and in that case they are generally provided with a possession elsewhere.

Quarries.—Dunnet-Head affords excellent freestone for all building purposes, besides mill-stones, rollers, gate-posts, &c. The demand is limited, and the rent about L. 10 yearly. The other parts of the parish are well supplied with quarries for building, making roads, fences, and drains; and in one case there is a tolerable quarry for pavement, which is at present working on Mr Traill's estate of Inkstack, which pavement is sawn in the edges, and wrought up to be fit for exportation to London, at a considerable expense, affording profitable employment to a number of people.

Fisheries.—The salmon are *kitted* in the usual way, and sent to London. The cod and ling are sometimes sold as mud-fish in winter; in spring and summer they are dried.

Gross Amount of Raw Produce.—

10,000 quarters oats and bear, at L. 1,	L. 10,000
Hay, turnips, and potatoes,	4,000
Pasture of all kinds,	1,500
Fisheries, exclusive of herrings taken at Thurso and Wick,	400
Quarries,	200
	<hr/>
	L. 16,100

Manufactures.—Formerly, a quantity of kelp was burned along the shore. It has been discontinued for some years, not paying the expense of manufacture. A number of females are employed in winter making herring nets, and working straw plait; but neither affords above 4d. per day. The growing of flax and making of linen has also been discontinued in a great measure; and from there being no other employment, except a little woollen cloth for home wear, females are not well employed in the winter season.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Market-Towns, &c.—Thurso and Wick are the market-towns. There is nothing that can be called a village in the parish. Thurso is nine miles from Dunnet church. A sub-office to Thurso was established in 1839. There is no post-office at present; It is hoped this grievance will soon be remedied. There

is one good and safe harbour at Ham, built at Mr Traill's expense. There are three landing places for boats at Dunnet, Brough, and Scarffskerry. A slip has been built at Brough, at the expense of the Commissioners for Northern Lights, for landing their stores. Here a good harbour could be formed. Nothing has been done at Dunnet or Scarffskerry to aid nature.

Ecclesiastical State.—The parish church is inconveniently situated, being nearly at the western extremity of the parish, and distant about seven miles from the most easterly point. But the few inhabitants in that remote quarter are near the church of Bower, and very seldom attend at Dunnet. The great bulk of the population are within four miles of the church. The church is an ancient building, was repaired in 1837, and an aisle added. It is now a comfortable and commodious edifice, capable of containing 700 sitters. The manse is in indifferent repair, and the offices ruinous. The glebe contains eight acres, besides the garden and the site of manse and offices, and is worth L. 12 yearly. The stipend is 112 bolls of oatmeal, 81 quarters, 4 bolls, 1 peck, 1 gallon, $1\frac{1}{4}$ quart bear, and L. 8, 6s. 8d. of money. The living is in the gift of Sir James Colquhoun. The number of communicants is nearly 200, of whom 58 are male heads of families. There are a few Dissenters in the parish, Burghers, Anabaptists, and Methodists,—not exceeding 40 of all these persuasions.

The average amount of church collections from Whitsunday 1830 to Whitsunday 1836 was L. 10, 16s. 11d. annually. From Whitsunday 1836 to Whitsunday 1837, they were only L. 6, 6s. 2d., in consequence of the church being under repair.

Education.—There are in the winter season, four schools in the parish besides the parochial school, supported by private subscription. The salary of the parish school is the maximum, amounting to L. 34, 4s. 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. The school fees are moderate and ill paid. The salary, fees, &c. may amount to L. 45 per annum. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are principally taught in all the schools. The parochial schoolmaster teaches the higher branches of education. The people are quite alive to the value of education; but, for the most part, can only send their children to school during the winter months, which prevents there being many good scholars. All, however, are taught to read and write, and have been so for many years. There is a new school erected by Mr Traill in a central part of the parish, to which the Education

Committee of the General Assembly has appointed a teacher with a salary of L.20 per annum, and which will be of great benefit.

Friendly Society.—There is one Friendly Society in the parish, but it has been productive of no obvious advantages.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—The average number of persons receiving parochial aid is about 100. The sum allotted to each of the greater part of them is a few shillings twice in the year. The more necessitous are supplied more liberally.

The lands of Hollandmaik in the parish, were purchased in 1835 for the poor, at the price of L. 630, yielding a clear rent of about L. 25 per annum. There is also an annuity of L. 5, 11s. 1½d. payable from the estate of Freswick, and interest of L. 800 capital, at 4½ per cent. L. 18, 10s. which, with the collections, say L. 10, 16s. 11d., make a sum of L. 54, 18s.* From this sum is to be deducted L. 4, 10s., the interest of L. 100, appropriated by the donor, the late George Oswald, Esq. of Scotston, for paying the school fees of those children whose parents are unable to pay, which leaves the sum of L. 52, 13s. for annual distribution. There are no poor rates. With few exceptions, those among whom the poor funds are divided, are objects of charity; old and infirm people, who have no families to help them; widows with weak families, and the like. There is no general disposition to take parochial relief where they have other means to rely on, such as assistance from children or relatives.

Fairs.—There are four fairs or markets held in the parish annually for the sale of cattle, horses, sheep, &c., viz. one at Dunnet, first Tuesday of April, and the great market at the same place, on Tuesday, after 15th August, old style, which lasts two days, and is well attended. There is another on the first Tuesday of October, old style; and the Reaster market, third Tuesday of October, old style.

Fuel.—The fuel used is nearly altogether peats: it is of easy access, and good quality. The expense of it is not easily ascertained. A large cart load sells for 2s. Coals are imported at the neighbouring harbour of Castlehill, but little is used.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

The arable land, by last Statistical Account, was 1600 Scots, or 2000 imperial acres; it is now upwards of 5000 acres: the rent was then L.950, it is now about L.3600. The system of ploughing with oxen and horses, three and four abreast, has been discontinued;

* The collections since the church was repaired, L.18, 17s. 11d. per annum.

iron ploughs and two horses being in general use. The pernicious system of servitude is abolished. Wages of labour of all kinds are more than doubled. The population was then (1791) 1399, it is now 1906,—certainly enjoying more comfort than at that period, and doing a vast deal more business. The houses also, with a few exceptions, have been much improved: in many cases, comfortable cottages have been erected.

The improvement which the parish is susceptible of, has already been pointed out. There is certainly a want of employment for females within doors; perhaps the growth of flax and the working of it as in Flanders, might be of use to remedy this evil. There are also a number of small tenants at a distance from the sea, who would be better employed as labourers, and the land they possess would be more productive under a different system. Seeing the climate forbids the cultivation of the more valuable grains, wheat, barley, beans, and pease, (of all which the soil produces great crops, but they only ripen well in favourable seasons, and are not for a man to meddle with who has a rent to pay,)—the attention of the farmer should be turned to grass, turnips, bear, and oats, which are produced, where well cultivated, in abundance. He should be active in rearing and feeding cattle and sheep for the southern markets, which, now from the introduction of steam navigation, can be sent as cheap in a few hours by sea, as they could be driven by land in a month, some years ago. Thus, by increasing the exports of the parish, and getting money in return, its cultivation may be still farther extended and improved, and the quantity of labour increased, which is the only sure means of adding to the happiness and comfort of the labouring classes in a rural community.

October 1840.