

MARKINCH PARISH

POPULATION.

The population of the parish has increased at a rapid rate during the last century. Within the last seventy years it has considerably more than doubled. As population and means of subsistence are intimately connected, this great local increase may be attributed, in a great measure, to the introduction of new branches of productive industry, which, by supplying regular employment, both retained the native population, and attracted influx from less favoured districts-emigration even of individuals being, very rare.

Years	1755	1790	1801	1821	1838
Population	2188	2790	3130	4661	5396

MANUFACTURES-Local facilities for the establishment of all those branches of productive industry which require the aid of machinery, are peculiar and numerous. The most remote part of the parish is but an inconsiderable distance from the coast. It is traversed by excellent roads in all directions, rendering communication with the great manufacturing town of Dundee, through the shipping ports of Newburgh and Newport, on the one hand, and with Edinburgh, by Kirkaldy and Pettycur on the other, neither difficult nor expensive. The water power supplied by two considerable streams, the Leven and the Orr, is unlimited and inexhaustible. Coals are abundant and cheap, and excellent stone for building is found in all directions, and at a trifling depth below the surface; while seven populous villages furnish an abundance of hands for all those operations where manual labour is required. At the period of Dr Thomson's statistical return, there existed in the parish no machinery save what was used in corn and flax mills, of which there are at present in use of the former 1, and of the latter 4. Since that time a class of public works has sprung up, Which have been greatly beneficial to the industrious classes. The following statement is made up from the proprietors' returns, which have been obligingly furnished.

PAPER-MILLS-Rothes Paper-Mill was erected in 1806, by Mr William Keith, and worked as a two-vat mill. Some years after, it became the property of Mr David Lindsay, who enlarged it considerably, and latterly erected a paper machine. In 1836, it was purchased by Messrs R. Tullis and Co. Brown and gray wrapping-papers are the sorts now manufactured here, for which about 25 cwt. of flax waste, coarse bagging, or ropes, are used daily. Employment is here afforded to about 20 men and 10 women.

Auchmuty Paper-Mill was erected by Robert Tullis and Co. as a four vat mill, and began working in May 1810. The vats are now all thrown aside, the paper being made by a Fourdrinier

machine, such as is generally used. Above a ton of fine rags is consumed here daily in making cartridge, coloured, printing, and writing papers. There are upwards of 50 women employed in sorting and cutting the rags, who are paid at the rate of 10d. per day of ten hours. About the same number of men are required to attend the machinery, and manage the different processes, or engaged as wrights, carters, labourers, &c. The wages of these latter vary from 1s. 6d. to 2s. 6d. per day. The hands at the Rothes Mill are remunerated at the same rate. The annual amount of excise duty paid by the two mills is about L. 6500 Sterling, and, as the duty is 1 1/2d. on each pound of paper, this gives a total of 1,040,000 Ibs., or 465 tons of paper manufactured annually.

Balbirnie Paper-Mill was erected in the year 1816, by the late Mr Alexander Grieve, and was continued with two vats and one engine, until 1834, when J. Grieve and Co. introduced a machine and four engines. The papers made here are principally for the London market, and consist chiefly of two kinds, the one very strong, such as is principally used by grocers ; and the other very thin and transparent, for the use of drapers and silk-merciers. The raw materials employed are, damaged Yarn, flax waste, bagging and ropes, of which, when making light papers, 24 cwt., and when making heavy papers, 37 cwt. are consumed daily. The quantity of paper manufactured yearly averages 44,000 reams, weighing about 560,000 Ibs., or 250 tons, and contributing to the public revenue the sum of L. 3500 per annum. The number of hands employed on the works are 30, of whom 16 are men, and 14 women ; the former earn from 1s. 6d. to 2s. 8d., and the latter from 10d. to 1s. 1d. per day.

WOOLLEN MANUFACTORY-Balbirnie Bridge Factory, established by Mr Drysdale, 1835. The stuffs manufactured here are plaidings, blankets, and shawls. The wool employed is chiefly of British growth. The carding and spinning processes are carried on, on the premises, by means of two roving-machines and two double sets of jennies of 144 and 168 spindles respectively. There are 10 power-looms and 4 hand-looms employed, producing 3, 7, 8, 9, and 10 qrs. widths. The average daily consumption of raw material is 8 stones of 24 lbs. each. The hands employed are 27, of whom 10 are men, 11 boys, and the remainder women and girls. The men earn from 10s. to 16s. per week, and the others from 3s. 6d. to 6s. The power-loom weavers, 6 boys and 4 girls, earn as much as 1s. each per day of twelve hours. The articles manufactured are principally for the Glasgow market. The wholesale prices are, of blankets, from 7s. to 17s. each, and of plaidings, from 10d. to 1s.3d. per yard.

LINEN MANUFACTORY-Previous to the year 1810, the brown linen manufactory of this parish was limited to some 50 or 60 operatives, who sold their Silesias and window-blind Hollands to the merchants at Auchtermuchty and Kettle, from whom the yarns were generally purchased. The yarns chiefly used were hand-spun, the produce of Scotland and Ireland, with some German yarns imported from Hamburg; but in a few years this branch of the linen trade very much declined, and was at last almost entirely relinquished. About the year 1804, the manufacture of Dowlas, sheetings, and various kinds of towellings, was introduced from

bleached, mill, and spun flax, and tow yarns, and this branch of the trade has continued to increase, till it now employs from 800 to 900 individuals, including winders, warpers, weavers, and lappers. The hands thus employed do not all belong to Markinch. The work is given out to be performed at their own homes, and many of them reside in the adjoining parishes. During the summer months, nearly a third part of the weavers go to out-door work, and return to the loom when winter sets in. Steady workmen, at the present rates will earn at Dowlas weaving about 7s. at sheetings, 8s.; and at towellings, 9s. per week. The winders are chiefly old and infirm persons, or married females who have time to spare from their domestic duties; they earn from 1s. to 4s. ; warpers and lappers, 10s. per week. The whole of this branch is in the hands of Mr Robert Inglis.

FLAX SPINNING MILL.-Balgonie mills, the property of Messrs Baxter and Stewart, for spinning flax and tow. The works command the entire use of the Leven, and the machinery is driven by two water-wheels of fifty-five horse-power. 1. For flax spinning, dry or long staple, there are twenty frames, containing 1000 spindles, with a full system of screw-gill preparation to correspond. The size of the yarn spun is from 1 1/2 to 3 pounds per spindle, or, in other words, from 30 to 16 lea yarn. 2. For flaxspinning, wet or broken staple, there are eighteen frames, containing 1170 spindles, with full system of circular-gill preparation for the same. The size of the yarn spun is from 12 ounces to half a pound per spindle, or from 30 to 60 lea yarn. 3. For tow spinning, there are three systems of spinning, each with suitable preparation, including, twelve 6 feet carding engines, viz. five frames, 296 spindles, for spinning yarn from 2 to 3 pounds per spindle, or 24 to 16 lea ; ten frames, 400 spindles, for spinning yarn from 3 1/2 to 6 pounds per spindle, 14 to 8 lea; four frames, 160 spindles, for spinning yarn from 10 pounds to 24 pounds per spindle, 5 to 2 lea. The principal buildings of which the mills are composed form three sides of a rectangle, 160 feet by 140. Two of the sides are occupied by machinery, and the third is occupied by three spacious warehouses, with heckling rooms above. There is a large store warehouse detached, capable of holding 200 tons of flax, as well as large conveniences in the way of stabling, Smithy, and gas-work. There are about 265 individuals employed at the mills, of whom about 95 are full grown men, 120 women, and 46 of both sexes under seventeen years of age. The wages paid each fortnight are about L.200, averaging say 12s. per week for each man, and 5s. per week for each woman and for the younger hands. The quantity of flax manufactured in the year 1838 was 475 tons, of which 340 tons was Baltic flax, 65 tons Archangel and the remaining 70 tons Dutch, French, and Irish. Besides the tows from these flaxes, about 100 tons of imported tow were used. The total cost of the whole material was above L.25,000.

The yarns spun are, with the exception of the heavier tow yarns, either sold in the district adjoining, or exported to France. The heavier tow yarns are manufactured by the proprietors into canvas, sacking, &c. chiefly for the London market. This branch of the business is carried on in Dundee, and at present employs from 60 to 100 looms; but arrangements are at present making for transferring it to Balgonie; and when this is effected, it will cause an addition to the number of persons already employed of about 100 men, and 50 women and children.

The village of Miltown, adjoining the mills, has, since the enlargement and extension of the works in 1836-37, nearly doubled its population. The present population is 580. The houses are, in general, neat, substantial, and fully beyond the average of the country as to comfort. The rent of a house of two rooms, with a few falls of garden ground and a pig-stye, is from L.2 to L.2, 10s. per annum.

Haugh Spinning-Mill was erected in the year 1794, for the purpose of spinning chiefly canvas yarns from flax and tow, which was carried on by various companies up to 1832, when the present proprietor sold all the old machinery, and introduced a complete set of new, for spinning fine yarns adapted for home made linens. Half the machinery works upon the long staple, and half upon the short staple principle. An addition was made to the work in 1835, and the mill now contains upwards of 2000 spindles, capable of turning off about 600 spindles of yarns per day. The machinery is propelled by two water-wheels of about 40 horse-power. The mill consumes from 25 to 30 tons of flax per month, consisting chiefly of the finer qualities imported from Holland, Belgium, and France, and also from Archangel, Riga, and St Petersburg. The yarns are for the most part wove in the county of Fife, into almost all descriptions of family linens.

Haugh Bleachfield.-In 1836, there was added to the mills a bleachfield, capable of bleaching about two tons of linen yarn daily. The work-people employed at the mill and bleachfield are in number 183, of whom two-thirds are females from fourteen years of age and upwards, earning from 4s. 6d. to 7s. 6d. per week. The men earn from 9s. to L. 1 weekly. Most of the hands are accommodated with dwelling-houses on the premises. Upwards of twenty families are thus accommodated, besides a good many boarders; the whole may be estimated at an average of 280 to 320 souls. Their moral and religious character is generally good, and their attendance at church very respectable, both in point of numbers and of outward deportment.

Lochty Bleachfield, on the water of Lochty, in the vicinity of the new and thriving village of Thornton, is the property of David Landale, Esq. Kirkaldy. About two tons and a half of linen yarn are bleached at this field per day, the greater part of which is manufactured into cloth in the county ; but part is exported to France, and some sent to Ireland. At this field the residuum of the chlorine stills is converted by the usual process into carbonate of soda, and mixed with potash, as a detergent for the yarns. From 80 to 100 hands, mostly women, are employed at this bleachfield. The women are paid 5s. 6d., and the men 10s. to 12s. per week.

Balgonie Bleachfield, the property of Messrs William Russell and Co. was established in 1824, for bleaching linen yarns, About 480 tons of flax and tow yarns are bleached here annually. The number of hands employed is 70, who are paid at the same rate as at the other bleachfields. The

machinery is worked by water-power supplied by the Leven, on the banks of which the works are situated.

Rothes Bleachfield, the property of Mr D. Donaldson, was erected in 1800. The quantity of yarn bleached on an average is as follows: From December to March, inclusive, 292 tons; from April to November, inclusive, 390 t.ons., The number of hands employed is of men, 30, women and girls, 80. The men earn from 10s. to 11s. per week; women and girls, 3s. 6d., 4s. 6d., 5s. 6d., according to age and capability.

Besides the above public works, there is a very extensive grain distillery at Cameron Bridge; and there has lately been established at Thornton a vitriol manufactory, for supplying with that article the surrounding districts, which, previous to this erection, were subjected to the expense of carriage from Glasgow. The works at Thornton are a branch of a Glasgow firm extensively engaged in the vitriol manufacture.

PAROCHIAL ECONOMY.

Ecclesiastical State.- According to an entry in the " Great Register Book" of the Priory of St Andrews, the church of Markinch was given to the Culdees by Malduinus, the son of Gillander, seventh Bishop of that See, who flourished in the early part of the tenth century. " Malduinus Episcopus St Andreae dedit eis ecclesiam de Markinch cum tota terra." It seems to be a fact sufficiently well authenticated, both by records and histories of the period, that the first Bishops were themselves Culdees, and elected from among the general body of pastors by a majority of votes. But as the influence of these holy men became gradually undermined by the emissaries of Rome, and the insidious abettors of Papal domination, they were stript, one by one, of their privileges and possessions, and finally ceased to exist as a distinct and influential body in the church. At what time they ceased to hold possession of the cure and lands of Markinch, we have no means of ascertaining very precisely ; but, by a deed of Etigenius, son, of Hugo, a second son of Gillemichael McDuff, fourth Earl of Fife, we find it was mortified to the Priory of St Andrews, towards the close of the twelfth century. This deed was confirmed by a charter of King William. From this period the patronage of the parish continued vested in the Priory of St Andrews, till, on the suppression of religious houses at the Reformation, it was resumed by the Crown. The names of the earliest incumbents after the downfall of Popery are not preserved, the session records reaching no farther back than the month of July 1626, at which period they began to be kept with an exactness and detail long since discontinued, exhibiting an interesting picture of the manners and opinions of the time, and shewing with what vigilance and vigour the discipline of the church as carried into effect, and its government maintained throughout the most trying and stormy periods of its history.

From these records it appears, that collections for the poor were regularly made on Sundays, and on occasions of baptisms and marriages. The sums thus collected were statedly distributed to the regular poor on the roll, while incidental cases of want or of more urgent distress were liberally

relieved on the application of the necessitous. The names of the principal proprietors in the parish appear as the collectors and the distributors of the poor's funds, as patrolling in turn the streets of the village during the hours of Divine service, debating offences against social order and good morals, and enforcing, the salutary discipline of the church against graver delinquencies. Among other respectable members of the kirk-session up to the Reformation, we find the names of Sir David Achmuttie of that Ilk, and of the Lairds of Balbirnie, Bandon, Bruntoun, Coul, Carristoun, and Kirkforthar, names related to the first families in the kingdom, and who disdained not to exert the influence which their rank and wealth conferred in promoting the interests of religion and morality. In addition to the usual immoralities cognizable by the session, and which were then punished by fine and by rebuke in the face of the congregation, we find not a few delated for pursuing their ordinary avocations on the Sabbath, for absenting themselves from church and from the administration of ordinances, for slandering neighbours, for profane swearing, for drunkenness, and frequenting houses of public entertainment during the hours of Divine service. In 1643, Mr Frederick Carmichael is admitted minister of the parish, the "ministrie of the Presbyterie" having met at the kirk of Markinch for that effect. His predecessor would seem to have been deposed as "aneemie to ye Covenant," notwithstanding the testimony borne in face of the kirk-session by the Laird of Bruntoun in his behalf, that "he was als honest a minister, als faithful a minister, and als conscientious a minister as any minister in Fyffe." It appears, however, that the great majority of the elders and people were heartily engaged on the side of the common cause. Numbers of the parishioners flocked to the national standard, with arms in their hands, while contributions in money were not wanting to attest the general zeal for the cause of the kirk and the Covenant. Several instances occur in which "the session thought it meit yt the voluntarie contribution should be carried to ye armie by ye minister, and to be delyvered ther." That the incumbent during these years was a zealous promoter of the popular cause is manifest from the above extract, if, indeed, he was not one of the council of ministers appointed to attend the General in the field; for not only do the weekly entries show that his pulpit was at frequent intervals supplied by one of his brethren of the Presbytery, but we also find such intimations as the following,:- "The qlk day our awin minister taught (Ps. xxxiv. 19,) being returned for ane space from the armie," and again, "13th July 1645, Our awin minister returned from England." We refer to one other entry to show that the victims of war were not forgotten by such of their brethren as tarried at home; for under the date of August 24th, 1645, we find it noted, that a messenger was dispatched by the session "to Montrose, his ligure, to try if any prisoneris of this parochie be thaire." Nor were demonstrations of piety, of which the times furnished such signal examples, wanting to second the efforts of a generous patriotism. The adverse vicissitudes of those troublous times are duly marked by days of public humiliation and fasting, for wliich the reasons are recorded at length, while the successes of the national leaders are as duly celebrated by public acts of thanksgiving. Days of thanksgiving were ordained "for ye victorie obtained be our armie at York against Prince Rupert his armie," for "the victorie our armie obtained at Newcastle," for "the happie victorie obtained be Leivtenant Generall David Lesslie, against James Graham, sometyme Earle of Montros, and his rebellis, at Philip Haugh, neir Jedburgh, upon ye 13th of September 1645." In this manner the principal events in this most eventful period of Scottish history are noticed up to the Restoration. Such was the political education of our fathers. Their guides and instructors were their ministers and elders, the former, for the most part, men of large minds, as well as of an ardent piety; deeply versed in the principles of civil not less than of ecclesiastical polity; while the latter, were, by their birth, education, and moral worth, entitled to the respect and esteem of those over whom

they were called to rule, of whom moreover, they were the local and legitimate protectors. The principles and the proceedings of those days have been sometimes wittily ridiculed, and sometimes gravely denounced as hostile to monarchy and subversive of liberty of conscience; nor have they wanted able vindicators. But discussion were here out of place. Suffice it to remark, that so fixed and firm was the attachment of our forefathers to the revered institution of monarchy in the State, and presbyterial order in the Church, that neither the example, nor the caresses, nor the menaces of the "English sectaries" availed to repress, much less to vanquish them.

A system grounded on principles so holy, and aiming at results so salutary, a system so deeply rooted in the habits and affections of a whole people, none but the most licentious monarch, and the most unprincipled administration that ever swayed the destinies of the British empire, would have wished, or ventured to assail. After the re-establishment of Episcopacy the altered state of matters is lamentably manifest. The meetings of session are no longer stated and regular, no fasts are ordained but those which precede the communion, no days of thanksgiving set apart, but the 29th of May " for his Majestie's happie returne." Yet the Sabbath day ministrations never seem to have suffered any serious interruption during the long and troubled night of Episcopal domination ; nor is the most distant allusion made in the Minutes of Session to any change of form, under the new order of things, unless the following may be so interpreted: " 30th November 1662, reading befor and after sermones did begin again." In the course of the succeeding year, the names of those elders who were landed proprietors are no longer found, as present at, or concurring in, the deliberations of the session; they devolved on meaner men those duties which the arbitrary temper of the times rendered it dangerous for them any longer to discharge. The acts of their successors are no longer bowed to with deference and submission; threats are held out of making " applications to my Lord St Andrews for purchasing of a warrand" in " mitigatione" of the required " satisfacione." " My Lord St Andrews, through his commissary, enjoins the " mitigatione" prayed. But our limits do not permit to enter more minutely into details. If similar instances of arbitrary interference served to weaken the bonds of discipline, and to lessen the respect due to the immediate pastors and rulers of the church, they served to prepare the minds of all good men and true patriots for welcoming the glorious dawn of civil and religious liberty ushered in by the Revolution of 1688.

After the Revolution settlement, when civil and religious liberty were placed on a secure basis, the church, if not a faultless, at least exhibited a fair and well-proportioned institution, as efficient an instrument for publishing the Gospel, and instructing the people, divested of religious pageantry and superfluous appendages as latter ages have witnessed. From that happier period, the parish seems to have enjoyed a succession of not only sound, but able ministers all of them faithfully and some of them eminently successful in their day. The patronage, which is vested in the Crown, was exercised judiciously, chiefly by means of the Earls of Leven, who till lately held the rank of principal heritor, and long diffused a salutary influence over the parish. No unpopular settlement, I believe, ever took place, and those who advocate the advantage of such management, will no, doubt be anxious to ascertain the result.

Now, though every minister in his day has had sufficient reason to deplore the limited success of his ministry, it is due to truth to make the statement I now do, that, after twenty years connection with the parish, I have found among its ancient families, as compared with newcomers,

transplanted from fields placed under a different system of spiritual husbandry, an order, decency, and moral bearing, obviously superior, even where much might be lacking as to the full standard of wished-for piety. This general statement admits many exceptions on the one side and on the other ; but enough remains to warrant the assertion. that a sound Christian agency is the best calculated to induce moral order, and did, in fact, in this place, largely prove its adequacy to that effect.

As to literary distinction, few of the pastors referred to had leisure, or inclination, it is presumed, to enter the lists with competitors for fame. One or two of them were deemed fit to be transferred to St Andrews, to occupy in that University the place of principal. Another, who furnished the former Statistical report, published an agricultural survey of the county, about the time of his translation to a city charge ; of the rest, nothing remains beyond a few sermons, mostly of an occasional and ephemeral sort. Their works, however, we doubt not, will bear a last-day review without shame, as they are without pretension.

Owing to the rapid increase of population, the parish field soon became unmanageable for a single labourer, especially as secular business increases on the hands of the Established clergy in proportion to the census. Household ministrations necessarily became rare, and the effects of one visit had vanished before another could be given to confirm the impression. Church accommodation, too, was unrighteously straitened; for a place of worship built for a population of 2000 or 3000, left many among 5000 or 6000 unprovided for. Neither had there been any Dissenting place of worship erected here previous to 1834, owing, no doubt. to the Popular settlements that had so long prevailed. In that year, a chapel in connection with the United Secession body, and seated for 380 was opened, though so placed as to afford little aid for unaccommodated parishioners in the remote villages ; for it was put down in close neighbourhood to the parish church, while several considerable villages, at from two to four miles distance, were overlooked.

It was then, however, the Church Extension scheme came into action, and here it was speedily and efficiently applied, first at Thirnton, a village four miles off, with more than 500 inhabitants; and next at Milton of Balgonie, having nearly 600 indwellers, besides a populous district lying beyond it. The church at Thornton is seated for upwards of 400, and that, at Milton for 650 ; while a new erection at Methill, on the border of Weymss parish, has supplied accommodation for a large village of 400 inhabitants, situated on the coast, and more than six miles distant from the church at Markinch. In the latter village, Inverleven, a small Dissenting chapel had long existed, and nearly one-half the inhabitants, who adhered to the Established Church, were obliged to cross the Leven to attend public worship at the church of Scoonie, the minister of which, indeed, had taken the virtual charge of them for many years.

The church at Thornton was built by general subscription, that of Milton solely by the heritors and people of the district to be benefited by the erection ; and it is due to the respectable heritors of the parish to record their liberality on that occasion, in grateful terms. Both churches have now ordained pastors ; and seats being furnished at a low rate, Sabbath privileges are accessible to all. But after these erections have so greatly relieved the pressure on the parish minister, a body of about 3500 remain, among which to exert his still inadequate pastoral superintendence, though he has done what he could to remedy the deficiency, by calling a qualified assistant to aid him in

the work. It were much to be desired that his unendowed fellow-labourers in the new parishes were on an equal footing as to stipendiary compensations.

The manse is of very ancient construction, by much the oldest in the presbytery. It has undergone repairs and alterations so numerous, as greatly to affect its apparent identity. The site has been long regarded by incumbents as very insalubrious, and more has been expended to obviate dilapidation, than would have built a wholesome and commodious dwelling. The church is in excellent repair.

According to a census taken in 1836, the whole population of Markinch amounted to 5328, or 1189 families. Of these, 159 families are Dissenters from the Established Church; 51 families are of a mixed composition; 30 of them having one Dissenting member; and 14 having two in each ; the rest three or more ; 25 of the first class (159) reside in the far off village of Inverleven. Making these deductions, there remain within the bounds of the civil parish about 1079 families, exclusive of those of a mixed profession, in connection with the Established Church, or owning no other connection. Since last census, the population has increased, but without materially affecting, the above proportions. No marvel that the class of non-attenders at any place of worship should have increased, when church accommodation, till recently, was so disproportionate, and more especially, that, to supply the public works, strangers, not always of settled principles, or church going habits, are often attracted to the parish.

Education.-This has always been a prominent object in our parochial system. No other country has ever exhibited so close an alliance betwixt religion and education, or shown a parish church and parish school in such harmonious and undivided neighbourhood. Of this conjunction, the beneficial effects have been incalculably great, both as to intellectual improvement and intelligent piety. The earliest records of the kirk session evince the attention paid to means of education ; for, besides the parochial school, we find order taken to have the remoter localities supplied. Thus, in 1702, the following entry was made "The minister having acquainted the session, that he had found, on his going thro' that part of the parish, that the people of Coltoun stand in great need of an English school for teaching their children, the session, taking the case to their consideration, not only what is represented, but further, that there is a dangerous water betwixt this and Coltoun ; and that many poor things of that toun must be lost entirely as to instruction, if there be not a school there, and that parents who have substance of the world, and are obliged to send their children abroad out of the paroch, will be hereby encouraged to keep them at home, and that the doing of this is ane necessary and Christian duty, and for the special benefit of that corner of the paroch, and not in the least lyable to any reasonable exception, did unanimously agree that there be a school in Coltoun, and offered to the minister their ready concurrence with his project to that effect."(This school has continued to the present time).

Equal interest, however, was not shown by the people at all times in availing themselves of school-training, for on the " 20 Martii 1643," this minute occurs "The said day, George Rebertson did give over his office of ye school and ye kirk, and ye session, and yat because his detitie was small and ewil payed," &c. Probably, George Robertson might have set down the people's indifference to his own remissness or want of skill. In the present day, at least, the desire

for good education pervades all classes in the parish, nor are the means for accomplishing it sparingly enjoyed, nine schools, besides the parish one, being in active operation. Of these nine, two only, on the Balgonie estate, have any shadow of endowment; the one at Balgonie Square, enjoying an annual allowance of L. 10, with dwelling-house annexed, the other, at Thornton, having L. 5 simply. These sums had been allowed by the former proprietor, and are continued by the present, with a becoming liberality. Another school, at Balbirnie coal-hill, merely provides the teacher with a house. Of the rest, none have any other means of support for the teacher, save school-fees, a very precarious and inadequate source of remuneration for a class of men whose meritorious labours are of so much importance to the community. A female school in the village derives pecuniary aid from the private subscription of a few ladies connected with the place, chiefly of the Balgonie, Balbirnie, and Barnslee families.

The parish school may be held up as a model, so admirably is it conducted by Mr Duncan Stewart., Previous to his appointment six years ago, little could have been said in favour of its management; but it is now efficient in the highest degree, and, in point of system, will bear a comparison with seminaries of the first class. After this, it need not be said that it is well attended. Indeed, want of room is the chief impediment it labours under, and though the heritors have already done much in the way of affording accommodation more is needed for the due working of the important institution. When Dr Thomson gave his Statistical Report, the salary of the schoolmaster was L. 10, the dwelling-house also being old and incommodious. Mr Stewart's salary is L. 34, 4s. 4 1/2d; school-fees, L. 70 ; other emoluments, L. 17, 10s. ; total income per annum L. 121, 14s. 4 1/2d. The dwelling house is late erection, and affords accommodation considerably beyond the statutory amount, though by no means beyond the station of the occupants.

Besides week-day means of instruction, the Sabbath school system is diligently worked under the efficient direction of the assistant minister, aided by a number of gratuitous teachers, who devote a portion of the Sabbath to this excellent purpose. Oral instruction is aided by the gratuitous use of a small, but gradually increasing collection of appropriate books, which convey to many houses, ill-provided with such furniture means of information and material, for thought, on subjects of momentous importance. The Dissenting chapel has also its collection of books in useful circulation.

Poor and Parochial Funds; Though this class must have increased with an increasing Population, yet it has done so by no means in the same ratio. In 1621, the ordinary poor were 21 ; in 1645, 93 ; the intermediate years exhibiting little fluctuation. At present, and for the last twenty years, the ordinary poor average 50 on the roll for stated supply. In few cases, is full maintenance afforded, the weekly pension being chiefly given to persons disabled by sickness or age from industrial employments, and wanting relations in a condition to relieve them fully though, with a little assistance, well disposed to contribute to the utmost of their power. The rate of allowance varies with the circumstances of the individual's case, there being as many under 1s. 6d. per week, as there are above that moderate sum. A heavy charge, however, occasionally occurs by having

whole families devolved on parish support, either by the death of parents, or by their desertion. Cases in the latter predicament have, of late, become more frequent, and will necessarily multiply in proportion as moral principle is undermined, by the insidious fallacies of opinion, which of late have been industriously propagated on the questions of property and the marriage contract.

Besides the ordinary poor, occasional relief is administered, to a considerable extent, to persons not claiming regular supply, though incidentally requiring assistance. It is always an object to keep this class distinct from the others, as far as the principle of public charity will allow. In general, there is no indisposition to receive

eleemosynary aid, though far less among recent settlers, than the ancient residents. When cases of lunacy occur among the working classes, the parish, for the most part, is called on to defray the expense of their admission into a public asylum. At present, there is one individual so maintained at Perth. In general, recovery is by no means hopeless, when the case is not too long neglected.

To meet these charges, the permanent funds of the parish are very inadequate. These funds comprise church door-collections, dues on marriages and mortcloths, and interest on money in bank deposit.

The first named class of revenue is variable, and it is to be regretted that the younger portion of churchgoers are less exemplary in the Sabbath offering than their fathers. Injurious opinions, indeed, are by some inculcated, to the effect that such contributions, going only to exonerate the proprietors of the soil, who are legally bound to support the poor, form an act of gratuitous generosity on the part of the unlanded community, as if charity were the business of a class, and not the general concern of a virtuous community.

Other causes operating unfavourably on church-door collections might be mentioned, did the nature of this report allow more than general views. It must, moreover, be taken into the account in stating an average, that the quoad sacra parishes, having their own collections, must cause a diminution at the parish church. By the terms of their constitution, they are allowed to apply their collections for their own objects, provided they collect twice annually for the parish funds. It is a remarkable fact, that, in one of those new erections, that at Thornton, not a single pauper has claimed to be relieved. Since these disjunctions took place, the average collection at the parish church is under L. I. Thrice annually, (at two sacramental occasions, and first Sabbath of the year) extraordinary collections are made, the proceeds of which are distributed in addition to the ordinary supplies, and chiefly to persons not on the stated roll. Collections for objects not eleemosynary are also occasionally made, averaging from L. 30 to L. 40 per annum. These include the General Assembly's Schemes, books for Sabbath school library, &c.

The return for mortcloths has of late years greatly declined, the right of the kirk-session to exact a fee being occasionally disputed, and not by Dissenters alone, though it was first challenged on that side. The payment is undoubtedly legal, but can rarely be enforced without violating the decencies due to interment of the dead. There is a deposit fund of L. 400 belonging to the parish, the interest of which only is at the disposal of the kirk-session. A Female Society for aged

women in destitute circumstances lays out about L.50 annually, and is so conducted as to prove an excellent auxiliary to the kirk-session. The principal ladies connected with the parish patronize it.

It must not be omitted, that a great deal of private charity is unobtrusively distributed by the families of the principal heritors, whether resident or otherwise. It is pleasant also to state, that among the humbler classes, many instances occur of an habitual, though little noticed readiness to communicate of their little to a neighbour having less. The finest charities of life are thus produced.

The two great coal proprietors, Mr Balfour of Whittingham and Balgonie, and Mr Balfour of Balbirnie, make liberal donations of coals each winter. The former not being resident, places his coal bounty at the disposal of the kirk-session, and never reduces the list of expectants made up by the elders. The Barnslee family also do much in the way of private distribution to the deserving poor. In the eastern part of the parish, the family of Balfour has been long distinguished in this respect. With all these accessories, the parish funds present a large deficit, which the heritors have hitherto met by voluntary assessment. This is gradually becoming more onerous, and the kirk-session experience augmenting difficulties in their management. Indeed, in so far as relieving the poor ceases to be regarded as a branch of charity, and passes into the predicament of an absolute legal claim, it becomes the more difficult for a kirk-session to administer beneficially. Their position is pressed on the one side by applicants, on the other by heritors, who have to provide for deficiencies. In this conflict, their moral influence is exposed to damage, and as it perishes, their usefulness suffers in proportion. Yet the substitution of a machinery divested of all church associations, and worked by legal power only, destroys one of the healthiest agencies ever introduced into the parochial economy.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

On minor branches of parish statistics, it is not necessary to dilate. It may be mentioned that the public health is under the care of three active and well-qualified medical practitioners; whereas, long after Dr Thomson wrote his Report, not one was resident in the parish. These three reside in the village of Markinch. There is nothing that requires special notice in the department of disease; here, as in other parts of the island, cases of pulmonary consumption forming the largest class. The mortality of the last forty years shows an average of 69, the greatest amount (in 1834) being 130; the lowest (in 1802) 53.

Several instances of a longevity exceeding ninety Years have occurred during the last twenty years; and one, a few months ago, who had gone beyond ninety-six. The ardour of politics had carried him, two years before, to a polling-place six miles from his habitation.

As to the general morals of the community, it were indelicate to go into specialities of detail. Crime, as the term is usually understood, is exceedingly unfrequent. Petty breaches of the peace occasionally occur, but will become rare, as the cause of temperance gains ground, and happily it does gain on the opposite vice, solicited as that vice is by a too promiscuous system of licensing

public-houses, the number of which is still excessive, and ought to be reduced. The class of immorality that most falls under the cognizance of the kirk-session has sensibly diminished ; and, upon the whole, the community has an improved moral aspect. This is much aided by the excellent regulations maintained at the leading public works, whose proprietors insist on moral conduct as an indispensable condition of being retained in their employment. Several of them, too, have provided libraries for the use of their work people, which operates in many ways in producing a beneficial result. And, in proportion as the popular mind is well-informed, it will cease to lend a facile ear to the propagators of opinions subversive of virtuous order and religious obligation. The parochial system, not less than other institutions of the land, has of late years been exposed to unsparing aggression, and nothing less than its ruin will satisfy assailants. We wish its downfall averted, in the persuasion that it is a righteous instrument for promoting an host of objects, each of which, we cannot help thinking, is worth more than the most exaggerated cost of the whole !

Rev J. Sieveright (June 1840)