

PARISH OF KIRKURD.

PRESBYTERY OF PEEBLES, SYNOD OF LOTHIAN AND TWEEDDALE.

THE REV. DAVID ANDERSON, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name—Boundaries.—According to Chalmers in his *Caledonia*, the word Kirkurd was formed by prefixing the Scoto-saxon *Kirk* to *Urd*, the Celtic name of the place, signifying an eminence or height. This seems the most probable derivation of the name. The length of the parish from east to west is $5\frac{1}{2}$ English miles, and its breadth from north to south is from 3 to 4 miles. It is bounded by Broughton, Skirling, Dolphington, Linton, Newlands, and Stobo.

Topographical Appearances.—The highest hill in the parish is called Hell's Cleugh, which, according to Armstrong, is 2100 feet above the level of the sea. On the summit of this hill there is a small cairn called the *Pyked Stone*, the boundary of three parishes, Stobo, Broughton, and Kirkurd. This cairn commands a very extensive view. Towards the north-west, the view extends as far as Dumbartonshire, and towards the east as far as the Eildon hills, near Melrose, and the Cheviot hills in Northumberland.

Hydrography.—There is a copious sulphureous spring near Castlecraig. The late celebrated Dr Black, Professor of Chemistry, in the University of Edinburgh, from a chemical analysis, ascertained its water to be stronger than the sulphureous water at Moffat, but weaker than that at Harrowgate. It has been used with success in several diseases. The water Tarth flows along the north of the parish, and divides it from Linton and Newlands. This is the only stream in the parish.

The lands in this parish, though in general high, being betwixt 600 and 700 feet above the level of both the east and west sea, are notwithstanding healthful—the soil being for the most part gravelly. The soil appears to be well adapted for the growth of timber of various kinds, and a great deal of wood has been planted,

which tend much to beautify and improve the country. The prevailing winds are from the south-west, and the heavy rains are immediately absorbed. Rheumatism is the most prevalent distemper.

Geology.—The prevailing rocks in this parish appear to belong to the transition class.

Not long ago, in digging for marl in the Mount bog, several horns of the elk, in a high state of preservation, were found. It is conjectured that there must have been a lake at one time in that place, perhaps in a semifluid state, and that the deer running into it when pursued by the hunters had perished. In proof of there having been a lake, it may be mentioned, that, in boring for marl in another part of the bog, there were found several hazel-nuts by no means in a decayed state. The discovery of these horns affords one, among many other proofs, that this country must have abounded in former times very much in wood.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Eminent Men.—James Geddes of Rachan, whose ancestors possessed the large estate of Kirkurd for a long course of years, was born in this parish in the year 1710. He was educated for, and practised several years at, the bar, and was to have been appointed to the Bench of Judges. He died of consumption before he arrived at the age of forty. He published an Essay on the Composition and Manner of Writing of the Ancients, and left behind him several other tracts.

It is recorded in history, that, at the close of the civil wars with the Douglasses in the reign of James II., Sir David Scott of *Kirkurd* and Buccleuch obtained great gifts of land for his clan's service and his own at the battle of Arkinholme, in the valley of Esk, where the brothers of Douglas and his followers received a severe defeat, and that the possession of this landed property was the commencement of that course of greatness which afterwards raised his family to the dukedom.

Land-owners.—There are four proprietors in this parish, the principal of whom are Sir Thomas G. Carmichael, Bart. of Skirling, and John Lawson, Esq. of Cairnmuir. The former gentleman is patron of Kirkurd, and possesses several valuable estates in other parishes. His estates formerly belonged to John Earl of Hyndford, his grand-uncle. They are entailed in the male line.

Parochial Registers.—With regard to these, it may be stated, that three books exist containing part of the records of the kirk-session. The first begins in September 23, 1705, and ends Fe-

bruary 23, 1707; the second begins November 10, 1717, and ends July 12, 1724; the third begins January 3, 1725, and ends July 30, 1738. The registers have been regularly kept from October 27, 1742, to the present time.

Antiquities.—Several stones of a circular form are standing in the neighbourhood of old Harestanes, supposed to have been erected by the Druids for religious purposes.

Near Castlecraig house are two mounts called the Castle and the Law, supposed to have been sepulchral barrows of ancient construction, though afterwards used as stations for the administration of justice to a rude people. To the east of these is a circular fortification, on an eminence near Ladyurd, called the Rings, and another to the west called the Chesters. They are supposed to have been military erections.

At Mount-hill, about the year 1754, a stone chest enclosing a large clay urn containing human bones was found. And more recently there was found at the bottom of the same hill a stone coffin $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep, which contained human bones, among which were discovered three flint stones,—one resembling a halbert; another of a circular form; and the third of a cylindrical form, with a small ring, supposed to have been a Druidical amulet. In another part of the parish, there was also found a few years ago another stone coffin, formed of a great many stones rudely put together, and containing human bones.

Modern Buildings.—Castlecraig, the seat of Sir Thomas G. Carmichael, is an elegant and commodious mansion-house, erected by Sir John G. Carmichael, and enlarged and beautified by the present proprietor. The garden and pleasure grounds are very extensive, and tastefully laid out. The house at Cairnmuir, belonging to John Lawson, Esq. is also an excellent one, and well fitted for the accommodation of a large family.

III.—POPULATION.

Population in 1801,	-	327
1811,	-	387
1821,	-	352
1831,	-	318

The population of 1831 is now considerably less than when the last census was taken, owing to the two principal proprietors not being resident in the parish.*

1. Number of families in the parish,	-	-	57
of families chiefly employed in agriculture,	-	-	46
handicraft,	-	-	7

* Since the above was written, the heritors have returned, and the population may be about 360.

2. The average number of births yearly, for the last 7 years.	-	-	-	8
of deaths, betwixt	-	-	-	3 and 4
of proclamations, betwixt	-	-	-	6 and 7

Owing to the prodigious increase of machinery of late years, which greatly lessens the price of various articles, very little wool or lint is spun at home, and the general practice is to purchase every thing from the merchant. And, indeed, still fewer articles will hereafter be manufactured at home, because, in reality, no profit is derived from the system. The people in a reasonable degree may be said to enjoy the comforts and advantages of society; and, accordingly, it may be mentioned that no emigrants to foreign countries have gone from this parish.

During the last three years there have been four or five illegitimate births in the parish.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture and Rural Economy.—By actual measurement the parish was found to contain 6620 English acres. It has been plausibly supposed that these may be divided into three nearly equal parts, 1st, land that is at present under cultivation; 2d, land that may be cultivated or improved: 3d, land that is solely adapted for sheep-pasture. Under the second of these divisions, however, are included nearly 600 acres which have been planted; and the remaining 1620 acres must merely be considered as what it is possible to make arable, not what may be advantageously cultivated. This last point cannot properly be determined; only we may safely assert, that the number of acres that might with profitable application of capital be added to the cultivated land is very small. In fact, in some instances too great a desire has been manifested to bring high ground into cultivation, and it may be questioned whether the farmer has received a proper indemnification for the expense incurred.

This parish has derived great benefit from the attention that has been paid to the growth of timber. The plantations belonging to Sir Thomas G. Carmichael and Mr Lawson are extensive, and are in a flourishing state. Sir Thomas, indeed, has done incalculable service to the parish by his numerous plantations. These have wonderfully improved the climate, and beautified the country. In this county much may yet be done in the way of planting trees; and proprietors would receive a proper remuneration, for it cannot be disputed that the plantations on the hills tend to improve the lower grounds.

Rate of Wages.—The wages of men-servants for the year are

betwixt L. 11 and L. 13; and of women-servants betwixt L. 5 and L. 6 for the same period. The wages of women-servants are much higher in summer than in winter, owing, no doubt, to the greater amount of labour to which they are subjected in the one season than in the other.

Husbandry.—All kinds of grain excepting wheat and beans are raised, and it is found that the more early kinds suit better than the later. Wheat, indeed, has been attempted, but this so partially, as scarcely to merit notice.* The green crop cultivation is much attended to, and potatoes and turnips are generally of excellent quality. The dairy system is carried on here to a considerable extent, and it has been said that the farmers are nearly enabled to pay their rents from the produce of their cows.

The plan of irrigating meadow ground has been adopted in some places in the parish very successfully.—It has been ascertained that some water meadows have produced on an average about 400 stones of hay per acre, reckoning 22 lbs. to the stone.

As to the duration of leases, it may be stated, that all farms, with a few exceptions, are let for nineteen years, and if they are let on an average at 20s. per acre, both landlord and tenant are considered as equally benefited.

Very little can be said in praise of the farm-buildings in the parish. These are commonly taken by estimate, and the lowest is generally preferred. Hence the farm-houses are rather superficially built. It has now, however, become customary for the tenants themselves to drive materials for the buildings, and this no doubt tends, with as little cost as formerly to the proprietor, to secure a more substantial and comfortable erection.

Produce.—The average gross amount and value of raw produce yearly raised in the parish, as nearly as can be ascertained, is as follows:

Oats, 2392 bolls at 15s. per boll,	L. 1794	0	0
Barley, 258 bolls at 22s. per boll,	283	16	0
Pease, 50 bolls at 16s. per boll.	40	0	0
Turnips, 113 acres at L. 4, 10s. per acre,	508	10	0
Potatoes, 33 acres, 40 bolls per acre, at 8s. per boll,	528	0	0
Hay, cultivated, 12,000 at 6d. per stone,	300	0	0
Hay, meadow, 11,000 at 3d. per stone,	137	10	0
Sheep, 2000 at 6s. each,	600	0	0
Black cattle, Ayrshire breed,—240 at L. 3 each,	720	0	0
Wood disposed of,	215	0	0
	<hr/>		
	L. 5126	16	0

The above may be considered a pretty accurate account of the

* It was found not to succeed, owing, probably, to the high situation, &c.

annual produce, and in connection with this, we now state that the real rental of the parish may be about L. 1900 yearly. The land, upon the whole, is well cultivated. The improved system of husbandry has been adopted, and good crops in general are produced.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Market-Towns, and Means of Communication.—There is no village in the parish, and the nearest-market towns are Biggar and Peebles, the one seven and the other ten miles distant from the church. The parish enjoys abundant means of communication, the great public road betwixt Edinburgh and Dumfries, &c. passing through it, and also the road betwixt Glasgow and Peebles, &c. The length of the turnpike roads are betwixt seven and eight miles, and they are kept in excellent repair. There are three principal bridges, all of which are in pretty good condition.

Ecclesiastical State.—The situation of the church is convenient for the bulk of the population, the distance from one extremity being two and a-half miles, and from the other about three. It was built in 1766, and is fitted for accommodating about 300 people. The interior is upon the whole pretty comfortable. The sittings are all free, every farmer in the parish being entitled to a seat in the church for himself and family.

We understand that in 1116 there belonged to the Bishoprick of Glasgow in Kercayrd one carucate of land and a church. This church was confirmed to the bishops of Glasgow by the bulls of Pope Alexander in 1170 and 1178, and by the bulls of Lucian and Urban in 1181 and 1186. The church of Ord was afterwards given to the hospital of Sottra *in proprios usus*, and continued with it till 1462, when Mary of Gueldres transferred it to the Trinity church of Edinburgh, upon condition that the sacrist of the collegiate church of the Trinity should keep in repair the church of Kirkurd. It is a curious fact, that in 1384 Sir James Douglas of Dalkeith founded near his castle a chapel, which he endowed with the lands of Lochard, and 40s. out of the lands of Kirkurd in Peebles-shire.

It would appear that the church of Kirkurd must have been a vicarage in Roman Catholic times, for we are told that in 1477 William Chamber, the vicar of Kirkurd, granted some lands in the manor of Corstorphine and various annual rents for supporting a chaplain to officiate at St Ninian's altar in Corstorphine church; and that this endowment was confirmed in 1477 by James III.

It may be proper to mention, that during the prevalencē of the

keen discussions regarding church government, the minister of Kirkurd, Mr John Bennet, was sent as one of the commissioners from the Presbytery of Peebles to the famous assembly that convened at Glasgow in 1638, where Henderson was moderator, and where Episcopacy was abolished.

There is only one place of worship in the parish, and those who dissent from the Established church generally attend a Relief chapel in the parish of Newlands.

The average number of communicants for many years past may be about 160. The sacrament is dispensed annually, and the people are very regular in attending upon it.

The manse was built in 1788, and has once or twice undergone some trifling repairs. It is too small, and inferior to the generality of manses. The extent of the glebe is about nineteen acres, nearly all arable. When the present incumbent was settled in 1787, a new glebe was given, and as part of the land was very indifferent, this accounts for the glebe being larger than usual. It has been much improved by manuring, draining, and by its being enclosed. The present minister was once in the habit of letting it, and one year received a rent of L. 30, with a cow's grass.

The parish was valued at an early period, and was found to be no more than L. 1108, 15s. 4d. Scotch money. The stipend from the heritors is about L. 70, and as the teinds are exhausted, more than double is received from the Exchequer to make it amount to L. 150.

Education.—There is one public school in the parish, attended on an average by about forty scholars, but often by more, from its vicinity to other parishes. Occasionally there are a few scholars instructed in Latin and Greek, and practical mathematics. The teacher has the maximum salary. The school-fees fixed by the heritors and minister are 2s., 2s. 6d., and 3s. per quarter. These may amount annually to L. 12. The dwelling-house for the schoolmaster is very small, there being only a kitchen and one small room. There is scarcely an individual upwards of twelve years of age in the parish who cannot both read and write, and the people are alive to the benefits of education.

Library.—A parish library was instituted in 1810, and is upon the whole in a flourishing state. A school library was likewise founded in 1828.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—The weekly collections in the church are found more than sufficient to supply the ordinary poor

in a purely agricultural parish, where there is no village and no manufactories. These collections vary considerably at different times. When the heritors' families are resident, they are sometimes 9s. or 10s., and 2s. 6d. may be considered as the average at other times. Occasionally, collections are made for religious and charitable purposes, and the people in general contribute liberally enough. It may be right to mention, that there was at one time a capital of about L. 400, which by extraordinary expenditure, as in the payment of a schoolmaster's salary for several years, the building of a house for the church-officer, the maintaining of a widow with a large family, and by purchasing mort-safes, enclosing the schoolmaster's garden, erecting an iron gate to the churchyard, and occasionally repairing the church, painting the same, &c. is now reduced to less than L. 200. At an average for several years past the disbursements for the poor have been about L. 40 annually; and the number of persons receiving aid yearly has been six. It may be safely stated, that there is little danger of any assessment ever becoming necessary in this parish. To the credit of the people it may be mentioned, that a highly laudable and independent spirit exists among them, and that they will not have recourse to parochial assistance except from absolute necessity. They very generally avail themselves of the advantages arising from Savings Banks, established in different parts of the county.

Inns.—There is one inn in the parish, chiefly for the accommodation of travellers.

Fuel.—Coals are generally used. The nearest are six miles distant, and can be procured, including carriage, &c. for nearly 10s. per common cart, containing about 12 cwt. The people in general, however, prefer getting their coals from Douglas, and the neighbourhood of Carnwath, because, though at a great distance, they are reckoned excellent in quality.

Friendly Society.—A Friendly Society was many years ago established in the parish; but, owing to its not being founded on proper principles, and to the want of efficient management, it has become extinct.

May 1834.