

DUNBOG PARISH

PAROCHIAL REGISTERS.-The parochial registers extend no farther back than the year 1666. The first entry is dated September 23d of that year. From that period they have been kept with tolerable accuracy. The records are not very full, but they are sometimes interesting, as illustrative of the manners of a former age, of the comprehensive charity and national usefulness of the Established Church. It is impossible to glance over them without a feeling of surprise, at the frequency and largeness of parochial contributions to a great variety of benevolent purposes. Not Satisfied with the comfortable maintenance of their own poor, with relieving every unfortunate person that applied to them for a little aid, with paying their proportion of the expense incurred by the education and support of the presbytery bursar, we find the session sending collections to the most distant parts of Scotland to assist in repairing the damage occasioned by fire, at that time a very frequent disaster, in alleviating the misery of the victims of such calamities, in building or improving harbours, bridges, and public works of a like nature, and in ransoming those of our countrymen who had been carried into a terrible slavery by the Sallee rovers or Turkish corsairs. Towards the close of the seventeenth century we find such entries as the following: "Given out to ane indigent gentleman 6 B. Given to ane dumb man 4 B. Given to ane poor sojer 1 B. A collection forane Pollonian minister 4B. Given to a shipbroken man 4 B. To ane indigent gentlewoman 10 B. To a deposed minister's wife 6 B. To a distressed minister L. 1, 8s. To ane Episcopal minister called James Spark, who came from Ireland, 12 B. To Mr John Constantine, a Neapolitan and Capuchin friar, who had renounced Poperie, as he said, 12 B. To a suppliant John Lauder, 12 B, having lost 25,000 merks in ane ship coming from France to Greenock." Of another sort, we have such entries as these: "1671, Given to John Rule and John Cunninham, two men that had their houses burnt at Sligo, 12 sh. 1675, December 25, a voluntary contribution for rebuilding of the town of Kelso, which was burnt down." Some years after a collection is made to assist in rebuilding Newburgh, which had been burnt down.

The instances of relief granted to individual sufferers by fire are almost without number. Of a class still more interesting, we may venture to give a few specimens. " In 1678, February 10, the minister did intimate a voluntar contribution this day eight days for the relief of some Montrose seamen taken by the Turks." Again, October 3d, 1680, " There was two acts read for a voluntar contribution, the one in favour of John Atchison, skipper in Pittenweem, his mate, Alexander Black, ten mariners and two passengers, taken by Turkish men of war, and carried up to Sallee and there ever since slaves. The other in favour of Robert Angus,. skipper in Burntisland, who was taken by a Turkish man of war belonging to Algiers and was kept as a slave since." The Barbary corsairs seem to have been the terror and scourge of British sailors in the seventeenth century. A few years in advance we fall on the traces of a new enemy. " 1707, July 20, Given to George Hamilton, a man taken by the French pirates, and retaken by the Dutch, and who had five children, 10sh." Again " November 30, this day there was given to James Forbes and his wife, in their distress, they being robbed by the French pirates, 12 B." But it is curious and instructive to remark how effectually the church was made to promote the general interests of the country. For example, in 1677, September 16, the minister " read an order Of the privy-council, for a contribution this day eight days, for helping the harbour of Eyemouth." Again, in 1682, " A voluntary contribution is ordered, for building a stone bridge over the water of Ness, at Inverness." And again in the same year, we find three acts of the privy-council quoted, ordering

collections in favour of " the harbour at Burntisland, to repair it; in favour of Dumbarton. to erect a bridge across the water of Leven; and in favour of my Lord Pitsligo, for repairing the harbour at _____" There are many more of the same kind; but the above will amply suffice to shew the many practical benefits the church has been the instrument of conferring on almost every town and sea-port of our native land. It was the practice in the seventeenth century for parties intending to be married, to enter into a public contract, and to deposit with the kirk-session a sum of money in pledge of their sincerity and good behaviour. The form observed is recorded with amusing simplicity. As, for instance, " Contracted George Brewhouse and Helen Kinloch, and consigned their pledges according to order, that they should marry within the space of forty days, and carry themselves civillee till their marriage." It did happen occasionally that the pledges were forfeited for lack of the requisite civility, and sometimes too for other reasons, as, for instance, on the 28th of February 1675, there is given to the bursar " be Andro Law, 4 lbs. being his daughter's pledge, which was given because of her fail in not taking of William Buist in marriage, after being thrice proclaimed." The oldest register is full of proclamations, read by order of the King and Council, which forcibly mark the unquiet aspect of the times, and the growing Jealousy of the government, as the eventful era of the Revolution approached.

We shall conclude this branch of our account, by extracting an entry of a peculiar interest: " 1678, May 18, a proclamation was read from the pulpit by the minister, ordaining the whole heritors within the parish to cause their tenants, cottars, servants, and all others on their grounds to compear at Cupar on Friday the 23d of May instant, to clear and vindicate themselves from the late murder of my Lord Archbishop of St Andrews."

POPULATION. The population of this parish has gradually but regularly declined since the end of the last century. At that time the population was nearly 406. By the census of 1831, it amounted to no more than 195, and this year it has been reduced to 170 of all ages, which we sincerely hope will prove its minimum. This rapid decrease is to be attributed to the extinction of the village; and the absorption of the small farms. There is now only one farm where formerly there were three or four. That the depopulating system has been carried much too far is now painfully evident to every one connected with agriculture. The farmers not only experience a difficulty in procuring labourers to work the green crop, but they find it impossible to get them at any price, and must have recourse to some unusual means of obtaining an adequate supply. The average number of births since my induction does not exceed 8 per annum ; of marriages not more than 4 ; of deaths about the same number.

Number of persons under 15 years of age	67
between 15 and 30	25
30 and 50	55
50 and 70	12
upwards of 70	11
TOTAL	170

There are no heritors or families of independent fortune resident in the parish. There are 42 families altogether.

There are 42 inhabited houses, besides 4 bothies.

HABITS AND CHARACTER OF THE PEOPLE-The farmers are an enlightened, active, and enterprising body of men, who embrace every opportunity of extending their knowledge of the important subjects connected with the cultivation of the soil, and eagerly adopt every suggestion that may conduce to the improvement of the rapidly advancing science of husbandry. Perhaps no class of men is more free from prejudices, more unaffectedly kind, more sound and steady in their principles, and full of solid and useful information, than that of the farmers of Fifeshire. Besides these, the only other class of people belonging to this parish is that of their dependents or Ploughmen. Speaking generally, we would say of the married ploughmen, that they are a quiet, sober, and industrious race. Their lot is one of incessant toil, alleviated by few advantages. Their ordinary food consists of oatmeal and sweet milk, with potatoes and occasionally pork. While Young, they enjoy uninterrupted health, and exhibit in their form all the appearances of robust and sinewy vigour. But long before old age has arrived, Most of them, from perpetual exposure to the weather, are crippled with violent rheumatism. But no class of men, we are Persuaded, labours under more blighting evils than does that of our Ploughmen. Their education, both religious and intellectual, is exceedingly neglected from their earliest youth. There may be found a few bright exceptions to the prevailing character of the body; but it is a melancholy truth that this interesting race of our people has been allowed to sink into a state of great ignorance and debasement. One chief cause of this calamity, we do not hesitate to say, is the practice universal in Fife, of making the young unmarried men live together in bothies. No sooner are boys capable of attending cattle in the fields, than they are sent from their father's house, consigned to these wretched bothies, and left in the midst of dangers to their own will. The results are grievous, though not more so than might be anticipated. In these hovels the wicked very speedily corrupt the good. The old ensnare the young; and the hardened profligate leaves no effort untried to seduce the scrupulous and timid to imitate his reckless example. Until this horrid system be abolished, it will be in vain to expect any happy alteration in the character and condition of our ploughmen. Another grand cause of this flagrant evil is to be found in the fluctuating and wandering lives of the ploughmen themselves. The married men frequently, the unmarried always, flit at the end of one years service. They thus acquire vagrant habits and uncontrollable minds. They are never long enough in one place to form useful connections, to feel themselves influenced and benefited by the exertions of the minister, or to receive any sufficient advantage to their children from the care and superintendence of a parochial teacher. They thus virtually cut themselves off from all the blessings of Christianity and civilization, and in a land of light are literally roaming about in darkness. That an evil so virulent and so widely diffused as this can be soon or easily remedied, is not to be believed. But were the masters and clergy to unite in a zealous endeavour to reclaim to better habits the labouring class of our people, they would, we have no doubt, do much good even to the present generation; and, at all events, they would commence a work of improvement, which another and a more fortunate age would carry on and complete.

ECCLESIASTICAL STATE.-The church is situated in the centre of the parish, and at a convenient distance from the remotest houses. It was built in 1 803, and is in excellent repair. It is seated for 200, allowing eighteen inches to a seat. The sittings are all free. The manse was

built in 1792. A considerable addition was made to it fourteen years ago. It is both comfortable and commodious. There is not a dissenting family in the parish. The farm-servants, with very few exceptions, all belong to the Established church. They change every year, yet there is never above one or two individuals among them that are members of any other denomination, which may be received as a decided proof that the whole body of the agricultural population are still attached to the Establishment.

The average number of communicants is 135, which number comprehends a good many from the adjoining parishes of Flisk and Abdie, who always attend on ordinances in the church of Dunbog. The annual amount of collections for the poor do not exceed L. 12. We have contributed liberally to the schemes of the General Assembly for education in the Highlands of Scotland, and for the propagation of the Gospel in India.

EDUCATION.-There is only one school in the parish. The ordinary branches of instruction are taught. The salary is the maximum. The fees are small, and do not produce above L. 15 per annum. There is no person in the parish unable to read and write, but very many who read and write very ill.

POOR AND PAROCHIAL FUNDS.-The poor roll is at present a heavy one. We have many aged persons, and two families of orphan children. There are 13 in the receipt of a weekly aliment. We very seldom give the allowance in money, but authorize the tenant under whom the paupers reside, to give as much meal and potatoes as will keep them with comfort. Our annual outlay is nearly L. 30. Of this sum we have about L. 12 from church collections, the rest is drawn from money belonging to the poor.

July 1836 (Rev Adam Cairns)