

PARISH OF UNST.

PRESBYTERY OF BURRAVOE, SYNOD OF SHETLAND.

THE REV. JAMES INGRAM, A. M. MINISTER.

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I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Boundaries, &c.—THE island of Unst, of which this parish consists, lies in north latitude $60^{\circ} 45'$; west longitude $50'$. Its length from south to north is 12 miles, and its mean breadth three miles. Its form approaches to an oblong square, and it contains upwards of 36 square miles or 24,000 acres. It is separated from the island of Yell by Blumel Sound, on the south-west, a rapid tide-way of about a mile in breadth; and from Fetlar, on the south side, by a sound four miles broad. It has the German Ocean on the east and north, and the Atlantic on its west coast.

Topographical Appearances.—A considerable proportion of its surface is dry and level, when compared with many other parts of Zetland; and although it has not yet the advantage of turnpike roads, one can ride from one end of it to the other without meeting any obstructions. Hills of a moderate height diversify its scenery. Valleyfield, nearly 700 feet in height, runs along the western coast, and forms a strong barrier against the fierce assaults of the Atlantic, which, notwithstanding, dashes its huge billows against it with such fury, during a north-west gale, that foam and spray are thrown over it, into the valley on its eastern side, and strongly impregnate with salt every green herb. This hill terminates in a long projecting headland, called Hermanness (from a hero who is said to have landed, in days of old, on these shores), the most northern point of the island, and of her Majesty's dominions. On the east side of this hill, is a valley, extending from Uyea Sound in the south, to Burrafirth in the north, almost the whole length of the island; and in it there is a continued chain of lochs, which empty themselves,—one part of them, into the sea at Uyea Sound,—the other part, at Burrafirth. The lochs in the south division, from their dimensions, are called the small waters. The loch of Watly, the first in the northern chain,

is one mile long; the next to it is the Loch of Cliff, three miles long. An arm of the latter runs towards the east, on the north side of the hill of Crucifield, for nearly a mile, and is called the Loch of Quoyhouse. Saxa Vord, a hill of 938 feet in height, on the east side of the bay of Burrafirth, rises abruptly from the sea, and its bluff round-head, showing itself considerably above every other point of land in its neighbourhood, makes a very conspicuous mark for fishermen, along the whole eastern coast. Crucifield runs from west to east, at right angles with Valleyfield, and separated from it by the loch of Cliff, and terminates in its eastern extremity in two conical points called Heogs, one of them, much higher than the other, and supposed to have been anciently a place where courts of law were held, and where criminals were executed. This hill lies nearly across the middle of the island, and separates the Mid from the North parish. A little to the south-east of Crucifield is a high headland, called the Keen of Hammer, (query? the Celtic *Cean*), which forms one side of the north entrance to Balta Sound. The Vord Hill, on the south side of the voe or harbour, stretches along the east coast. Valleyfield and Saxa Vord, and the hills connected with them, are covered with peat-moss, an article most useful in this northern climate, where no coal has yet been discovered. To the eastward of the valley which runs along the base of Valleyfield, and following the course of the Loch of Cliff, and turning off by the Loch of Quoyhouse, all that section of the island to the south and east (excepting some small spots in the south-east extremity), is completely denuded of moss, and has a bare stony appearance. Notwithstanding, it yields excellent pasture for the native horses and sheep, which thrive remarkably well upon it. This section is composed principally of serpentine, hornblende, and diallage rocks. The hills to the north and west are chiefly composed of gneiss.

Caves.—There are a variety of caves round the coast, but not worthy of notice. Under a very high and precipitous rock, which forms the north-eastern base of Saxa Vord, a noted haunt of kittiwakes and other aquatic birds, there is a grand natural arch, having sufficient breadth and depth of water to admit a boat to be rowed through it; it is 300 feet in length, and of considerable height.

Sea Coast.—Captain Thomas of the Investigator, who has been employed for some years in surveying the coasts of Zetland, has been very particular in his survey of this island, both along its coast and in the interior. When his chart appears, it will furnish

all the information that can be wished for, as to the form and extent of the coast, &c. The shores of Unst, like every other part of Zetland, are deeply indented by numerous bays and creeks, some of which are low and sandy. The intervening headlands, especially in the north-east, north, and west coasts, are bold, high, precipitous rocks. The principal bays are, Burrafirth, on the north; Norwick, and Haroldswick, and Sandwick, on the east; Watswick and Wick, on the south-west; and Woodwick, on the west side. None of these are safe harbours. Burrafirth and Norwick are two deep sandy bays, quite open towards the sea. Both have a very romantic appearance, and a considerable extent of good land on their shores, and are much admired by strangers who occasionally visit this island. The only safe harbours are, Balta Sound, on the east coast, about the middle of the island, completely covered from the sea by the grazing island of Balta, the property of Thomas Edmondston, Esq. of Bunes, whose manor house is situated near the bottom of the Voe, or harbour; and Uyea Sound, on the south, covered by the island of Uyea, (about a mile and a half long, and one mile in breadth, an appendage of this parish, and the property of Thomas Leisk, Esq.) The grazing islands of Haaf Grunie and Huna, and the holms of Ska, Burrafirth, Woodwick, Newgord, Heogaland, and Weatherholm, belong to the proprietors of Unst, and lie along its shores, affording pasture for a considerable number of black-cattle and sheep.

Hydrography.—The streams of tide off some of the extreme points, especially off Hermanness, Ska, and Lambaness, are so rapid and turbulent, that it is extremely dangerous, and often impossible for boats to cross them, even in moderate weather, and it not unfrequently happens that they perish in the attempt.

Perennial springs of excellent fresh water are most copious and abundant in every part of the island; but there is nothing remarkable either in their situation or character.

Geology.—The chief rocks in this island are, gneiss, serpentine, diallage rock, and chlorite slate. Besides these the following may also be enumerated, viz. talc slate, protogine, limestone, quartz rock, hornblende rock, and mica slate. The most important ore is the chrome ore, or chromate of iron.*

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Land-owners.—The chief land-owners, in the order of the ex-

* A beautiful mineral, the *Hydromagnesite* of Professor Jameson, was discovered by Dr Hibbert in considerable veins in serpentine at Swinaness.

tent of their property, are, William Mouat, Esq. of Garth, proprietor of nearly one-half of the parish; Thomas Edmondston, Esq. of Bunes; the Right Honourable Lord Dundas; James Ogilvy, Esq. of Greenwell; Thomas Leisk, Esq. of Uyea; and Gilbert Spence, Esq. of Hammer. There are twenty-three other small proprietors, possessing from 20 down to 3 merks of land.

Parochial Registers.—The parochial registers are of very modern date. The first entry is made in October 1776. No doubt, records must have existed, at a much more remote period; but after the most diligent inquiry, not the least vestige of them can now be traced.

Antiquities.—Around the island, and so situated, that the one can be seen from the next in order, is a continued line of ruinous buildings, called Pict's houses, or castles, or burghs,—round towers, open in the top, with massy walls, built of large stones. Some of them stand in the midst of small lochs; some on projecting headlands on the margin of the sea; and others on level ground, and surrounded by two or three ditches or moats. According to tradition, they were used as watch-towers, for the purpose of communicating, by means of smoke, intelligence of the approach of an enemy; and this could be speedily done over all Zetland. At Muness, in the south-east quarter, there is a ruinous feudal castle, now the property of William Mouat, Esq. of Garth, which bears over the main entrance the date 1598, together with the following inscription:

List ye to know this building quha began,
Laurance the Bruce, he was that worthy man,
Quha earnestlie his ayris and affspring prayis,
To help and not to hurt this wark alwayis.

This Laurence Bruce is said to have been of the family of Cultmalindie, in Perthshire, and to have fled hither, in consequence of having slain a neighbour in an affray. The castle is an oblong square, 60 feet by 18 within the wall, and 24 in height. At each of the four angles, is a tower. Two of these are hanging; the other two rise from the ground. On the hill of Crucifield, are some concentric circles of earth and stone, with eminences raised in the middle, where, perhaps, in the days of Paganism, the priest of Odin had performed his unholy rites. . . . Two ancient obelisks, or standing stones, are to be seen, the one near Greenwell, a rude, unshapely mass; the other near Uyea Sound, higher and

more tapering, but without any inscription or traditionary story. Each is supposed to commemorate the site of a battle when some renowned warrior fell.

The ruins or some vestige of an ancient chapel, are found at every turning. No fewer than twenty-four, at some remote period, have been standing in this parish. One of them, called the Cross Kirk, or St Cruz, in the neighbourhood of Haroldswick, is still accounted a holy place, and occasional pilgrimages are made to it by some of the older inhabitants, whose minds are not yet emancipated from the Popish superstitions of their ancestors. There are six burying-places in the parish, around the ruins of so many old kirks, viz. at Norwick, Haroldswick, Balliasta, Sandwick, Wick, and Uyea. The Rev. William Archibald, who officiated as clergyman of this parish, from the year 1735 to 1785, preached, by rotation, in three of these kirks for many years, viz. at Haroldswick, Balliasta, and Wick. The manse, then at Norwick, was one mile to the northward of Haroldswick, four to the northward of Balliasta, and nine miles to the northward of Wick. A number of stone urns were found in the island of Uyea some years ago, filled with bones and ashes, and deposited beneath a heap of stones and earth. They are supposed to be of Scandinavian origin.

Modern Buildings.—A very neat new church forms a very conspicuous object, as seen from a vessel entering the Voe or harbour of Balta Sound, and, with the exception of the school-house, this is the only public building in the parish. Of private buildings a considerable number has been reared within these few years. Mr Edmondston has built a new manor-house at Buness, and two other dwelling-houses in his vicinity; and at Uyea Sound, Mr Mouat has built a lodge for his own accommodation, when he visits that part of his property which lies in Unst; and a range of neat houses along the shores of the harbour, for dwelling-houses; a shop for merchandise; warehouses; and workshops for a blacksmith, boat-carpenters, and a cooper. The water-mills for grinding corn are the same as they have been for centuries, exceedingly simple, but answering the purpose very well. Every neighbourhood has its own mill, and every farmer is his own miller. The mills are minutely described in the old Statistical Account.

III.—POPULATION.

There is reason to believe that this island had a numerous po-

pulation at a very remote period. The vestiges of houses and stone-fences, now in ruins, and grown over with grass, or buried in moss, are no indistinct indications of this. In former days, the inhabitants had but little intercourse with other countries, and had to depend chiefly on their own resources; the healing art was little known amongst them,—perhaps not one medical practitioner in the land. In 1729, and again in 1740, the small-pox appeared in Zetland in such a virulent form, and made such havock, almost depopulating some districts, that they are yet spoken of under the name of the mortal pox. Accordingly, we find, that, subsequent to that time, the population was very low; for, in the year 1755, it consisted only of 1368 souls. From that period, the increase has been steady and rapid. In 1780, it had risen to 1853; in 1790, to 1988; and in 1831, to 2909 souls.

Vaccination, which has been resorted to ever since the year 1800, may be assigned as one cause of this great increase. Another cause may be found in the very favourable seasons this country has enjoyed during the last thirty years. There has been no failure of crops; the fishing has been successful; and trade has greatly improved.

There are six proprietors of land of the value of L. 50 and upwards per annum.

Much has been said, and much has been written, by men very superficially acquainted with the state of the country, about the wretchedness, the enslaved, and oppressed state of the peasantry. They have had all their information from hearsay, and have not given themselves the trouble to inquire after the truth, where they might have had it impartially stated to them; and the consequence has been, that they have been greatly imposed upon, and they, in their turn, have imposed upon others. They who have lived long amongst the people, and are intimately acquainted with their ways and means, and have seen the comforts they enjoy, can bear the most ample testimony to the fact, that there are but few of Her Majesty's subjects, of the same class, who are treated in a more kindly and indulgent manner by their superiors; who enjoy so much liberty; who pass through life with so little labour or care; or who have more reason to be contented with the situation and circumstances a kind Providence has assigned them. They do not live in affluence; but they seldom want the necessaries, and they have many of the luxuries of life, with one-half of

the toil that people of their class are doomed to undergo, in more genial climes.*

The inhabitants of Unst are remarked for being naturally a shrewd observing people, acute and discerning; and although they have not, until lately, had the advantage of schools, which highly-favoured Scotland has long enjoyed, yet many of them are well informed, can read well, and write an excellent hand, and keep accounts; and, in respect of general knowledge, they may compete with those who have had superior opportunities. Their moral and religious character is far from being so high as it could be wished to be. They are just what people generally are in the same circumstances,—some good, some bad; but, in general, they appear to have a thirst for religious knowledge; and it is hoped, there are many amongst them who truly fear God.

Smuggling was for a long time carried on in this place to a great extent, and was no doubt attended by the evils which naturally accompany that illegal traffic. It has scarcely been heard of, for these last twenty years.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—There are about 2000 imperial acres of arable land in the parish, most part of it yearly under crop. Nearly an equal quantity of meadow and grass land, connected with the arable, remains uncultivated. The meadows produce a considerable quantity of good natural hay; and on the grass grounds, milch cows are pastured during the summer. The whole of the meadow and grass ground might be broken up, and with proper management, converted into good corn land, and much of it has, within these few years past, been cultivated, and made to produce very tolerable crops, by some of the more industrious tenantry. But the greater part of the farmers being also fishermen, little attention comparatively is paid to agriculture. Indeed, the pursuits of fishing and farming seem to be incompatible with one another, in the same persons. The soil is, in many places, excellent. Under a better climate and more skilful management, it would yield the best of crops; and even with all the disadvantages of climate, and the slovenly manner in which it is cultivated, it yields heavy crops of black oats, bear, and potatoes; the latter not inferior to those produced in the best districts of Scotland. Some gentlemen

* Since this Account was drawn up, the circumstances of the people have been sadly altered. A general failure of the crops, for five or six years in succession, has reduced them to great poverty, and it must be long, even under the most favourable circumstances, before they can regain their former state.

in this island, who have turned their attention to the subject, have raised very fair crops of Angus oats, and have proved that as good turnips, and rye-grass, and clover can be grown here as in any part of the kingdom, and that the climate and soil are peculiarly adapted for such crops. They have vastly improved the appearance of the farms under their own immediate management, and made them look like oases in the midst of a barren desert.

Most of the farms are, to this day, lying run-rig, and, according to the old system, consist of outfield and infield. The outfield seldom receives any manure. It is turned over with the spade every alternate year, for, since the reduction of the size of the farms, ploughs amongst the tenantry have been wholly laid aside; yet, notwithstanding of this treatment, the outfield land yields a fair average crop of black oats. The infield, or ground nearest the farm-house, is yearly manured, and on it they raise fine crops of bear and potatoes. If the farms were brought into a more compact form, and enclosed, a few of the more active and intelligent might be induced to sow turnips, and rye-grass, and clover, and thus produce an abundance of nutritious winter provender for their cattle, of which, under the present management, there is often great scarcity.

None of the tenants, or but few of them, have leases, not that the land-owners are unwilling to grant them; such is not the case, but because they are not disposed to take them. Many of them are so restless and fond of change, that they do not choose to bind themselves to remain for a fixed time in one place, and this is often the cause of much annoyance and loss to the proprietors of the soil, for it is not to be supposed that such tenants will take much trouble about the improvement of their land. It is seldom that the land-owners warn a tenant to remove, if he is honest and industrious, and there are many of the most substantial and respectable of the tenantry, who are now in the same houses and on the same farms which their fathers and grandfathers occupied before them, and some of them, by their industry, have doubled the ancient extent of their arable land.

Many of the tenants have comfortable houses, built solely at the expense of the proprietors, at a cost not under three years' rent of the land they occupy.

As the extent of the commons or hills and unenclosed ground has never been ascertained by any actual survey, it can only be stated conjecturally. The truth, however, is not exceeded, when

we say that there are 20,000 acres lying in those commons, of which at least 2000 may be capable of improvement; but as they belong to several different owners, and are undivided, a grievous obstacle is thus in the way of those who might be inclined to make the trial.

Rent, Wages, &c.—The land is let for a fixed money rent. The average rent of arable land is about 18s. Sterling per merk, which, arable meadow, and grass, may contain nearly two imperial acres. The tenants have the privilege of keeping as many cattle, horses, and sheep on the common as they please, without any additional rent being demanded.

The summer grazing of a cow or ox is from 8s. to 10s. Sterling, and much the same sum is demanded for winter fodder. Young cattle, sheep, and horses pasture on the open common, and cost the owners nothing.

There are but few families in the parish, who require the assistance of a man-servant in the management of their farms. For the purpose of accommodating a more numerous body of fishermen, the farms are now made much smaller than in former times. They consist, on an average, of about six imperial acres arable, with a due proportion of meadow and grass land; and there are generally more people in each house, than are necessary for the work of such farms; but as the young people can be maintained by their parents at home, and as they are very fond of liberty, they care not much about going to service. In the spring time, every individual who can lift a spade, old and young, male and female, is set to work in the fields, and they very easily and in a short time turn up the soil, and accomplish the labours of the season. Young men are more inclined to go to the Greenland fishing, or to prosecute the ling-fishing at home, than to engage in agricultural labours. When the gentry can prevail on a man to undertake the work of their farms, he is paid about L. 6 Sterling per annum and maintained. A woman servant is paid for farm-work, or the management of the dairy, from L. 1, 10s. to L. 2 per annum, and is maintained, and receives various perquisites besides, which will make up her fee to L. 1 more. Neither men nor women do half of the work that is required at the hands of servants in the south, nor is their labour so productive.

Labourers and artisans seldom want employment, and are well paid, and when they are sober and economical they save money, as living to them is comparatively cheap. A good stone-mason

receives from 2s. 6d. to 3s. a day; inferior workmen, 2s.; and day labourers, 1s. a day. A house-carpenter can earn 2s. 6d.; a boat's carpenter, as much; a tailor, 2s.; and a shoemaker, 1s. 6d. a day. The rates at Lerwick may be somewhat different, and in some cases higher.

Live-stock.—The breed of sheep, black-cattle, and horses, with a few exceptions, which cannot be mentioned as improvements, is much the same as it has been for time immemorial. The native breed is most suitable for the country and climate, and under proper management, would be by far the most valuable. The cows, for their size, are excellent milkers, and their milk is of the very richest quality. The sheep, when attended to properly, carry remarkably fine wool, and their mutton is highly prized for its delicacy and flavour. But, what is the concern of a great number is the concern of nobody, and as the cattle go at large and feed promiscuously on the commons, no attention is paid to their breed, and, the consequence is, they are degenerating fast. This is remarkably the case with the fine, lively, sagacious, and active breed of native ponies. They are now much smaller in size than they were thirty years ago, entirely owing to the fact, that all the best and stoutest are exported, and stallions of the most puny size are allowed to go at large.

Quarries and Mines.—Chromate of iron, discovered on this island by Professor Jameson, and afterwards found in large quantities by Dr Hibbert, in the course of his mineralogical survey, has been raised and carried to market in its crude state in considerable quantity, for which a very fair price was at first realized; but of late, it has been discovered in Norway and in other places, and the free importation of it being allowed, the price now offered is very low. There are also limestone quarries at Cliff and in the neighbourhood of Balliasta. The tenants of those districts are allowed to work the quarries, and to manufacture the stone into lime on their own account. The lime is usually sold at the rate of one shilling per barrel, and becomes a source of considerable emolument to those who engage in the work.

Fisheries.—This is the most important branch of industry in Zetland, and which the men prosecute with much spirit and skill; and although often exposed to the most imminent danger, on a rough and boisterous sea, and although many valuable lives are often lost in this hazardous pursuit, (as was the case in 1832, when seventeen boats with their crews, five of them belonging to this pa-

fish, were overtaken by a dreadful storm, and buried in the sea,) yet, with undaunted courage, they launch out in their small open skiffs, to a distance of thirty or forty miles from the shore, and appear to be more in their element when so employed, than in any other occupation. Their boats are now built somewhat larger than they were in former days. They measure from 18 to 22 feet in length of keel, with six men in each, and they carry from 60 to 100 ground lines, each 42 fathoms in length, with hooks fastened to them by a smaller line, of about 3 feet in length, and at the distance of 5 fathoms from each other. The boats and lines are either furnished by the fishermen, at their own expense, or hired out to them, by the land-owners, or others, who purchase their fish in a green state, and cure them for the market. When the fishing is successful, they may average from 80 to 100 cwt., for which they receive, from 5s. to 6s., and sometimes as high as 7s. per cwt. Ling, cod, and tusk, and seath or coal-fish, were long the only fish which were considered marketable, and of these great numbers were caught, salted and dried, and sent to Spain, Ireland, and to Leith, and sold at from L. 12 to L. 22 per ton, for ling and tusk; and from L. 9. to L. 12 for cod and seath. Immense shoals of herrings, annually, visit the coasts of Zetland, and every summer for a long series of years, the Dutch have fitted out a great number of busses, which have appeared in swarms, in the harbours and along the shores of Zetland, and remained in the undisturbed possession of the herring fishery, to the great emolument of their country. It never entered into the minds of the Zetlanders, that they might with the greatest ease come in for a share of their gains, until within these few years, when some public-spirited gentlemen have exerted themselves to rouse their countrymen to a sense of their own interests, and to engage in that lucrative branch of industry. The herring-fishery is now fairly begun, and promises to be a source of great additional wealth to the people. The land-owners, in general, furnish nets, which they either hire out to the fishermen, or advance to them, at prime cost, to be paid for from the proceeds of the fish, within a time limited by agreement. They also provide casks, and salt, and take upon themselves the whole expense and risk of curing, and sending the herrings to market. The fishermen are paid so much per cran, and as there is a good deal of competition, they are sure of the highest price that can be afforded. The amount of fish cured and marked by the fishery officer in the year 1831 was as under :

Amount of ling, tusk, and cod-fish exported from Unst, which may be considered a fair average, 190 tons at L. 17,	L. 3230	0	0
Seath or coal-fish, 20 tons at L. 9,	180	0	0
840 barrels of herring would nett,	504	0	0
Add to this fish of all kinds used by the inhabitants as food, at an average less than $\frac{1}{2}$ d., per diem, each person,	2000	0	0
	Total, L. 5914 0 0		

Produce of Land.—The amount of produce raised annually in this parish, consisting of corn, potatoes, turnips, cabbages, hay, grazing of cattle, sheep, and horses, and swine, together with fowls, eggs, &c. may be averaged at L. 4 Sterling per acre, or merk of cultivated ground, or somewhat above L. 8000 Sterling per annum.

Manufactures.—Articles of woollen hosiery, chiefly consisting of stockings and gloves, are the principal manufacture in this parish. They are knit by the females, and are highly prized for their softness and the beauty of their texture. The demand for Zetland hosiery is not nearly so great now as formerly; yet the quantity sold is still very considerable. Stockings vary in price from 1s. to 10s. per pair, (a few pairs of extraordinary fineness are sold for L. 2 per pair), and gloves from 1s. to 10s., or even sometimes as high as 15s. per pair. The only other manufacture of any account is a coarse kind of woollen cloth, which is dyed blue, black, or red, according to fancy, and constitutes a considerable part of the daily wear of both men and women.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

The only market-town in Zetland is Lerwick, at least forty miles distant from this parish by sea. Cattle are driven by land to be sold there, at very considerable expense, and with great toil, through bleak swampy mossy hills, without any trace of a road or bridge, and they have also to be transported in boats, over two sounds or arms of the sea, where the tide runs with extreme rapidity, and renders the passage uncertain and dangerous. When the inhabitants are disposed to sell any other part of their produce at Lerwick, they carry it thither in their own boats, and bring back with them such necessaries as their families stand in need of, and they can afford to purchase. Until about the year 1820, this was the only mode of communication betwixt Unst and Lerwick, where the general post-office is established, and all letters and newspapers coming from the southward had to remain there, to wait any opportunity that might occur, unless when it was found expedient to dispatch an express, at a considerable expense. To remedy this inconveni-

ence experienced by all, some gentlemen residing in Lerwick, in the year 1820, entered into an agreement to engage a man to travel as post betwixt Lerwick and this place, and to call at several intermediate stations, and to carry all such letters and papers as might be committed to his charge. People residing in the country parishes have some agent, or friend in Lerwick, who receives their letters from the general post-office, and puts them into the hands of the person who is appointed to make up the mail for the landward districts, where there are receiving-houses conveniently situated. This plan has been found to answer extremely well. The post travels twice a-week, and greatly adds to the comfort of this remote parish and other parts of the country.*

Fences in general are of a very inferior kind. A ring fence, of turf and stone intermingled, about three feet high, surrounds townships, of from 80 to 100 merks of land, often belonging to different proprietors. Within this fence there are from 12 to 40 small farms, for the most part lying run-rig; and the consequence of this mode of division is, that the tenants cannot, if they had the inclination, raise crops of ryegrass and turnips, because it is not in their power to protect them from the cattle. The land-owners have good sufficient stone fences around their own farms, and they have them also subdivided into enclosures of six or seven acres each, and are thus enabled to have a judicious rotation of crops. They are now beginning to see the inconvenience to their tenants of the old system, and are having their farms laid in one spot, with the view, it is hoped, of enclosing them. Indeed, the work of enclosing has been going on, in a very spirited manner, for the last three years; and although this cannot be converted into an agricultural country—the pursuits of the people, as fishermen, the variableness of the climate, and the want of good markets for any extra produce, being insurmountable obstacles in the way,—yet there is good hope that such improvements may be effected, as will meet the demands of an increasing population, and enable the people to procure for themselves many additional comforts.

Balta Sound, on the middle of the east coast, and Uyea Sound, at the south end of the island, (already mentioned,) are much frequented harbours, and as good, and of as easy access, as any in the kingdom. It is much to be regretted, that there is no lighthouse to direct distressed mariners to their entrance. Such a work is as necessary on the north, as it has been found to be on the south extremity of

* There is now a Government penny post, established in place of this private arrangement.—1841.

Zetland. Many a vessel tossed on the north sea, and in dark and stormy nights ready to be dashed against our rocks, would hail with joy the appearance of a light, by which they might be guided to a safe place of refuge—and many valuable lives, and many a valuable cargo would thus be saved. There are two places where such an erection might be made, for the benefit of all vessels coming from the north and east, viz. Lambaness, a long projecting headland which forms the north side of the bay of Norwick in Unst, and Strandiburgh in the Island of Fetlar.

Ecclesiastical State.—The parish church is as nearly as possible in the middle of the island, distant six miles from the northern and southern extremities, and one and a-half from the eastern and western. It was built from the foundation, at a small distance from the old church of Balliasta in 1825. It is a handsome, substantial, well-finished, and commodious place of worship, and does great honour to the heritors who erected it, at the expense of about L. 2000 Sterling. It has accommodation for 1200 souls, with a sufficient number of free sittings for the poor. There is at present no manse in the parish. The incumbent lives in a house of his own, and receives an allowance from the heritors in lieu of a manse, and with this arrangement all concerned are well satisfied.

The glebe is at Norwick, about four miles to the northward of the church. It consists of 14 imperial acres of very good land, and, although let to a tenant considerably lower, is worth L.9 Sterling per annum.

The tithes are valued, and the stipend, which is paid by the heritors, including communion elements, amounts to L.249 Sterling.

A small chapel was lately built by a few Independents, and another by the Wesleyan Methodists near Norwick. They have no stated ministers, but are occasionally visited by some preachers of their own persuasion, who are paid by their respective Societies.

About 487 families, comprehending an examinable population of nearly 1900 souls, attend the Established Church, two-thirds of which it is found to accommodate sufficiently, on all ordinary occasions. The people, in general, attend well. When the weather is favourable, the church is full. The number of communicants is generally from 1150 to 1200. The number of Independents in this parish, is 15; of Wesleyan Methodists, 25.

Church collections average about L. 30 per annum.

Education.—There are only two schools in this parish,—a pa-

SHETLAND.

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rochial school near the church, and a school on the General Assembly's scheme at Norwick. The branches taught at these schools are, English, reading, writing, arithmetic, book-keeping, and navigation. The parochial schoolmaster's salary is the maximum. The school fees are about L. 6 per annum : but the school being situated in a very populous district, a more efficient schoolmaster would double that amount. The Assembly's schoolmaster has L.25 Sterling of salary ; and his school fees may vary from L.10 to L. 12.

There are no persons in the parish from six to fifteen years of age, who cannot read a little. But there are still a few aged people who cannot read.

The north and mid parishes of this ministry are now well supplied with schools, which are within reach of the whole population, and well attended, the Assembly's school especially, which is full to overflowing, and is accounted by the people a great blessing. Yet there is still a large part of the population in a most deplorable state for the want of schools. The south-east, south, and south-west parts of the island, with a population of at least 1200 souls, are at the distance of from four to six miles from the parish school, separated from the mid-parish, where it is situated, by a long dreary hill ; and the people have no means for the education of their children, unless when they can occasionally engage some young man, during the winter quarter, who has been educated at the parochial or Assembly's school, to undertake the charge.

Two additional schools, one at the south-east, and another at the south-west part of the parish, are greatly wanted, and loudly called for. The people about Uyea Sound, and Sandwick and Muness, are, many of them, exceedingly anxious about the education of their children. In that district, were a school established, 100 children could easily attend it ; and surely in the present enlightened times, it is sad to think that so many young creatures should be deprived of the means of instruction.*

Library.—In the year 1823, a parochial library was established, under the direction of the present incumbent. It is supported by a subscription of 1s. yearly, paid by each member ; and as many

* Since this was written, a school-house has been built in the proposed locality, chiefly at the expense of the late William Mout, Esq. of Garth, by whose lamented death the cause of education in these islands has been deprived of one of its warmest and most generous friends. A salary has been granted and a teacher appointed by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge. The people on the west side of the island are still lamentably destitute of the means of education for their children.

of the parishioners as choose, have it in their power to become members at any time. It has succeeded very well, and consists of about 300 volumes of religious and historical books.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—There are about 70 poor people constantly on the roll. They receive from 5s. to 10s. per annum, to help to purchase clothes. They are lodged and victualled by a certain number of the people, fixed upon by the kirk-session, who keep them in their houses a certain number of days, in rotation, in proportion to the number of merks of land they occupy; and they are generally well treated. Some of the poor have small houses built for them by their friends, in which they live, and the people amongst whom they are quartered* send in to them part of such provisions as they have for themselves, and, in this respect, they shew much kindness, for we seldom hear that the poor are in want of necessary food.

The ordinary church collections amount to about L. 30 per annum, and a demand for an extraordinary contribution does not frequently occur. But when it does, and a collection is called for in aid of any individual case of distress, it is as liberal as could be looked for, considering the circumstances of the people, and no other mode of procuring funds for the support of the poor has hitherto been found necessary. It is, however, much to be regretted, that there appears no disposition among the poor to refrain from seeking parochial relief. So far from considering it degrading, they express the greatest earnestness to have their names placed upon the roll, when they have the slightest pretence for making the request, and when a "quarter" becomes vacant, by the death of a pauper, there are always immediate applications for it. It is hoped, that, as the minds of the people become more enlarged by a Christian education, they will assume a more independent spirit.

Public-Houses, &c.—There is no house in this parish which can be properly called an inn; but the kindness and hospitality of the people are such, that a stranger can never be at a loss, and there are two houses in the neighbourhood of Uyea Sound, kept by shop-keepers, where wayfaring men will find very comfortable lodgings. There are seven licensed retailers of spirits, ale and porter, in this island. Some of these are of too respectable characters, to allow of any improprieties in their houses; but there are others who retail liquors, and some of them without license, who are a nuisance in their neigh-

* That district or number of houses, fixed upon by the kirk-session, for the maintenance of a pauper, is called a "quarter."

bourhood, and who use every art to engage the young men in drinking to the great injury of their morals, and the waste of their substance. The population, with a few exceptions, is in general sober, yet the quantity of ardent spirits exhausted in the parish, was some years ago very great, equalling in value one-half of the rent of the island. There is now a great change. The institution of a Temperance Society in November 1831, has produced a very happy effect. The quantity of liquors now exhausted in the parish, is less than the half of what it formerly was.*

Fuel.—Peats from the hills of Valleyfield and Saxa Vord, are the only article of fuel used by the tenantry, and are procured by many at no small labour and expense, especially on the east side of the island, where peat-moss is completely exhausted. Besides the labour of cutting and drying them, the people are obliged to employ from eight to ten horses, for the space of five or six weeks, every summer, to carry them home, and these must be attended by a person to put on the loads, and one or two boys to drive the horses. Most of the gentry use a considerable quantity of English coal.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

Very considerable changes have taken place here, since the last Statistical Account was published, some of which have been glanced at in the course of the foregoing observations. The farms are now smaller, and more adapted for a population of fishermen, whose avocations allow them but little time for farm-work, and who have but very little inclination for it. They are, however, sufficiently large to supply them with meal, potatoes, cabbages, &c.; and to enable them to keep a sufficient number of milch cows, horses, sheep, and some pigs; and they have at all times an abundant supply of the best fish, both for family use and for the market. Favourable seasons and successful fishings have placed many of them in easy circumstances, and enabled them to indulge in the luxury of tea, formerly little known among them, but now used in the greater number of families twice every day.

In consequence of the reduction of the size of the farms, ploughs have entirely disappeared from amongst the tenantry. That implement of husbandry is now only employed on the farms of the

* Since this statement was drawn up, a society has been formed in this parish, based on the principle of total abstinence from all intoxicating liquors, and which already numbers upwards of 350 members. Two of the most extensive spirit-dealers in the parish have wholly abandoned the traffic, from conscientious convictions of its impropriety; and it is hoped the rest will soon be led to adopt the same course.

gentry, and is of the same construction with the ploughs used in the south country. The old Zetland plough has now yielded to the spade, and is nowhere to be seen.

In this island, far removed from a market-town, great or rapid improvements in agriculture are not to be expected. It is well adapted for a population whose chief employment is fishing, and who hold their small farms as cheap places of abode, and for furnishing them with various comforts, which they could not have, if they had only their fishing to depend upon. Yet improvements are silently going on, and considerable quantities of ground are, from year to year, added to the old arable land. If the commons were divided, and the improvable parts inclosed, from time to time, as the population increases, portions of them would be willingly taken at a low rent and cultivated by tenants; and this is the only way in which improvements could be prudently made in this place. To attempt speculations in agriculture here, on a large scale, would be the height of folly.

Revised May 1841.