

PARISH OF PENPONT.

PRESBYTERY OF PENPONT, SYNOD OF DUMFRIES.

THE REV. GEORGE SMITH, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THIS parish is generally believed to have derived its name from a hanging bridge (*Pendens pons*) across the river Scarr, which separates one part of it from the adjoining parish of Tynron. If this etymology should be thought to ascribe little ingenuity to the aboriginal inhabitants of the soil, it is not thus chargeable in respect of their posterity. If any one can believe that the parish had no name until it was visited by the Romans, or that the name had then been changed,—or that it was ingeniously applied by the “masters of the world” from the peculiar structure of the bridge,—then to him the etymology will appear quite satisfactory. More probably, however, it is derived from the Celtic words *Ben* or *Pen*, signifying high, and *Pont*, a sharp crag or pointed cliff. Any one acquainted with the parish, and the striking outlines of the whole neighbourhood, will readily consider this to be the more rational etymology.*

Extent, Topographical Appearances, &c.—This parish is contiguous to seven parishes, Tynron, Keir, Closeburn, Morton, Durrisdeer, Sanquhar, and Dalry. It is probably, from one extreme point to another, somewhere about 18 miles in length; but the inhabited part is from 15 to 16. There are not above nine houses farther off than 7 or 8 miles from the parish church; and the few, perhaps four, situated beyond 9 miles, are nearly in a line, indicated by the course of the Scarr. The parish is of an irregular form. The upper part of it is altogether pastoral, and diversified with numerous hills, varying perhaps from 500 to 1000 feet in height. Some of them around their bases are adorned with natu-

* The latter idea has been suggested by that accomplished scholar the Rev. John Wightman, minister of Kirkmahoe. It has antiquity at least on its side; for whether we look to Glenquhargan Craig as its name-father, or to any rugged cliff in the neighbourhood, the cliff was at least older than the bridge.

ral copsewood, whilst their green summits are "clothed with flocks." Others are so rugged and precipitous, as in some degree to resemble the scenery of the Highlands. Glenquhargan Craig, situated about nine miles from the church, is frequently resorted to in summer by those who admire the wilder beauties of nature.

It presents an irregular and precipitous front to the south and south-west. It is said to be 1000 feet in height, which, if understood in reference to the level of the sea, may be not far from the truth. But if the height be taken from the adjoining valley, or the Scarr, which washes its base, it certainly does not appear to be underrated. The parish at this point may probably be from 3 to 4 miles broad. These distances are not given with perfect precision. But on the authority of an eminent surveyor, the parish is said to contain $32\frac{1}{4}$ square miles, and 20,640 English acres.

The lower part of the parish is bounded very distinctly upon the west and south by the Scarr, which separates Penpont from Tynron, for about five miles; upon the south still by the Scarr, which separates it from Keir; and on the north or north-east for about three miles by the Nith, which separates it from Morton and Closeburn. Indeed, in consequence of a change in the channel both of the Nith and the Scarr, a small angle of the parish of Closeburn has been somewhat unceremoniously cut off from it, and in defiance of ecclesiastical statistics attached to Penpont. The Scarr rises near the extremity of the parish. Its course is marked by a hilly range on either side, extending from the north-west to the south-east, the one terminating in Glenquhargan Craig, the other on the south at Chanlock foot, in a beautiful round green hill, formerly covered with wood to the summit. When this hill is again planted, which, in the judicious and tasteful management of the estate to which it belongs, is about to take place, the landscape will bear to be compared to some of the most beautiful scenes in the Highlands.

About the middle of the parish, a hilly ridge extends towards the north, which terminates in Cairnkinnow, a hill of gradual ascent, 2080 feet above the level of the sea. On the north-east, for several miles, the parish is separated from the parish of Durrisdeer by the Mar or Park Burn, a small stream, which after adorning the policy and flower-gardens at Drumlanrig, falls into the Nith about a mile below the castle.

The parish is generally of a hilly character, and, comparatively speaking, there is little flat or low-lying land in it. The land of

the latter description is chiefly to be found upon the sides of the rivers, or not far removed from their banks. The surface of the more hilly parts is not considered to present very interesting features to the geologist. There are two sandstone quarries in it,—one upon His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch's lands at Hillhead, the other on the estate of Lauderdale Maitland, Esq. of Eccles. In both, abundance of excellent materials might be found for building; but they are not worked. The strata in both are nearly horizontal, or dip very slightly to the south-east. Detached pieces of lead ore have frequently been found in the parish. This may be of less consequence, however,—as, many years ago, it was brought thither in large quantities for the purpose of being smelted. Attempts were at one time made to discover lead upon the Eccles estate, and, as is said, with reasonable hopes of success. These attempts, however, were interrupted by some legal proceedings respecting the property, and they have never again been resumed. Of late, several pieces have been found in cutting a ditch along the public road leading from Penpont towards Sanquhar, about a mile from the village. One vein in particular has been discovered of a very promising character. It is said to resemble the veins that indicate lead at Wanlockhead and Lead-Hills, and to run precisely in the same direction, or nearly from south to north. Similar indications, it is thought, would be followed out with avidity by the miners in that quarter. And there is little doubt that here they will be thoroughly investigated.

It is said that coal was at one time found accidentally upon the Eccles estate when the then proprietor was raising materials for building a wall round his garden. Yet no scientific attempts have ever been made with a view to ascertain to what these hopeful symptoms might lead.

Hydrography, &c.—The river Scarr is one of the largest tributaries to the Nith, which it joins about three miles below the church of Penpont. It is a considerable stream, and at one time abounded greatly in trout. Its banks for probably seven miles are beautifully fringed with wood,—now rugged and precipitous, and again opening back into fertile valleys, presenting scenes of considerable variety and beauty. About half a mile from the village, toward the west, is the site of the bridge from which the parish is alleged to have derived its name. From its antiquity, its height, and the width of its span, it must have been an object of considerable curiosity. It was

originally designed for people upon foot or on horseback. Afterwards (in 1724,) it was widened to admit of carriages. But being still inconvenient, and probably insecure, it was taken down in 1801;—and a convenient and substantial bridge erected in its place. About half a-mile above this bridge, is Glenmarlin Pool, a rocky and narrow pass in the river, where the stream descends with such rapidity, and its waters are so broken as at all times to present a scene of great interest. It is indeed not unworthy to be compared with the Rumbling Bridge, near Dunkeld, to which it bears some resemblance. There are few more interesting rides in this part of the country than the road presents along the banks of the Scarr, as far as Glenquhargan Craig. From the rising ground in the vicinity of Arkland, the view of the valley, bounded by its wild or wooded hills, is remarkably sweet. And when the vista opens up with Chanlock foot in the distance, and apparently terminated by the round high hill behind, there are few scenes to be met with any where more picturesque. In summer, sea-trout are brought up by the heavy rains; and later in the season, salmon in considerable numbers. The latter are unfortunately destroyed in close time, it may be said, almost without let or hinderance. The present state of the law, as it refers to the Nith and its tributary streams, is considered by many to be injudicious. It closes the rivers as early as the 25th of September, when the fish are in excellent order. The angler is then deprived of his recreation, which might with safety be extended for several weeks, and the fish are in fact preserved for those who are less scrupulous about legal prohibitions. On the other hand, the 10th of March is too early a period for opening the rivers, as many spawned fish are then taken when they are nearly useless, and of course before they had returned to the sea.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Antiquities.—There is one obelisk in the parish, upon the property of Mr Maxwell of Bailford; but no account can be got of it, worthy of being recorded. It is a narrow pillar about ten feet in height, with two steps of a stair around its base, or forming the socket in which it stands. It is covered with a sort of character, now almost defaced.

A somewhat curious tradition has come down to us regarding the stream that separates the parish from Durrisindeer, immediately opposite Drumlanrig Castle. It is expressed in a couplet, which

is ascribed to Thomas the Rhymer so far back as the thirteenth century. The words are,—

“ When the Park burn rins where never man saw,
The Red-house of Hassock is near hand a fa’.”

In explanation of this prophetic couplet, it may be necessary to state, that the castle, which is built upon a piece of high table or flat land, in the gorge between two hills, must occupy the place of an older building of similar colour, to which the oracular prediction referred; for it is well known that the castle itself dates about four centuries later. It has various dates engraved on it, from 1675 to 1688, and is the workmanship of Inigo Jones. The word Hassock is said to be a corruption for “haus o’t,” signifying the throat or passage between the hills. It is said, likewise, that, in order to beautify the gardens with a cascade from the high ground behind, the course of this stream had been changed by Duke Charles of Queensberry; whereupon, the prophecy was fulfilled by the property coming in the year 1810 into the possession of the family of Buccleuch. Another poet, however, and better known than Thomas, has attached some celebrity to this beautiful streamlet. For it was beside it where Burns wrote the fine song, beginning

“ Their groves o’ sweet myrtles let foreign lands reckon.”

In the neighbourhood of Drumlanrig, there are still shewn the ruins of an ancient castle, called Tibbers Castle, and so called, it is thought, by one of the Roman generals, in honour of Tiberius Cæsar. The traces of this monument of antiquity are now nearly obliterated,—*etiam periere ruinae*. In 1812, the lintels of a doorway were standing, and several steps of a winding staircase; but they have since been removed. From the niches then seen in the wall, it is conjectured that the outer doorway had been hung, and drew up and was let down, like a window,—while the inner apparently had been hinged. A labourer, who had been inadvertently allowed to pull down a part of the ruins, for the sake of the lime, found, about the doorway, various masses of lead, which might have been thrown upon assailants in a state of fusion, or may be supposed to have indicated the fate of the building itself. He also found a number of arrow heads, generally square and tapering to the point; a few were grooved out like the sides of a bayonet; and all of them were of a dark blue colour. There were found, likewise, broken pieces of earthenware, lined with metal resembling copper, of the thickness of tea-chest lead; and a spear head about two feet long, including socket, sharp-pointed and two-edged.

This castle is said to have been in the possession of the English at the time of Sir William Wallace. It is said, likewise, that, having heard of the depredations which the garrison committed in the neighbourhood, Wallace was desirous to avenge the wrongs of his countrymen, and that, to accomplish his purpose, he practised the following stratagem. Having observed a kiln smoking at Mallyford, a place in the immediate neighbourhood, and seen from the garrison, he hied thither in the morning, in the tattered garb of a mendicant, bent down with infirmities, and leaning upon a trusty staff. With the curiosity characteristic of his vocation, and on that account the more readily excused, he soon ascertained from the unsuspecting kilnman the strength of the garrison, and that he was engaged in drying grain for their use. Thereupon, he asks and obtains leave to prepare his breakfast, or to "roast a herring" at the kiln fire. And in return for this accommodation, he agreed to take charge of the kiln while the keeper was away for a similar purpose. As soon as he had gone, Wallace seized the moment, set the kiln on fire, and returned unperceived to a party of his men who lay in ambush in the Keely Cleugh, a woody dell near the castle. The flames in the meantime soon burst through the roof, and the garrison flew to save their grain. While they were engaged in extinguishing the flames, Wallace and his party rushed to the gate, secured the drawbridge, and set the castle on fire. Whether this story be true or not, it is generally believed; but, unfortunately, the means of verifying, or of refuting it, are not at present within reach.*

Legend of the Dowloch.—There was a small loch in the parish, from about 70 yards in breadth to about 120 in length, near the summit of the hilly ridge about a mile to the south of Drumlanrig; but which, by draining, has been somewhat shorn of its fair proportions. It was called the Dow-Dhu or Black Loch, as the word signifies in Gaelic, and was reputed to possess extraordinary virtue

* Though the parish may not be distinguished by any extraordinary individuals now living within its bounds, yet the inhabitants still cherish the remembrance of one remarkable for strength, and who died near the beginning of last century. This was the celebrated John M'Caul, or Strong Glennanow, who occupied a farm of this name about a mile from Glenquhargan, upon the banks of the Scarr. This individual is stated to have been tall and stoutly built, as, indeed, was evinced by the size of the bones brought to light on the opening of his grave. The late schoolmaster, who has deemed the feats of Glennanow worthy of a place in the parochial register, remembered the opening of the grave, and his being struck with the size of the strong man's remains, particularly the skull. Whether all the anecdotes current are to be implicitly believed may perhaps admit of some doubt. He died in 1705, at the age of eighty-four.

in the healing of diseases. It seems to have been looked upon as a perpetual Bethesda, for its waters were reputed to be efficacious in the cure of every disease, but especially of cattle subjected to the spells of witchcraft. It was not necessary that the person ailing should himself visit the loch. This might often have involved considerable hazard; and if the prudent alternative had not been adopted of employing a deputy, the number of cures consequent upon their use would probably have been considerably diminished. To accomplish the end desired, however, the deputy was required to observe certain rules. He had to carry a part of the dress of the person ailing, or of the furniture of the animal bewitched, as an offering to the spirit of the loch. Whether any of the contingent virtue might not first accrue to the raiment from lustration in the loch, is not declared. But when the person had reached it, he had to draw water in a vessel, which was on no account to touch the ground,—to turn himself round with the sun,—and to throw his offering to the spirit over his left shoulder,—formalities all indicative of a Druidical origin,—and to carry the water, without having once looked back, to the sick person or animal, to be drank. All this, moreover, was to be done in absolute silence. Like the prophet's servant, the messenger was to salute no one by the way. If, after an observance of this ritual to the very letter, expectations were sometimes baulked, is it uncharitable to suppose that the temptation to violate the injunction of silence sometimes proved too strong for the virtue of the messenger? Whether the inefficacy of the water may be ascribed to any defect in the prescribed form or to another cause, it certainly is now of no longer avail even to cattle, unless, perhaps, to the fleecy flocks that pasture beside it. Yet it is not long since the virtue of Dowloch was put to the test, as individuals are now alive of undoubted veracity and intelligence, who have seen the votive offerings floating on the lake, or scattered around its banks. And to such a degree had the habit prevailed in earlier times, that Mr Murray, the minister who lived till 1736, was regularly in the habit of debarring from the sacrament those who had engaged in the heathenish practice.

The particulars of this somewhat curious history are partially confirmed and illustrated by an expression still to be met with in the neighbourhood, but at one time said to be proverbial. Whenever an individual did not return the usual civilities, on being met upon the road, or who, when addressed, whether in the day time or under cloud of night, found it convenient to keep silence,

the shrewd guess, that he "had been at the Dowloch," both suggested an excuse for taciturnity, and a reason for not farther attempting to break it. The medical faculty will learn no doubt with dismay, that the Noble proprietor is about to restore Dowloch to all its former glory; some have hinted, for the less poetic purpose of accommodating wild-fowl. But if any one of that truly Noble house should ever stand in need of the charmed water, this much may be safely affirmed, that it were deeply to be deplored, if there were not at command greatly less questionable aid.

Will it be thought to be beneath the dignity of Statistical literature, to record matters of such questionable veracity, beside details which are only valuable, if admitting of the most rigid scrutiny? Perhaps the moralist will find an excuse, in the illustration they afford of the state of society, at a period not very remote from our own.

Land-owners.—There are nine heritors in the parish who pay stipend. Of the whole valued rent, L. 6799, 8s., L. 5644, 8s. 4d. is attached to the property of his Grace the Duke of Buccleuch.

Gardens at Drumlanrig Castle.—Drumlanrig Castle, his Grace's Dumfries-shire residence, stands at the extremity of the parish of Durrisdeer, and within a few hundred yards of the parish of Penpont. A part of the pleasure grounds attached, and the extensive new gardens, which were begun about six years ago, and are scarcely yet finished, are situated within the parish of Penpont. These, with the elegant cottage for the accommodation of the gardener, designed by Mr Burn, the architect, *have* been made at an expense of nearly L. 11,000. And the soil being excellent, and the whole establishment under the most judicious management, in a few years they will be as productive as any in Scotland. The position of the gardens, in point of taste, may perhaps be questioned; but no other locality held out the same advantages in point of soil, extent, aspect and shelter. The vegetable garden is four acres within the walls; and the quality of its productions not excelled by Covent Garden market itself. There are 600 feet of glass divided as follows: 100 allotted to vinery; 100 to peach-house; 100 to Dutch peach-pit; 100 to pine stove; 50 to succession pine-house; 100 to forcing-frames, for melons, cucumbers, &c.; and 50 to an exotic stove. In these, excepting the forcing-frames, water is employed to produce the necessary degree of heat, and all the departments are kept in the most beautiful order. The exotic stove contains many of the

choicest varieties of the vegetable kingdom, particularly of the class *Orchideæ*, or tropical parasitic plants, which are found upon the bark of trees, rocks, &c. in these warm regions; such as, the *Stanhopea insignis*, *Oncidium divaricatum*, *Cypripedium insigne*, *Catleya crispa*, *Rinanthera coccinea*, or Chinese air plant, *Epidendron cochleatum*, *Oncidium papilio*, or butterfly plant, &c. There are here likewise the *Musa coccinea*, *Musa sapientum*, *Dendrobium Pierardi*, *Astrapæa Wallichii*, or lightning plant, so called from the splendour of its flower. On the back wall of the stove the *Passiflora edulis* fruits freely, as also in the pine-stove. There is, here, also, the *Passiflora quadrangularis*, and the *Quisqualis Indica*, which flowered beautifully in 1835. The *Nepenthes distillatoria* or pitcher plant may likewise be mentioned, as also *Dioncæa muscipula*, or Venus's fly-trap, *Hybiscus splendens*, and the *Cattleianum*, which bears that luscious fruit of which Guava jelly is made. Its fruits here readily. But it is impossible to specify all the attractions that are here presented to the botanist or the lover of the beauties of nature. It is only justice to the Noble proprietor to add, that every facility is afforded to strangers to gratify their curiosity here, or in the lovely flower gardens in the immediate vicinity of the castle.

Parochial Registers.—Little authentic information can now be gathered regarding the ancient statistics of the parish. Unhappily a fire, which happened in the manse during the ministry of Mr Murray, consumed the parochial records; and those which exist commence only at 1728, and have been very irregularly kept. The first entry in the record of births and baptisms is of date 15th November 1728. With a view to the preservation and classification of the ancient parochial records of Scotland, the Presbytery of the bounds lately instituted an inquiry regarding the state of such documents in every parish under their ecclesiastical superintendence; and the following is extracted from the report of the committee relative to those of Penpont. "The register of births and baptisms is irregularly kept down to 1833. Since that period it has been kept regularly, as far as the children of parents who belong to the Establishment are concerned. Those parents who belong to other religious denominations seldom apply for registration. There is no record of marriages or of deaths." The extract abundantly shows the defective and utterly inadequate manner in which these records have been and still are kept. Similar defects and irregularities are very general; and it would be not unworthy of the Legislature to attempt a remedy.

III.—POPULATION.

In 1801, the population amounted to 966, there being	455 males and	511 females.
1811, - - - - -	1016, - - -	478 - 598
1821, - - - - -	1085, - - -	519 - 566
1831, - - - - -	1232, - - -	573 - 659

Of these there were, by the schoolmaster's memoranda, under fifteen years of age, 441; between fifteen and thirty, 347; between thirty and fifty, 268; between fifty and seventy, 145; and above seventy, 31. The yearly average of marriages may be stated on the same authority at 10. Neither the births nor the deaths can be given with perfect accuracy, for the reason assigned in the report formerly quoted.

The population is scattered over the parish very irregularly. About 570 belong to the villages of Penpont, Burnhead, Townhead of Penpont, and Brierbush. Indeed, with the exception of Burnhead, which is within half a mile of the Nith, the other three may almost be considered as one village with its suburbs. There is a tendency in the village population somewhat to increase its relative proportion to the country part of it. His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch is understood to be inclined rather to the system of having large farms, and of erecting substantial buildings with all necessary and suitable accommodations, than of subdividing them, and having numerous cottars attached. Some cottages upon his estates, that had become ruinous, have not been rebuilt; and of course, their former occupants have found their way into the villages.

The number of illegitimate children born within the last three years may be stated at 4. And it may likewise be of importance to state, that there are probably not more than three fatuous persons in a population of 1261.

Language, Customs.—There can be no doubt that society here has made considerable progress in intelligence within the last forty years; and that the language of the inhabitants has participated in the general improvement. Yet to one not a native of Nithsdale it perhaps would seem that modes of expression are employed indicative of greater antiquity than in the adjoining districts,—than in Ayrshire for example. One often hears, even from men of intelligence and education, of the *Parochin* of Penpont. And no mode of expression is more common than to use *but* for *without*. It would be injudicious, however, to record other peculiarities of idiom, which, in the rapid course of intellectual improvement in the parish, may soon themselves become obsolete.

Customs still prevail here, which in a great measure are discontinued elsewhere. But, let it not be rashly spoken whether they are more honoured in the breach or the observance. Upon occasion of marriages, guests are frequently invited, greatly more numerous than the happy couple could afford to entertain. To obviate this inconvenience, a sum of money, varying according to circumstances, is levied from the gentlemen. A sum equal to 1s. 6d. from each will furnish music for the dance, and refreshments to exhilarate; and thus the wedding is celebrated by a numerous party, and the festivities go off with eclat.

The funerals in the parish are often accompanied with greatly more expense than the relatives can afford, though considerable improvement in this respect has of late been effected. The good sense of the inhabitants is, of its own accord, gradually working out a cure. Would it be believed, that individuals in circumstances the reverse of affluent would incur expense, not only for things that are necessary or suitable for such solemnities, but even for show, to an extent which perhaps they may never be able to defray. Yet such things have been known. If such inability were occasioned by the unavoidable dispensations of Providence, and if such extravagance were incurred from a sacred regard to the dead, or a mistaken desire to do honour to their remains, one would endeavour to probe this wound with all tenderness and delicacy. But if it proceed from a silly vanity,—from a desire to rival or excel others in expense,—regardless alike of the claims of justice and the calls of affection,—it can hardly be reprobated too severely.

It would be altogether inexcusable to omit, under this head, the prowess of the parish in the national game of curling. It might, indeed, adopt the motto of the 2d Dragoons, better known by the name of the Scots Greys; for every player must maintain that the parish is “second to none.” And that the immortal Cairnie, in his elaborate treatise upon curling, should have omitted to do her justice, is one of those capital errors which perhaps cannot be satisfactorily explained.

Character of the People.—The parish may be considered as entirely of an agricultural character. There are no manufactories within it, nor machinery,—except such as is employed for agricultural purposes. It is true there is the ordinary variety of crafts in the village; but such trades are called into being by the exigencies of the farmer, and are dependent upon him for their existence. There are likewise retail shops in abundance,—no fewer than eight.

There are also five inns,—enough, and more than enough, for the morals of the people. It is at same time true, that in general the people merit the character of sobriety. The farmers are intelligent, some of them remarkably so, while their servants, the shepherds, in the more pastoral parts of the parish, perhaps from the leisure they enjoy, and their distance from society, exhibit more information, particularly on matters connected with religion, than others who occupy a corresponding grade in society. The situation of the lower classes ought to be unusually comfortable at present from the abundance of work, and the cheapness of provisions. If the calculation be a fair one, that the labourer is well provided when he can earn a peck or half a stone of meal in the day, he must be much better provided when he can earn double,—as is here often the case. The labourer's wages in winter are 1s. 4d.; in summer, 1s. 6d. sometimes 1s. 8d. per day; while the wright and mason consider themselves entitled to 2s. The rate of labour varies less throughout the year than may seem altogether reasonable. But the wants of the labourer are even greater in winter than in summer, though his labour at this period cannot be so productive to his employer. The wages of a man-servant may be stated at about L. 6 in the half year, while those of female servants vary from L. 2 to L. 3, or even L. 4. The food of this class of the inhabitants is plain, but substantial and nutritive. Oatmeal in the morning constitutes the regular food of the agricultural labourer; the same, or potatoes, in the evening; and generally they have broth with butcher meat of some kind, or cheese, to dinner.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—It is by no means an easy matter to give correct details regarding the agriculture of the parish. The utmost, therefore, that can be offered, is only an approximation to the truth. It contains from thirty-five to forty farms of very varying extent; and perhaps about an eighth of the whole surface might admit of being brought under tillage. This, however, could not be effected without great expense, and the land not already reclaimed is much more profitably occupied in the feeding of sheep. There are probably not more than two proprietors of land of the yearly value of L. 50 and upwards, resident upon their own lands in the parish. Extensive plantations have lately been made in it, of all the more common kinds of timber, which in a few years will greatly increase its beauty. Upon the estate of the Duke of Buccleuch, the extensive plantations are rapidly increasing. Preparations are already made for plant-

ing about 150 acres, this season. In the higher and wilder districts of the parish, there is natural copsewood, chiefly of hazel, to a considerable extent, which, though unprofitable, adds much to the beauties of the landscape. The wood in the glens, and upon the rugged braes, is chiefly oak,—a species of wood, which, whether natural or planted, is admirably adapted to the soil. From the extent of wood in the parish,—the variety of hill and dale,—and the numerous streams with which it is intersected, there can be no doubt that, in a few years, it will be one of the most beautiful and romantic parishes, not only in Dumfries-shire, but in the lowlands of Scotland.

Rent of Land.—As there is no parish which presents a greater variety of prospect and of surface, so there is none where the land is of more varying value. In the holms upon the banks of the Nith, which for several years have been under the most judicious management, the value may not be considered too high, if estimated at L. 2, 10s. or L. 3 per acre; and from this may be found land at every intermediate rate, to the lowest denomination of Sterling money. A cow's grass yearly may be said to run from L. 4 to L. 5, while that of an ox may be rated at L. 3. The wood that is employed for agricultural implements may be purchased readily at 2s. per foot.

Rate of Wages.—The rates of wages are specified under the head Population.

Husbandry.—The agriculture of the parish may be considered as steadily advancing. The farms upon the estate of the Duke of Buccleuch have been let last summer for nineteen years, upon terms favourable to landlord and tenant. And the spirit of true liberality and encouragement with which the tenants are met in regard to enclosures, and reclaiming land by freeing it of stones, by liming, draining, or otherwise,—holds out the hope, that before the expiry of these leases, the estate will be most materially improved, and the tenants substantially benefited. Upon the part of the Queensberry estate situated in the parish of Penpont, there are now erecting farm-houses and offices of the most substantial kind. When they are completed, no farmers in the kingdom will be more comfortably, and few so elegantly accommodated. There can be little doubt of the wisdom of those extensive landed proprietors, who promote the substantial comfort, and thereby indirectly raise the character, of their tenantry. It would probably seem paradoxical to affirm that the house will affect the character of its occupant.

But when agriculturists are raised from the status of serfs, or labourers, or middlemen, and enabled and accustomed to participate in the substantial comforts, not to say the luxuries of civilized life,—independently of the feelings of respectful attachment which they cherish towards those through whom these are enjoyed,—there is an interest created in the permanency of all those social arrangements, and of the very constitution of society by which, under Providence, they are guaranteed. If Sterne's theory be a sound one, that, in order to write like a gentleman, it is necessary for the writer to put on clean linen and dress genteelly,—to give the agriculturists all the accommodations, not of country squires, but of substantial, well-educated yeomen, leads not indirectly to create and to foster in them the same principles and feelings which characterize the landlords themselves.

The progress of improvement within a limited period has, perhaps, in no case been more strikingly exhibited than in the parish of Penpont. Districts of land, perhaps it would not be wide of the truth to say whole farms, may now be pointed out, that are three times more productive at present than they were thirty years ago. Turnip husbandry is gradually extending, and where the crop has been eaten off with sheep, the effects are abundantly visible in the following crop. Districts formerly unenclosed are now judiciously fenced, and a spirit of improvement everywhere manifested by an enterprising tenantry.

Perhaps in no respect would the parish as a whole be more benefited than by an extension of the roads in it. It may excite surprise to state, that, until this season, there cannot be said to have been a made or passable road for more than seven miles up the parish. It is hoped that, ere long, one may explore on horseback the beauties of the most remote pastoral districts, with safety and comfort. The turnpike roads, however, are excellent; they extend to about eleven miles. The bridges, too, are in good order, except where the ledges have suffered through that wantonness said to be peculiar to Scotland.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Penpont is situated about fifteen miles from Dumfries, the county town. The post-office nearest it is in the village of Thornhill, distant about two miles. It enjoys, however, the benefit of a daily runner in his progress to and from Minnyhive.

Ecclesiastical State.—The church is situated at the lower extremity of the parish, about 150 yards from the village. It was built

in 1782, and thoroughly repaired in 1834, at an expense of L. 240. A session-house was likewise added to it, with a new entrance to the church underneath, at a further expense of L. 100. The church is in the form common to the period in which it was built. It stands on three parts of a cross, one of which had at one time been built up, but is again opened and comfortably seated. It has a neat small gallery attached, which the Duke of Buccleuch erected at his own expense. The church is seated for 408, including the gallery, and has communion tables capable of containing about 80 communicants. The communion cups bear the dates 1363 and 1366; and it is worthy of being mentioned, that not till the year 1834 had the Lord's supper ever been dispensed in the church, the service previously having been conducted in the open air. The seats in the church are about to be legally divided. The congregation have hitherto been well accommodated, without being asked for a farthing of rent by the heritors. Perhaps in no spot could the church have been placed more conveniently for the parishioners generally,—though one family attached to the Establishment are fully fourteen miles away from it. The present incumbent, Mr Smith, was inducted in 1833, after having been several years minister of the second charge in Kilmarnock.

There are other two places of worship in the parish besides the Established Church,—the one belonging to the Reformed Presbytery, which was built in 1791, and is capable of containing about 500 sitters; the other to the Relief, erected in the year 1800, and seated for 700. These congregations are supplied with ministers of great respectability. Mr Carmichael, of the Reformed Presbytery, has not yet been a twelvemonth ordained. Mr Dobbie, of the Relief, being somewhat advanced in life, is about to avail himself of the aid of an assistant and successor, a Mr John Smith, in whose favour a call has been very harmoniously moderated. It is no more than justice to these congregations to say, that individuals belong to them as intelligent and as respectable as are anywhere to be found in their sphere of life. And whatever asperity may have resulted elsewhere from discussions upon Establishments, now so rife, such discussions here have neither interrupted nor embittered the intercourse of social life. Mr Carmichael is allowed L. 100 a-year, and has a house and garden. Mr Dobbie, with similar advantages, has L. 125. Both congregations are in the habit of giving from their funds to relieve the necessities of the poor who belong to them. Since Mr Smith's induction, he has been

in the habit of taking an ecclesiastical census annually when engaged in parochial visitation, with the view of ascertaining accurately the different denominations of professing Christians to which the inhabitants belong. In 1834, the number of families where the heads belonged to the Relief was 79, and contained 347 souls; the number of those belonging to the Reformed Presbytery, 48, containing 235 souls; of the Secession, 21, containing 109; and all the rest, including those who can scarcely be considered as attached to any religious denomination whatever, 110, attached, nominally at least, to the establishment, and containing 570 souls. From a statement inserted in the parochial register about thirty-four years ago by Mr Hewetson, then schoolmaster of the parish, it appears that, so early as 1766, there were 16 families that had separated from the Established Church, and in 1796 upwards of 60. About the end of the century, it is said that this number considerably increased. The same authority, of date 1802, states, that "the people in general have been of a religious cast of mind, being addicted to Puritan principles. But of late, from the great influence of itinerant preachers, they are more and more divided in their religious principles; and being split into four considerable factions, there is a foundation laid for religious squabbles and polemical controversy, which do not tend to the progress of true and genuine religion."

The parochial stipend amounts to 16 chalders, half meal half barley, which in 1834 yielded L. 209; in 1835, L. 210. The manse underwent a thorough repair, and had a large addition made to it in 1833, at an expense, including a new steading of offices, of nearly L. 1100; and whatever may be thought of its appearance, there are few more convenient or more comfortable manses in Scotland. It is situated about 100 yards from the church, the garden intervening. Both church and manse are about a similar distance from the Scarr, and stand on a level ground near a sloping bank, about forty-five feet above its level. From the situation of the manse, it was found impossible to supply water from within the glebe, and there seemed to be no other mode of obviating this great inconvenience, but by leading it in pipes from the high land behind. To this plan, however, the proprietor of the land was averse; and in consequence, water had to be brought from another spring, at a distance of about 1000 yards from the manse. The expense of this work, amounting to about L. 130, the Duke of Buccleuch defrayed individually; and it is not saying too much to add, that, in the pe-

culiar circumstances of the case, perhaps no other heritor in Scotland would have acted with the like generosity. The glebe extends to 13 acres—and in improving it and making a new garden, the minister has expended nearly L. 300. The heritors have erected a garden wall at an expense of about L. 100. Perhaps it may be added, that in a few years Penpont manse will be as delightfully situated as any in Scotland.

Education.—There are four schools in the parish, two of them parochial and of course endowed; the third, private, as such schools are termed, and unendowed; and the fourth exclusively appropriated to females. They are all respectably taught. In one of the parochial schools, Greek and French are superadded to the ordinary branches. The salary of the one parochial schoolmaster is L. 29, 6s. 6½d., the other has L. 22. The one draws about L. 16, the other about L. 9 in school fees. One of them has a house and a small garden; the other has only a house, and that of as comfortless a description as can well be imagined. The expense of education per month may be considered as ranging from 8d. to 10d. and 1s. It is not believed that there are any persons in the parish between six and fifteen years of age who cannot read; and if there be any, they are not more than one or two above fifteen years of age, in this unhappy predicament. One of the parochial schools is about five miles from the church, and on the whole is judiciously set down, for the district. Of course, there may be eight or ten farms with their cot-houses adjoining, that cannot be said to have the benefit of parochial school economy. But the evil is partly remedied, as in the Highlands, by itinerating teachers; partly by intelligent parents themselves.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—There are 18 individuals, who singly, or as representing others, receive parochial aid. The expenditure for the year ending August 1835 was L. 59, 8s., so that the average sum may be stated as 5s. 6d. per month. This, however, is not an exact average, as the number of children, and other modifying circumstances, cannot be minutely detailed. There are two sums, the one of L. 200, the other of L. 150, mortgaged for the benefit of the poor, the capital of which, it is understood, cannot be encroached upon. The yearly collections average L. 16 per annum. The sums allowed to paupers here will seem large in comparison with those in other parts of the country,—a circumstance which may be partially explained by the fact, that coal cannot be procured for less than from 7d. to 8d. per cwt. The aver-

sion to receive parochial aid, at one time so beautifully characteristic of the independent and honourable character of the Scottish people, is, unhappily for the morals of the community, gradually diminishing. Individuals may yet be found who cannot brook the disgrace, as they consider it, of receiving parochial aid in regard to themselves. But this fine spirit is nearly extinct amongst those even from whom better things might have been expected, in regard to their collateral descendants.

Within the last two or three years, three hiring markets have been held annually, on the third Tuesday of March for the summer half year; on the third Tuesday of June, for hay-making and harvest work; and on the third Tuesday of October, for hiring for the winter half year.

February 1836.