

EXTRACTS

FROM A

HISTORY OF THE PARISHES OF MONIVAIRD AND STROWAN,

IN THE ARCHIVES OF THE SOCIETY.

By Mr Porteous, Minister of Monivaird.

THE united parishes of Monivaird and Strowan are almost in the midst of Perthshire, sixteen miles north-east from Stirling, and thirteen miles west from Perth; to both which places small ships and the tides come. The inhabited part thereof is a parallelogram of four miles from east to west, and two miles from north to south: but it has another parallelogram of the Grampian hills and moorish ground on the north, of four miles in length, and two in breadth; and a smaller one, on the south, of moor, of the same length, but only half a mile in breadth; and it is bounded on the north by the tops of high mountains, which lie betwixt it and Glen-Almond. This glen consists of detached parts of the parishes of Monzie,

Foulis, and Crieff; these places being only originally sheals, that is, places for grazing, to which the farmers in these parishes sent their cattle to feed in summer, building in them annually huts for their herds; but they have now become farms themselves. There is a rivulet, or large burn, rising out of one of these mountains, named Barvick. After running two miles, it has cut through a rock, steep on both sides; and, going down a precipice for half a mile, has made several very high and beautiful cascades, with deep *linns* below, which the fall of water has worn out of the rock. But it is only a few of them which we are able to approach, owing to the steepness of the rock. This burn runs into the water of Turret, and with it, for some way, separates this parish from Monzie on the east; and Turret, moving on to the river Earn, separates it also from the parish of Crieff on the east. There is, on the south, a high ground from east to west, going over the top of Mount Turlam, the height whereof, or, in the language of old papers, the place where wind and water sheers, separates it from the parish of Muthill. It marches on the west with the parish of Comrie.

What is inhabited of these united parishes consists of two large vallies, encircled by a high rising ground, beginning near the east, and running to the west all the way, except where the river Earn breaks through it at Strowan.

The valley on the north has at the bottom of it the church and loch of Monivaird in the east part, and the river Earn in the west, with the king's highway from Perth to Inverary on the south of the loch, and the north of the river. The valley on the south has the river running from west to east in the bottom, with a road on the south side, and another on the north from Crieff to Strowan.

In giving a particular description, we shall begin at the east

with the church of Monivaird. All the old names of places in the south, as well as the north of Scotland, being Gaelic, and the author being ignorant of this language, he must be often straitened to explain their meaning. *Moni* is frequently used in the composition of our names, and signifies a plain hill or moss; as *Monimusk*, *Monteith*, *Monimeal*, *Monimoon*, *Moneidy*, &c. *Vaird* signifies bard, (the Bard's Hill or Moss). The neighbouring parish *Monzie* is, in old papers, called *Monie Lagan*. *Lagan* signifies low. The reason of this designation may be, that although the church of Monivaird be now as low as *Monzie*, yet the old house of the Toshachs of Monivaird was at Balmuck, in a very high place, where the foundations of the house, and of a large garden wall, are still to be seen. The under part of the walls of the church still bear the marks of the burning of a great number of Murrays there by the Drummonds, who, for this dreadful murder, suffered by the hands of justice, as mentioned in our histories.

William, Master of Drummond, son of John first Lord of Drummond, a man of parts and spirit, being at variance with the Murrays, who had openly defied him, and had actually gone in a forcible manner to draw teinds on the Drummonds lands in the parish of Monivaird, marched with his followers in order to prevent them; and was accidentally joined by Duncan Campbell, captain of Dunstaffnage, who had come down from Argyleshire with a party of his men, to revenge the death of his father-in-law, Drummond of Monie, whom, with his two sons, some of the Murrays had lately killed. Upon their approach, the Murrays fled to the kirk of Monivaird for refuge, whither they were followed by the Drummonds party. The Master, being satisfied with driving them off the field, was returning home, when a shot, fired from the kirk, unluckily killed one of the Dunstaffnage men; which so

enraged the Highlanders, that they immediately set fire to the kirk; and it, being covered with heather, was soon consumed to ashes, and all within it burnt to death. The Master of Drummond was immediately apprehended.

Nigh to this place is St Serf's Well, and the moor whereon St Serf's market is held. He was the tutelary saint of the parish of Monivaird. This well is a plentiful spring of water. About sixty years ago, our people were wont, on Lammas day, to go and drink it, leaving white stones, spoons, or rags, which they brought with them; but nothing except the white stones now appear, this superstitious practice being quite in oblivion. It has been useful in a strangury, as any other very cold water would be; for a patient, taking a tub full of it immediately from the well, plunging his arms into it, which were bare to the elbows, was cured.

St Serf's fair is still kept on the 11th of July, where Highland horses, linen cloth, &c. both from the south and north, are sold. Ascending, to the height of the sixth part of a mile from the church, a steep though arable *brae*, north-east, we come to what we who live amongst mountains name a little hill, viz. the Sheers. On the top of it are some short trenches, like to those of the Romans at Ardoch, or Dalginross, rising in view of this last camp, although it is five miles distant. It seems to have been one of the outposts, intended to give warning to their army, by fires or otherwise, when the Scots should cross the mountains, or come down Glen-Almond. But if we give credit to a Gaelic song, they took another route, by Loch-Earn and the forest of Glenartney; and, under a warlike lady or queen, beat the Romans, and drove them out of Strath-earn.

Although in the low part of this parish there is plenty of game, such as hares, partridges, wild ducks, snipes, plovers, and wood-

cocks, in their season, and a few foxes, till of late we had no rabbits; for it is only about twenty years past since Sir Patrick Murray brought them, and placed them in this high ground. They have multiplied much, nestled in the Knock of Crieff, and in many places two or three miles distant from it. If lime were not so dear, and so far from us, the inclosing of this ground with stone and lime ditches, over which the rabbits could not pass, making proper divisions, confining them to some of these inclosures, and sowing turnip in others, to feed them in winter, might be profitable. It is said, an improvement of this sort has been made by an English gentleman in the parish of Ayton, and shire of Berwick, to a very great advantage; although he sends them to the Edinburgh and Newcastle markets. On this and the adjacent places are abundance of whins or furze, which are burnt by our bakers and poor, and turned by our farmers to a more profitable use. Their servants provide themselves with a thick glove, and a strong sickle. They cut their crops, carry them home in carts, thrash them in their barns, to take away their prickles; or rather provide large troughs of wood, and cross hatchets, the same tanners use in cutting bark; and cutting the whins small, they give them to their horses or cows, finding they feed as well as corn and hay. They are of great use to them when fodder is scarce.

Their ploughs here differ from that in our carse ground; their timber and iron are stronger, and their horses go all in a breast. The man who guides them walks backward immediately before them, having all their halters tied, holding a rod of timber of about five feet long in his hand. Their plough is stronger this way for tilling up hill, and meeting many unforeseen large stones fast in the ground, whereof their land is full; and they say this method fully compensates for the injury which the horses trampling down

the red land occasions. They take only a very high furrow when going up hill; and notice that commonly they have the best crop on that part of the ridge which is tilled in this manner.

On the north of this brae, is the mountainous parallelogram already mentioned. It lay in the middle of the Caledonian wood, which extended from Callander in Monteith to Dunkeld, more than thirty miles. Many natural woods, in the parishes of Muthill and Comrie, in this, and in Monzie, are not only the remains of this forest; but in all our mosses, which are many, even in our highest hills, there are still found logs of oak, birch, fir, and pieces of hazel, with the nuts. There is the appearance of many ridges which have been tilled on the tops of our highest mountains, which are now so extremely cold, that grass will not grow on them: but it seems that, in old times, being inclosed with trees, they were kept warm by them.

Until about twenty years past, horses, cows, and some small sheep and goats, pastured on them; but now, very properly, a great number of large sheep brought from the south have been put in their room. These are eating up the heath, which gives liberty to the grass to grow; so that in some years most of these moors will be green. We have a clear evidence already, in the bounds of Glen-Almond, that it will produce this effect. The sportsman may here find abundant diversion; for here are some foxes, moor-fowl, ducks, and the hill hare, which appears to be a different species of animal from that in the low country, being much larger, and otherwise shaped; of a dark brown in summer, and a pure white in winter.

Here also is the Tanmerack, a fowl of the size of a dove, which always inhabits the tops of the highest mountains. On these hills is found a mountain leek, or *ramsh*, as it is here named, whereon

the goats feed, and sometimes their milk smells of it. There is abundance of *blae berries*, very delicious. A handful of them boiled a short time in a Scotch mutchkin of fresh milk, with an ounce of loaf sugar, and supped or drunk at night, is a sovereign remedy for the flux, as our army experienced at Fort-Augustus after the rebellion. Some of our surgeons take the blades of the bush whereon they grow, dry them, beat them into a powder, and give it for the same purpose, when the berry cannot be got. Here also are *everocks*, resembling a strawberry, but it is red, hard, and sour; and *brylocks*, like a red currant, but sour.

We came to a sheal called Renacardich, or the Smith's Sheal. Here we observed the foundation-stones of houses, and what are said to be large heaps of ashes; which reminded me of the information I had received from Mr A. S., who had been born, and lived long, in the distant Highlands, and who still retained in his memory many of Ossian's songs;—that there was an iron-work here, and that the swords and arms of Fingal were made at Locherlour, two miles in the valley below: and that the iron was brought from this place seems the more probable, because peats, cast hard by, when burnt in large fires, as in kiln-pots, leave a plate of yetlin, which they name a *dander*, amongst their ashes. On the other side below, three miles down Glen-Almond, is Clachan Ossian, Ossian's Stone, of a very large bulk, which the King's soldiers under General Wade, making the military road to Inverness, turned over by engines, exposing his coffin of four stones, and his burnt ashes, to the world. Besides, still, these old songs say that Ossian resided on the water of Brane, which is only two miles distant.

Coming from the mountains back to the church of Monivaird, and turning to the west, we enter into Sir William Murray's inclosures. Going through the first park, we come to the loch of Monivaird,

about half a mile west from the church. This is one of the most agreeable basins of water any where to be seen; it is half a mile in length, and one-sixth part of a mile in breadth; only it is narrower where the island lies. It is environed by woods, except on the north-west. There is a natural wood of half a mile every way, extending more to the east than the loch. It lies on a steep *brae* rising from the loch, is environed by a border of old firs on the top, and is full of large old oak trees. The island is now a peninsula, because the loch has been drained several feet at different times. There are the ruins of the old castle of Ochtertyre; and within a gunshot of it, where the water is twenty feet deep, there is built a cairn of stones, rising about it, which they say the family made use of for their prison, carrying the criminal into it in a boat, and leaving him there. In frost, below the ice, and even in a clear day, large deers horns are seen; and some of them have been got up.

On a hill of arable ground, we meet with a small circular inclosure, built of stone, which seems to have been another outpost of the Roman camp at Dalginross, or of that at Ardoch. Descending, we come a little to the west, where are the graves of those who died of the plague in the reign of King Charles I. An old man, an elder of the parish, informed me that his father, having recovered at that time, was a cleanser; and told him that, when this fatal disease was raging in the parish, our gentlemen caused many huts to be built in this place, and ordered all who perceived that they were infected immediately to repair into them: That particularly the family of Ochtertyre caused observation be made every morning whether the wind blew from the east or west: That they sent provisions of all kinds to them; but gave their servants strict orders, if the wind blew from the east, to lay them down a good way to the east of them, and to the west if it blew from the west; and

that some time after they were gone, the cleansers took them up, and carried them to the diseased. He said also, that his father told him that, while he was thus employed, a number of men in arms passed, chasing from the wood of Trowan two wolves, which they pursued to the Highlands before they were killed; and that these were the last wolves he had ever heard of in Scotland.

Lawers is built on high ground, which overlooks a beautiful plain of four miles in length, having the river, at the distance of half a mile, running from west to east before it. The inclosures are regular, and very extensive. The gardens are large, and laid out in the best order. Here are large woods of planted trees full grown, and most regular, also a most pleasant avenue. Nature and art conspire to make this place most commodious and beautiful. We find, from Knox's History, that Colonel Campbell of Lawers commanded a regiment of the reformers, and was of considerable use among them. The successor married an heiress, the Countess of Loudon, and was himself created Earl of Loudon, and Chancellor of Scotland. He disposed the estate of Lawers to his brother; who, during the civil wars, raised a regiment against Cromwell, which, with the Macleans, fought him at Inverkeithing, but were most miserably defeated by his victorious troops. It is the tradition of this country, that Lawers, according to the use of those times, gave a bond to government, obliging himself to return the arms, tents, &c. furnished, or a sum mentioned as the value of them. But they being lost in this manner, it is said that a covetous minister of state, in the reign of James VII. getting a gift of this bond from the king, made him, before he would discharge the principal sum and interest, part with a barony of land on the north side of Loch-Earn.

His son, who is said to have been a brave gentleman, got a

commission for a Highland company of soldiers for apprehending thieves. He brought a number of the Macgregors to justice; which so irritated the clan, that, meeting under night, they resolved to assassinate him. Coming upon him in bed, and his lady endeavouring to protect him, he got time to ask the favour of them to allow him to pray to God before they would kill him. Having no design to take away the lady's life, they yielded to this; and having got up, he proposed his praying in the chapel, which was hard by. They agreed to this, rather than do it in her presence. When they were on the way, he promised, if they would spare his life, he would secure them 10,000 merks, to be delivered to them on Monday next, at a tavern. They took the bait; and he employed all hands to collect the sum. Much of it was in halfpence, and was carried on horseback. While he was paying the money, a corps of military, surrounding the house, made them, with their chieftain, Captain Ogg Macgregor, prisoners. They carried them to Edinburgh, where they were hanged.

His successor, who served as a captain in Flanders, died unmarried; and this line being extinct, the estate returned to the family of Loudon, and has been enjoyed by the second son, Sir James Campbell, lieutenant-general.

On the east side is the estate and town of Strowan (or St Rowen), as well as Trowen, which seems to have been the eastern part of this estate before the river was made to run this way, named from St Rowen, who also, in some histories, is called Rowan, a clergyman, who was proprietor thereof, A. D. 660. He travelled through France and Italy, was made professor in one of the universities of Germany, and was highly esteemed every where for his learned writings. The venerable Bede informs us that he was daily engaged in controversy against Finan, Bishop of Lindisfarne, or Holy

Island,—the Bishop strenuously maintaining, with all the British churches, that Easter was to be observed on one day; and Rowen, with the Pope and Church of Rome, that it ought to be kept on another. It was perhaps for this reason that he was afterwards canonized. He left three acres of good ground to the bellman of Strowan. The term *Dewar*, in Gaelic, signifies a bellman; and the service required by the charter granted to his heirs is, to ring the holy bell of St Rowen. This is not the church bell, but a fine hand-bell, still carefully preserved by the *Dewars*, which was rung by the bellman under his gown when mass was said. This land pays nothing to the public, to the minister, or schoolmaster. About fifty years past, a plea happening betwixt the Dewars before the Lords of Session, concerning their right to this land, Andrew Dewar, as advised by his lawyers, applied to the minister and session, who, upon examination of old records, found out the right of their claim to a succession in said office as beadle of Strowan; by which means he carried his plea. We have here St Rowen's Lin, a part in the river wherein he bathed himself; and St Rowen's Dam-dike, going through the water, wherein he had a cruive, which furnished him with fish on his fasting days. Below this is his well of fine water; and a little west of the church is his large stone cross, where his market is still kept.