

PARISH OF ATHELSTANEFORD.

PRESBYTERY OF HADDINGTON, SYNOD OF LOTHIAN AND
TWEEDDALE.

THE REV. WILLIAM RITCHIE, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—ATHELSTANEFORD is named from Athelstan, an English commander, who was slain here in a battle with the Scots about the beginning of the ninth century.* In the second volume of Camden's Britannia, there is the following statement:—"A little from Haddington stands Athelstanford, so named from Athelstan,

* Several hamlets, built in places much exposed to the wind, are named the Gowl, and sometimes Windy Gowl, which last is a reduplication. Of ancient names, we have the following, Congal-ton, Dongal-ton, Fingal-ton, and Fingal Street.

an English commander, who was slain with his men there about the year 815; but that this was Athelstan, the warlike King of the West Saxons, must be utterly denied, if we have any regard to the time and manner of his death." Tradition still points to the place, near the ford of the brook, where Athelstan fell and was buried.

Extent and Boundaries.—This parish is four miles in length, and about three in breadth, being on the south side somewhat irregular. In breadth it extends from the stream called Peffer, which divides it from the parish of Dirleton on the north, and reaches in one part to the river Tyne, where it is bounded on the south by the parish of Haddington. It is bounded by the same parish on the west, and on the east by the parish of Prestonkirk. The church and village of Athelstaneford stand near the middle of the parish,—three miles from Haddington, six from North Berwick, and nine from Dunbar; the two last towns being seaports. The village stands somewhat elevated, and commands an extensive view of the adjacent country, of the Frith of Forth, the county of Fife, the Bass Rock, and the Island of May.

Topographical Appearances.—The low lands of East Lothian have an undulating appearance; they are formed into large ridges, lying east and west, and sloping gently toward the sea. On one of these ridges stand the church and village of Athelstaneford. The surface of this parish exhibits considerable inequalities, the lower parts having most probably sunk down at an early period, and the rocky places, left almost bare, retain their ancient elevation. The columns of rock lying at a gentle slope, and in some places almost horizontal in the large knoll called Sydserf Hill, and some very remarkable appearances near Balgone, the property of Sir James Grant Suttie, afford striking indications that the low lands of East Lothian do not now retain their former elevation. It is certain the strata in most places in this neighbourhood have been greatly disturbed, and are seldom found in their natural state. The rocks in this parish are of whinstone and gray porphyry, the last of which is exceedingly hard. No limestone nor freestone has been found in this parish, and the coal, lying deep in the bowels of the earth, has not as yet been discovered, though various attempts have been made to find it. The quarries in this parish have produced nothing remarkable, except some beautiful specimens of rock crystal.

Meteorology.—The climate of East Lothian has changed greatly for the better within sixty years. About that period the air of this county was far from being salubrious, particularly in the low district, or north of the Tyne. At that time the lands were not laid dry, large stagnant pools were to be found in many places, field drainage not being practised, except in open cuts or furrows; and fevers and ague greatly afflicted the inhabitants. Many young persons were carried off by consumption, and a number of respectable families were greatly diminished, and some entirely swept away, by the prevalence of that disease. Since the beginning of the present century, fevers and consumption are far less common in this district, and ague has completely disappeared. The people now enjoy much better health than formerly, and generally arrive at a greater age. Three persons have lately died in this village at the age of ninety, another at the age of ninety-one. During the incumbency of the present minister, two women have reached ninety-five. These persons retained their mental faculties to the last, and died apparently without pain.

A considerable change of the atmosphere of this county in winter has taken place of late years, so much so, that we have had almost no frost in the lower district of this county until the beginning of January. Last season, 1834, we had, strictly speaking, no winter, the plough having been never arrested by the frost; and spring began early, accompanied with an agreeable and genial warmth. During that period the wind was almost always from the west, and the number of deaths in this parish was few, compared with what usually happens here at that season of the year. The heavy rains which visit this county are from the east and north-east, and these sometimes continue without intermission two or three days. Rain from any other point is of short duration. Formerly, dense fogs frequently spread over this county, particularly in the months of April and May, and would have remained two, and sometimes three days; but since the lands have been drained, that dense vapour appears less frequently, and when it comes, is of shorter duration. Whatever effect it may have on the human frame, it is favourable to the growth of plants. When this county is visited by a thunder storm, the thick and dark cloud generally appears first above the hills which separate this county from Berwickshire, and spreading wide, it either passes along the same range of hills to the eastern sea, or crosses the county by Gladsmuir, to which

it seems powerfully attracted, and enters the frith at Aberlady Bay.

Hydrography.—There is no river or considerable stream of water in this parish, except two brooks which run along the sides of the ridge which comprehends the parish of Athelstaneford. That on the north side is named the Peffer. It rises in a meadow in the lower district of the parish, and dividing itself into two branches, the one flows eastward and enters the sea, north of Tynninghame; the other moves slowly westward to Aberlady Bay. Each branch flows about five miles before its waters unite themselves with the sea. When the course of the Peffer was widened and deepened some years ago, several stag horns were found, about two and a half feet below the surface; and large oak trees have been oftentimes found imbedded in moss on the banks of that stream; and the farmers who discovered them told the writer of this account, that the trees were generally found with their tops lying to the south; for in this quarter the most violent storms come from the north and north-east. Before the waters of that district were confined and carried off by the course made for that purpose, the whole strath extending from Aberlady Bay to Peffer mouth near Tynningham, about eleven miles in length, was one continued morass, and anciently covered with wood, the habitation of wild beasts.* But the banks of that slow running stream are now converted into fertile corn fields. Before that improvement the valuable fields on both

* That a considerable part of the low lands in this part of the county was covered with wood in the thirteenth century appears from the history of the family of Livingstone of Saltcoats, in the parish of Dirleton. The whole line of the Peffer, including part of the lands of Fenton and Chapel, and stretching towards North Berwick Law, is said to have been at that time covered with wood, the den of wild beasts, and greatly infested with wild boars, one of which is said to have been of great size, and exceedingly destructive to those who dwelt in that neighbourhood. At that time fire arms were not used for defence, and the only way of attacking and destroying the ferocious beast, was with a spear, or sword, in hand. A reward was offered to any one who should destroy the monster, and the reward promised was a track of land extending from Gulan to North Berwick Law, or rather the right of pasturage for cattle on that district, which appears to have remained in common so late as the beginning of the last century, when these lands were divided by the Sheriff of the county, among those who had a servitude upon them. A man named Livingstone had courage to undertake, and strength to perform the enterprise. Having armed himself with a strong spear, and his right hand and arm shielded with a glove of thick leather, he encountered and killed the ferocious beast, and obtained the promised reward. When a division of the lands took place, the heirs of Livingstone got about four hundred acres of land in four separate parcels, the first commencing at Gulan, and the fourth being the farm of Hard-Rigs, which is bounded on the east by North Berwick Law. These four parcels, now distinct farms, still comprehend the estate of Saltcoats. The family of Livingstone of Saltcotes became extinct about the middle of last century, and when the household furniture was sold, the ancient spear and glove were found hanging in the garret of the mansion house, and were sold for a trifle to a gentleman of the name of Livingstone, then resident in Edinburgh.

sides of the stream were covered with water, at least during the winter season, and that fine alluvial strath rendered in a great degree unproductive; now they produce luxuriant crops. When the bed of the Peffer was deepened, marine remains were expected to be found in it, but nothing of that kind appeared, though the source of the stream is said to be not more than twenty-five or thirty feet above the level of the sea.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

About the middle of the thirteenth century, a branch of the ancient family of Frazer of Tweeddale possessed the lands of East and West Forton, in this parish, amounting to 1500 acres; for we find various grants made about that time, to religious houses in Scotland, by the proprietor of those lands, and in particular one donative was given to the brethren of the Cross Church of Peebles from the lands of East Forton, the value of which is known. The principal part of the revenue of the Cross Church of Peebles was given to the Duke of Queensberry at the Revolution 1688, and by him conferred on his second son, William Earl of March. Among other favours he obtained the grant by Frazer, of Forton, and that donative had been reckoned of so much value that it was named in the deed of entail of the March estate, and has descended to the Earl of Wemyss, the present proprietor. The particulars of that donative are as follows: Wheat 8 bolls; barley 16½; rye 8½; money Sterling L. 4, 16s. 3½d.

The same person, probably Barnard Frazer,* son of Sir Simon, the elder, gave a large meadow out of his lands of west Forton to the Abbey of Newbottle. At the Reformation, when church lands fell to the Crown, King James the Sixth, at his accession to the throne of England, conferred that meadow on his faithful servant Sir Gideon Murray. It forms a valuable farm of upwards of 200 acres, and is named Prora, the property of Lord Elibank. It is the only parcel of land in this parish that has remained in one family since the above-mentioned period.

One of the most valuable baronies in this parish is the barony of Drem, containing above 800 acres of fine land. In former times it belonged to the Knights Templars, where they kept a considerable establishment. The priest's house is still standing; and his garden adjoining, defended by a holly hedge, which is still in a vigorous state. The chapel, the greater part of which still

* Crawford's Lives of the Officers of State.

remains, appears to have been a small, but a neat structure; and the burial ground attached is now converted into a fruitful garden.

Eminent Men.—The lands of Athelstaneford, 200 years ago, belonged to a gentleman named Hepburn. When General Leslie's army were encamped on the west of Haddington, near to Gladsmuir, before the battle of Philiphaugh, Hepburn of Athelstaneford, attended by his five sons, paid a visit to the General at his camp; and Leslie was so much struck with the appearance of one of the sons, that he offered him a commission in his army, which was readily accepted. Young Hepburn conducted himself in the Scottish army with propriety and courage; and when peace was restored to Scotland, Hepburn, fond of the military profession, entered the service of Gustavus of Sweden, received the honour of knighthood from that sovereign, and was made Colonel of the Scottish Brigade. Afterwards, he went into the French service, and died a field-marshal of France. The Memoirs of Sir John Hepburn is a scarce but interesting narrative.

Mr John Walker, who possessed considerable property in this parish, is celebrated as the person who first introduced the system of fallowing land, and of thereby raising wheat crops far more extensively than formerly. He was a person of great intelligence and enterprise, and set an excellent example of superior farm culture to his neighbours. He was descended from the family of Walker of St Fort in Fife, and flourished about the time of the Revolution. He was great great-grandfather to Sir Francis Walker Drummond of Hawthornden, Bart.

The Rev. Robert Blair, author of *The Grave*, was fifteen years minister of this parish, and was buried in this churchyard, where a monument is erected to his memory.*

* A young gentleman, now a minister of the Church of Scotland, walking one day, some years ago, in the minister's garden, which is separated from the churchyard, and particularly from the spot where the poet's ashes rest, only by the breadth of the garden wall, composed the following lines :

Hushed in the place of which he sung,
Is Blair's arresting solemn tongue.
This garden plot was once his room, †
Behind this wall is now his tomb.

There all is trodden under foot,
Here all is blossom, flower, and fruit,—
An emblem of what death may crave,
What genius rescues from the grave.

† The spot where the old manse stood is now part of the minister's garden; and the room where the poet sat and wrote was called *The Grave*, so long as the old manse stood.

The late Robert Blair, Lord President of the Court of Session in Scotland, a gentleman distinguished no less for his private virtues than for his high attainments as a lawyer, and his unrivalled character as a judge, was a native of this parish, of which his father was minister. When but a boy, in the fourth year of his age, he had the misfortune to lose his revered father; but his education was carefully attended to by his excellent mother, and by his maternal uncle, William Law, Esq. of Elvingston, Sheriff of Haddingtonshire. Mr Blair died 1811, aged sixty-eight. His death was greatly lamented, and deemed a public loss.

Mr John Home, author of the Tragedy of Douglas, succeeded Mr Blair, as minister of this parish. He was ordained at Athelstaneford, 11th February 1747. Although he was ten years minister here, he never took up his residence in the manse. When at home he lodged in the village; but he had a very unsettled habit, generally moving from place to place, and living with his friends. He was a welcome guest at the houses of many of the gentlemen of East Lothian; and was exceedingly fond of gay company.*

Mr Archibald Skirving, distinguished as a portrait-painter, was a native of this parish. He pursued his studies at Rome for a considerable time with intense application, and rose to eminence in his profession. He was never afflicted with any bodily trouble

In this same spot, at such an hour,
He viewed the scene, and felt its power;
At this same hour, a saint in Heaven,
He feels o'er death the triumph given.

Charmed by thy verse, to court thy theme,
Cheered by thy Scripture borrowed beam,
Sweet Poet, may we fearless trust
To God our souls, to earth our dust.

* It appears that he was admonished by his Presbytery for being absent from his parish three months, 1755, without leave asked or given. His Tragedy of Douglas appears to have been performed for the first time in the month of December 1756; for, in January following, the Presbytery of Edinburgh wrote a letter to the Presbytery of Haddington, informing them, "That a gentleman of their number had attended the Play-house in Edinburgh, for a number of nights successively, during the representation of a profane play called Douglas, of which that gentleman was commonly reported to be the author; and that, as the scandal happened within the bounds of the Presbytery of Edinburgh, that body had thought themselves bound in duty to give regular intimation of the same to the Presbytery of Haddington." Before the Presbytery of Haddington could enter on this matter, Douglas had begun to be acted on the London stage, and Mr Home had set off for that city in the beginning of February, and did not return to his charge until 4th May that year. It does not appear, from the Record of the Presbytery, that any thing was done by the Presbytery relative to the letter from the Presbytery of Edinburgh, nor with respect to Mr Home's long absence from his charge; it being understood that, after the term of Whitsunday, he was to resign his charge; and this he did at a meeting of Presbytery held at Athelstaneford, 7th June 1757.



during his lifetime, and he died suddenly, when pursuing his usual exercise, having just completed the seventieth year of his age. His dust rests with that of his ancestors in Athelstanesford church-yard, where a marble monument is erected to his memory. "By simplifying the comforts of life, he rose to private independence," as one has said of him, and left considerable property to his relatives. For some years before his death, he kept a riding-horse, and lived more in the style of a country gentleman than of an artist. About that time his professional labours did not exceed one likeness in the twelvemonths, and its price was one hundred guineas. The time and labour he bestowed on his likenesses were great beyond what can be expressed. Had he painted for gain, he might have left a large fortune; but his great object in painting seemed to be to please his own fine taste.

Parochial Registers.—The parochial registers of this parish have been kept correctly since the beginning of last century, and are generally written in a fair hand. The register before 1688 is imperfect. The record of the Presbytery of Haddington commences at the first establishment of Presbytery after the period of the Reformation, is entire, and appears to have been correctly kept.

Modern Buildings.—The only modern building of large dimension in this parish is the mansion house of Sir David Kinloch, Baronet, of Gilmerton.

An old baronial mansion of large extent stands in this parish, formerly the residence of the Earls of Winton. Part of it is still inhabited, but the greater part is in ruins. It had been built in the form of a square: an excellent garden and fine bowling green are attached. The house had been defended by a strong wall, and on the north side also by a deep moat. George Earl of Winton in large gilt letters is still legible in the ceiling of the principal room.

Ancient Families.—Of the ancient families of distinction in East Lothian, whose ancestors swore fealty to Edward I. of England at Berwick A. D. 1296, there does not appear to be any now existing, and in possession of the lands they then held, except Brown of Colestone, the last branch of which family is the Right Honourable Christian Brown, Countess of Dalhousie.

It is perhaps not unworthy of notice, that the lands of East Forton, after passing into various families, are again in the possession of a lineal descendant of the renowned Sir Simon Frazer of Peeblesshire, whose eldest daughter was married to the ancestor of the

Marquis of Tweeddale, and brought with her a large accession of property. The present proprietor of the estate of East Forton, Sir Francis Walker Drummond of Hawthornden, Bart., being a lineal descendant of the noble house of Tweeddale, has the blood of Sir Simon Frazer flowing in his veins.

Antiquities.—When the road-man was opening a new quarry three years ago for metal to the roads, in the spot where Athelstan is said to have been buried, he and his men being engaged removing the stratum of earth which covered the rock, found a stone coffin containing the remains of a human body in a very decayed state. Part of the cranium was not decomposed; a considerable part of the under jaw remained, and the enamel on the teeth was surprisingly white, considering the length of time the body had been buried. The coffin was but two and a-half feet below the surface. It was formed of five handsome freestones,—one at each side of the body, one at the head, another at the feet, placed at right angles, and one for a covering. The stones forming the coffin had been cemented together with a fine paste made apparently of clay, to prevent the admission of the external air. A cavity had been cut in the surface of the hard rock, six feet two inches in length, thirty inches in breadth, and four in depth, in which the body had been laid, and where it was found. The stones that formed the coffin rested on the sides of the cavity on a bed of fine clay. Nothing was found in the coffin but what has been stated. An intelligent mason examined the stones, and was of the opinion that no freestone of the same quality as that which formed the coffin has hitherto been found nearer to Athelstaneford than at the distance of eight miles. The under jaw and coffin of the warrior are in the possession of Sir David Kinloch, the proprietor of the estate of Athelstaneford.

History records that the lands on which the battle of Athelstaneford was fought and won, were given by the King of the Scots to the Culdee Priory of St Andrews, as an acknowledgment of gratitude to Heaven for the victory obtained. At the Reformation, when monkish institutions were abolished in Scotland, these lands were conferred on the Chapel Royal of Holyroodhouse, with which they are still connected, and form a considerable part of the income drawn by the present dean or deans of that venerable fane. The late Sir David Kinloch, Bart. of Gilmerton, obtained from the Crown a perpetual lease of these lands at the following rent:—

wheat, 46 bolls, Linlithgow measure; barley, 51 bolls ditto; oats,

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35 bolls ditto. Kain fowls ; 1 dozen of hens, 2 dozen of poultry or chickens. The rent is doubled for one year at every singular succession of the family of Kinloch of Gilmerton.

On the barony of Drem are the remains of a Pictish town, situated on the top of a low hill, of a conical form, which is almost level on the summit, and which contains about two acres of land. The houses, the foundations of which are still obvious, had been built round the sides of the summit in regular rows, and the greater part in a conical form. In the centre are the foundations of oblong houses of larger dimensions. The conical houses are generally twelve feet in diameter within the walls. The town had been strongly fortified,—first by a deep circumvallation, and higher up the sides of the hill by three ramparts quite perpendicular ; from the top of the one rampart to the bottom of the higher there is a level space of eighteen feet, from whence the inhabitants could defend themselves with great advantage from their assailants. On the west side of the hill, looking towards Edinburgh, are three deep trenches in succession, before coming to the first circumvallation. These out-works appear to have been raised on account of a small Roman station in that direction, about half a-mile from the Pictish town ; for several Roman implements have been found there, and two years ago a large urn of superior workmanship, containing calcined bones, was found in the same spot. The name of the farmstead is commonly called Captain-Head, which is evidently a corruption for Camptown Head. The urn is in the possession of Mr David Skirving, farmer, of Camptown Head. The lands belong to the Earl of Hopetoun.

III.—POPULATION.

The population of this parish amounted at last census to 931 ; at present it amounts to 951. Of these, twelve are Dissenters, but during the last thirty years the number of Dissenters have seldom exceeded one for every hundred of the inhabitants. The native inhabitants of the parish are sober, industrious, and well behaved : The strangers amongst us are less so, with some exceptions.

The number of families in the parish is	212
chiefly employed in agriculture,	132
in trade, manufacture, or handicraft,	46

There is but one family of independent fortune resident in this parish, and the whole lands belong to the following persons of distinction. Sir David Kinloch, Bart. 18 ploughgates ; Earl of Hopetoun, 13 ditto ; Earl of Wemyss, 7 ditto ; Sir Francis W. Drummond,

Bart. of Hawthornden, 11 ditto; Sir Alexander Hope, 6 ditto; Lord Elibank, 3 ditto; Miss Grant of Congalton, 2 ditto.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—This parish consists of somewhat more than 4000 acres, 3750 of which are arable. The remainder is planted with wood, except 40 acres of hill pasturage. The writer of this account has not been able to ascertain the value of the whole agricultural produce of this parish; but he can state that the quantity of wheat produced in it annually is about 4000 quarters.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Ecclesiastical State.—The old church of Athelstaneford was built about the middle of the twelfth century by Ada, daughter of the Earl of Warenne and Surrey, and wife of Henry Prince of Scotland. She built and endowed an Abbey in the neighbourhood of Haddington, and gave the church of Athelstaneford to that religious establishment, to be served by its monks. She survived her husband twenty-six years, and like her father-in-law, King David I., left various proofs of her attachment to the church. She died, according to Lord Hailes, A. D. 1178, and in the 13th year of the reign of her son William, surnamed the Lion.* The church she built here, part of which is still standing, continued the parish church until the year 1780, when a more suitable one was built. It is not inconveniently situated for the inhabitants, and contains about 500 sittings.

The manse was built about the same time, and affords sufficient accommodation for the minister's family.

The glebe land consists of five acres, and is worth L. 15 per annum.

The stipend is fifteen chalders of victual, consisting of 116 bolls of barley, 116 bolls of oats, and 8 bolls of wheat, Linlithgow measure, payable according to the highest fiar prices of this county. When the present minister obtained an augmentation of his stipend a number of years ago, he asked of the Court a larger proportion of wheat, that being the kind of grain chiefly raised in this parish, and as there is a considerable portion of tithe wheat still unappropriated; but the Judges, with the exception of the late Lord Meadowbank, refused to grant the request. The minister receives also an annuity of L. 1, 8s. left by the late Mrs Hepburn of Monk Rig, who died about 180 years ago.

When the last Statistical Account of this parish was published,

* The barony of Athelstaneford was part of Ada's dowery lands.

the number of Dissenters is stated to have been thirty-four. Dissenters are not numerous within the bounds of this Presbytery, except in those parishes where the inhabitants cannot find accommodation in the parochial churches. The people in general are regular in their attendance on Divine ordinances, and decent in their deportment. The number of communicants is about 385, and sometimes 400.

Education.—There are three schools in this parish. The parochial school is in the village of Athelstaneford, and the schoolmaster has received a liberal education. The branches taught at this school are English, writing, arithmetic, geography, and the Latin and French languages. The schoolmaster's salary is the maximum; he is well accommodated with a house and garden, and the school room is one of the best within the county. The school fees are fixed at a low rate, and the number of scholars during winter and spring are between eighty and ninety, and they are in summer about seventy.

There is another school in this village established by the heritors for girls, taught by a woman, who instructs them in the first principles of the English language, and in needle-work. The number of young persons who attend this school is about twenty.

The Earls of Hopetoun have, for more than a century past, established a school on their lands in this parish, at which the common branches of education are taught. The schoolmaster has about L. 10 of salary, and a house and garden; and the number of his scholars is generally thirty-five in summer, and sixty during the winter.

In all these schools the principles of the Christian religion are carefully attended to. Lord Hopetoun's schoolmaster has been wont to keep a Sunday school in that part of the parish where he is settled, and a school of the same kind is kept in the village of Athelstaneford.

The people of this parish give their children the common branches of education taught at the parochial school; and although there be an influx of strangers at every Whitsuntide, yet the minister is not aware of any in this parish above six years old but have been taught to read. The kirk-session pay for the education of orphans, and a benevolent lady who resides in this parish pays for the education of those whose parents are in mean circumstances.

Libraries.—A parochial library was established here about thirty years ago; and the people are also well supplied with Mr Samuel

Brown's Itinerating libraries, presently consisting of 2600 volumes, in forty three divisions, each division remaining a year at one station, so that there is no want of books to them who are disposed to read.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—There never had been any assessment for the ordinary poor of this parish until a few months ago. The receipt of money from the weekly collections at the church doors, what is received for the use of a hearse, under the management of the kirk-session, and for mortcloths, have, with some savings previous to 1770, been adequate to supply the wants of the parochial poor. The people are regular in attending the church, and liberal, according to their circumstances, in giving to the poor; and it is for these reasons chiefly, that assessments for the support of the poor had not been found necessary in this parish until 1835. The kirk-session disburse to the parochial poor about L. 130 annually. Thirty years ago, when the present incumbent was settled here, the number of poor on the roll was almost the same as at present, but the monthly allowance to each is about one-third more now than it was then.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

At the time the last Statistical Account was published, the farms in this parish were too small, and a number of the farmers had not sufficient capital to carry on improvements. Grazing was not then practised to any considerable extent, and this prevented a proper rotation of crops. A large portion of the land was wet, and no proper means had been taken to lay it dry. The feeding of sheep and cattle on turnip was not then much practised, a great part of the land being unfit for that kind of crop. An improved mode of drainage has now greatly altered and ameliorated the soil; so much so, that a large extent of land in this parish formerly unfit for turnips, now bears weighty crops of that valuable root.

The present farmers are intelligent and skilful in the line of their profession, and the far greater part of them are doing every thing that wisdom joined with prudence can suggest for the improvement of their possessions. Nine-tenths of the land of this county being under entail, the improvements in agriculture which East Lothian exhibits, have arisen not so much from encouragement given by the landlords, as from the spirit and enterprise of the farmers. Drainage, however, when well executed, being deemed a permanent improvement, many of the landlords now show a readiness to bear a fair proportion of the expense of that

undertaking. Drainage, which ought to be one of the first improvements in agriculture, is now the crowning work in that department in this district of the country; and whilst it does honour to the proprietors and possessors of the soil, it is, as has been observed, diffusing an increase of health and comfort among the inhabitants.

The working classes in this parish are sober and industrious, and generally well behaved; they are lodged in comfortable houses, and their gains are equal to the maintenance of themselves and the education of their children. They are generally well qualified to perform the kind of work they undertake, and the male part display considerable knowledge and skill in rural affairs. To these topics, however, their knowledge is in a great measure confined. On the subjects of sacred history and religion their knowledge is very limited, particularly those of them who are somewhat advanced in years, and this ignorance arises from the want of religious instruction in youth. But the younger part of this class of the population is better educated and more intelligent than the aged, and the rising generation promises progressive improvement. This change is to be ascribed to a better educated and more efficient class of parochial teachers. It has been often found that a marked difference exists between the inhabitants of those parishes where the clergymen visit and catechise their parishioners annually, and where the youth have the benefit of Sunday schools, and the people of other parishes, where these advantages are not enjoyed. An intelligent, moral, and religious population, is an object so pleasing to a rightly constituted mind, and so advantageous to the interests of all, that it may well excite the ministers of the Gospel and instructors of youth, to increased diligence in their vocations, as they must be aware that their perseverance will be followed with the happiest results.

May 1835.