

# UNITED PARISH OF KILCALMONELL AND KILBERRY.

PRESBYTERY OF KINTYRE, SYNOD OF ARGYLE.

THE REV. JOHN M'ARTHUR, MINISTER.

## I.—TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

*Name.*—THE name Kilcalmonell is of Gaelic derivation, and signifies the burying place of Malcolm O'Neill. Kilberry, the name of the other division of the parish, we think, is compounded of *Cill a-Mhairi*, the burying-place of Mary. Kilcalmonell is situate in the peninsula of Kintyre, extending from the parish of Killean, on the west, to Lochfine, at Tarbert, on the north-east.

*Extent, &c.*—Its length is about 16 miles, and its breadth 3 miles. It is bounded, almost along its whole length on the north-west, by West Loch Tarbert and the Atlantic Ocean; and on the south-east, by the parish of Saddel and Skipness. Kilberry is situate, properly speaking, in the district of Knapdale, is separated from Kilcalmonell by West Loch Tarbert, and bounded by the sea on all sides excepting on the north-east, where it is met by the parish of South Knapdale. The form of it is triangular, and nearly equilateral.

*Topographical Appearances.*—Kilcalmonell rises sometimes with a gentle acclivity, at other times with greater abruptness from the sea to its greatest elevation. The general altitude of the range of hills in which it terminates on the south-east, does not exceed 1500 feet, whilst the few valleys by which the uniformity of the acclivity is disturbed, rise not more than 100 or 150 feet above the level of the sea. Kilberry is bisected from west to east by a ridge of hill which rises gradually till it is lost in the cloud which frequently envelopes the lofty Sliobh-ghoil, one of the two bases of which extends out into considerable breadth of soil, well fitted to reward the labours of the husbandman; while the other, possessing equal extension, is of a more moorland character. The coast of Kilcalmonell is not remarkable for variety of aspect, ex-

cepting along the shore of Loch Tarbert, which is overhung, along a considerable portion of it, by the birch, the alder, and the oak, growing in careless profusion towards the summit of the abruptly ascending hills. The shore is chiefly sandy. The sea coast of Kilberry presents a bold front to the billows of the Atlantic. The only bay worth noticing in the united parish is Stornoway, in the neighbourhood of which is the headland of Ard Patrick, where tradition affirms Saint Patrick to have landed on his way from Ireland to Icolmkill.

*Climate.*—The climate of this parish is very variable. The exhalations which are constantly rising from the surface of the Atlantic are attracted, when the wind blows from the west, by the upland of Kintyre. The prevailing wind is the west, and a sure prognostic of rain is afforded by the cloud-capped Paps of Jura. When we consider the variableness of our temperature, it may be surprising that the climate should be so healthy as it in general is.

*Hydrography.*—West Loch Tarbert, a branch of the Atlantic, separates the two divisions of the united parish, measuring in its length about nine miles, and in its breadth one mile. The depth of the water is by no means uniform, varying from three or four fathoms to ten or fifteen. There are several fresh water lochs in the parish, but, neither in regard to magnitude nor adjacent scenery, are they entitled to any particular notice.

*Geology and Mineralogy.*—This parish does not furnish an interesting field to the investigation of the lovers of those sciences. The direction of the strata along the sea is from west to east. There are beds of limestone from north-east to south-west (but of inconsiderable thickness) to be found in several localities in the parish.

*Zoology.*—In addition to the ordinary variety of the feathery tribe, we have the wigeon in great numbers every winter, taking shelter from the northern blasts, on the comparatively smooth surface of Loch Tarbert. The barnacle comes now and then into close juxtaposition with them; and on a clear frosty morning, it is not uncommon to hear the wild melody of the swan echoing from shore to shore. Some of the Loch Tarbert oysters are of great size, and all of good quality.

## II.—CIVIL HISTORY.

*Land-owners.*—The principal land-owners are, John Campbell,

Esq. of Kilberry; John Campbell, Esq. of Stonefield; and Miss Macdonald, Lorgie.

*Parochial Registers.*—Parochial registers do not seem to have been kept till the year 1780.

*Antiquities.*—There are tumuli on the property of John Campbell, Esq. of Drimnamueklach, in one of which some pieces of a rudely adorned helmet were found, in a tolerable state of preservation, three years ago. The forts of Dunskeig, mentioned by my predecessor, and belonging to a chain of forts built at certain distances from each other along the coast of Kintyre, appear to have been erected at a very early period in the history of this kingdom. The castle of Tarbert, though very ancient, is not nearly so much so as is the line of forts already mentioned. Dunskeig is admirably adapted by nature for being a place of defence. The view it commands is varied and extensive. It rises almost perpendicularly from the level of the sea to the height of 400 feet. The remains of the vitrified fort are not very entire, but sufficiently marked to prove that its magnitude was considerable.

### III.—POPULATION.

The population has not increased since 1821, owing in a great measure to the extent to which emigration to America has been carried on within these few years past. Of the whole population of the united parish, about 1200 reside in villages, and the remainder in the country. Four or five families of independent fortune reside in the parish; and the number of landed proprietors whose properties yield upwards of L.50 per annum, is nine.

*Language, &c.*—The Gaelic is the vernacular language of the parishioners; but the English is displacing it, and the sooner it overmasters it the better.

The peasantry endeavour to better their condition by having recourse to smuggling. It is impossible to calculate the amount of evil that this unholy and unpatriotic traffic is the cause of.

### IV.—INDUSTRY.

*Agriculture.*—There are a few very well cultivated farms in this parish. Potatoes form the principal article of farm produce; and, in the case of a purely arable possession, if the holder does not pay one-half of his rent by the sale of this root, his lease cannot be regarded as a very advantageous one. A large quantity of potatoes is exported annually for the English and Irish markets.

Kintyre is not distinguished for the excellence of its breed of black-cattle.

On some of the estates there are no leases at all, the tenants continuing from year to year, as tenants at will; and it is surprising how few removals occur within the space to which leases are generally extended. Such a system, however, cannot but operate as a drawback upon agricultural improvement; and the fact is, that there is but little progress in this department. Mr Campbell of Stonefield has proved, on his farm of Crear, in Kilberry parish, how much the outlay of money can accomplish towards beautifying the aspect of a country, and procuring, at the same time, a fair remuneration for the expenditure of the capital.

The landholders of this united parish have lent their sanction, for time immemorial, to the establishment of a cottage and village system over their estates. A farm is let to a tenant at a given rent, and he is subjected to no restrictions as to the management. He has cottagers in two or three places on his farm; each of whom engages to pay a rent of from L. 2 to L. 5 per annum. But this is accomplished very frequently, by having recourse to illicit distillation, and the evil practices therewith connected. The evils again, of the village system, are lamentable in the extreme. If the inhabitants can command a meal or two of potatoes per diem, their ambition rises no higher. In the parish of Kilcalmonell alone, exclusive of Tarbet, the burden laid upon the heritors for the maintenance of the poor is L. 50 this year. But the vices engendered directly by this system are still more to be deplored: and most earnestly would I beseech all my heritors to annihilate, as speedily as the laws of humanity permit, a system so fraught with such incalculable evil.

#### V.—PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

The village of Tarbert contains a population of 700 or 800; the inhabitants depending mainly on the herring fishing. This village is probably the ancient county town of Argyle; and is still a thriving little place. Tarbert is a post-town, the mail being transmitted thereto every lawful day from Glasgow, per one of the steamers, from whence it is forwarded, by land, to Campbelton.

*Ecclesiastical State.*—The Kilcalmonell church was built about eighty years ago; the Kilberry one in the year 1821. The seats are all free, to the extent of 600 in the former, and 700 in the latter; there is also a chapel at Tarbert, supported by the Royal Bounty. There is an Independent meeting-house, erected some twenty or thirty years ago, where the minister officiates every al-

ternate Sabbath. The number of members belonging to this body may be somewhere about twenty: The stipend of this united parish, for the last three years, has been about L.170.

The clamant ecclesiastical destitution in the lowlands is the want of churches. We have a sufficiency of the material building, but we lack pastors to preach in our churches. In other words, we stand in much need of a State provision for additional ministers in this parish as in others in the Highlands.

*Education.*—In this united parish there are two parochial schools, five or six supported by private subscription, and two Society schools. The two parish schoolmasters have each about L.25 per annum, without the house accommodation. We would require, at least, three additional endowed schools to meet the demands of our people.

*Poor.*—The number of paupers on the parish roll may vary between 40 and 55, many of them receiving 12s. per annum, whilst a few get from L.1 to L.2, 10s. We do not observe any growing disinclination on the part of the people to have recourse to parochial aid: but the contrary.

*Ale-houses.*—There may be about twelve public-houses in the united parish; not an unreasonably large number, considering the magnitude of its population.

When the foregoing statement was written a few years ago, agriculture, with the exception mentioned, was, as a science, almost unknown in the parish. Since that period, however, a considerable change has taken place, I may say, in all the departments of this most useful branch of industry. The old system of cropping the same field successively by father, son, and grandson, without a pause, has been *partially* uprooted. Mr Campbell of Kilberry is experimenting on the opposite principle, on rather an extensive scale. Some of the chemical manures have been introduced. The cottage system of ancient times has received a check. And Alexander Morison, Esq. the new laird of Balnakill, is about to beautify the glen of his habitation there. On the estate of Loup also, the same improvement is taking place. Within the last few years Mr Campbell of Stonefield has planted an immense extent of land between Tarbert and Whitehouse.

October 1843.