

PARISH OF SORN.

PRESBYTERY OF AYR, SYNOD OF GLASGOW AND AYR.

THE REV. JOHN STEWART, MINISTER.

I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—THE parish of Sorn, in all likelihood, derives its name from the Celtic word *Sorn*, signifying a snout, projection, or disagreeable visage, and may have been so called from the projection, promontory, or eminence, on which the castle stands. In Alexander and Donald Stewart's Collection of the Highland Bards, we find a song addressed to a gentleman dwelling in a farm in Mull, called *Sorn*. In the parish of Morven, and on the side of Loch-Sunart, there is a farm situated on an eminence called *Sorna*. There is also a place in Cornwall where the Celtic language was spoken until the beginning of last century, and in some instances preached, called *Sorne*. The original name of the parish was *Dalgain*, (the ground on which the church, manse, and glebe stand, having been a grant from the late Hugh Mitchell, Esq. of *Dalgain*,) and is supposed to have been changed in consequence of the vicinity of *Sorn* Castle, an ancient seat of the Loudon family, to the church. *Dalgain*, like *Sorn*, is of Celtic origin, being evidently derived from *Dal* and *gaineimh*, the field of sand or gravel,—a name strikingly descriptive of the soil on which the old house of *Dalgain* stands.

Extent and Boundaries.—*Sorn* is nearly a square, whose side is about $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles, and is intersected by the river *Ayr*. It is bounded on the east, by the parish of *Muirkirk*; on the west, by the parish of *Mauchline*; on the north, by the parish of *Galston*; and on the south, by the parish of *Auchinleck*.

Topographical Appearances.—The external appearance of the parish is considerably diversified by its rising grounds, and its level holms on the banks of the *Ayr*, as well as by the large extent of *moors* and *mosses* which adjoin the land now under cultivation, and which have been greatly improved of late years. The only hill of any considerable height in the parish is *Blackside-end*, situated on the

north-east boundary of the parish, from whose summit, which has been rated at about 1500 or 1600 feet above the level of the sea, there is in clear weather a very extensive view; some individuals maintaining that no less than sixteen counties may be seen from it. The scenery along the banks of the Ayr is remarkably picturesque, and is peculiarly so about Sorn Castle and the manse.

Meteorology.—The climate may in general be characterized as healthy, although, as in the greater part of the west of Scotland, there are frequent and heavy falls of rain. The prevailing winds are the west and south-west. Snow seldom falls to any considerable depth, and when it does fall, remains only a very short time upon the ground.

The following extract for the last three years from a meteorological table kept at the Catrine works may serve to convey a very accurate idea of the climate :—

Catrine Works Meteorological Register for 1834.

	Atmospheric variations.				State of the wind taken at noon.							Atmospheric pressure.			Attached Ther.			External Ther. in shade.			Fall of rain.	
	Wet and stormy.	Fair.	Frosty.	Snow & hail.	N.	S.	S.W.	W.	N.W.	N.E.	Lowest.	Highest.	Mean.	Lowest.	Highest.	Mean.	Lowest.	Highest.	Mean.	At Catrine.	At Som. Menec.	
																						Lowest.
January.....	15	12	2	2	1	6	12	2			28.73	30.22	30.09	54	63	58	35	54	44	6.40	7.03	
February....	8	13	4	3	1	10	15	5	2		29.22	30.20	29.64	54	60	55	38	50	43	3.16	3.53	
March.....	10	14	4	3		4	12	6	5	2	29.13	30.40	29.88	54	64	59	40	55	48	3.45	4.00	
April.....	8	22				5	2	6	5	10	29.25	30.30	30.07	58	64	61	42	60	52	0.65	0.93	
May.....	13	18		1	3	12	3	8	6	1	29.22	30.39	29.83	60	70	63	46	72	59	1.50	1.87	
June.....	14	16			1	11	8	3	2	2	29.20	30.30	29.95	59	71	61	54	70	60	3.05	3.30	
July.....	14	17			1	10	2	7	3	4	29.42	30.20	29.82	61	74	67	56	68	68	2.08	2.33	
August.....	12	19			1	10	3	8	5	2	29.33	30.04	29.64	59	74	66	58	78	65	2.76	3.10	
September..	13	17			1	10	2	3	5	3	29.22	30.48	29.93	60	69	64	51	60	60	3.09	3.83	
October.....	17	14			3	7	1	12	1	1	28.82	30.40	29.71	58	68	62	37	65	53	3.51	3.95	
November...	14	11	5			8	1	7	4	7	28.64	30.38	29.70	58	64	61	37	57	47	3.69	3.80	
December...	14	12	5			6	2	8	8	7	28.82	30.58	30.07	57	62	59	36	54	45	2.65	2.90	
	152	185	20	8	11	101	24	114	23	49	29.07	30.22	29.86	57	67	61	44	63	53	36.09	40.57	

For 1835.

	State of the wind taken at noon.										Atmospheric pressure.			Attached Ther.			External Ther. in shade.			Fall of rain.				
	W.	S.W.	S.	S.E.	E.	S.E.	E.	N.E.	N.	N.W.	Lowest.	Highest.	Mean.	Lowest.	Highest.	Mean.	Lowest.	Highest.	Mean.	At Catrine.	At Som. Menec.			
																						Lowest.	Highest.	Mean.
January.....	9	4	12	6		28.93	30.64	29.83	51	61	58	29	52	41	2.10	2.18								
February....	11	3	3	1	1	28.74	30.19	29.40	57	63	60	36	50	44	5.89	6.60								
March.....	5	16	3	7	2	28.87	30.49	29.71	59	63	60	36	55	47	5.10	3.30								
April.....	8	17	2		1	29.39	30.20	29.94	58	65	60	41	56	49	1.05	1.20								
May.....	14	17			7	29.26	29.98	29.60	52	66	60	48	63	50	3.55	3.50								
June.....	9	21			5	29.28	30.34	29.88	58	74	65	55	79	64	1.40	1.60								
July.....	9	22			5	29.35	30.14	29.64	55	75	64	54	78	64	3.25	3.30								
August.....	10	21			2	29.32	30.12	29.83	62	76	69	60	76	69	1.65	1.60								
September..	17	13			1	28.97	30.03	29.42	59	71	63	48	69	59	5.10	5.11								
October.....	15	16	4		4	28.80	30.16	29.60	57	61	59	40	57	50	3.40	3.47								
November..	16	16	4		8	28.95	30.44	29.68	54	64	60	38	52	46	4.10	4.45								
December...	12	11	8		9	29.05	30.42	29.98	56	62	59	41	51	44	2.75	2.83								
	135	171	32	27	13	86	16	130	10	59	6	45	20	07	30.24	29.71	56	66	61	43	61	52	37.34	39.04

Catrine Works Meteorological Register for 1886.

	Atmospheric variations.				State of the wind taken at noon.								Atmospheric pressure.			Attached Ther.			External Ther. in shade.			Fall of rain.	
	Wet and stormy	Fair.	Frosty.	Snow & hail.	E.	S. E.	S.	S. W.	W.	N. W.	N.	N. E.	Lowest.	Highest.	Mean.	Lowest.	Highest.	Mean.	Lowest.	Highest.	Mean.	At Catrine.	At Sorn.
January.....	11	6	8	6	1	4	4	15	3	3	1	3	28.62	30.38	29.56	53	63	57	28	47	39	5.95	6.50
February....	3	10	9	7		8	1	7	10	2	7	28.19	30.38	29.63	53	62	57	35	49	41	2.30	2.54	
March.....	9	11	3	8		2	3	10	5	1		28.65	29.94	29.18	55	63	59	39	54	44	4.05	4.38	
April.....	11	14	2	3		2	2	12	9	2	1	29.05	30.20	29.64	57	62	60	43	58	50	2.35	2.30	
May.....	1	30			6	9	1	7	3	5	9	29.74	30.46	30.12	59	70	64	46	70	61	0.01	0.00	
June.....	17	13				5	3	14	3	3	1	29.18	30.10	29.61	60	70	64	56	74	63	3.25	3.27	
July.....	20	11				2	17	17	6	6	1	29.29	30.09	29.68	58	71	61	52	73	61	6.97	8.40	
August.....	14	16	1			5	15	5	7	7	2	29.38	30.20	29.84	59	72	64	47	75	61	4.60	4.80	
September..	15	13	2			5	11	2	4	4	8	29.09	30.22	29.65	56	63	60	53	60	56	5.32	6.01	
October.....	17	10	2	2	2	10	1	11	5	5	1	28.79	30.25	29.54	56	67	62	35	60	50	4.65	4.90	
November..	15	4	8	3	9	4	8	10	2	6	2	28.68	29.80	29.34	56	64	59	36	51	44	4.96	5.40	
December...	14	5	7	5		9		9	2	2	7	28.65	30.36	29.57	55	59	56	29	50	41	5.85	6.60	
	147	143	42	34	9	58	23	138	25	65	8	40	28.94	30.19	29.61	56	65	60	41	60	51	50.26	55.10

Hydrography.—The only river in the parish is the Ayr, which, entering at its eastern extremity, runs through it in a westerly direction. This river, whose bed is of round stones and gravel, rises in the parish of Muirkirk, and is considerably increased in its course by the Greenock and Garpel, two rivulets which run into it about six miles from its source, as well as by several streamlets, which, now that furrow-draining has been so generally introduced into this country, immediately after a heavy fall of rain, swell the Ayr into an immense body of water. The usual velocity of this river is about a mile an hour, but when swelled by a heavy fall of rain, or the melting of snow on the neighbouring hills, its velocity is increased to six or seven miles an hour. The scenery along its banks, which in many places are steep and bold, is remarkably picturesque and beautiful. There are several burns of water in the parish, the principal of which is the *Cleugh*, which runs into the Ayr close by Sorn Castle. This burn, which passes through a deep glen finely wooded on each side, though on a small scale, exhibits in some points scenery not greatly inferior to the much admired scenery at the Falls of the Clyde. Here are to be found beautiful specimens of what is commonly called petrified fog, or more properly calc-tuff, which are generally attached to the precipice, where it is formed by the deposition of the carbonate of lime, held in solution by the water which oozes from the rock upon the moss with which it is covered.

Geology, Soil, &c.—The primitive rocks do not make their appearance in the parish *in situ*, although the debris of several varieties of granite is found in abundance in the diluvial deposit. The whole district, however, is rich in the more useful minerals of the secondary formation, and is chiefly remarkable for the very extensive beds of limestone which are found on both sides of the river, and which have been wrought for economical purposes during a century. Coal seams also occur to some extent in the parish, and at no great distance under the surface. In the same locality, seams of clay ironstone (alternating with slate-clay) are found in very great abundance, and are said to contain a very large per centage of metal. The ironstone has never been fused on the spot; but some years ago a considerable quantity was made use of by the Muirkirk Iron Company at their works, about eight miles higher up the river. *Strata* of sandstone of considerable variety of structure are also found in the vicinity of the coal, and towards the western part of the parish, where the coal and lime disappear, the

sandstone becomes less indurated, and better fitted for being wrought into building stones.

In the holms, on the banks of the river Ayr, the soil is of a gravellish nature. On the higher ground it is generally reddish clay, and near the hills it assumes a mossy character until it terminates in moss. Underneath parts of this moss, however, there is in many places a substratum of clay, which, when ploughed up and mixed with a liberal portion of lime, produces excellent crops of oats and a beautiful sward of grass.

Zoology.—There are no rare animals found in the parish. There is in it a great abundance of hares and rabbits. It is only within these few years that rabbits first made their appearance in the parish in a wild state, but to such an extent have they increased, as in several instances to prove injurious to the crops and plantations. The fox, polecat, and weasel, white and brown, are all to be met with in the parish.

The adder abounds in the moors and mosses.

Birds of all kinds peculiar to the district abound in the parish. In consequence of the great additions which have been made to the plantations of late years, the number of birds has greatly increased, and they are now very destructive to the farms and gardens. Game birds of all kinds are also to be found in great numbers in the moors, fields, and plantations. Of late, there has been a great increase of pheasants, which are now frequently to be seen running upon the public roads in considerable numbers. Black-cock too have increased lately on the high grounds, but have not, as in other districts, displaced the red grouse, which still abound in the parish.

The fresh water trout, which at one time abounded in the river Ayr, but which had for a number of years disappeared in consequence of the tar-works at Muirkirk, now that these works have been discontinued, have again returned, and are caught in abundance in the Ayr, as it flows through Sorn and the adjacent parishes.

Botany.—There is nothing in the botany of this parish worthy of particular notice. An eminent botanist, who examined its vegetable productions lately, was unable to discover any plants but such as are to be found in other districts; the appearance and vegetable productions of the banks of the Ayr, from Sorn village to Catrine, being in his opinion similar to those of the banks of the Esk on the east coast.

Woods and Plantations, &c.—A vast addition has been made to the plantations in the parish, since the last Statistical Account was written. At that time there were but few trees and no plantations, save those which had been planted in the immediate neighbourhood of Sorn Castle by the late Countess Dowager of Loudon. This distinguished lady, after having lived for a considerable time at the courts of Queen Anne and George I., took up her residence at Sorn Castle in 1727, when she commenced, and carried on with wonderful activity and skill, till within a short period of her death, those improvements in hedging and planting which to this day adorn the surrounding landscape. The good work commenced by the Countess of Loudon has been followed up by the present possessor of Sorn Castle, Mrs A. Somervell, who, with great taste and judgment, has laid off extensive plantations and beautiful hedges, not merely in the vicinity of the castle, but to a considerable distance along the roads leading to Galston and Mauchline, and also on the higher lands of the parish. These plantations are in a very thriving condition, and will soon prove an ornament and a shelter to this once bleak and dreary district of country. Besides those on Sorn Castle estate, there are about 100 acres of very thriving plantations on the estate of Dalgain, now also the property of Mrs A. Somervell, which were laid off about twenty years ago by a former proprietor, the late Mr Stevenson, and have tended materially to improve the land, and have added much to the beauty of the scenery. There are also several plantations of smaller extent on other properties in the parish. Larch and Scotch fir are the predominating trees in these plantations, although there is also in them a proportion of oak, ash, elm, beech, and birch. It is much to be regretted, however, that a greater quantity of hard-wood has not been planted in these and in other plantations in this district of the country, and, when planted, that care has not been taken to cut down in time the firs and larches. Had attention been paid to this, many plantations in Ayrshire, which are now in a state of decay, would have been in a high state of preservation.

II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

Land-owners.—There are no less than twenty heritors in the parish; of these, Mrs A. Somervell of Sorn Castle and Dalgain, patroness and proprietress of about two-fifths of the parish; Miss Gray Farquhar of Gilmillscroft; Robert Campbell, Esq. of Auchmannoch; George Rankin, Esq. of Burnhead; Archibald Bucha-

nan, Esq. of Catrine Bank; Lieut.-Colonel Stewart of Catrine; and four other small proprietors, are resident. The non-residing heritors are, the Duke of Portland; the Marquis of Bute; Sir James Boswell, Bart. of Auchinleck; William Campbell, Esq. of Fairfield; Lieut.-Colonel M'Adam Cathcart of Craigengillan; Claud Alexander, Esq. of Ballochmyle; William Campbell, Esq. of Nether Place; Thomas Falconer, Esq. of Auchencloigh; Miss Innes of Stow; and Alexander Murdoch, Esq. of Briggs.

Antiquities.—There is nothing particularly worthy of being noticed under this head, except Sorn Castle. This castle, which stands upon a rock overhanging the river Ayr, and within a short distance of the church and manse, is supposed to have been erected at a very early period, but by whom is unknown. There is, however, a tradition, that the labourers who were engaged in building it had their option either of a peck of meal or 1½d. per day. The following short but well-authenticated narrative of its proprietors was communicated to Dr Gordon, the eloquent and benevolent writer of the last Statistical Account of the parish: “About the year 1406, the lands of Sorn, with several others in the district of Kyle, were acquired by Andrew Hamilton, third son of Sir David Hamilton of Cadzow, ancestor to the Duke of Hamilton. This Andrew Hamilton married Agnes, a daughter of Sir Hugh Campbell, Sheriff of Ayr, and by him had a son, Sir Robert Hamilton of Sorn and Sanquhar. Sir Robert married a daughter of Sir William Crawford of Loch Norris; and Sir William Hamilton of Sorn and Sanquhar, a son of this marriage, was one of the Senators of the College of Justice, and Lord Treasurer to King James V. This Lord Treasurer married a daughter of the family of Cassillis, by whom he had an heiress, Isobel Hamilton, who married George Lord Seaton, and by him was mother to Robert, first Earl of Winton, to Alexander, first Earl of Dunfermline, and Margaret, the wife of Claud Hamilton, Lord Paisley, ancestor to the Earl of Abercorn. The lands of Sorn were sold by the succeeding Earl of Winton to the family of Loudon, and, after remaining in this family upwards of 150 years, they were sold to William Tennent, Esq. of Poole, in 1782.” Sorn Castle and estate, after being a short time in the possession of Mr Tennent, were sold by him to Mr Graham of Limekilns and Mr Stevenson of Dalgain, from whom they were purchased by the family of the present proprietrix about forty years ago. Sorn Castle was one of those places belonging to private individuals which Charles II., in

virtue of an obsolete act, took possession of, and which, amid the severe struggle made during the latter part of his reign by the Presbyterians for their privileges, was provided with a garrison and a governor for the purpose of overawing them.*

Parochial Registers.—The parish registers commence in 1692, when Mr Mungo Lindsay was ordained minister of the parish, and have since been regularly kept. The register of baptisms is not by any means complete, as parents belonging to different dissenting bodies frequently neglect the registration of their children. Care, however, is taken to enforce this duty on parents belonging to the Establishment. There is no record of deaths, although the minister, in the course of his visitations, is in the habit of taking an exact account of them.

Eminent Men.—The only person of eminence to whom this parish gave birth was Mr Alexander Peden,—a name familiar to the people of Scotland, and particularly so to the people of this district. The place of his birth, which happened in 1626, has been disputed,—some maintaining that it was at the farm of Auchencloigh, others that it was in one of the small cottages, which, in the remembrance of persons now living, stood not far from Sorn Castle. Mr Peden having received at the University the education which was necessary to qualify him for the office of the holy ministry, was for some time parish schoolmaster, precentor, and session-clerk at Tarbolton, and, according to Wodrow, precentor also at Fenwick. In 1663, he was settled minister of New Luce, in Galloway, but in about three years afterwards, he was, like other eminent servants of God in those troublous and persecuting times, forced to abandon a flock most ardently and devotedly attached to him. From the time of his being thrust out of New Luce, he wandered about from place to place, sometimes in Scotland, and sometimes in Ireland, till June 1673, when he was seized in Carrick, and conveyed from thence to Edinburgh. After undergoing a series of hard-

* A great extent of judicial power seems to have been vested in these governors, as appears from a document now in the possession of Robert Campbell, Esq. of Auchmannoch, of which the following is a copy:

“ God save the King.

“ I, Lewis Lauder, Governour of Sorn Castle, dow heirby certife and declare, viz. Kirkwood, servitor to Arthour Campbell of Auchmannoch, in the parish of Sorne, did compeir before me, on solemn oath before Almighty God, did abjure and renounce the late tratours appollogeticall declaration, in so far as it declares war against his Mattie (Majesty,) and asserts that it is lawful to kill all such as serve his Mattie in church, state, armie, or contrie, conform to his Majestie's late proclamation of the 30 daye of Decr. last.

“ Given at Sorne, the aught day of February 1685 ziers.

“ LEWIS LAUDER.”

ships of various kinds, and being cruelly treated in various ways, he returned to Scotland, which he reached in 1685,—the year when the persecution raged hottest in this and other districts of the country. At the imminent risk of his life, yet under the guidance and protection of a gracious God, who wrought out many signal deliverances for him, he visited different districts of Ayrshire and Galloway, preaching, and warning men in the most solemn manner of the awful judgments which the Lord, in consequence of the impenitency and apostacy of the people of Scotland, would at no very distant period bring upon them. At length worn out and exhausted, and apprehensive that his latter end was drawing nigh, he returned to his brother's house in this parish. But as Sorn Castle, in the immediate neighbourhood of which it was situated, had, as has been already stated, a garrison of soldiers and a governor for the purpose of overawing the people of the surrounding district, and of bringing such leading men as Peden to condign punishment, he was aware that his arrival would soon become known, and that, unless he had some place of concealment, he must be detected. For this purpose, he caused a cave to be dug, and there he was in the habit of hiding himself. Though every moment in danger of being laid hold upon, he paid frequent visits to his friends, and uttered many prophecies respecting the fate which awaited the church and people of Scotland. On his death-bed, Peden was visited by James Renwick, that eminent saint and servant of God, and last martyr to the cause of civil and religious liberty in Scotland, whose presence was a great source of comfort and refreshment to his spirit. After having very narrowly escaped detection from his persecutors, who had searched every place in and about his brother's house for him, he died there in 1686, in the sixtieth year of his age. The laird of Auchinleck, who was favourable to the Presbyterian cause, allowed Mr Peden's remains to be deposited in the family burial-place within the church of Auchinleck. But the spirit of persecution, which raged with such fury in this district of Scotland at this period, followed Mr Peden even to his grave. Forty days after his burial, his corpse was raised by a troop of dragoons, with the intention, it is believed, of hanging it in chains on the gallows at Cumnock. But this act of barbarity on the part of Mr Peden's persecutors was prevented through the intercession of the Countess of Dumfries and the Lady of the Laird of Affleck, and the dead body was taken down and re-interred at the foot of the gallows. Such, however,

was the veneration in which the memory of this good man was held by the people of the surrounding district, that, in selecting a piece of burying-ground for the parish of Cumnock, the spot where Mr Peden's ashes lay was made choice of for the purpose, so that these now lie in the church-yard of Cumnock.

Dr Matthew Stewart, late Professor of Mathematics in the University of Edinburgh, and so well known over all Europe for his original genius and high attainments in geometrical science, though not a native, was a frequent visitor in the parish. At his death his property came into the possession of his son, the late Professor Dugald Stewart, one of the most distinguished metaphysicians of his day. Though not generally resident in the parish, in the earlier and more advanced period of his life, Professor Dugald Stewart spent a portion of his time in it. The house which he occupied still stands; and individuals still speak with delight of his unwearied benevolence, of his kindness and condescension to all who came within the sphere of his influence, particularly to those who he knew had been the objects of his father's regard. Professor Stewart was succeeded, as an heritor of the parish, by his son, Lieutenant-Colonel Matthew Stewart, a distinguished soldier and an accomplished scholar. On a very commanding situation on his property, and at a short distance from the house which was occupied by his father, he has built a new dwelling-house, and laid off the grounds about it with great taste.*

III.—POPULATION.

According to Dr Webster's account, the population of the parish						
	in 1775, was			1474		
	in 1797, the date of the last Statistical Account,			2779		
		Males.	Females.			
By Government census, 1801,	-	1243,	-	1363,	-	2606
1811,	-	1462,	-	1886,	-	3348
1821,	-	1725,	-	2140,	-	3865
1831,	-	1900,	-	2353,	-	4253
At the end of 1836,	-	1843,	-	2277,	-	4120

State of population in 1836.

	Males.	Females
1 to 15,	815	824
15 to 30,	435	658
30 to 50,	352	507
50 to 70,	194	222
above 70,	47—1843	66—2277

* There is a well authenticated tradition, that King James V. visited Sorn Castle on the occasion of the marriage of the daughter of his Treasurer, Sir William Hamilton, to Lord Seaton. It is generally believed, that it was while he was on this visit that his Majesty sat down by a well, about half-way between Glasgow and Sorn, to refresh himself, and hence the name "King's Well" was given to it.

	<i>Married.</i>		
Males,	-	-	560
Females,	-	-	561
Widowers,	-	-	39
Widows,	-	-	134
Number of families in the parish, 846, averaging about $4\frac{1}{2}$ to each family.			
Yearly average of births for the last seven years,	-	-	120
registered,	-	-	96
deaths about	-	-	68
marriages,	-	-	32

There are no insane persons in the parish. There are two fatuous, and one deaf and dumb. The rapid increase of the population from 1775 to 1831, arose from the establishment of the cotton manufactory at Catrine, in 1792, by the late Claud Alexander, Esq. of Ballochmyle, and the late David Dale, Esq.; and the decrease from 1831 to 1836 has arisen chiefly from the improvements which have taken place in machinery, by means of which, in some departments of that establishment, fewer persons are required. In the country part of the parish, and in the village of Sorn, the population has varied little since the date of the last Statistical Account in 1797. Then it was 1429, and at the end of 1836, 1418, the difference being only 11 during that period. In the cotton manufactory, and in the bleachfield at Catrine, there are 913 persons employed, of whom 315 are males and 598 females. There are besides in the parish, 1 auctioneer; 1 land-surveyor; 3 brewers; 7 bakers; 4 butchers; 1 carding-miller; 15 carters and carriers; 6 cloth-merchants; 1 cooper; 3 clock and watch-makers; 1 corset-maker; 4 cowfeeders; 1 dyer; 1 forester; 13 grocers; 9 grocers and spirit-dealers; 5 gardeners; 3 grain-millers; 100 hand-sewers; 5 hawkers; 5 heddle-carders; 7 inn-keepers; 2 keepers of lodgings; 4 knitters of stockings; 3 manufacturers' agents; 34 masons; 37 pinn-fillers; 1 portrait-painter; 2 painters; 4 painters of snuff-boxes; 1 plasterer; 9 snuff-box-makers; 13 smiths; 3 sewing-mistresses; 53 shoemakers; 6 sawyers; 3 surgeons and druggists; 2 spirit-dealers; 2 slaters; 3 students; 4 straw-hat manufacturers; 1 saddler; 2 stocking-weavers; 2 tambourers; 12 teachers; 4 tinsmiths; 6 thatchers; 16 tailors; 120 hand-loom weavers; 34 wrights; 5 white-seam-sewers. The remaining portion of the parish, with the exception of a few individuals who live upon their properties, consists of farmers, farm-servants, day-labourers, quarriers, and colliers.

Character, &c. of the People.—The people of the parish are in general quiet, sober, and industrious. Most of them pay outward respect to religion, yet it is to be feared, as in other districts of the

country, there is less of the power of religion among them than in times past. They are remarkable for their kindness towards each other, particularly in seasons of distress. Should an individual be laid on a bed of sickness, and be unable to procure for himself the essentials of existence, his neighbours are generally ready to share their humble meal with him—to attend him night after night, should their presence be required, and, when death has closed his eyes, they are always ready to render any assistance in their power to administer consolation to the afflicted family. Though living in a comparatively remote district of the country, where there is little facility of attaining to a knowledge of the higher branches of education, the people of the parish are by no means deficient in the spirit of enterprise, or in general and scientific knowledge. Several individuals, natives of the parish, at this moment, fill most honourably prominent situations in society, some in this and others in distant lands. A considerable number of the villagers in Sorn and Catrine have a small piece of ground attached to their houses, on which they raise potatoes and a few common vegetables, for the use of their families, the working of which forms a pleasing recreation to them after the toils of the day.

IV.—INDUSTRY.

Agriculture.—The parish is supposed to contain about 19,000 Scotch acres, of which about 7000 are in pasture after cultivation, about 3000 under crop or under rye-grass hay, about 600 in wood, about 3000 might, by a judicious application of capital, be brought into a state of cultivation, and the remainder is chiefly hill or moss.

The value of the grain raised annually is about L. 7200; of rye-grass and meadow hay about L. 1716; of potatoes, beans, turnips, and carrots about L. 1517; of land in pasture, rating it at L. 3 per cow, and 6s. per sheep, L. 4320; dairy produce about L. 7000; of lime last year L. 600. The number of cows is about 1264, of sheep 2161, of horses 221. The valued rental is L. 5411 Scots, and the real rental about L. 7300.

The rent of land on the higher ground varies from 12s. to L. 1, 2s. but on the holms, on the banks of the Ayr, and in the neighbourhood of the villages of Sorn and Catrine, it is as high as L. 3 per acre, or even more.

The crops chiefly raised in the parish are oats, potatoes, and hay. There also a few acres of wheat and barley, beans, turnips, and occasionally a small quantity of carrots. The rotation is generally two crops of oats, one of hay, and five years of pasture. In several instances a more improved system of farming has been recently

introduced, and that chiefly by those who have had recourse to furrow-draining. When this mode of draining was first introduced into Ayrshire, it was done by means of small stones; of late, however, tiles have been substituted for stones, and are now to be easily obtained in this and in most of the neighbouring parishes. The impulse which this species of improvement has given to agriculture, and the increase of produce, is very great. This is strikingly exemplified in the glebe, which has been drained by the present incumbent. Fields which yielded only from $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 bolls of oats per acre when he entered upon his charge, yield now about 7 or 8 bolls per acre. But perhaps one of the most remarkable examples of the good effects of furrow-draining is to be found on a piece of moss in the parish belonging to Archibald Buchanan, Esq. of Catrine Bank, who was, if not the first, at least amongst the first, who introduced this mode of draining into Ayrshire. This piece of moss, consisting of about 20 acres, averaging 14 feet deep, till within these few years, was lying in a worse than useless state, and the damp arising from it frequently mildewed the crops in the neighbouring fields. After being drained and dug, about 40 bolls of lime, and 50 carts of compost, consisting of two-thirds clay, and one-third dung, were spread upon every acre. After this it was sown with oats, and the crop averaged about 6 and 7 bolls per acre. It has since been in sheep pasture, and yields a return of about L. 2 per acre yearly. Three acres of this moss have been green cropped, and yielded about 30 tons of turnips per acre. The whole cost of cutting the drains, digging, lime, compost, and putting in the first crop, amounted to L. 14 per acre, and by these means, from being worse than useless, the moss has become equally as valuable, if not more valuable than any arable land on the property on which it lies. Should this system of furrow-draining be carried to its greatest possible extent, it is to be hoped, that our country will not only in general be independent of supplies of foreign grain, but become an exporting one.

Wages.—The usual rate of wages given to a ploughman is from L. 7 to L. 8 half-yearly; to a dairy maid from L. 4 to L. 5; to married male servants who live in houses of their own from L. 10 to L. 12. Day-labourers receive about 1s. 8d. per day; females, when engaged in out-door work, about 10d.; masons and wrights about 2s. 6d. per day; when hired for the harvest work of a season, men receive about L. 3, women about L. 2. Wages of weavers

in this, as in other parishes, fluctuate very much. Sometimes a good weaver may earn from 1s. 6d. to 2s. per day; at other times only from 9d. to 1s.

Stock.—The cows in the parish are mostly of the Cunningham breed, and the sheep are the common black-faced. No particular attention is paid to the breed of horses in the parish, which is to be regretted. For were farmers careful to have something of the blood horse in their horses, they would find them much better fitted for every species of work, and better able to undergo fatigue than those now generally in use among them.

Manufactures.—In the village of Catrine, and on a part of the estate of Ballochmyle, which still forms a part of the parish of Sorn, there are the very extensive cotton and bleaching-works belonging to Messrs James Finlay and Company of Glasgow. These works were commenced in 1786, by the late Claud Alexander, Esq. of Ballochmyle, and the late David Dale, Esq. merchant in Glasgow. At that time, where the village of Catrine stands, there were only two families living,—those of the miller and blacksmith; now it contains a population of 2702 souls, whose chief support is derived from the cotton and bleaching works. In 1801, the cotton works were purchased from Claud Alexander, Esq. and David Dale, Esq. by their present proprietors, and have since been greatly enlarged and improved, particularly by the erection of an extensive bleaching work in 1824, and three very large water-wheels a few years ago. Two of these wheels, which are about 50 feet diameter, and estimated at 100 horse power each, along with two steam engines of about 40 horse power each, which are used occasionally in dry seasons to make up for any deficiency in the supply of water, and to insure regularity of motion, propel the machinery in the cotton manufactory; and the third, which is about 32 feet diameter, aided by a steam-engine of twenty-five horse power, when there is a scarcity of water, propels the machinery in the bleaching establishment. At Catrine, the cotton which is brought from Glasgow is spun, woven, bleached, finished, and put up for home sale and exportation, to suit the various markets. The weight of yarn spun in 1836 was 951,973 lbs., and the quantity of goods produced 172,175 pieces of 25 yards, or 4,304,393 yards, equal to 2445 miles. Besides bleaching that which is manufactured at Catrine, there is also bleached at the bleachfield there the cotton cloth manufactured at the other works belonging to Messrs James Finlay and Company. The quantity of cloth bleach-

ed varies from 15 to 25,000 yards per day. The superior quality of the goods manufactured by the Catrine Company, and the manner in which they are bleached and finished, have obtained for them such a decided preference, both in the home and foreign markets, that individuals have in some instances assumed the mark of the Catrine Company, with the view of getting their goods more readily disposed of. The bleaching process is completed within doors, and is carried on without interruption at all seasons of the year, and that, too, without the slightest injury being done to the cloth; nay, with the advantages of superior purity and colour, and a vast saving of time in the process, as well as of land, which, when the old system of bleaching was adopted, was required to expose the cloth to the action of the sun's rays. In the Catrine bleaching-work there is a saving of from 150 to 200 acres of land. In the different departments of spinning, weaving, and bleaching, and in the making and repairing of machinery connected with the cotton and bleaching-works, there are 913 persons employed, besides masons, labourers, and others, who on an average may amount to 30 more; and the whole money put in circulation, and paid at the Catrine works in 1836, amounted to L. 27,568, 18s. The wages are paid every Friday; and every thing is done to promote the moral and religious interests, as well as the comfort of the people connected with the works. Before the new regulations with regard to the education of the young persons employed in cotton-factories were introduced, the Catrine Company, at their own expense, provided a schoolmaster, to whom all who were connected with the works had, and still have, access immediately after the labours of the day are over, without any charge whatever. From 200 to 300 individuals have been in the habit of availing themselves of this privilege, thereby laying the foundation of future happiness and future usefulness to themselves and to others. When a stagnation in trade occurs, and other works of a similar description suspend their operations wholly, or in part, the Catrine Company carry on their operations without intermission, and keep their workers in full employment. A goodly feeling has in consequence, with but little interruption, subsisted between the employed and their employers in the Catrine works. An attempt, it is true, was made about two years ago to destroy this goodly feeling by the formation of a union among the workers, and by a demand for an increase of wages. This attempt, as generally happens in such cases, failed,—much distress ensued, and the greater number of those who

had been seduced from an establishment, where they had uniformly been treated with all the kindness and consideration consistent with its proper management, returned after the lapse of a few months, and solicited admission to their former situations. Except in the cases of those who took a leading part in this union, the applications of all were listened to, and the same harmony and good feeling which formerly prevailed in this establishment seem again to prevail, and, it is hoped, will long continue. The works at Catrine, as well as the workers, have uniformly excited the admiration of strangers; and from the books of the General Friendly Society at Catrine, with which many of the persons employed at the Catrine works are connected, it is evident there is less sickness among the people employed at the works than among any other description of workmen in the village. The success of this establishment, and the comfortable circumstances of the individuals employed at it, are mainly owing to the able and judicious management of Archibald Buchanan, Esq. the resident partner of Messrs James Finlay and Company, who has managed the works at Catrine almost from the time they passed into the hands of the present proprietors. Besides the weaving of cotton cloth by power-looms at Catrine works, there is in this, as in most of the parishes of Ayrshire where there is a village population, a number of hand-loom weavers. The employment afforded to this class of workmen is very precarious, and the remuneration when trade is at its best so very small, that whenever an opportunity occurs many individuals who follow this profession abandon it. In 1826 the number of hand-loom weavers in the parish was about 220, now it is only about 120.

There is a grain-mill in the parish, which has attached to it a saw-mill, where, at a reasonable rate, a great quantity of wood is sawn. There is also a carding-mill, a brewery, and two licensed private brewers in the parish. Several of the farmers have thrashing-mills attached to their farm-yards, which are chiefly driven by horses.

Quarries.—There are at present three lime-quarries wrought in the parish;—one on the estate of Sorn Castle, a second on the estate of Dalgain, and a third on the estate of Gilmillscroft. That on Sorn Castle has only been opened up this year, although it was formerly wrought a considerable time ago. Indeed, there is a well authenticated tradition, that the lime with which the old bridge at Ayr was built was taken from that quarry. The quarries on Dal-

gain and Gilmillscroft have been wrought for a number of years. Last year their joint produce amounted to 9000 bolls.

V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Market-Towns.—There are no market-towns in the parish; but in the villages of Catrine and Sorn, there are a number of excellent shops, at which almost every article required for domestic use can be purchased as good, and on as easy terms as in large towns. Besides the regular supply of butcher-meat and vegetables which may be obtained daily from the butchers and grocers in the villages, there is an excellent market for butcher-meat and vegetables held every Saturday at Catrine village.

Villages.—There are two villages in the parish,—Catrine and Sorn. The former contains 2700 souls, and the latter about 300. In Catrine, people are chiefly dependent for employment on the cotton and bleaching-works there, and in Sorn, with the exception of about eight-hand loom weavers, they are chiefly agricultural labourers, colliers, quarriers, and hand-sewers.

Inns.—There are four inns in the village of Catrine, two in the village of Sorn, and one at Greenfoot, about a quarter of a mile from the village of Sorn, on the road from Galston to Auchinleck.

Means of Communication.—About six miles of the road from Ayr to Muirkirk, and about five miles of the road from Galston to Auchinleck, pass through the parish. There are penny-post offices in Catrine and Sorn, and the mail gig with the mail from Ayr and Kilmarnock for London, passes through the latter village every morning about seven o'clock on its way to Douglas Mill, where it meets the mail-coach from Glasgow to London, and waits the arrival of the mail from London to Glasgow. On receiving the letter-bags for Ayr, Kilmarnock, Cumnock, and Mauchline, it returns again immediately, and passes through Sorn about three o'clock P. M., bringing letters and papers from London in about forty-four hours. The coach from Glasgow to Dumfries passes through Mauchline, about four miles distant from Sorn, every lawful day, about three o'clock. There are carriers twice a week from Sorn and Catrine to and from Glasgow, leaving those places every Monday and Thursday, and returning again every Wednesday and Saturday. There is also a carrier from Catrine to Ayr every Tuesday and Friday, and from the same place to Kilmarnock on Tuesdays and Fridays. The Catrine Company despatch carts with goods to Glasgow every lawful evening, which, by means of a relay of horses on the

the road, reach their destination early on the following forenoon. Carts are also despatched from Glasgow every evening with cotton and goods for the bleachfield, which reach Catrine every forenoon. There is a stone bridge over the Ayr, near the manse on the road from Galston to Auchinleck, which was begun and completed through the exertions of the Rev. William Steele, the second minister who was settled in the parish after its final separation from Mauchline. There is also an excellent stone bridge over the Ayr at Catrine, on the road from Mauchline to Muirkirk through that village.

Ecclesiastical State.—The parish of Sorn was originally a part of the parish of Mauchline, from which it was finally and completely separated in 1692, when Mr Mungo Lindsay was ordained minister, a stipend and glebe provided, and a manse built. The precise year in which the church was built cannot be ascertained. The writer of the last Statistical Account represents it to have been built in 1656; but there is a stone in a part of the building which represents it to have been built in 1658. From Wodrow's history, it appears that a Mr John Campbell was ejected from Dalgain in 1662 for non-compliance with Episcopacy; and according to Cruickshanks, Mr Andrew Dalrymple, minister at Auchinleck, was "indulged" to Sorn in 1669. Nor is it improbable that, previous to the Revolution in 1688, there was an Episcopal incumbent settled in the parish, as a tradition prevails that he was obliged to flee at that period; and a small pass at the side of the river Ayr, near Sorn Castle, over which he is said to have passed during his flight, is still called the Curate's Steps. It is not unlikely that he was one of those to whom Bishop Burnet alludes as being so obnoxious to the people, that they tore their gowns, and carried these in mock procession through their parishes previous to expelling them. In 1826 the church was thoroughly repaired, and the seating so arranged as to accommodate about 50 persons more than formerly. It is conveniently enough situated for the parish,—has 611 sittings, of which 64 are set apart for the poor and those not otherwise entitled to church accommodation. There is besides a chapel of ease in the village of Catrine, which was built by the late Claud Alexander, Esq. of Ballochmyle, in 1792, and cost L. 1000. In 1829, this chapel was purchased from the present Claud Alexander, Esq. of Ballochmyle, by the feuars of Catrine, who, by their feu-rights, are bound to maintain a chapel in connection with the Establishment, as well as a church-yard. This chapel, which con-

tains about 730 sittings, will, it is expected, in a short time be constituted a parish church, and the village of Catrine be assigned to its minister as a parish *quoad sacra*.

The present manse was built by the Rev. William Steele, to whom allusion has already been made, soon after he was settled minister of the parish, and that chiefly at his own expense,—the heritors having only granted him a small allowance for the purpose. Some additions have been made to it by succeeding incumbents, and, if thoroughly repaired, it might prove a comfortable manse for sometime to come. The glebe, including the ground on which the manse and office-houses stand, is about 9 Scotch acres. The stipend is 123 bolls of meal, 52 bolls of bear, of the old weight and measure of the county, and L. 37, 6s. 9d.

A meeting-house in connection with the United Secession Church has recently been built at Catrine, but as yet no minister has been appointed to it. This meeting-house has been erected, not in consequence of any recent accession in the parish to the religious denomination with which it is connected, but chiefly, it is supposed, for the accommodation of those persons belonging to that body who have been in the habit of attending the meeting-houses at Mauchline and Cumnock.

The number of persons in the parish belonging to the Establishment is 3360, of whom 1299 are communicants. 760 belong to other denominations, chiefly to the United Secession.

Education.—There is one parochial school in the parish, with the legal accommodation and the maximum salary, situated close by the church, within about a quarter of a mile of the village of Sorn. There are, besides, in the rural district four teachers, and in the village of Catrine seven teachers, all of whom, with one exception, depend entirely on the school wages, which average about 3d. per week. The exception is the teacher employed by the Catrine Cotton Company, who receives from them L. 50 a-year for teaching in the evening, the more advanced young persons engaged in their works, and about L. 30 annually for instructing during the day those who are under thirteen years of age, in terms of the factories' regulation bill. The number of the persons in the parish attending school is about 500.

Libraries.—There are four libraries in the village of Catrine: one, called the Public Library, was instituted in 1814, consists of upwards of 600 volumes, and has 70 members, who pay L. 1 of entry money, and 2s. 3d. annually. The second is the New Pub-

lic Library, instituted in 1829, consists of upwards of 700 volumes, and has about 100 members, who pay 1s. of entry money, and 4s. 4d. annually. The third is the Philosophical Library, which was instituted in 1825, consists of about 90 volumes, and has 24 members, who pay 1s. of entry money, and 2s. annually. And the fourth is a library in connection with the Catrine works Sabbath school, consisting of 528 volumes, to which all the young persons attending the Sabbath school have access gratis.

Friendly Societies.—The only friendly society at present in the parish is in the village of Catrine. It was instituted in 1829, and remodelled in 1832. There are 320 members, whose average annual assessment is about 11s. 6d. The funds at present are L. 254, and L. 170 were paid last year to members claiming relief. Another Friendly Society was instituted in 1794, but was lately dissolved.

Poor and Parochial Funds.—The number of poor on the roll at the end of 1836 was 38, and the average allowance to each weekly was 1s. 2½d. The average number for the last seven years was 32, and the average allowance to each weekly during that period was 1s. 1½d. and a cart of coals annually. There are besides individuals who have received occasional relief. In 1836, the number of persons who received occasional relief was 30, and the average sum granted to each was 11s. 5½d. For the last seven years the average number of persons receiving occasional relief yearly was 36, and the average sum allotted to each during that period was 11s. 3½d. The relief thus granted is but small, yet, with the aid of friends and the kindness of neighbours, the greater proportion of these poor persons have generally been supported in some degree of comfort. The whole amount expended on the poor of the parish, in 1836, was L. 135, 0s. 1½d., and the average amount for the last seven years was L. 113, 0s. 3½d. annually. This sum is raised from the collections at the parish church and the chapel at Catrine, the interest of L. 110, the result chiefly of some donations, mortcloth-money, small sums received at marriages, and a voluntary assessment on the part of the heritors. The management of the poor's funds is entirely in the hands of the kirk-session, who exhibit a statement of the money received and expended by them annually to the heritors.

Fairs.—There are two fairs held at Sorn annually,—one on the second Tuesday of March, O. S., and the other on the first Monday of November, N. S. At the former, there is a great attend-

ance of people from the surrounding district. A good deal of business is transacted, and a number of cattle disposed of. There is also a race run on this occasion, which tends to increase the concourse of persons. At the latter, which has only been recently instituted, the attendance is but small.

Fuel.—The fuel used in the parish is peat and coal; peat in the higher districts, and coal in the villages and places adjacent. Till of late, coal was found in considerable quantities in the immediate neighbourhood of the village of Sorn, and the price was in consequence very moderate, 3s. per cart of 12 cwt. laid down at the doors of the villagers. At present the coal used in the parish is brought from the parish of Auchinleck, a distance of about four miles, and with the rise of price which has taken place in that article during the present year, and the additional cost of cartage, a cart of 12 cwt. of coals, laid down in the village of Sorn, costs 5s. 3d. An attempt, however, is now making on an extensive scale to raise coal in the parish, and should it be successful, of which there seems a probability, this district will, as in times past, be abundantly supplied with coals, and the dwellings of the poor and labouring classes be again cheered by that great alleviation of the ills of poverty,—a comfortable fire.

July 1837.

PARISH OF MUIRKIRK.

PRESBYTERY OF AYR, SYNOD OF GLASGOW AND AYR.

THE REV. JAMES SYMINGTON, MINISTER.*

L.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

Name.—MUIRKIRK is the most easterly parish of the county of Ayr, and was known in former times, by the title of “the Muirkirk of Kyle.” Until about the year 1626, it constituted a part of the parish of Mauchline, and was subject to the jurisdiction of the Earls of Loudon. A separate provision was at that time made for a minister, and a building erected for public worship.

Extent, &c.—The parish is about 8 miles in length from east

* Drawn up by the late incumbent, the Rev. Alexander Brown.