

THE CAIRNGORM PARISHES AND THE (OLD)
STATISTICAL ACCOUNT OF SCOTLAND.

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II.

KIRKMICHAEL. By the Rev. Mr. John Grant.

Name, Extent, Surface, &c.—In Monkish history, this parish derives its ecclesiastic name from St. Michael, to whom the chapel, where now the kirk stands, was anciently dedicated. If this account be true, it may be observed, that the tutelary patron, ever since the period of his election, has paid little regard to the morality of his clients. In the Gaelic, the vernacular idiom, it is called Strath-āth-fhin, from “Strath,” a dale, “āth,” a ford, and “Fin,” the hero Fingal, so highly celebrated in the Poems of Ossian. It is generally written Strath-avan, avan being the appellative for a river ; but the former etymon approaches much nearer to the provincial pronunciation. It is further confirmed by a stanza, which is still recited by the old people of the country.

Chaidh n.o bheans bhatha’,

Ain uisg āth- fhin, nan clachan sleamhuin ;

’S bho chaidh mo bheans’ bhatha’,

Bheirmeid āth-fhin, ainm an amhuin.

“On the limpid water of the slippery stones, has my wife been drowned, and since my wife has there been drowned, henceforth its name shall be the water of Fingal.” It is the tradition of the country, that in one of Fingal’s excursions, in pursuit of the deer of the mountains, after having crossed the river, he was followed by his wife, who being carried down by the violence of the stream, sunk, and was drowned. To commemorate this melancholy event, in which the hero was tenderly interested, he uttered the above stanza. Since that period, the water, which was formerly called An-uisge-geal, or the White Water, in allusion to its transparency, assumed by an easy transition, the name of the ford or river of Fingal.

The parish of Kirkmichael——[Footnote refers to its remoteness, its ancient lack of population, and its long continuance in the possession of the Earls of Huntly.]——is divided into 10 little districts, called Davochs.——[Footnote praises the Duke of Gordon and his factor, as owner and manager of one of these.]——Several antiquaries have mistaken the etymon of Davoch ; but the word is evidently derived

from Daimh, oxen, and Ach, field. In its original acceptation, it imports as much land as can be ploughed by 8 oxen. In the Regiam Majestatem, it is clearly defined.—[Footnote quotes this definition.]—

This parish lies at the western extremity of the county of Banff, from which it is distant between 30 and 40 computed miles. On every side, there are natural barriers which separate it from the surrounding countries; from the parish of Strath-don, toward the S., by Leach^h-mhic-ghothin, the declivity of the smith's son; from the parish of Cromdale toward the N. by Beinn Chromdal, the hill of the winding dale. These are two long branches of hills, that, running in an easterly direction, project from the northern trunk of the Grampian mountains.—[Footnote.] Grampian, from Grant and Beinn. Grant, like the *ἀγος* of the Greeks, has two opposite meanings. In some fragments ascribed to Ossian, it signifies beautiful. This meaning, now, is obsolete, and it signifies deformed, ugly, &c. The old Caledonians, as these mountains abounded in game, and connecting beauty with utility, might have given the name in the former sense. Mr. Henry Saville, and Mr. Lhuyd, two eminent antiquaries, call them Grant Feinn, from which comes the soft inflected Grampian of the Romans.—From the parish of Abernethy toward the W., it is separated by moors and hills, that connect Cromdale hill with Glenavon; from the parish of Inveravan, by moors and hills, and narrow defiles. The length between the extreme points that are habitable, may be about 10 computed miles. The breadth is unequal. Where it tapers at the extremities, in some places, it is less than a mile; between the verges that bound the middle, it may be about 3 computed miles. In its shape, it resembles an irregular oblong oval.

Cairn-gorm, or the Blue Mountain, one of the high, though perhaps not the highest of those lofty mountains that stud the Grampian desert, rises 4050 feet above the level of the sea; and Loch-avon not more than a mile from the foot of the Cairn-gorm, 1750 feet.—[Footnote.] For the height of this mountain and Lochavon, the writer is obliged to James Hay, Esq. of Gordon Castle, a gentleman of much knowledge, whose skill in observing, and whose accuracy in describing natural appearances, are well known to the Linnaean Society in London.—At the southern extremity of the parish, there is a cataract falling from a height of 18 feet. From this cataract to Lochavon, the source of the river, there are 8 computed miles; between the manse of Kirkmichael, which lies within 2 miles of the northern extremity of the parish, and the above cataract, there are 7 computed miles. As the source of the river there, is situated so near the cultivated part of the country, it may be inferred, that the situation of the whole ground is very considerably elevated above the surface of the sea.—

[Footnote.] Close by Lochavon, there is a large stone called Clach-dhian, from clach, a stone, and dhian, protection or refuge. It has been a cavity

within, capable of containing 18 armed men, according to the figure made use of in describing it. One corner of it rises 6 feet 4 inches in height. The breadth of it may be about 12 feet. Plain within, it rises on the outside from the several verges of the roof, into a kind of a irregular protuberance of an oblong form. In times of licence and depredation, it afforded a retreat to freebooters.

Clach-bhan, from clach, a stone, and bean, a woman, is another stone situated upon a summit of a hill, called Meal-a-ghaneimh, from meal, a knoll or mound, and ganeimh, sand. On one side, it measures 20 feet in height. On the other side, it is lower and of a sloping form. In the face of it, 2 seats have been excavated, resembling that of an armed chair. Till of late, this stone used to be visited by pregnant women, not only of this, but from distant countries, impressed with the superstitious idea, that by sitting in these seats, the pains of travail would become easy to them, and other obstetrical assistance rendered unnecessary. —

The face of the country, in general, exhibits a bleak and gloomy appearance. In crossing the centre of it, few cheering objects attract the eye of the traveller. From detached hills covered with heath, and destitute of verdure, where here and there a lonely tree marks the depredations of time, he naturally turns with aversion. But, should he happen to pass after a heavy fall of rain, when the numerous brooks that intersect the country pour their troubled streams into the roaring Avon, he must commiserate the condition of the inhabitants, at such a season, precluded from the rest of the world, and even from enjoying the society of each other. Frequently in winter, the snow lies so deep, that the communication between it and other countries, becomes almost impracticable. The banks of the Avon, however, are pleasant enough, and in different places tufted with groves of birch, mixed with some alder. This being the largest stream that waters the country, from its source to where it falls into the Spey (the Tuessis of Antoninus's Itinerary), it flows over a space of 24 or 25 miles, including its windings. — [Footnote.] Tuessis, from Tuath, north, and uisg, water, by way of eminence, being the largest river in the N. of Scotland, it was afterward called Spey, from Spadha, a long stride, in allusion to the length of its course. — In the parish, there are 2 other lesser streams, besides a variety of brooks; the one called Conlas, from cuthin, narrow, and glas, green, and the other, ainnac, from eil, a rock, and nidh, to wash.

Climate.—From its elevated situation, the numerous brooks by which it is intersected, and its vicinity to the Grampian mountains, it might naturally be expected, that the atmosphere of this country has little to recommend it. Of this, the inhabitants have sufficient experience. Their winters are always cold and severe, while their summers are seldom warm and genial. The disorders consequently to which they are subject, may, in a great measure, be attributed to their climate. These, for the most part, are coughs, consumptions, and affections of the lungs, by which many of those advanced in life are

cut off, and frequently several of those who die at an earlier period. In summer and autumn, what the Medical Faculty call nervous fevers, chiefly prevail, and frequently prove fatal. These are the common disorders.

Soil, Springs, Natural History, &c.—As the face of this country rises into hills, or sinks into valleys, as it slopes into declivities, or extends into plains, the soil accordingly varies. Along the banks of the Avon, and the brooks, it generally consists of a mixture of sand and black earth; in the more elevated plains, of a pretty fertile black mould, on the sloping declivities, of a kind of reddish earth and gravel; the nearer it approaches the summits of the hills, it is mixed with moss and gravel. In some few places, it is deep and clayey. In the parish, there are several springs of mineral waters: One in particular, is much frequented by people troubled with the stone, or labouring under stomachic complaints. Some medical gentlemen, who have made the experiment, assert that it is superior to the celebrated wells of Pananich on Deeside. It has been observed, that the hills of this country are covered with heath, and destitute of wood; yet, in the interstices of the heath, there grows a rank clayey, and a plant called Canach an Shleibh, or the mountain down, on which cattle and sheep feed in summer, and grow tolerably fat. The forest of Glenavon which is 11 miles in length, and between 3 and 4 in breadth, contains many green spots, and during 4 months of the summer and autumn seasons, affords pasture for a 1000 head of cattle. This forest is the property of his Grace the Duke of Gordon. Further, toward the S., and forming a division of the forest of Glenavon, lies Glenbuilg, also the property of the Duke of Gordon. Glenbuilg will be about 5 miles in length, and between 2 and 3 in breadth. If no part of it were laid under sheep, it might afford pasturage for 500 or 600 head of cattle.

The long and narrow defile that bounds the southern extremity of the parish, and contiguous to the Avon, exhibits a beautiful and picturesque appearance. It is everywhere covered with grass, the ever-green juniper, and the fragrant birch. From the beginning of April, till the middle of November, sheep and goats, in numerous flocks, are constantly seen feeding on its pendent sides. In many of the Grampian mountains are found, precious stones of a variety of colours. But whatever may be their specific difference, they are all denominated by the well known name of Cairn-gorm stones, that being the mountain in which they have been found in the greatest abundance. Some of them are beautifully polished by the hand of nature, while others are rude and shapless. They are ranked by naturalists in the class of topazes.—[Footnote tells of limestone, freestone, slate, and marl in the parish, and of the iron mines of the York-Building Company in Leac-mhic-ghothin.]——

Population, &c.—According to Dr. Webster's report, the population in 1755, was 1288. No sessional records are now in existence belonging to this parish, previous to the 1725, when the incumbent before the last was admitted. Ever since, it has not been possible to keep them with accuracy. Dissenters, of whatever denomination, watch the opportunity of encroaching upon the prerogative of the Established Church. As the third, then, of the people of this parish are Roman Catholics, the priest generally takes the liberty of sharing in the functions that belong to the Protestant clergyman.—[Footnote states that this condition of things prevents the recording of some marriages and baptisms; it continues, Some years ago, too, the taxes imposed upon deaths, marriages, and baptisms, made them be considered as a kind of contraband goods, and for that reason, many of them were as much as possible concealed from publick view, that they might elude an imposition, which they called tyrannical and oppressive.]—

By the most accurate inquiry, it has been found that this parish contains 1276 inhabitants, young and old, and of both sexes. Of these, 384 are Roman Catholics; all the individuals of each profession are included, in 253 families, containing, at an average, 5 persons to a family, with 265 children under 8 years of age By a pretty accurate calculation, the total of black cattle in the parish, amounts to 1400, with 7050 sheep, 310 goats, and 303 horses. No other domestic animals are reared, except some poultry, and a few geese.

Acres, Rent, &c.—The whole parish, exclusive of the forest of Glenavon, Glenbuilg, and the hill pasture belonging to the davoeh of Delnabo, the property of Sir James Grant, contains 29,500 acres, of which little more than 1550 are arable. The whole rent may be about 1100l. Sterling; but to a certain extent of grass following each farm, no rent is affixed.

Ecclesiastical State, Schools, Poor, &c.—The glebe, manse, and garden, occupy a space of between 9 and 10 acres, situated on an eminence, and hanging upon the sloping sides. A part of the soil is poor, and a part tolerably fertile. The value of it may be about 6l.—[Footnote tells of the minister's difficulty in getting fuel.]—The church was built in 1747, and has been never since repaired. As a house of worship, it would appear to a stranger to be totally deserted. A few broken windows mark the sable walls: the glass is broken, and gives free access to the winds from all the cardinal points. Were the people enthusiasts, a little current of air might be necessary to cool them; but in their present disposition, they frequently complain of the inroads of the cold, to disturb them in their sober meditations; yet they never express a wish to remove the inconvenience. Their apathy is the more extraordinary, as his Grace the Duke of Gordon, is ever ready to listen to the representations of his people, and never refuses to grant them a

just and equitable request. Sir James Grant is patron of the parish. From 1717, till 1786, the stipend of the parish was no more than 47l. 4s. 5½d. Sterling. During the latter of these years, his Grace the Duke of Gordon, informed of the smallness of the living, was pleased to bestow upon the present incumbent, without the painful feeling of solicitation, a gratuitous augmentation; and this at a time when the Court of Session were inimical to such claims. The stipend, at present, is 68l. 6s. 8d. Sterling, with 10l. Sterling, allowed by his Grace for a house. It will not be deemed a digression, to mention that his Grace gave a farm to the present incumbent, at a moderate rent, when an advanced one, and a fine of 20 guineas were offered by others.—There are 2 schools; a Society one at Tammtoul [*sic*], with a salary of 13l. 10s., and a parochial one at Tamchlaggan, with a salary of 8l. 6s. 8d.—No funds appropriated for the relief of the poor, have been hitherto established in this parish. Three years ago, the trifling sum of 5l. Sterling, was bequeathed by an old woman; and, without exaggeration, few parishes stand more in need of the charitable contributions of the well disposed. The number of the old and infirm at present on the list, amounts to 32 persons; while the annual collection, distributed last week, came to no more than 42s. 6½d. Sterling. In this large treasure, designed to be incorruptible, beyond the power of moths and rust, there were 1s., 5 sixpences, 443d., and 50 farthings.—[Footnote mentions the special poverty in the years 1782 and 1783, and the general need of more generous contributions for the poor.]—

The price of provisions in this country has been different, at different times. In the reign of King William, it is well known that a famine prevailed over the whole kingdom, and continued during several years. Either agriculture, at that time, must have been imperfectly understood, or the calamity must have been severe, when a boll of meal cost 1l. 6s. 8d. Sterling. The year 1709, is also noted for a dearth, and winter, uncommonly rigorous over every part of Europe.—[Footnote mentions the severity of that winter, compares early and recent prices, and wanders away to discuss the troublesome manners of servants].

Among other grievances, it must not be omitted, that the inhabitants in this, and the contiguous districts, descant with melancholy declamation, on the heavy and increasing taxation imposed by Government.

Village, &c.—Tammtoul is the only village within the precincts of this parish. It is inhabited by 37 families, without a single manufacture, by which such a number of people might be supposed to be able to acquire a subsistence. The Duke of Gordon leaves them at full liberty, each to pursue the occupation most agreeable to them. No monopolies are established here; no

restraints upon the industry of the community. All of them sell whisky, and all of them drink it. When disengaged from this business, the women spin yarn, kiss their inamoratos, or dance to the discordant sounds of an old fiddle. The men, when not participating in the amusements of the women, sell small articles of merchandise, or let themselves occasionally for days labour, and by these means earn a scanty subsistence for themselves and families. In moulding human nature, the effects of habit are wonderful. This village, to them, has more than the charms of a Thessalian Tempe. Absent from it, they are seized with the mal de pais; and never did a Laplander long more ardently for his snow-clad mountains, than they sicken to revisit the barren moor of their turf-thatched hovels. Here the Roman Catholic priest has got an elegant meeting-house, and the Protestant clergyman, the reverse of it; yet, to an expiring mode of worship, it would be illiberal to envy this transient superiority, in a country where a succession of ages has witnessed its absurdities. A school is stationed at this village, attended by 40 or 50 little recreants, all promising to be very like their parents.—[Footnote narrates the wanderings abroad of Mrs. McKenzie, a woman of Tomintoul.] —

Antiquities, Eminent Men, &c. — — — No crosses, no obelisks, no remains of antiquity have been hitherto discovered in this parish. That it was ever visited by the Romans, is not probable. In that expedition, in which Severus lost 50,000 men, as recorded by the abbreviator of Dio Cassius, no vestige exists that any part of his army pursued their rout [*sic*] through the mountains and defiles of Strath-ath-fhin: no marks of encampments are to be seen; there is no tradition, that either Roman urns, or Roman coins have been ever discovered. In the year 1715, a small fort was erected in the southern extremity, but soon after, it was abandoned, and now lies in ruins.

—[Footnote.] The great road that passes through the country, to facilitate the march of the troops between Perth and Fort-George, was not made till the year 1754: and now the stages are so bad, that few travel it. The roads here, in general, are wretched beyond description; and yet the people, in terms of the statute, are annually called out to work at them. This only can be imputed to their indolence, their want of the necessary implements, and the ignorance or indifference of the persons appointed to superintend them. No good roads can be expected according to the present mode of management. To effect this, a commutation is absolutely necessary. On the river Ath-fhin, there is a bridge, where it is crossed by the great road. Two other bridges, one at Delvoran, and one at Delnacairn, a little E. of the kirk, would prove essentially useful, as they would facilitate the water-course, which at present is frequently interrupted, and render the communication safe and commodious. Another upon Ailnac at Delnabo, and one upon Conlas at Ruthven, would also be very necessary. —

As far as tradition can be depended upon, no battle, nor skirmish of consequence, ever happened in this country. The only one mentioned, was fought between Macdonald of the Isles, and an Alexander Stewart, chief of that name. The former, with the greatest part of his men, was killed, and from the carnage of that day, the place is still called Blar nan Mairbh, the moss or field of the dead.—[Footnote.] Casual rencounters have frequently happened. Manslaughter, murder, and robbery, at a period not very remote, form a distinguishing feature in the character of the Highlanders. But from the detail of such scenes of barbarity, the human mind turns away with horror. One instance, however, it may not be improper to mention: In the year 1575, soon after the establishment of the Reformation in Scotland, a priest who had refused to marry the uncle to the niece, was seized by the ruffian and his party, laid upon a faggot, bound to a stone, and in this manner burnt to death. The remembrance of this atrocious deed is still preserved in the name of the stone, which to this day, is called Clach-ant-shagairt, or the Priest's stone.—

If any persons of eminence were ever born in this district, time has swept them from its annals. But, if such there have been, Mr. George Gordon of Foddaletter, is justly entitled to be ranked in the number. This gentleman's abilities rose beyond that mediocrity, which sometimes acquires celebrity without the possession of merit. As a chymist and botanist, his knowledge was considerable; and this knowledge he applied to the extension of the useful arts. At an early period of life, he discovered, that by a certain preparation, the excrescence of the stones and rocks of the mountains, forms a beautiful purple dye. It is called in the Gaelic, crottal, from crot, a bunch, and eil, a rock. He erected a manufacture of it at Leith. At that place, in 1765, the inventor died, much regretted; while his mind was teeming with various and original projects for the improvement of his country.—[Footnote tells of James an Tuim, or James of the Hill, an outlaw.]—

Stature, &c.—Many have asserted, that in size and stature, the people of modern times, have decreased considerably from that of their ancestors. . . . Every old man in this district can recollect the time when many of the inhabitants were stronger, bigger, and more robust than at present.—[Footnote attributes the decadence to less favourable circumstances in modern times.]—In this and the surrounding countries, the mean size may be about 5 feet 7 inches. There are 3 individuals in this parish above 6 feet; 13, 5 feet 10 inches; and some of them 5 feet 11 inches; there are many who measure 5 feet 8 inches in height.

Means of Improvement.—From the geographical view of this country, it will occur to the attentive observer, that the condition of the inhabitants appears to admit of little melioration. For the im-

provements of agriculture and manufactures, the country is ill calculated.

Manufactures.—In this parish, there are 4 mills; the multures of these together, will scarce amount to 80 bolls of meal, and this quantity multiplied by 32, the proportion paid to each, will make the whole quantity of victual raised in the country 2560 bolls. When this number is divided by 1276 individuals, it will be found, that each will have little more to live upon, during the year, than 2 bolls of meal; besides, that from the whole quantity of victual, as mentioned above, foreign beggars subtract, at a moderate calculation, 60 bolls. No manufactures of any kind have as yet been established in this country; and the presumption is, that a considerable time must elapse before such an event can happen. — [Footnote discusses the difficulty of establishing manufactures in so remote a district.]—

Learned Professions.—All retainers to the law, except one sheriff-officer and three constables, if they can be classed among that species of men, feel this country rather cold for their residence. Never was the solemn brow of Justice of Peace seen in the parish of Kirkmichael, before last autumn. Medical gentlemen are seldom called to this country. Mountain air, and constant exercise, render their aid, for the most part, unnecessary; besides that, the people can ill afford to pay doctors and retainers of the law at the same time.

Animals.—The domesticated animals here, have no peculiarities to distinguish them from such as may be met with in every other part of the Highlands. These have been described already. The wild ones are deer, foxes, badgers, polecats, otters, and hares. In former times the ravenous wolf, — [Footnote.] The last said to be killed in this country, was about 150 years ago; yet it is probable that wolves were in Scotland for some time after that period, as the last killed in Ireland was in 1709. — and the bounding chamois, were numerous in the Grampian mountains. — [Footnote discusses the extent of the Grampians.] — As a proof of this, it may not be unacceptable to the curious reader, to subjoin a passage from “Barclay de Regno, et Regali potestate,” describing a singular kind of hunting feast, with which the Earl of Atholl entertained Mary Queen of Scots. — [Footnote gives a Latin quotation, too long to reprint here, describing the famous hunt in 1563; chamois, however, were not among the animals slain.] —

In these mountains, it is asserted by the country people, that there is a small quadruped which they call famh. In summer mornings it issues from its lurking places, emitting a kind of glutinous matter fatal to horses, if they happen to eat of the grass upon which it has been deposited. It is somewhat larger than a mole, of a brownish

colour, with a large head disproportionate to its body. From this deformed appearance, and its noxious quality, the word seems to have been transferred to denote a monster, a cruel mischievous person, who, in the Gaelic language, is usually called a *famh-fhear*. Other quadrupeds once indigenous to the Grampian mountains are now extinct, and now known only by name; such as the *Torneimh*, or wild boar, an *lon*, or the bison.—[Footnote.] It has been asserted by some antiquaries, that the bear was never a native in Scotland. It is a fact, however, well vouched, that during the residence of the Romans in Britain, bears were sent from it to Rome, and baited there. In an ancient Gaelic Poem, ascribed to Ossian, the hero Dermid is said to have been killed by a bear on *Beinn Ghielleinn* in Perthshire.—Lizards, and serpents, may be frequently met with, and of the latter, different specieses [*sic*], some of them striped and variegated, others black and hairy. It is a curious fact, that goats eat serpents, without any prejudice from their bite. Hence, it has passed into a proverb, *cleas na gaoithr githeadh na nathrach*, “like the goat eating the serpent,” importing a querulous temper in the midst of plenty. Incredible as this may appear, it may not be improbable. Goats are animals that feed much upon plants and herbs; and upon the supposition that the bite of serpents were more poisonous than what they are known to be in our northern latitudes; yet, by an instinct of nature, goats might be led to have recourse to such plants and herbs as are an antidote against their bite.—[Footnote.] There is also a small kind of reptile called *bratag*, covered with a downy hair, alternately spotted into black and white; if cattle happen to eat it, they generally swell, and sometimes die. It has the same effect upon sheep. The birds in this parish are of the same genus and species with those of the neighbouring countries; such as moorfowl, partridges, wild duck, crows, magpies, wood pigeons, hawks, kites, owls, herons, snipes, king’s fisher, swallows, sparrows, blackbird, and thrush. In the higher hills are *ptarmagans*. In the steep and abrupt rocks of *Glenavon*, the eagle builds its eyry; and during the latter end of spring, and beginning of summer, is very destructive to kids, lambs, and fawns. Some of the more adventurous shepherds, watching them at this season of depredation, frequently scale the rugged rocks, where they nestle, and share with their young in the spoil. Till of late years that his sequestered haunts have been disturbed by the intrusion of more numerous flocks of sheep, the black cock, or *gallus Scoticanus*, was wont to hail the dawn of the vernal morning amidst the heaths of this country. Now he has fled to *Strathspey*, where the numerous and extensive woods afford him a secure retreat. . . . The *capercaille*, once a native here, is now totally extinct, and known only by name. He continued in *Strathspey* till the year 1745. The last seen in Scotland, was in the woods of *Strathglas*, about 32 years ago.

the swallow may be excepted, the cuckoo and the lapwing, “tiring its ech oes with unvaried cries,” are the only migratory birds that pay their

annual visits to this country ; and after a short stay, wing their flight to more genial climates. The former seldom appears before the beginning of May, and often its arrival is announced by cold blasts from the N., and showers of snow, which are considered as an auspicious omen of the approaching summer. This temporary rigour of the weather is called by the people, *glas-shiontachd na cuach*, or the heavy storm of the cuckoo. —

Wood, Shrubs, Herbs, &c.—At a period perhaps not very remote, this country was covered with wood. In the hills and mosses by which it is bordered, fir-root is found in such abundance, that it supplies the inhabitants with a warm and luminous light during the tedious nights of winter. Frequently large trunks of the fir are found at a considerable depth below the surface. Occupied in this employment, many of the poorer people drive the root to the low country, from which they bring meal, iron, salt, and other articles in exchange ; and by this mode of industry, earn a precarious subsistence for themselves and families during the summer season. No fir-wood, however, at present exists, except a few scattered trees in the southern extremity, upon the banks of the Avon. The only woods to be seen, are birch and alder, and these covering but a small extent of ground. Till of late, groves of alder, in which were trees of pretty large dimensions, grew, in several places along the banks of the river, but now they are almost cut down, and will soon be totally consumed. These, with a little hazel, thorns, haw-thorns, holly, willows, and mountain-ash, are the only species of wood that still remain. Indigenous shrubs of different kinds grow wild in the hills, that carry fruit, such as wild strawberries, two kinds of black berries, and two of red berries. In the beginning of harvest, when these fruits are ripe, they are sought for with avidity by the poorer children, to whom, during the season of their maturity, they supply a portion of food. It is probable, that formerly, if at any time the labours of the chase proved unsuccessful, even the men and women of ancient Caledonia allayed their hunger by these spontaneous productions of nature. Dio Cassius expressly asserts, that our ancestors made use of a vegetable preparation, by which they repressed, for a time, that importunate appetite. Caesar seems to allude to it in his description of the *Chara*. The soft inflected *Chara* of the Roman, evidently points to the *Còr* of the Caledonians. *Cor* signifies excellent, super-eminent, a very expressive and appropriate name, if it supplied the place of food. It grows a little below the surface of the ground, and spreads laterally into several ramifications, carrying larger or smaller knobs according to the soil, and at irregular distances. In spring it protrudes a small greenish stalk, and in summer bears a beautiful flower, which changing into pods, contains feed, when the root becomes insipid and loses its virtue. The country people, even at present, are wont to steep it among water, where having continued for some days, it becomes

a pleasant and nutritive drink. Till of late that the little wood of the kind has been better preserved, the inhabitants used in the month of March to extract a liquid from the birch, called *fion-na-uig*, a *bheatha*,——[Footnote.] The wine or water of the birch, or the water of life, in allusion to its salubrity.——which they considered as very salubrious and conducive to longevity. By an easy metaphor, the name has been transferred to denominate that well known spirit distilled from malt; but a spirit of different effects in its consequence.

It may not perhaps be improper to observe, that a tradition prevails among the Highlanders, that together with these, the Picts were acquainted with the art of extracting a delicious beverage from heath, and of an intoxicating quality. Except to make a yellow dye, the uses of this shrub at present, are unknown. But there is a probability, that in August, when it carries a beautiful purple bloom, if it were cropped in sufficient quantities, what is now considered a fiction, might, by proper skill, be realized; for, at that season, it emits fragrant and honied effluvia.——

[Footnote.] The writer of this statistical article is not so well acquainted with the science of botany, as to be able to enumerate the various plants and herbs that grow in this district. He believes few uncommon ones are to be met with, unless among the Grampian mountains, which might afford a rich field of observation to the naturalist. The plant called an *dubh-chosach*, black footed, or maiden hair, is frequently gathered among the woods and rocks, and used as a tea in asthmatic complaints. Another plant grows in several parts of the parish, and rises on a stalk near 2 feet in height. It spreads into small branches, with sharp-pointed leaves of a pale green, and bears a pretty large berry, red at first, but changing into a livid hue as it ripens. Perhaps it may be the *solanum somniferum* of the historian Buchanan, by the aid of which, infused in the drink, and mixed with the meat presented by King Duncan to the Danes, he and his generals gained a decisive victory over that barbarous people. This berry is still considered as poisonous by the country people, and they cautiously abstain from it.

Modern scepticism rejects the above passage of the history, and considers it as fictitious; but in ancient times when the wants of the inhabitants were few, gratified from the spontaneous productions of the field, or the beasts of the forest; as they lived almost constantly in the open air, climbing rugged mountains, or plunging into woody dales; they must necessarily acquire a considerable knowledge of plants and herbs, together with their various and specific qualities: besides that agriculture being in a rude state, and many of the present domesticated animals unknown, owing to these causes, the vegetable race would arrive at a higher degree of perfection, and their virtues would consequently operate with more energy and effect. In the list of plants, must be reckoned the seamrog, or the wild trefoil, in great estimation of old with the Druids. It is still considered as an anodyne in the diseases of cattle; from this circumstance it has derived its name. *Seimh*, in the Gaelic, signifying pacifick and soothing. When gathered, it is plucked by

the left hand. The person thus employed, must be silent, and never look back till the business be finished.——

Language.—The common idiom of this country, is a dialect of the ancient Celtic, which in remote ages pervaded the southern and western regions of Europe; and together with the Gothic, divided this quarter of the globe into two radical and distinct languages. Though the latter, owing to the better fortune of the people who spoke it, has prevailed over the former, yet may a considerable portion of the roots of several modern languages be traced to a Celtic original. This, however, is not the place for such discussions. The dialect spoken in this country is growing daily more corrupted, by the admission of Anglicisms, and a number of terms unknown to the simple arts of the ancient Highlanders. Such is the folly or bad taste of the people, that they gratify a preposterous vanity from this kind of innovation. It may therefore be well supposed, that the language is upon the decline; that the harmony of its cadence is gradually changing, and the purity of its structure mixing with foreign idioms. The young people speak Gaelic and English indifferently, and with equal impropriety. Their uncouth articulation of discordant words and jarring sounds, resembles the musick of frogs in a Dutch canal, harsh and disgusting to the Attic ear of a genuine Highlander. Some of the old people speak the Gaelic, and consequently with a degree of propriety. On subjects of common occurrence, they are at no loss for expression in well chosen and natural language. Hence, it may be inferred, that the parish of Kirkmichael spoke the same dialect of the Celtic that is now spoken in Badenoch, making allowance for some little difference, in point of pronunciation. In terms descriptive of the objects of nature and local situations; in the names of the seasons of the year, of mountains, lakes, brooks, and rivers, their language is as just and appropriate as any in the Highlands of Scotland. There are a few words, however, that would seem peculiar to themselves, but which may be traced to the parent Celtic; some words are used by them metaphorically and not unappositely applied; In this country they have still many proverbs, and many of them beautiful, both with respect to language and sentiment. The insertion, however, of one of these, at present, may be sufficient. Eisd, say they, ri gaoth non gleann, gus an traogh na 'huisgachaibh—Listen to the winds of the hills till the waters assuage; importing that passion should be restrained till the voice of reason be heard.——[A long Footnote urges the desirability of a Gaelic dictionary, suggests that the Highland Society of London should patronise one, and records that Argyllshire clergymen were busy on one, but notes that their knowledge of the language is too much provincial.]——

Superstitions, Ghosts, Fairies, Genii, &c.—In a statistical account,

even the weaknesses of the human mind may afford some little entertainment. That fear and ignorance incident to a rude state, have always been productive of opinions, rites, and observances which enlightened reason disclaims. But among the vulgar, who have not an opportunity of cultivating this faculty, old prejudices endeared to them by the creed of their ancestors, will long continue to maintain their influence. It may therefore be easily imagined, that this country has its due proportion of that superstition which generally prevails over the Highlands. Unable to account for the cause, they consider the effects of times and seasons, as certain and infallible. The moon in her increase, full growth, and in her wane, are with them the emblems of a rising, flourishing, and declining fortune. At the last period of her revolution, they carefully avoid to engage in any business of importance; but the first and the middle they seize with avidity, presaging the most auspicious issue to their undertaking. Poor Martinus Scriblerus never more anxiously watched the blowing of the west wind to secure an heir to his genius, than the love-sick swain and his nymph for the coming of the new moon to be noosed together in matrimony. Should the planet happen to be at the height of her splendour when the ceremony is performed, their future life will be a scene of festivity, and all its paths strewn over with rose-buds of delight. But when her tapering horns are turned towards the N., passion becomes frost-bound, and seldom thaws till the genial season again approaches. From the moon, they not only draw prognostications of the weather, but according to their creed, also discover future events. There they are dimly portrayed, and ingenious illusion never fails in the explanation. The veneration paid to this planet, and the opinion of its influences, are obvious from the meaning still affixed to some words of the Gaelic language. In Druidic mythology, when the circle of the moon was complete, fortune then promised to be the most propitious. Agreeably to this idea, rath, which signifies in Gaelic, a wheel or circle, is transferred to signify fortune. They say, "ata rath air," he is fortunate. The name, when the circle is diminishing, and consequently unlucky, they call mi-rath. Of one that is unfortunate, they say, "ata mi-rath air." Deas uil, and Tuath uil, are synonymous expressions, allusive to a circular movement observed in the Druidic worship.

Nor is it to the moon alone that they direct their regards; almost every season of the year claims a share of their superstition: Saimh-theine, or Hallow Eve; Beil-teine, or the first day of May; and Oidhch 'Choille, or the first night of January. The rites observed at Saimh-theine, and Beil-teine, are well known, and need not be described. But on the first night of January, they observe, with anxious attention, the disposition of the atmosphere. As it is calm

or boisterous ; as the wind blows from the S. or the N. ; from the E. or the W., they prognosticate the nature of the weather, till the conclusion of the year. The first night of the New Year, when the wind blows from the W., they call *dàr-na-coille*, the night of the fecundation of the trees ; and from this circumstance has been derived the name of that night in the Gaelic language.——

[Footnote quotes opinions from Virgil of the “genial and fertilising nature of the west wind.”]—— Their faith in the above signs, is couched in the following verses :

Gaoth a deas, teas is torradh,
 Gaoth a niar, iasg is bainne,
 Gaoth a tuath, fuachd is gailinn,
 Gaoth a near, meas air chrannaibh.

“The wind of the S. will be productive of heat and fertility ; the wind of the W. of milk and fish ; the wind from the N. of cold and storm ; the wind from the E. of fruit on the trees.”

The appearance of the first three days of winter is also observed :

Dorach doirauta’ dubh,
 Chead tri la do’n gheamthra ;
 Ge be bheire geil dhe’n chroi,
 Cha tugainn ’s e gu famthra.

“Dark, lurid, and stormy, the first three days of winter ; whoever would despair of the cattle, I would not till summer.”

The superstitious regard paid to particular times and seasons, is not more prevalent in this country, than the belief in the existence of ghosts. On the sequestered hill, and in the darksome valley, frequently does the benighted traveller behold the visionary semblance of his departed friend, perhaps of his enemy. The former addresses him in the language of affection ; if danger is approaching, he is warned to prepare against it, or the means of avoiding it disclosed. By the latter, he is attacked with the vehemence of resentment. The inhabitants of this, and the visitant from the other world, engage in furious combat. For a while, the victory is in suspense. At length the ghost is overthrown, and his violence appeased : a few traits of his life upon earth are described. If he stole a ploughshare from his neighbour, the place where it lies concealed is pointed out. His antagonist is requested to restore it to the owner ; and if he fails, punishment is threatened to follow the breach of promise ; for, till restitution be made, so long must the miserable culprit be excluded from the regions of the happy.——

[Footnote quotes some speeches of ghosts in Gaelic verse.]——

Not more firmly established in this country, is the belief in ghosts, than that in fairies. The legendary records of fancy, transmitted

from age to age, have assigned their mansions to that class of genii, in detached hillocks covered with verdure, situated on the banks of purling brooks, or surrounded by thickets of wood. This hillocks are called *sioth-dhunan*, abbreviated *sioth-anan*, from *sioth*, peace, and *dun*, a mound. They derive this name from the practice of the Druids, who were wont occasionally to retire to green eminences to administer justice, establish peace, and compose differences between contending parties. As that venerable order taught a *Saoghl hal*, or world beyond the present, their followers, when they were no more, fondly imagined, that seats, where they exercised a virtue so beneficial to mankind, were still inhabited by them in their disembodied state. In the autumnal season, when the moon shines from a serene sky, often is the wayfaring traveller arrested by the musick of the hills, more melodious than the strains of Orpheus, charming the shades, and restoring his beloved Eurydice to the regions of light.

*Cantu commotae Erebi, de sedibus imis,
Umbrae ibant tenues.*

Often struck with a more solemn scene, he beholds the visionary hunters engaged in the chase, and pursuing the deer of the clouds, while the hollow rocks in long-sounding echoes reverberate their cries.

*Chorus aequalis Dryadum, clamore supremos,
Implerunt montes.*

——[Footnotes.] Notwithstanding the progressive increase of knowledge and proportional decay of superstition in the Highlands, these genii are still supposed by many of the people to exist in the woods and sequestered valleys of the mountains, where they frequently appear to the lonely traveller, clothed in green, with dishevelled hair floating over their shoulders, and with faces more blooming than the vernal blush of a summer mornig. At night in particular, when fancy assimilates to its own preconceived ideas, every appearance, and every sound, the wandering enthusiast is frequently entertained by their musick, more melodious than he ever before heard There are several now livng, who assert that they have seen and heard this aerial hunting; and that they have been suddenly surrounded by visionary forms, more numerous than leaves strewed on the streams of Vallumbrosa in November blasts, and assailed by a multitude of voices, louder than the noise of rushing waters.

About 50 years ago, a clergyman in the neighbourhood, whose faith was more regulated by the scepticism of philosophy, than the credulity of superstition, could not be prevailed upon to yield his assent to the opinion of the times. At length, however, he felt from experience, that he doubted what he ought to have believed. One night as he was returning home, at a late hour, from a presbytery, he was seized by the fairies, and carried aloft

into the air. Through fields of aether and fleecy clouds he journeyed many a mile, descrying, like Sancho Panza on his Clavileno, the earth far distant below him, and no bigger than a nut-shell. Being thus sufficiently convinced of the reality of their existence, they let him down at the door of his own house, where he afterwards often recited to the wondering circle, the marvellous tale of his adventure.——

The same credulity that gives air-formed inhabitants to green hillocks and solitary groves, has given their portion of genii to rivers and fountains. The presiding spirit of that element, in Celtic mythology, was called Neithe. The primitive of this word, signifies to wash, or purify with water. In the name of some rivers, it is still retained, as in the river Neithe of Abernethy in Strathspey. To this day, fountains are regarded with particular veneration over every part of the Highlands. The sick who resort to them for health, address their vows to the presiding powers, and offer presents to conciliate their favour. These presents generally consist of a small piece of money, or a few fragrant flowers. The same reverence, in ancient times, seems to have been entertained for fountains by every people in Europe. The Romans who extended their worship to almost every object in nature, did not forget in their ritual, the homage due to fountains. It is to this, Horace alludes in his address to his limpid fountains of Blandusia [*sic*].

O fons Blandusiae splendidior vitro,
Dulci digne mero, non sine floribus,
Cras donaberis haedo.

——[Footnote.] Some modern antiquaries have asserted, that the Celtic nations never worshipped rivers, and had no divinities appropriated to them. Several ancient authorities, however, might be adduced to evince the contrary. Gildas expressly says, “Ut omittam,” talking of the Britons, “montes ipsos, aut colles, aut fluvios, quibus divinus honor a caeco tunc populo cumulabatur.” The vulgar in many parts of the Highlands, even at present, not only pay a sacred regard to particular fountains, but are firmly persuaded that certain lakes are inhabited by spirits. In Strathspey, there is a lake still called Loch-nan Spioradan; the lake of spirits. Two of these are supposed frequently to make their appearance, the one under the form of a horse beautifully caparisoned, with golden trappings. With the bit of his bridle, the anti-conjuror of this parish expels jealousy, and cures other maladies of the mind. The other under that of a bull docile as Jupiter wafting Europa over the Hellespont. The former is called an each uisg, the horse of the water; the latter, an taru uisg, the bull of the water. The mhaidan mhare, or mermaid, is another spirit supposed to reside in the waters. Before the rivers are swelled by heavy rains, she is frequently seen, and all the attributes of a beautiful virgin ascribed to that part of her person that is visible. Her figure is enchanting, and her voice melodious

as that of the Syrens. But fair as she is, her appearance never fails to announce some melancholy accident on her native element. It is always considered as a sure prognostication of drowning.

In Celtic mythology to the above named, is added a fourth spirit. When the waters are agitated by a violent current of wind, and streams are swept from their surface and driven before the blast, or whirled in circling eddies aloft in the air, the vulgar, to this day, consider this phenomenon as the effect of the angry spirit operating upon that element. They call it by a very expressive name, the mariach shine, or the rider of the storm. Anvona is also reckoned as a divinity of the waters, derived from anfadh, a storm or hurricane, a compound from an, a particle of privation, and feadh, serenity, tranquillity.——

Near the kirk of this parish, there is a fountain once highly celebrated, and anciently dedicated to St. Michael. Many a patient have its waters restored to health, and many more have attested the efficacy of their virtues. But, as the presiding power is sometimes capricious, and apt to desert his charge, it now lies neglected, choked with weeds, unhonoured and unfrequented. In better days it was not so; for the winged guardian under the semblance of a fly, was never absent from his duty. If the sober matron wished to know the issue of her husband's ailment, or the love-sick nymph, that of her languishing swain, they visited the well of St. Michael. Every movement of the sympathetic fly was regarded in silent awe; and as he appeared cheerful or dejected, the anxious votaries drew their presages; their breaths vibrated with correspondent emotions. Like the Delai Lama of Thibet, or the King of Great Britain, whom a fiction of the English law supposes never to die, the guardian fly of the well of St. Michael, was believed to be exempted from the laws of mortality. To the eye of ignorance he might sometimes appear dead, but, agreeably to the Druidic system, it was only a transmigration into a similar form, which made little alteration on the real identity.——[Footnote mentions an old man who still believed in the well and the fly.]——

Among the branches into which the moss-grown trunk of superstition divides itself, may be reckoned witchcraft and magic. These, though decayed and withered by time, still retain some faint traces of their ancient verdure. Even at present, witches are supposed, as of old, to ride on broomsticks through the air. In this country, the 12th of May is one of their festivals. On the morning of that day, they are frequently seen dancing on the surface of the water of Avon, brushing the dews of the lawn, and milking cows in their fold. Any uncommon sickness is generally attributed to their demoniacal practices. They make fields barren or fertile, raise or still whirlwinds, give or take away milk at pleasure. The

force of their incantations is not to be resisted, and extends even to the moon in the midst of her aerial career. It is the good fortune, however, of this country to be provided with an anti-conjurer that defeats both them and their sable patron in their combined efforts. His fame is widely diffused, and wherever he goes, *crescit eundo*. If the spouse is jealous of her husband, the anti-conjurer is consulted to restore the affections of the bewitched heart. If a near connexion lies confined to the bed of sickness, it is in vain to expect relief without the balsamick medicine of the anti-conjurer. If a person happens to be deprived of his senses, the deranged cells of the brain must be adjusted by the magic charms of the anti-conjurer. If a farmer loses his cattle, the houses must be purified with water sprinkled by him. In searching for the latent mischief, this gentleman never fails to find little parcels of heterogeneous ingredients lurking in the walls, consisting of the legs of mice, and the wings of bats; all the work of the witches . . .

Dress.—Since the year 1745, there is a considerable change on the dress of the people of this district. By a singular kind of policy, as if rebellion lurked in the shape and colour of a coat, at the above period, the ancient dress was proscribed and none durst wear it without running the risk of a vigorous prosecution. It was consequently superseded by the Low Country dress. To the ancient braccæ, or truish—[Footnote.] Truish, from *trusà* or dress.—and belted plaid, succeeded strait breeches, and an awkward coat of a uniform colour; sometimes a long surtout dangling down to the heels, encumbering the freedom of motion. The barbarous policy of Edward the First, did not more effectually destroy the spirit of the indignant Welsh, by the murder of their bards, than the prohibition of their ancient garb, that of the poor Highlanders. In the enthusiasm of patriotism, Mr. Fraser of Lovat got the prohibitory act repealed, in order, according to his own emphatic words, “to divert the minds of the people from Transatlantic notions.” Let metaphysicians, if they choose, trace the connexion. But, though this respectable gentleman, with the view to making them good subjects, procured liberty to the Highlanders of exposing their naked posteriors to the north wind, on their bleak mountains, few have availed themselves of the privilege. Habit reconciles them to the present, and they seem to have no desire of resuming their ancient garb. The blue bonnet, however, with the exception of some round hats, still maintains its ground. Since the year 1745, the women too, like the men, have altered considerably in their apparel. Before that period, they wore sometimes white blankets covering their heads, sometimes their shoulders,

drawn forward by their hands, surrounded on each side by a fold. These, as fashion varied, were succeeded by barred plaids, or blankets, were different colours blended, crossing each other at right angles, somewhat distant, and bearing a square space in the middle. Wearied of barred plaids, they betook themselves to Stirling ones, and now duffle cardinals begin to have the ascendant. Formerly their hair flowed in easy ringlets over their shoulders; not many years ago, it was bound behind in a cue, now it spreads into a protuberance on the forehead, supported by cushions; sometimes, it is plain, and split in the middle. But who can describe the caprice of female ornament more various than the changes of the moon!

Manner of Living.—Not more than 50 years ago, their mode of living in this country was different from what it is at present. Places that were at that time waste, are now planted with inhabitants. And though sheep, upon the whole, be more numerous than formerly; yet they are chiefly the property of those who occupy the out-skirts, and to whom the hills and glens lie more convenient. In the central places, the farms are enlarged, at least as much as the nature of the ground can admit; consequently the smaller tenants are fewer, and live less at their ease: but previous to the above period, even cottagers kept a few sheep, because the hill pasture was a common, and there were few of any description who did not occasionally feed upon flesh. But at present, unless it be at Christmas, or when any little festivals are celebrated, the fold is kept sacred for the market, in order to make money to supply the exigencies of the family, and satisfy the many demands to which it is exposed, from bad seasons, precarious crops, and increasing taxes: besides that, the luxury of the times has imported into this country, inaccessible as it is to other improvements, a portion of factitious wants, which must be gratified. Fifty years ago they used burnt plates of whisky, instead of that spirit, which must now be diluted with warm water, and sweetened with sugar. It must, however, be acknowledged, that it is seldom they indulge in this beverage; they oftener drink it raw and unmixed. It may easily be supposed that a plant of such universal consumption as tea, should not be unknown to the people of this country. Few of the better families are without it, though sparingly used; and some of the old women, even when they cannot afford sugar, infuse it in boiling water, and drink it for their headachs. These headachs frequently return, but fortunately by the aid of the grand elixir, they are seldom of long duration.

Character, &c.—The character of a people never fails to change with their changing condition. In contemplating them at the extreme points of a period of 70 or 80 years, it would be difficult to recognise their identity. . . . Not further removed than the more distant of these extremes, the people of his country were generous and hospitable. If they were occasionally subject to the foibles, they possessed the virtues of genuine Highlanders. If they resented injuries with vehemence and passion, their breasts felt the glow of affection and friendship. Attached to their chieftain, they followed his standard where-ever it led ; and never shrunk from danger in the defence of his cause. Connected with the freebooters of Lochaber, they imbibed no inconsiderable portion of their spirit and manners : Address and stratagem marked their enterprises : Active abroad, they were indolent at home : Addicted to depredation, they neglected the arts of industry and agriculture : Disengaged from those pursuits that require vigour and exertion, they passed the vacant hour in social enjoyment, in song and festivity, and in listening to the tale of other years : Rude in their manners, their bosoms frequently opened to the warm impressions of a disinterested benevolence. The indigent and the stranger found them always ready to sympathize with their distress. What Paul the Deacon, in his barbarous Latin, said of the Lombards of Italy, might be applied to them :

Terribilis facies, hirsutaque barba,
Sed corda benigna fuerunt.

——(Footnote.) A dreadful countenance, with rough beards, but with hearts benevolent.——

But, in contemplating the nearer extreme of the above period, a different picture appears. The spirit of commerce which, in a certain degree has pervaded every corner of the Highlands, with its natural concomitants, avarice and selfishness, has penetrated hither. In the private views of the individual, the interests of the community are disregarded. Cunning has supplanted sincerity, and dissimulation candour : Profession supplies the place of reality, and flattery is used as a lure to betray the unwary. Obligations are rewarded by ingratitude ; and when the favour is past, the benefit is no longer remembered. Opposed to interest, promises cease to be binding ; and the most successful in the arts of deception acquires the esteem of uncommon merit and abilities. It may therefore be supposed, that, in a field where the prize is so attractive, there will be many candidates. To aid them in this career of ambition, it must be acknowledged, in alleviation of their bias, that they have had models of imitation not unworthy of the doctrines of a Machiavel.

Unfortunately for them, these models have been strangers, and of that rank in life who have always the most powerful influence in making proselytes among the vulgar.

Such are the causes to which it must be imputed, that there is so little discrimination to be observed in the character of the people of this country; for, where one object is pursued, the means of attainment will be generally uniform. Suspended between barbarism and civilization, the mind is never so strongly influenced by virtue, as it is attracted by the magnetism of vice. In this view, however, they are not singular from their neighbours. From a combination of causes, particularly high taxation, and increasing commerce, avarice and selfishness must necessarily constitute a prominent feature in the character of many. At the same time, there may still be found the usual proportion of persons of a different character, conspicuous for honour and integrity, humane and benevolent, just and upright in their transactions.

Miscellaneous Observations.—It has been observed, that the central parts of this country lie at a considerable distance from moss, which is yearly diminishing in proportion to the consumption. From the increase of population, and as the natural woods are every where decaying, the period is approaching, when the Highlands must sensibly feel the difficulty of procuring the necessary accommodation of fuel. To anticipate such an event, is an object that peculiarly calls for the attention of proprietors. There are few of this description in the Highlands, who are not possessed of considerable tracks of moor and hill. In this district, there are at least 18,000 acres that lie barren, and at present of little value. This space of ground laid under fir, would contain, at a moderate calculation, 80,000,000 plants, exclusive of the forest of Glenavon, and without much injury to the pasture. By converting the waste ground to this purpose, the rent of the proprietors would increase, while the farmer would be supplied in fuel, and materials for building. Plantations of fir so extensive, may appear an arduous undertaking; but by giving farmers long leases, indemnifying them at removal, appropriating a portion of the rent for the purpose, and various methods that might be devised, it might be successfully carried into execution; and when accomplished, would be worthy of a great and patriotic proprietor. It has been asserted that moss grows; but this is a fallacy to obvious to be credited. Being the production of wood and moisture, it is well known from experience, that when the component ingredients are once exhausted, the substance itself cannot be reproduced.

No complaint seems to be more universal over the Highlands, nor in this country in particular, than the increasing inclemency of the seasons. Modern philosophers attribute this phenomenon to the vast shoals of ice accumulating in the northern seas. But whatever be the cause, the opinion of the effect prevails among the people. Since the year 1768, they observe, that the summers are colder, and productive of greater quantities of rain, than was remembered in the same space of time, during any preceding period. The assertion, though conjectural, appears to be founded upon probability. Even within these 20 last years, the beds of brooks and rivers are considerably enlarged, and much of the contiguous grounds destroyed by the floods. The trouts, that formerly swarmed in lakes and rivers, are exceedingly decreased. The few migratory birds that visit the country, are later in their arrival, and sooner take their departure: The hum of the mountain bee is not so frequently heard: even the insect tribes that fluttered in the air of a warm summer, are less prolific than usual. In Glenavon, of this parish, are mosses, near 3000 feet above the level of the sea, full of the fir root; where no wood at present, owing to the cold, could grow. Some of the highest hills in the Grampian desert, are denominated from the wood which formerly grew upon them, such as beinn a chaorin, the mountain of the service tree. Are these then appearances the result of a temporary cessation, or has nature become more languid in her energies? Such, however, are the assertions of the old people, the neverfailing panegyrists of the times that are elapsed. Mr. Hume and the Abbè du Bois, are of a different opinion, and assert, that in ancient times, the seasons were colder than at present, but the facts adduced by these respectable writers are too vague and remote to overthrow the experience of feeling.— [Footnote suggests that farms should be carefully valued, so that rents might be properly fixed instead of being left to the chances of competitive offers.]——.