

PARISH OF AYTON.

PRESBYTERY OF CHIRNSIDE, SYNOD OF MERSE AND TIVIODALE.

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I.—Topography and Natural History.

Name, Boundaries, &c. — The parish of Ayton, like that of Eyemouth, obviously derives its name from the water of Eye, on whose banks the village of the same name is situated. In the ancient records, it is usually written *Eitun or Eiton*; and it is said to be compounded of two Saxon words, *Ei*, a water or stream, and *tun*, a villa or town. The parish is nearly four miles in length, and as many in breadth, and contains probably twelve or thirteen square miles. It is bounded on the north by Eyemouth and Coldingham; on the south by Foulden and Mordington; on the west by Coldingham and Chirnside; and on the east by the sea. In figure, it somewhat resembles the flat side of a battle axe without the handle, having the edge turned towards the south and east.

Topographical Appearances.— On the south there is a beautifully sloping range of high land, tastefully adorned with copses of plantation to the summit. At its highest elevation, it is 660 feet above the level of the sea. The highest point of the sea banks, known by the name of Blaiky's, is 350 feet, precipitous towards the sea, sloping gently towards the land, and irregularly down to the water's edge at Eyemouth. On the northern side of the parish the ground is lower and flatter than on the southern, but still of considerable elevation, and finely undulating in all directions. The whole line of coast for many miles both north and south is splendidly bold and rocky. Its extent within the parish is two miles, forming almost a continued precipice, with innumerable indentations. The stratification of the rocks is distinctly visible, and in all possible inclinations, curvatures, and fantastic shapes, evidently thrown into the wildest confusion by some great convulsion of nature. There are one or two caves which present themselves to the eye of the mariner, accessible only by sea; they were distinguished probably in former times as smuggling concealments, but are now only a shelter for rooks, pigeons, and sea-gulls above, and crabs and lobsters beneath. The parish line of coast is terminated on the south by a rocky bay accessible from the land by a steep ravine, at the bottom of which stands the romantic fishing village of Burnmouth, and a remarkable rock called the Maiden Stone, isolated at high water. It has probably been separated from the precipice above by the undermining influence of the sea. At the northern extremity of the parish line of coast are two or three small islets, called the Harker rocks, over which the sea washes, and when impelled by strong easterly winds, ascends in beautiful sheets of foam to the height of seventy or a hundred feet.

Hydrography.—There are two principal streams in this parish, the Eye and the Ale. The former, the largest of the two, takes its rise in the Lammermoors, and after flowing in a south-easterly direction for ten or twelve miles, turns nearly at right

angles on entering the western side of the parish, traversing the parish in the line of the great central valley in a north-easterly direction, when, for another mile, it skirts the parish in the same direction, separating it from that of Eyemouth, and then falls into the sea. On entering the parish, its velocity is accelerated by the increasing declivity of the land towards the sea, just to such a degree as to convert it into a beautifully interesting stream during the remainder of its course. Its windings and sloping banks render the grounds on either side most desirable for country seats. The scenery of the valley through which it flows, especially when viewed from Millerton-hill on the west, presents a magnificent picture, having Ayton House with all its fine plantations, the picturesque village of Ayton, the manse, and the church, the beautiful new mansion-house and grounds of Peelwalls, all in sight, and various mansions and farm-houses in the distant horizon, with the hill country on the right, and the mighty ocean, forming the back scene towards the north-east. But that view is now seldom enjoyed by the traveller, the western approach to Ayton over Millerton-hill having been changed some years ago. The quantity of water flowing in the Eye may be estimated by its being able to drive common flour-mills, and even a paper-mill, except in very dry seasons, when there is a scarcity for these purposes. The other stream, the Ale, has its rise in Coldingham parish, takes also a south-easterly course for two or three miles, and at the northern extremity of the parish, continuing in the same direction, it forms the north-eastern boundary, which separates Ayton parish from those of Coldingham and Eyemouth to the extent of two miles, and then it falls into the Eye at a very romantic spot, distinguished by a remarkable elevation, called the Kip-rock. A very little way above this spot, there is a beautiful haugh or valley, of late years planted, through which the Ale has a serpentine course. This valley must formerly have been the bed of a lake, whose lower barrier has been cut down by the stream. As the opening or exit of the stream from the bed of the lake is narrow, the barrier might again be restored at a small expense. This would not only embellish the scenery in a very high degree, but might even indemnify for the loss of the land, (which here being gravelly, is not very valuable,) by raising the surface of the lake to a sufficient elevation to admit a canal from it to assist the work of the paper-mill. This mill has been injudiciously set down above rather than below the confluence of the streams, and would be greatly profited by this accession of water, of which it stands much in need.

Geology and Mineralogy.—Having already noticed the form and infinitely diversified stratification of the rocks, it is here only necessary to remark that, along the whole range of the coast within the parish, they consist of greywacke and greywacke slate, commencing at the northern extremity, after having been interrupted by an extraordinary mass of conglomerate immediately to the north of Eyemouth bay. This greywacke again terminates, or rather disappears for a little at the southern extremity, being there covered with a superincumbent formation of sandstone. Probably the estate of Greystonlees, comprehending the commencement of this formation of sandstone, owes its name to this peculiarity,—being the only land in the parish where freestone is to be found. It is a little remarkable, that both the northern and southern extremities of the coast within the parish should happen to coincide with the points at which the greywacke rock becomes invisible, as if the parochial division had been regulated by the geological. The same coincidence of limit,

however, does not take place to any distance inland; for the sandstone on the south, and the conglomerate on the north, are both of very limited extent. The rocks within the parish where-ever quarried partake of the same whinstone quality as those upon the shore, and form excellent materials both for building and road purposes. Just where the sandstone commences at Burnmouth, it has been occasionally quarried, and very lately to a considerable extent, for the erection of a harbour to the fishermen. Lately also, masses of coarse alabaster or gypsum, of a reddish colour, have been dug out of the same banks, by the proprietor of Greystonlees, but it has not as yet been converted into any important use. There are immense quantities of coarse gravel, boulders and rolled blocks under the soil, in the neighbourhood of the Eye, evidently rounded during ages of exposure to the action of water, and deposited by the strength of the same element. The soil in general is good, and not much, if at all, inferior to any in the county; light and gravelly in the northern, and more loamy in the southern parts of the parish. It does not appear to have been shifted by any process of nature, except by the watery deposits above-mentioned.

Zoology.—All sorts of white fish, equal to any on the eastern coast, which are the best in the kingdom, are caught by the Burnmouth fishermen in great abundance; and occasionally red fish. Cod, ling, and herrings are here cured for distant markets. Lobsters also are occasionally sent hence to London; and lately an attempt has been made to convert even periwinkles, of which there are immense quantities among the rocks, into an article of trade. They are in some request in London with the fish mongers, for making fish sauce.

Botany.—The only rare plants discovered in this parish are, 1st, the *Veronica filiformis*, (discovered by Dr Johnston, author of the Berwick Flora,) an engraving of which forms the frontispiece of his work. He found it about four years since, upon the farm of Whiterig, the second known station for it in Britain. 2d, the *Scilla verna*, discovered by the Rev. A. Baird of Cockburnspath. It was growing upon the sea banks at Gunsgreen. Before the discovery of this habitat, it was believed to be a native exclusively of the western shores of the island. 3d, the *Astragalus glycyphyllos*, discovered for the first time in Berwickshire, by Mr A. Carr, surgeon, Ayton, in the dean above Burnmouth. This dean is said to be one of the most interesting botanical resorts in the neighbourhood. The *Hyoscyamus niger*, or henbane, grows wild on the sea coast, as discovered on the lands of Fairneside, by Mr E. Colville, surgeon, Ayton.

All sorts of hard and soft wood grow well in this parish. Perhaps the Scotch and spruce firs thrive best. There are some very fine old hard-wood trees, of various kinds, surrounding Ayton House.

II.— Civil History.

Antiquities.— There is no direct history, ancient or modern, of this parish, but from old charters of Coldingham priory and other sources, a few gleanings have been collected. From these it appears that Ayton was formerly a dependency on the monastery of Coldingham. When a colony of Benedictine monks settled at

Coldingham, between the years 1098 and 1107, under the auspices of King Edgar, that monarch, with many other endowments, bestowed upon them two places called Eytun (Eytun et aliam Eytun) being the village of Ayton, and another small dependency on the opposite side of the river, called Nether Ayton,—which were confirmed to them by the charters of his successors. Ayton being thus bestowed on the Coldingham monks, it is probable that its church (whose old walls are still extant, built of square hewn-stones, not closely jointed, and evidently very ancient) was founded about this time. Till the Reformation, it seems to have been a cell or chapel of the neighbouring priory. After the arrangement of the parishes in Scotland, the present parishes of Ayton and Coldingham formed the then parish of Coldingham. At the Reformation, Ayton was disjoined from Coldingham, and united with Lamberton on the south east; but not long after, it became, as it now is, a parish per se.

Independently of all written records, the first object of historical antiquity or interest which presents itself to the eye is the round camp of Drumaw or Habchester, on the highest point of the southern extremity, now half-ploughed down, and reduced to the form of a semicircle. Some modern antiquarians have lamented that so perfect a specimen of the ancient British encampments has not escaped the mutilation of the plough, especially as no ancient relics have been discovered by the process of ploughing it down, to compensate for the deed. Enough, however, remains to mark the judgment and the industry with which such places had been selected and constructed, both with a view to observation and defence. Situated on the highest elevation of a lofty eminence, and commanding a most extensive prospect both of sea and land, no spot could be better chosen for watching the movements of an enemy; and formed of two concentric mounds with a deep trench between, and another outside, it was capable of making a vigorous resistance. As it stands on the northern side of the hill, it is probable that it was constructed by South Britons, to repel the assaults of their northern neighbours; at all events, it was not constructed by the Romans, as has been erroneously conjectured, for its form is circular. Near this spot must have passed the Roman road, which extended from the wall of Severus (which crosses the country at Newcastle) to the Roman camp in the vicinity of St Abb's Head, where it terminated. This road also must have passed close to the rising ground, on which has since stood, and since disappeared, the castle of Ayton, and which is now the site of Ayton House. Possibly the situations both of the camp and of the castle were chosen, in part at least, on account of their contiguity to the Roman road, for long subsequently to the retiring of the Romans it would be the best, if not the only great, thoroughfare of the country. Cairnchester, another camp hard by, of which there are now no vestiges but the name, and Chesterdale and Chesterbank, all indicate that this hill had been often selected for encampments on account of the fitness of its locality for that purpose.*

These, however, in process of time, gave place to castles, of which there are many remains in all the border counties, and which proved stronger and more permanent places of defence than camps.

*It may be proper to mention here an occurrence which happened in regard to the signal station erected during the late war, close by the ancient camp of Habchester; which eventually proved an experiment on the spirit of the country. The man at the station mistaking some whins blazing in the

west for an inland alarm of the French landing, quickly lighted his beacon fire. This being observed from the manse windows by the former incumbent, was instantly communicated to the villagers, many of whom being volunteers were at their posts in a moment, and ready to march to repel the foe. The alarm spread in all directions. Both horse and foot volunteers, from all parts of Berwickshire, were immediately on their route to the place of rendezvous at Dunbar. The news soon reached Edinburgh, and both town and country were all in commotion. Some serious and distressing alarms were unavoidably the consequence, and might have been aggravated tenfold, had not the officer commanding the first of the shore stations at St Abb's Head, prudently abstained from repeating the signal, although he saw it distinctly. But being a thorough bred navy officer, he understood his duty better than to depart a hair's breadth from the line of his instructions, which were to communicate by signal only what he observed at sea.

Castle of Ayton.—Among these the Castle of Ayton seems to have held a distinguished place, as we learn from a siege to which it was subjected by Surry, the renowned general of Henry VII. in 1497, when, as Ford in his dramatic chronicle sayeth or singeth,

"This strongest of their forts
Old Ayton Castle (was) yielded and demolished."

It seems to have been founded long after the conquest, by a Norman of the name of De Vescie, who having formed a settlement on the banks of the Eye, erected a castle and collected his vassals around him. The village of Ayton sprang up under the castle walls for mutual protection. The family name of De Vescie was afterwards changed into that of De Eitun: and the Aytons of Inchdarney in Fife are supposed to be the lineal descendants of this ancient family.

Estate of Ayton.— About the commencement of the fifteenth century, the estate of Ayton fell into the possession of the Homes, who about that period had acquired great sway in Berwickshire. In 1715 it passed from the Homes, when the sentence of forfeiture was incurred by James Home, the last proprietor of that name, who had abetted the Earl of Mar in his vain attempt to reinstate the Stewarts upon the throne. After remaining a few years vested in the crown, this estate was purchased by an ancestor of the present proprietor. Since that time it has undergone successive improvements and embellishments, by large plantations and otherwise, more congenial with peaceful times, and all of them done with much judgment and taste. The castle or mansion-house, standing on a beautiful acclivity, near the great London road, with its fine grounds full in view, is the first object of attraction and admiration in Scotland, to all strangers passing to the north. But alas, for the vicissitude of human affairs! Although neither turmoil nor feuds disturb the peaceful habitations of this once agitated district, a devouring conflagration has within these few weeks, and in the short period of as many hours, reduced that delightful mansion to a heap of ruins. Providentially, the whole family, assembled from different quarters, as if to witness the sad catastrophe, and to render mutual aid, although scarcely in time warned of their danger, and some of them in the greatest jeopardy, escaped unhurt. They must remove for a season. May they soon return to retrieve the damage, and to enliven the scene, which is now desolate in the extreme.

Prenderquest and Whiterig.—The next place in this parish respecting which there are any historical fragments is Prenderquest. In the reign of David I., the half of this estate belonged to Swain, priest of the ancient parish of Fishwick, on the banks of

the Tweed; and there is a document extant whereby this individual renounced his claim to it in favour of the monks of Coldingham. Many of the Coldingham charters are witnessed by members of an Anglo-Norman family, who once possessed Prendergust, and seem to have imparted their name to the land. From the records of Lindisfern monastery, we learn that, in 1326, William de Prendergust, possessing somewhat of the qualifications of a border reiver, rendered himself notorious by plundering the brewhouse and bakehouse of that religious establishment,—this being the only instance on record of its having suffered skaith at the hands of a freebooter. About the middle of the fifteenth century it passed to the Homes. The mansion-house of Prendergust is an excellent modern building. It has been occupied by the present tenant for about thirty years. The farm-house was taken down many years ago, and has never been rebuilt.— The same is the case with the mansion and farm-house of Whiterig, an adjoining property of rather smaller extent than the former. The latter is now in the possession of a gentleman who lately represented the city of Edinburgh in Parliament.

Peelwalls and Bastleridge.—During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the estates of Peelwalls and Bastleridge, to the eastward of the former two, had each a distinct proprietor (as they have still) named Home; and there is a deed extant in which Home of Bastleridge is styled bailiff of the barony of Peelwalls. The latter place, within the last three or four years, has undergone an extraordinary metamorphosis under the judicious management of a new proprietor. An elegant new mansion-house has been built of beautiful hewn stone, brought from the far-famed quarries of Killala, in Fifeshire; and the grounds and public roads have been so completely changed and improved, that any one who has not seen the place during that short period would be utterly at a loss to recognize it as the same. It may here be mentioned, to the honour of a former proprietor of this place, whose name might otherwise never have come down to our day, that there is the following inscription on one of the silver communion cups. "This cup, originally given by Magdalen Rule of Peelwalls, to the church of Ayton in 1677, was renewed and enlarged in 1780."

Flemingtons.—There are three places, all contiguous to each other, of the name of Flemington,—concerning which there is a tradition or conjecture that a colony of Flemish merchants had established themselves here, and imparted their name to their new settlement. As it is well known that the wool marts of these enterprising people went by the name of Redhalls, the existence of a place of that name in the immediate neighbourhood is corroborative of the tradition. One of these Redhalls likewise stood at the bottom of the street called Woolmarket, in Berwick. From the circumstance of the three Flemingtons lying on the side of the great hilly range on the south border of the parish, it is likewise probable that this tract was chosen by them on account of its being well adapted to sheep pasture, although now it is under tillage to the very top of the hill. There is still an extensive sheep walk on the other side of the hill, called Lamberton Moor, which belongs to the neighbouring parish of Mordington. The Flemings had probably chosen the north side of the hill, on account of its vicinity to the port of Eyemouth.

Gunsgreen.— Gunsgreen House, close by the sea side and harbour of Eyemouth, is an excellent mansion. The principal peculiarity of this house is, that it was built by a

wealthy smuggler. For the purpose of carrying on his contraband traffic, he constructed it with many concealments within the house, and with others attached to it. These, it is supposed, have not all been discovered to this day; and if stored with valuable commodities, which, by any accident, have as yet been left untouched, they may enrich some future possessor with unexpected treasure hid either in the house or in the field. To these there is now no clew. It is only a few years since the carriage-horses of the present proprietor were nearly swallowed up while ploughing in a field near the house,—owing to the roof of an unknown but empty concealment giving way. Of course not much treasure was found there. (It was in allusion to this mansion-house that a member once observed in the Senate, that smuggling was carried on to such an alarming extent on the east coast of Scotland, that one man had been enabled, from its gains, to erect a splendid palace. It now belongs to a very different proprietor, lately the venerable pastor of this parish, author of the former Statistical Account, and father-in-law of the present incumbent.)

Netherbyres.—Immediately adjoining to Gungreen is the estate of Netherbyres, which, after having been in the possession of one family and their descendants for more than two hundred years, has lately been purchased by a gentleman well known to the world for his valuable and extraordinary manufacture and construction of chain cables and suspension-bridges. By the latter, he has effected a second union of the sister kingdoms, in the beautiful chain-bridge over the Tweed at Paxton, which, it is hoped, will soon lead to the erection of others in this county, as it has already done in different parts of the kingdom. Of this most necessary means of communication, there is as yet a great deficiency in Berwickshire, over the larger streams. This enterprising gentleman has already commenced improvements on his newly-acquired property, where he intends to erect a splendid mansion-house, with an approach to it from the north side, by means of a suspension-bridge over the Eye;* and to form other embellishments, all which will furnish employment to many industrious individuals, and will contribute to ornament a parish already distinguished for its many beauties.

* (The operations are even now far in advance, and have already produced a magical transformation on the place. The particular form of suspension bridge now erecting is Captain Brown's own invention, and which he calls a Trmion Bridge, being supported by, instead of being suspended from, the chains. This, in the opinion of some, is equally pleasing as the other form; while it saves the necessity and expense of having the fulcra or points of suspension raised aloft in the air.)

Fairneyside, Greystonelees, and Chesterbank.—The next place to be noticed is Fairneyside, a good property extending along the sea-coast, with an ancient mansion and farm-house, both, however, scarcely habitable. The former has been occupied by the farming tenants for many years, and the latter by the farm-servants. Here also smuggling concealments have lately been discovered,—indicating a twofold traffic carried on by a former tenant, the history of which is sufficiently recent to be pretty well known to the parishioners even at this day.—Adjoining to the foregoing property is that of Greystonelees. Here there is neither mansion nor farm-house, but a pretty good set of offices, and a thrashing-mill driven by water. Here, too, there is reason to suspect that smuggling had been carried on in former times. There is on this property a place called Catch-a-penny, well adapted for that purpose by its retired situation on the edge of the adjoining moor, and immediately above Burnmouth. It was probably so named or nick-named for its receiving a share of the

booty.# Ascending the hill from Greystonlees, we come next to Chesterbank, a smaller property, with a good, but rather ancient farm-house and with offices. The view from this spot is very grand, presenting another aspect of the valley beneath, which was formerly described; and in the distance, the Lammermoor hills, with St Abb's rearing its venerable head above the ocean. Besides the camps already noticed, there appears to have been another on the high grounds above Chesterbank; and one is stated in the former Statistical Account to have stood on the north side of the parish. Spear heads are said to have been dug up at Redhall and other parts of the parish; and not many years ago there was turned up during the operation of trench-ploughing, on the farm of Prenderguest, a small millstone, supposed to have belonged to the hand-mills of the Romans.—A curious stone with an inscription was also discovered at Gunsgreen, and a drawing thereof was sent to the Edinburgh Antiquarian Society, but no explanation has yet been obtained.

There was a common saying at Eyemouth, when any strange sail was seen in the offing at night, and disappeared, lh.it "she had gone round to Catch-a penny."

Parochial Registers.—The history of the parochial registers is very imperfect. Those of births and baptisms, the only ones formerly kept, go no farther back than 1743, and even after that period they seem not to have been regularly kept until about 1770. They are by no means voluminous even at this day. No other register has been regularly kept.

III.—Population.

In 1741, the population did not exceed 640. This number was divided equally between the village of Ayton and the landward part of the parish. In 1821, it had arisen to 1481; and in 1831, when the last census was taken, to 1680, viz. 663 in the village, and 1017 in the rest of the parish. It is believed that the yearly average of births bears the usual proportion to the above numbers: but it cannot be easily or precisely ascertained from documents, as the baptisms are dispensed in three different congregations, and no means have been employed to enforce regular parochial registrations. There are not at present more than five or six families of independent fortune residing in the parish. All the proprietors, except one, hold lands above the yearly value of L.50.

Number of families in the parish, including Ayton Common, -	-	352
of families chiefly employed in agriculture, -	-	100
chiefly employed in trade, manufactures, or handicraft,		200

There are six boats' crews of fishermen in the parish, consisting each of six men ; and one boat's crew of the Preventive Service, consisting of one officer and six men.

IV.—Industry.

Agriculture and Rural Economy.—This parish contains nearly 6000 English acres of arable land, 800 in plantations, and between 200 and 300 in pasture. There are no lands waste; all are in the highest state of cultivation.

Rent of Land.— The average rent of arable land is somewhat under L.2. Horses and cows may be grazed for L.5.

Rate of Wages.—Labourers' wages are 1s. 6d. per day, artisans' 2s. and 2s. 6d. Farm-servants called hinds have L.4 per annum, with a cow's grass, 10 bolls of oats, 3 bolls of barley, a boll of pease or beans, with a proportional quantity of potatoe land, and a house and garden,—for which last two articles they supply a reaper in harvest to their masters.

Husbandry.—Every branch of husbandry is here conducted on the best principles. The turnip husbandry for many years has been a very important branch, and by the introduction of bone-dust, now in universal use, is brought to the greatest perfection. The general duration of leases is for nineteen or twenty-one years, a period equally agreeable to both landlord and tenant. Farm-buildings and enclosures are no where more complete than they are here in general. Iron ploughs and harrows have been long in common use. Nothing has contributed more to agricultural improvements than the complete system of draining which has now prevailed for many years. In this respect there is really little or nothing more left to be done. Grass fields are here sometimes irrigated. Of agricultural produce, some idea may be formed from the fact, that an acre of land in the parish will yield four bolls and a-half of wheat, or six bolls of barley.

Produce.— The average gross amount and value of raw produce yearly raised in the parish, as nearly as can be ascertained, is as follows:

9000 English acres of all kinds of grain at L.5, 10s per acre	-	L. 16500 0 0
1500 potatoes and turnips at ditto,	- - -	8250 0 0
1500 hay at L.4, 10s.	- - -	6750 0 0
200 permanent pasture at L.3, 15s.	- - -	750 0 0
Gardens and orchards,	- - -	100 0 0
Annual thinning and felling of wood,	- - -	150 0 0
Fisheries,	- - -	<u>1400 0 0</u>
		L. 33900 0 0

Manufactures.— There are four grain mills in the parish, as formerly noticed, in which wheaten flour, oat-meal, barley and pease meal, and pearl barley, are manufactured. Of the latter article particularly, a considerable quantity is prepared for the London market. There are also in use here on every farm thrashing-mills driven by horses, wind, water, or steam. One farmer has a bone-mill, where 160 tons of bones, chiefly brought from Hamburgh, are ground yearly, and after providing himself with what bone-dust he requires, he supplies his neighbours with the surplus, to the amount of L.700 or L.800 worth per annum.

Paper-Mill.—There is here a paper-mill, lately much improved by the introduction of the new machinery, by which the operations are wonderfully facilitated, and the number of hands formerly employed, greatly reduced. The following statement by the proprietor will give an idea of the magnitude and value, &c. of this establishment.

"The sorts of paper chiefly manufactured at Millbank paper-mill are pasteboards and

coloured papers. Eight years ago a machine was erected by which paper is made into webs, and after wards cut into such sizes as are wanted. And recently, a new plan has been adopted for drying it, by applying steam to the inside of large cylinders, round which the paper passes and comes off quite dry. The bleachfield at Ayton is given up, and is now employed in bleaching rags, and reducing them into (what is called in the trade) *half stuff*, and from thence taken down to the mill at Millbank, to be prepared and made into paper. The wages paid to the work people amount to nearly L.800 a-year, and the excise duties to upwards of L.3000 a-year."

Distillery.— A distillery was erected ten or twelve years ago at Gunsgreen, upon the site and ruins of a former distillery, which had been discontinued for many years. It is now in active operation, and the following particulars respecting it have been communicated by one of the partners: "Gunsgreen distillery is capable of making 1500 gallons of aqua weekly, which is mostly all sold in London. In the spring of 1832, when potatoes were nearly unsaleable, and selling so low as 1s. 3d. per cwt., the distillers here, having a large quantity on hand, were induced to enter their work for distilling from potatoes, and to attempt the manufacture of aqua from them, which they found to answer well. Besides using their own, they bought all that were in their neighbourhood, and continued working from them for two months, during which time they consumed upwards of 6000 cwt. By the present distillery law distillers can work from potatoes at pleasure, but they must continue one month, or rather they cannot work from any other thing till the expiry of the month."

Tannery.— There was lately attempted in the village of Ayton, and with sufficient prospect of success, a small tannery. It belongs to, and is conducted by, a respectable shoemaker, who commenced it at first for the supply of his own professional demands, and now he is able to supply the trade to a considerable extent. He manufactures annually about L.200 worth of as good leather as any that is made, and bids fair to form as good an establishment as any in the country.

There has been occasionally a manufacture of kelp on the shore at Burnmouth; but it is not very productive, else it would be more regularly prosecuted.

None of the manufactories of this parish have been complained of, as injurious to the health or morals of the people employed, and there is now less cause of such complaints, owing to the number of hands being reduced.

V.—Parochial Economy.

Village.—A fair has long been held twice a year in the village of Ayton. But since regular merchants and shopkeepers have established themselves in every town and village throughout the country, these fairs have often dwindled into mere erections of a few hucksters' stalls. Where this is the case, they yield little or no advantage to any one, are not frequented for purposes of traffic, and ought to be discontinued, especially as they not unfrequently lead to unnecessary or excessive drinking, and to unprofitable and hurtful associations among the youth of both sexes. There are no prevailing trades or handicrafts here, except such as are necessary in all agricultural districts. Blacksmiths are in greater demand than formerly, owing to farming implements being now made chiefly of iron. Of late years there has been a greater

number than usual of wrights and masons, from the following cause : Since the great London road which passes through this parish was altered, the proprietor of Ayton estate has wisely availed himself of the circumstance, to grant feus for building on the new line of road. This arrangement has put it in his power to get rid of the old houses at the upper end of the village, which trenched close upon the mansion-house. It has also led to the formation of an almost entirely new village, distinguished alike by the superiority, regularity, and general cleanliness of the new dwellings. Nor is it unlikely that it will eventually lead to the reduction of the number of paupers, many of whom occupied the old hovels which have been recently pulled down, and some of whom still linger in those which remain. A few handsome villas have lately been, and more are likely to be, erected in the extremities of the village. These already seem to have the effect of drawing respectable inhabitants to the place. As a useful substitute for the fairs, a monthly cattle market has very recently been established in Ayton, and is likely to succeed remarkably well,—this being a good central situation for the purpose.

Means of Communication.—The means of communication are here ample. There is a post-office in Ayton, and a daily post. The London road, always in the highest state of repair, passes through the village, the centre of the parish; and another road, not inferior in quality, leads from Eyemouth to Ayton, and into the interior of the county,—each bisecting the parish nearly at right angles to the other. On the former road two London coaches ply daily, viz. the Mail and the Union, each with four horses,—and another with two horses, also daily, betwixt Edinburgh and Newcastle. There are four good stone bridges, one within, and the other three leading into the parish. The first is at Ayton over the Eye, upon the London road, handsomely ornamented with embrasures. The next is near Eyemouth, over the same stream. The other two cross the Ale Water, one near the junction of the two streams, leading to Eyemouth, and the other on the road leading from Ayton to Coldingham. A ruinous bridge over the Eye, (which formed part of a very old road to London, and in the use of which as a kirk road, the parishioners every Sabbath day ran the risk of losing their lives,) fell down a few years ago, fortunately without doing hurt.

A boat-harbour has been erected lately at Burnmouth, strong enough to resist the heavy seas of the German ocean. The expense of erection was L.1600, three-fourths of which were supplied by the commissioners for the fisheries, and the other fourth was contributed by the fishermen and others. It seems to afford good security to the boats; but the fishermen are of opinion, that an additional land pier also is necessary to complete the security, by contracting the mouth of the harbour, and breaking the swell of the sea.

Ecclesiastical State.— The church, although nearly half a mile from the village, and a quarter from the manse, is quite central for the parish, and is scarcely three miles distant from the remotest habitation. It stands on a romantic spot on the banks of the Eye, nearly opposite to Ayton House, in a situation of sweet seclusion. As already noticed, it is supposed to have been founded in the 12th century. Besides the present place of worship, consisting in part of the ancient walls, there still remain entire those of the south transept, all beautifully mantled with ivy, and now consecrated a second time, by the place having been converted into the burying-

ground of the Ayton family, and adorned with appropriate shrubs and flowers by the pious care of the surviving relatives. In this portion of the ruins there is a stone window, with circular, and not pointed arches, which may be a guide to the antiquarian as to the age of the erection. There is likewise remaining, the gable of the chancel, the sidewalls of which have been assisted in their decay, by the sacrilegious hands of plunderers, for the sake of the sandstone. In the gable of the present church, there is a large circular arch, nearly the whole width of the wall, but now built up, which must have formed the spacious communication with the chancel, and of course wide enough to admit the grand processions to and from the altar in Catholic times. The hewn stone of the walls, appears, from its quality, to have been brought from the sandstone quarry by the sea side at Greystonlees; and this perhaps may account for the church being built on the south side of the river. Its original dimensions comprehending the external ruins, had afterwards been contracted within narrower limits, corresponding with the actual population,—probably at the time when it was converted into a Protestant church. Up wards of twenty years ago, it underwent repairs and an enlargement, by the addition of a northern aisle and steeple. Its capacity was thus better adapted to the increased population, but it would even then, (and still more now,) have been too small, were it not for the accommodation supplied to the redundant population by the two meeting houses in the village. These latter have also afforded similar accommodation to the growing population of the surrounding parishes. It would have been ultimately a saving to the heritors to have built a new church at the time of the last enlargement. The present although still in pretty good repair, will not last so long as a new one, and when repairs are next called for, it will probably require to be rebuilt and further enlarged. In its present state, it may contain nearly 500 sitters. None of the seats are free, except the communion benches, one or two of which are left for use in the middle passage, but seldom required. The pews are the property of the heritors for themselves, their tenants, and servants. A few seats were given by the heritors to the kirk-session, to be let for the benefit of the poor; but for these little or no rent is received. The feuars and others who have no legal accommodation would, no doubt, obtain liberty to erect a gallery for themselves in the west end of the church, but they have hitherto preferred being indebted to the indulgence of such seat-holders as have spare room, or they occupy the seats of such tenants and farm-servants as attend the meeting-houses.

The manse was rebuilt nearly forty years ago, and is agreeably situated on the banks of the Eye. It has since at intervals undergone a few repairs, by the last of which, further accommodation has been secured, by dividing the attic story into apartments, which had been left unfinished at the time of building. Good new offices were lately erected of sufficient extent for the present incumbent, who has no farming operations. They would have been further enlarged if required. The garden and grounds were laid out with great taste by the former incumbent, and water has been brought into the house by the present.

The glebe contains 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres, and has been let, till lately, at a yearly rent of L.38.—The stipend consists of sixteen chalders, half meal and half barley, convertible at the fiars prices of the county, which, as a matter of equity, ought to be struck twice in the

year, instead of once. On an average of the last seven years it has amounted to L.241, 4s. 10 ⁸/₁₂d. There are also L.10 for communion elements, and a small fish tithe; the latter is ill paid, owing to the alleged poverty of the fishermen, who are otherwise an unusually respectable body of men, partly belonging to the Established church and partly Dissenters, and both in their dress and domestic equipments, betraying no symptoms of poverty.

The dissenting chapels were formerly Burgher and Antiburgher, but are now in the New Associate communion. Their ministers' stipends arise from the seat rents. Neither of them are said to exceed L.100. The ministers have also a free house and garden. The number of families attending the Established church is 180; of families in the parish attending the chapels of Dissenters and Seceders, 145. The average number of communicants in the Established church is 360. The yearly average of the ordinary church collections is upwards of L.20. The average of occasional church collections for religious purposes is between L.3 and L.4, perhaps once or twice in the year.

There is a small auxiliary to the county Bible Society in this parish, consisting of individuals belonging to the Established church and Dissenters. The average of their yearly contributions is about L.6 or L.7.

Education.— There is one parish school,—the teacher of which has the maximum allowance, and an excellent dwelling-house and garden. There are likewise five private schools, depending on school fees, and one supported by an allowance from the lady of the chief landed proprietor. The branches generally taught are English, reading, writing, and arithmetic. But some in the parish school are taught the higher branches, as Latin, French, geography, &c. Every branch in the parish school is well taught, as indicated by the recent enlargement of the school-room, and a great accession to the number of scholars, rendering it needful to have an assistant. There are a few boarders residing in the schoolmaster's house, and a likelihood of more, when the superior qualifications of the teacher, the fitness of the house, and the healthiness of the situation are better known. The school fees are much on a par with those of other parishes, varying according to the nature of the branches taught. On an average of the last three years they amount to L.84 a-year. The teacher has also L.30 a-year as clerk to the heritors and session. In the private schools, the fees are generally somewhat lower than in the parochial. There are very few in the parish, either old or young, who cannot read and write; and as the children are kept pretty regularly at school, and the fees, with few exceptions, readily paid, it may be inferred that the people in general are alive to the benefits of education.

Literature.—There are two small subscription libraries in Ayton, which commenced within these ten or twelve years. One consists of 500 volumes, which, although suited to general readers, is not very extensively resorted to, but would be more so, if it had not excluded religious books. The other consists of more than 300 volumes, and is calculated to supply the defect of the former, being better adapted to the entertainment and instruction of the labouring classes and rising generation. It was founded somewhat later than the former, by a benevolent gentleman in the neighbourhood, and assisted by the donations of others: it is thus more accessible to

the poor, and although intended as an itinerating library with others founded in neighbouring parishes by the same gentleman, no interchange of books has as yet taken place amongst them.

Friendly Society, &c.— There is a friendly society in Ayton supported chiefly by the older people, but not very flourishing, as the younger generation are losing the spirit of independence, becoming less saving in their habits, and relying more on parochial aid for supplying the wants of old age.— There is also a temperance society lately established here, consisting almost exclusively of people who were previously sober in their habits. There is no evidence as yet of its having had the effect of converting a single drunkard. But it must not be denied, that it may have given a further improvement to the sober habits of the former class; and possibly, it may have prevented some of them from acquiring contrary habits.—A savings' bank was established some years ago in Eyemouth, of which it was expected that many in the neighbouring parishes would have availed themselves; but the same cause has prevented the success of this establishment, which has already been assigned for the falling off of the friendly society.—There is no Dispensary here, but the poor receive medical advice at home, at the expense of the parish.

Poor and Parochial Funds.— The number of persons receiving parochial aid is between 50 and 60. The average weekly allowance to each is 2s. 6d. The parish, including heritors and their tenants, is regularly assessed for the support of the poor. The average amount of yearly assessments is L.400. The heritors have long allowed the whole of the church collections, together with the money arising from the use of the mortcloth, and from proclamations of marriage, to be laid out by the kirk-session in giving temporary aid to poor not upon the roll, and in paying a small fee to the clerks and officers of synod, presbytery, and kirk-session. If any money remains at the end of the year, it is laid out in coals to the poor, generally after new year; and sometimes, when there is a deficit for this latter purpose, an extraordinary collection is appointed in the church to make it up. The farmers and others are occasionally so kind as to drive the coals. There is no mortified or endowed money in this parish for the benefit of the poor; but occasionally small donations have been given or bequeathed for distribution.

This parish labours under a singular disadvantage, owing to the village of Ayton being the first town in Scotland on the great London road. Crowds of poor families and individuals, originally belonging to Scotland, having acquired no parish settlement in England are daily sent down through the English parishes, in cart loads, many of them unable to walk, and thrown into Ayton, as though it were the limit of their destination. When they happen to have regular passes to any of the eastern counties of Scotland, they are moved forward at the expense of this county. But when, as often happens, either from carelessness, or the intentional mistake of people interested in transporting them, they are sent down by the east instead of the west road, this county refuses to be at any expense in their further conveyance. So, from pure humanity and dire necessity, the parish of Ayton must remove the most helpless of them, else they might lie and die in our streets. Besides these, there is now a vast number of travelling poor, a great proportion of whom are Irish, passing north and south daily and hourly on this road, who beset the manse and

schoolmaster's house sometimes in formidable bands, conceiving they have a legal claim for aid by the way. Many of these are evidently labouring under disease, sickness, and want,—requiring both relief and medical assistance. Such persons occasionally die here, and are buried at the expense of the parish, and sometimes leave to it as a legacy a destitute orphan, whose proper parish cannot be found. There ought to be a joint fund among all the parishes of each county, more especially of this border county, where the evil is greatest, to defray such expenses, and not to suffer the burden to lie upon those parishes whose particular locality exposes them to such a hardship. This multitude of travelling poor indicates the depressed state of the country at large, and it need scarcely be asked, "whether there is any disposition among the poor to refrain from seeking parochial relief, and whether they consider it degrading." In this neighbourhood, as well as in most other parts of the low country at least, the pride of independence has become almost extinct.

Lock-up-house, &c.—Some years ago a lock-up-house was built in the village, which is occasionally occupied for a night by unruly vagrants and others. They are generally dismissed in the morning. But there would be fewer calls for this accommodation if there were fewer accommodations of a different description for the thoughtless and intemperate. In this parish there are no less than nine public houses, whereas at most, one or two respectable inns would be quite sufficient for all the purposes of travelling or business. The combined effects of so many facilities for drinking are anything but favourable to the morals of the people.

Fuel.—Coals are supplied to this parish in abundance both by sea and land. Forth and Newcastle coals come in at Eyemouth, and are sold out of the ship at 10s. and 12s. per ton, and may be carted to Ayton for a couple of shillings more. They may also be brought by land from the other side of the Tweed at nearly the same price. There was a prospect renewed lately of coals being wrought along the coast, about a few miles to the south-east of this, but the stratum not being found of sufficient thickness to encourage the erection of machinery, the project has again, for the present, been abandoned. About eight miles northward peats may be procured, but they are here in very little demand.

Miscellaneous Observations.

The great depression in the price of agricultural produce has, of late years, materially retarded improvements, which the landlord and tenants have shewn a laudable ambition to promote, if the times afforded encouragement. Some years ago the chief proprietor invited a few individuals, with their families, to settle on a moorish land belonging to him, about eight miles to the north, called Ayton common, said to be a part of this parish, although surrounded by that of Coldingham. With a view to improve the land, he gave them a grant of it for a very small acknowledgment. But it does not appear as yet to have been turned to any very good account. The principal improvements in the parish consist in the alteration of the London road, to avoid the long ascents at Ayton-hill on the south, and at Pease Bridge on the north; and the consequent new-modelling of the village of Ayton;—the alteration of the road leading from Eye mouth to the interior of the country by the south of Ayton, to avoid the

steep ascent at Millerton-hill,—and the alteration of another road in the parish leading from Berwick to Eyemouth, by which the great descent at Blaikies has been avoided. It was at one time in agitation to extend this latter road along the coast, as forming a better line for the London road, and less liable to obstructions from snow, than one more inland.—A moral improvement has been wrought by the complete suppression of foreign smuggling, through the establishment of the Preventive Service along the coast. There is, however, a system of smuggling more demoralizing, if not also more hurtful to the revenue, still carried on, all along the English border, in which Ayton has borne a share,—namely, the illicit traffic in Scotch whisky. This traffic, on account of the high duty paid for Scotch whisky in England, holds out a strong temptation to carry it over the borders at all points, and by all sorts of artful conveyances,—a practice which has not hitherto been prevented by all the vigilance of the excise.—Perhaps the only and the most equitable way to put an effectual stop to it, is to equalize the duties on both sides of the Tweed.

July 1834.