

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE COUNTY OF KINROSS.

SIR ROBERT SIBBALD, in his History of Fife and Kinross, tells us, that, in the ancient language of the Picts, the county of Fife was called Ross, "which signifieth a peninsula," and adds, "that the upper part of this territory, formed by the Friths of Forth and Tay, got the name of *Kean-Ross*, which means the head of the peninsula." He does not, however, adduce a shadow of evidence to satisfy us that the county of Fife was at any period called Ross; and we are rather inclined to suppose, that the origin of the word Kinross arose entirely from some local circumstance.

This county lies between $3^{\circ} 14'$ and $3^{\circ} 35'$ west longitude, and between $56^{\circ} 9'$ and $56^{\circ} 18'$ north latitude. From the eastmost point at Auchmoor Bridge over the River Leven to the westmost part, where it is bounded by the Devon, it does not exceed twelve miles in extent; and from Kelty-Bridge, on the south to Damhead on the north, is scarcely ten. The area of the whole county does not exceed seventy square miles, or 44,800 imperial acres; and thus it is one of the smallest shires in Scotland. It is bounded on the north, by the Ochil-hills, which separate the district from Strathearn; on the east, by the Lomond-hills; and the south-east and south-west boundaries run partly along the summit of Benarty, and partly along the flat ground to a point on Kelty-burn, whence the Cleish-hills, extending to the west, divide it from Fife. Thus, though the boundaries are generally hilly, there is a level opening at Blair-Adam, between Benarty and the Cleish-hills, through which the great north road passes; there is another opening to the north-east, between the Ochil and Lomond-hills, leading towards Cupar-Fife; and a third level, more extensive than any of the former, opens to the west towards Stirling, at the Crook of Devon. In addition to these, there is a narrow pass through which the River Leven flows from the loch.

Previous to the year 1426, the greater part of this county was

incorporated with Fifeshire, and at the period when the disjunction took place, it comprised only the parishes of Kinross, Orwell, and Portmoak; but in the year 1685, the King and estates in Parliament, in consideration of the smallness of the county, added Cleish, Tulliebole, and some lands lying in Perthshire. These constituted the county or sberiffdom of Kinross. But although separated from Fife, the same Sheriff-depute was placed over both, in the same way as one was placed over Stirling and Clackmannan. This state of matters continued till the year 1807, when the counties of Clackmannan and Kinross were united into one Sheriffdom.—Kinross-shire at present comprehends only four entire parishes, with portions of three others, which will be noticed under the county of Perth, to which they chiefly belong.

The greater part of this small territory is dry, resting on a sharp gravel, intermingled with small portions of clayey loam, and a good deal of it is of a moorish quality. The climate, though cold and wet, owing to the general elevation of the district, has been much improved by an extensive system of drainage, and is upon the whole considered healthy,—the people being vigorous and subject to few maladies. Indeed, the whole county till a very recent period was wild and barren, which circumstance has been attributed to the local peculiarity of the district being divided into small farms—almost every single farm being a separate property, and generally possessed by its owner. Thus the number of small proprietors are greater here in proportion to the size of the district than elsewhere. These farms were feued out chiefly about the end of the seventeenth or beginning of the last century for a feu-duty. “The marches of the various farms,” it is stated in Chambers’ Gazetteer, “not having been well defined, and being distracted by the practice of run-rig, it was long before the county manifested very active signs of improvement. Within the recollection of persons of middle life, few districts were worse cultivated or less profitable than Kinross-shire; but various circumstances, among which is included the good example shown by neighbours, ultimately induced a spirited change, and now, from less to more, the agriculture, the mode of draining, enclosing, and planting can vie with those of Fife, or most other places.” The whole productive land is about four-fifths of the whole county, and when let is on leases generally from fourteen to twenty-one years, the rent for the most part being a fixed annual sum. The size of the farms vary from 50 to 300 acres—the corn crops being oats and barley, though occasionally

on the better soils wheat is cultivated. Potatoes, turnips, clovers, and rye-grass are raised all over the county. A fair proportion of these farms is in grass, for which the soil and climate are both favourable. The pastures of the cultivated land are occupied by cattle, but sheep are kept in numbers only on the Cleish and Ochil hills. It is supposed that about 3000 acres are under wood, the most extensive plantations being on Blair-Adam. These were begun in 1733, and at the present time cover about 1300 acres, consisting of oak, ash, larch, elm, beech, spruce, silver and Scotch fir; the last, however, it is understood, does not grow well in exposed situations. The mineralogy of the shire is of little importance. Coal has been found on the south, where the county joins Fifeshire, but is not wrought in this county. Freestone quarries of excellent quality are likewise wrought in the parish of Cleish, and whinstone is almost every where to be met with. To the north of Kinross, red freestone is the geological formation of the district, and limestone, in great profusion, is obtained from the Lomond-hills. The roads throughout the county are all good, and none in Scotland can surpass in excellence the great north road, which runs through Kinross, the county town. This town is the only one in the shire, but there is a large and populous village, about a mile to the north, called Milnathort. At both these places, several annual fairs are held, and at the latter a weekly corn-market for the sale of grain. The manufacture of cutlery was formerly carried on in Kinross, but has for a long period been entirely abandoned. A great many people are employed in weaving cotton, chiefly by the manufacturers of Glasgow; and within the last twelve months, two or three companies belonging to Kinross and Milnathort, have set agoing the manufacture of tartan shawls and plaids, which hitherto appears to have met with success.

The annual value of real property in 1815, was L. 25,805, and now it cannot be estimated at less than L. 35,000 or L. 40,000.

Legal assessments for the poor are seldom resorted to, the heritors preferring to contribute according to their rentals what sums may be necessary.

In this county there are a few small rivulets, which, with the exception of the Leven, act as feeders to the loch. This sheet of water lies in the south-east part of the county, at an elevation of about 360 feet above the level of the sea, and is emptied by the stream just alluded to, which flows in an easterly direction through Fifeshire, till it disembogues itself into Largo Bay. Loch

Leven is from eight to nine miles in circumference, and covers about 4000 acres; though inferior in magnitude and picturesque beauty to some of the Highland lochs, it is still a noble expanse of water. Trout, pike, perch, and eel, are found here in abundance. It is of an irregular oval figure, possessing several islets, of which only two are worth noticing,—the one, extending to about five acres, is situated within a short distance of the shore at Kinross, and here are the remains of the castle, once the prison of the unfortunate Mary Queen of Scots; the other, called St Serf's Isle, having a flat, bare appearance, is near the south-east extremity of the loch. On the latter island there was a priory dedicated to St Serf or Servanus, which must have been placed here upwards of 1000 years ago, but no vestige of it is now to be seen. A considerable number of cattle and sheep are pastured upon this island, which, since the draining of the loch, immediately about to be noticed, extends to upwards of 100 acres. On the other island, containing the castle, the main tower of which, it may be observed, appears to be about the same size as the border towers, a fortlet was first built by Congal, a valiant Pictish King, who reigned towards the end of the fifth century. At what period the castle itself was erected we are not informed, but it makes an early appearance in our history. In the year 1335 it was defended by Alan de Vipont, a Scottish royalist, against a John de Strivilin, apparently a Scottishman, but who acted in behalf of Baliol. A fort was erected in the churchyard of Kinross, on a neighbouring promontory, and at the lower end of the lake, where the water issues from it, an embankment was thrown across with the view of laying the island and castle under water, and thereby compelling the besieged to surrender. Vipont took the opportunity of the English General being absent on some pious duty at Dunfermline, and broke through this barrier to the utter confusion and discomfiture of the English. Such is the story told by Buchanan, but it does not appear probable; for an embankment such as would inconvenience the besieged, must, from the nature of the ground, have also annoyed the blockading party on the shore at Kinross. And when we consider the magnitude of the operations required—the strength of the works necessary—and the time requisite for accumulating the water, we are inclined to place little reliance in the tale, considering that it happened in the time of war and slender resources. It appears to us, however, that the termination of the lake formerly must have been at the east end of the level cause through which the stream of the Leven flows.

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Here even now the rising grounds on each side almost meet together, and in all likelihood the natural barrier having, from some cause or other, given way, the waters of the loch receded to their lowest level, and thus the carse was formed.

The drainage of the loch, which has lately been effected, had engaged the attention of many of the proprietors in the neighbourhood for half a century; but it was only within the last twelve years that any attempt was seriously made to get this object accomplished. An act of Parliament was at length obtained; and though the operations have now been completed at an expense of some L. 40,000, it is very questionable whether the advantages, supposed to arise from the measure, have not been greatly exaggerated. A few proprietors may probably feel its good effects; but, in general, the ground recovered, which may be about 1000 acres in all, is poor.—that on the eastern side, which comprises the greater proportion, being composed of a covering of whitish sand, having generally a subsoil of bluish tilly sand, of a most unproductive quality. If any material advantage arise from the operations, it must be to the land-owners along the river, who have obtained a greater facility for draining; or to the mill-proprietors, who, indeed, will chiefly reap the advantage; and apparently endless disputes have already arisen as to the proportions of the expense which each party interested has to pay.

The features of the county, in general, are not very imposing, yet still they have a few charms; nor do we know any thing more beautiful than the view to be obtained from the rising ground on the eastern side of Loch Leven in an autumnal morning, when the mist which has enveloped the whole county may be seen gradually ascending from the lake, under the influence of the rising sun, and unfolding to the eye of the traveller, the calm unruffled surface of the waters, with the gray and lonely castle—connected with many a strange tale in our history—reposing in its bosom; as the mist clears away, the hills are seen girding on the whole, which presents at such a moment a picture highly interesting and sublime.

The following shows the state of the population at different periods:—

Population in 1755,	.	5944
1791,	.	6181
1801,	.	6725
1811,	.	7245
1821,	.	7762
1831,	.	9072

The following Table shows the Ecclesiastical State of the Parishes in the County of Kinross.

Parish.	Families belong- ing to Estab. Church.	Families of Dis- senters & Seced- ers.	Persons belong- ing to Estab- lished Church.	Dissenters and Seceders.	Parochial Ministers' Stipend.	Par. Schoolmasters' Emoluments.			Annual amount of contributions for Poor.		
						Salary.	Fees	Total.	From church Collections	From assess- ment or vo- luntary contri- butions by Heritors.	Total.
Kinross,	...	...	1240	...	Barley 31 b. 6 p. Meal 94 b. $\frac{3}{4}$ p. & L. 94. 6s. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	8 L. 34, 4s. 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	L. 55	L. 89, 4s. 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	L. 30 to L. 36.		
Portmoak, Cleish, Orwell,	219	127	620	60	L. 254, 2s. 5d. L. 163, 2s. 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	4 L. 34, 4s. 8 L. 34, 4s. 4d.	...	...	...	Int. of L. 620.	L. 25, 15s. 11d.* L. 91. 8s. 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.†
	...	...	1822†	1186	L. 155, 19s. 11d.	6 L. 34, 4s. 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	L. 50	L. 84, 4s. 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	L. 29, 8s. 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	L. 62, 0s. 9d.	

* The disbursements, on an average of seven years, amount to L. 43, 1s. 5d.—the amount required to make up the deficiency being contributed by the heritors.

† This is the balance; but many go out of the parish or do not attend any church.

‡ There was a sum of L. 54, 7s. 5d. collected by voluntary subscription for the poor in 1837, but this cannot be reckoned in the average. The sum in the table is the average of the years 1835 and 1836.

May 1839.