THE PAST AND PRESENT OF ABERDEENSHIRE.

Reverend William Paul MD Manse of Banchory Devenick August 1881
Published by Lewis Smith & Son 1881

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The following little work was originally suggested by a passage in the Introduction to one of the Editions of Dean Ramsay's Reminiscences, in which he says, "I have recorded the following Remarks, by way of experiment, hoping that it might form a precedent or example for others to take up the question of changes amongst us, and state the result of their observation." I have found that he who follows the Reverend Dean must do so at a great distance, and by a different route. To say nothing of his advanced age, which carried him back into bygone times, his profession and position in society brought him into contact with the Nobility and Gentry at a period far different from the present, while his acute observation and keen sense of the ludicrous, his strong Scottish predilections, warmth of heart, and geniality of manners, peculiarly fitted him for collecting and recording his reminiscences of Scottish life and character.

He had, moreover, advantages, particularly in the later editions of his work, which no followers of his can possess to the same extent, in that, as he himself says, he was Supplied with illustrations of the habits and manners described by him in the form of anecdotes from Scotchmen in all parts of the world. By this means, his work in its later editions was greatly enriched and that of any follower in his wake impoverished in like proportion. It may indeed be said, that the best Scottish sayings and anecdotes, which had been floating about the country for ages, became, as it were, stereotyped as his property. Yet not withstanding, there is still some unoccupied ground for others, of which I shall avail myself not by writing a collection of anecdotes, but by illustrating the manners, habits, and customs of a past generation in contrast with those of the present.

Dean Ramsay says, that amusement is not the chief object of his work, and his readers have been much indebted for the information and benefit conferred upon them ; but there cannot be a doubt that the amusement provided has not been less appreciated or less beneficial than the information furnished them. We know from his authority that there is a time to laugh, as well as a time to weep, and that "a merry heart does good like a medicine." We know that laughter excited upon suitable occasions , by pure and harmless humour, is a relief to an over burdened mind and heart, and is actually a medicine, and a very effectual one, when others fail. A kind and merciful God has opened up many sources of happiness in our path through life, as cords of love to bind us to Himself, and has furnished us with a faculty denied to the inferior animals expressive of our enjoyment. Smiles and laughter heighten the beauty of the human countenance, especially when expressive of the enjoyment of a pure and happy heart. Accordingly, the good Dean thought that he was not acting a part unsuitable to his holy profession when, by exciting the mirth, he heightened the joys, and alleviated the sorrows of his readers. Few of the clergy in this country, of any denomination, can, with a good grace, throw a stone at the Dean for publishing his reminiscences of Scottish life and character, as he has acknowledged his obligations to them , for the greater number of those published by him. To myself they have been a great source of amusement, as well as to the friends to whom I have related them. One of my neighbours, when I told him any one of them which particularly pleased him, used to say, "Oh, Doctor, that's a most beautiful antidote."

Dean Ramsay has delineated, in a very correct and graphic way, the general peculiarities of life and character, which distinguish the inhabitants of the "land of Cakes" from those of the "land of Roast Beef." There are, however, distinctive peculiarities by which certain counties of Scotland are sharply marked out, such as climate and soil, hill and glen, and the energy, intelligence, dialect, manners and the customs of the inhabitants. Of these, Aberdeenshire deserves prominent notice, and there arc reminiscences of past times of that county, which the Aberdonians would not wish to pass away; and it is to be hoped that they will welcome the efforts of a chronicler, recording reminiscences of the past still lingering in the memories of the aged inhabitants of the county. Many of the habits and usages, and much of the language of the people, have now become of the things that are past. The young of the present day, especially the children of the upper class, do not understand many of the words which were continually in the mouths of their fathers and grandfathers. The facilities of intercourse with other parts of the country, and other parts of the world, educational advantages, and the extension of general information by means of the public press, now accessible to all classes of the community, have contributed, with other causes, to the effecting of great changes in the language, intelligence, and general condition of the people. The same causes have led to the disappearance of notions and customs formerly prevalent, relics of ages of ignorance and superstition. Some of these notions and customs, however, were prevalent not very long ago. A neighbour of mine, some years ago, met a boy with a spade in one hand, and a piece of cloth, with something rolled up in it, in the other, and said to him, " Whaur are ye gauin', Jock ?" To which Jock replied, " I'm gauin' to the kirkyard to bury my thoom." On another occasion; at a funeral in the churchyard of this parish, a small deal box, firmly nailed, which was turned up among the mould of the grave, attracted the attention of those present, who could not imagine what

it contained. The chief mourner, on seeing their perplexity, gave it a kick with the point of his shoe, and said "That's my fader's fit."

Nothing, half a century ago, used to be more striking and amusing to our countrymen in the South and West of Scotland than the peculiarities of the Aberdeenshire dialect. From this circumstance they fancied, till they knee us better, that ours was a semi-barbarous dialect, and that we, as compared with themselves, were semi-barbarous people. Accordingly when, many years ago, any of us visited Edinburgh, no sooner did we open our mouths to ask a question at a stranger, than he stared at us before answering, saying, "You'll be frae Aeberdeen awa?" We on our part did not fail to observe peculiarities also in the Edinburgh dialect equally striking to us; and, after all, it is just a matter of taste whether it is preferable to say "fa' tu" or "fa' tee" for fall to, "mune " or " meen" for moon, "spune" or "speen" for spoon. The late Dr. Gillan, Minister of Inchinnan, on his return from a visit to Aberdeen, many years ago, jocularly remarked to his friends, on their asking how he had enjoyed his visit and how he had been treated by the Aberdonians, "The barbarians showed me no little kindness." It is true that our dialect is different from that of all the counties to the south of us. It is also true that difference of dialect is an indication of difference of habits and character. The language of a people is influenced by climate, innate vigour, mode of life, difficulty or case in providing for life's comforts and wants, and isolation from, or inter- course with strangers. The same causes influence the manners, habits, and energy of the people in different districts of the same country. This fact is strikingly illustrated in the case of the nations of ancient Greece, where, the broad and hard sounds of the Doric dialect indicated the Northern origin, energy, and vigour of the Doric race, and the comparative vigour of the highland district of Thessaly, originally occupied by them, as contrasted with the soft and gliding vowel combinations of the polished and comparatively effeminate Ionians, who inhabited the fertile and relaxing country of Ionia, in Asia Minor. In like manner a connection may be traced between the hard and vigorous dialect of the Aberdonians, and their pithy and vigorous character. And it may be seen how soil and climate, which yield the fruits of the Earth only by means of great skill and industry, influence the habits and energy of a naturally vigorous and industrious population. Many parts of the Aberdeenshire of half a century ago could scarcely be recognised now but by their grand features of river and mountain. In my own parish, during that period, immense tracts of barren land and extensive mosses, from which the town of Aberdeen was supplied for centuries with Peats and other fuel, have been reclaimed, through the spirit and energy of both proprietors and tenants, and by means of newly invented agricultural implements, and are cultivated by new and improved systems of husbandry. The mosses which, but a comparatively few years ago, presented a bleak and dreary aspect now bear, in Autumn, rich crops of waving corn and other agricultural productions in their seasons; and the same change has taken place in the waste and rugged moors which formerly presented such a dismal prospect to the traveller on the public road between Aberdeen and Stonehaven.

By means of its educational institutions great changes have taken place in regard to the intelligence and character of the people. The University of Aberdeen copes successfully with the best institutions of the kind in Scotland, and sends out men, even from the humbler spheres of life, who take a fair share of the highest honours and rewards open, in the kingdom, for competitive trial ; men who at one time had as little prospect of taking on a polish as the granite from their native quarries had, till the days of the ingenious and enterprising Mr. Macdonald of Aberdeen. I fear I have said too much about the Aberdonians in deprecation of any lurking prejudices that may still exist against them; I have done so out of an allowable partiality which I cherish towards them, akin to what a fond parent Cherishes towards his own children, and, like partial parents, I am sensible that I have spoken too much about them, for which I hope to be forgiven. My readers, however, will hear them much spoken of, not only on account of their educational distinctions - they will hear- much of them in the Smithfield, Leadenhall, and other famous butcher markets of London. I remember when poor wretched cattle were ,driven up from Scotland, worn out by their long and wearisome journey, to be fed off in the rich pastures of England before they could be shown in the London and other English meat markets. But now, at the Lord Mayor's and other London dinners, it is not the roast beef of old England, but the roast beef of Aberdeenshire that is extolled. Within my memory a great portion of the lower orders, especially in country parishes, did not eat butchers' meat from one year's end to the other. It is now very different; and, it must be confessed, the lower orders "have lost a great deal of their relish for brose."

The sketches to be given of the manners, habits, and condition of the Aberdeenshire folks will be very slight, my object being to amuse and instruct without wearying my readers; and my desire that the mirth of heart produced may do them good like a medicine, that my sketches may be welcome to them in the time to laugh, that they may do good to some and harm to none.

STATE OF RELIGION

THE PAST AND PRESENT OF ABERDEENSHIRE.

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During the latter part of the preceding and the earlier part of the present century the clergy of Aberdeenshire and of the adjoining counties were exemplary in their lives, and in the discharge of their clerical duties, and were, as a body, respected by their parishioners. In addition to their ordinary .....

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A ludicrous thing happened, when a man well on in years brought all his family, old and young, to be vaccinated. It having appeared that he had not been vaccinated himself, he was urged by the Doctor to submit to the operation first himself, but he refused, being apparently afraid of the pain. After all the children had been operated upon, he was again urged to submit, upon which he said to the eldest boy " Wast sair, Jock ?" " Na, nae verra," said the boy. "Weel," said the father, "I wad nae care muckle to tak' a scrat o't mysel." As he was getting old the Doctor's hand got tremulous, and he devolved upon me the duty of vaccination, which I discharged till the Vaccination Act was passed, which made statutory provision for its discharge by others.

Dr. Morison also contributed liberally to the funds which were raised for the endowment of the Church of Portlethen, for the erection of a new church and manse, and the reclamation of the barren ground, in which the manse was situated, for a glebe. This has been a great convenience to that extensive district.

During what was all but a famine, in the year 1800 (I think it was), Dr. Morison bought meal from other quarters, and lodged it in a granary in the neighbourhood, and the people who were in want were assembled and had it doled out with the Doctor's own hand from time to time; many being thereby saved from actual starvation.

Dr. Morison's greatest and last act of philanthropy in his parish was the erection, in 1839, of the foot suspension bridge over the Dee, which now unites the two divisions of the parish. Previous to its erection the only public means of communication between the one side of the river and the other was a parish boat, which was Only used On Sundays. It could not, however, always be depended upon, as the river was often impassable owing to ice and heavy floods. The total cost of the bridge was about £1400, and, with the exception of a contribution of £30 from Mr. Menzies of Pitfodels, which only sufficed for making the pathway between the South end of the bridge and the turnpike road, it was wholly defrayed by Dr. Morison. He bequeathed; moreover, a sum of money for keeping it in repair, which had accumulated to such an amount as to enable the trustees to lay out about £300 a short time ago for thoroughly re-painting and repairing it. In the circumstances I have mentioned I am disappointed to hear, from time to time, some of the classes who usually ride in their carriages, asking me, on passing the bridge, in a tone of complaint, "Why didn't Dr. Morison when he was about the thing build a bridge for carriages ?" and those who do not ride in these vehicles inquiring in an equally complaining tone, "I say, Doctor, fat for didna Dr. Morison mak' his briggy for caerts ?"

I cannot doubt my readers will be pleased with the information I have given them about this philanthropic, generous, and Christian minded man.

I now introduce my readers to my maternal ....

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... pedlar who used to take up his quarters at the Manse of Alves, about seven miles from Elgin, generally making his appearance on a Saturday evening, and leaving on the Monday morning following. Mr. M`Bean, the minister, was a good man, but somewhat vain of his preaching powers. The pedlar at the commencement of his visits attended the parish church, but soon ceased to do so, and went to hear a seceding minister at Elgin, returning to the manse in the evening. Mr. M`Bean was in consequence hurt at the want of appreciation of his, pulpit services, and asked his guest one day why, while he lived in his house and enjoyed his hospitality, he did not as at first attend on his ministrations, enquiring what fault he had to find with his preaching, and what was the attraction in the Elgin minister which induced him to travel so far to hear him. " Oh," said Donald , " yon's a gran' minister, sir, a terrible gran' minister. Fan ye speak d the evil one ye ca' him the Teevil, jist's gin ye war fear't at him ; but yon man ca's him the Divvel, an he disna care a pawpee for him."

FUNERAL USAGES.

When I came to this parish, and for a considerable time afterwards, the corpse, immediately after death, was laid

on a table, two lighted candles were set beside it, and a plate with salt upon it. Some of the relatives or neighbours sat up in the apartment where the corpse lay the whole of each night in succession till the day of interment, and the parties relieved one another till that took place. On the occasion of the lyke-wake, a portion of the Bible was generally read and psalms were sung, and as there were refreshments both in meat and drink, it not unfrequently happened, when the watchers were not religiously disposed, that the decorum necessary on such occasions was not observed. It was not considered respectful to the memory of a deceased friend if a quantity of strong drink was not consumed at his funeral - a mark of respect which was often too faithfully paid to him In consequence the guests often became intoxicated. I never saw a case of intoxication at a funeral; from what follows, however, it will be seen that a supply of strong drink was offered sufficient to exhilarate, if not to intoxicate, those who partook of all that was offered them. I well remember the first funeral which I attended in this parish upwards of fifty years ago. I was told that the hour of meeting was eleven. When I went to the place I learned that the guests were to meet in the barn, on entering which, a glass of whisky was offered to me before taking my seat. The seats consisted of deals, supported by turf or blocks of wood, running along the walls, all around the barn. There was a deal table in the middle, upon which were placed one plate filled with clay pipes, and another with coarse tobacco shred down and ready for use, and a candle burning for lighting the pipes. This candle, and the light admitted by the door, were the only means by which the apartment was lighted. The guests came straggling in for about an hour, and, as each entered, whisky was presented to him; and as he passed by the table, he took up a pipe, filled it from the cut tobacco, lighted it at the candle, took his seat, and began to smoke. When the guests were all assembled, two men came in, one with a corn sieve containing oat cakes and cheese ; the other with a pailful of small beer in the one hand, and a drinking jug in the other. All having partaken of this refreshment, the smoking commenced again with renewed vigour. About half an hour later, a glass of whisky and a piece of plain biscuit were presented, and partaken of by every guest. After this the smoking recommenced and continued till another service was brought in and partaken of, consisting of a glass of rum, and a better description of biscuit called bun; and lastly a glass of wine, with what used to be termed sugar biscuits. Up to this time little was spoken, but after this last service many of the guests became loquacious, and, forgetting the solemnity of the occasion, talked as gaily as if it were a baptism or marriage feast. I remember a conversation between two old mem of the following tenor. After having filled his pipe, the one said to the other, "A'thing's terrible dear now-a-days, Sanners; its an unco little smite o' tobacco that ye get noo for a bawbee; I've Seen fan ye wad hae gotten a piece for a bawbee as lang's a fup tow," i.e., a whip lash. "But fat was the maetter," said his neighbour, "fou muckle ye got for a bawbee, gin ye had na the bawbee to buy't wi." After the lapse of a short period one of the people having charge came in and invited any of the company, who wished it, to go and see the corpse before the coffin lid was screwed down. A portion of the guests went accordingly; and, when all was ready, the nearest relations, male and female, carried the bier for a few paces, and then consigned it to other, the company relieving one another till the body reached the grave. It was melancholy to witness the contrast between the sorrow and anguish of nearest and dearest relatives and the apathy and exuberant spirits manifested by many of the guests through the exhilarating influence of the funeral refreshments. I never went to a funeral again till a short time before the body was lifted. Such were the usages in times past, but at present, and for a long time bygone, funerals here have been conducted with great propriety.

Drinking usages at funerals existed in a neighbouring parish longer than anywhere else in this quarter, and the late minister, in consequence, soon after his settlement, with the view of establishing a more seemly order of things, called a meeting of his parishioners, and induced them to frame salutary regulations on the subject for future observance. The chief of these were that the minister should always receive an invitation to be present, and that the refreshments offered to the company should be limited to a single glass of spirits to each person. These rules were, I believe, afterwards strictly observed, except on one occasion, when a floater of wood on the Dee, whose wife, Nanny Skene, had died, thinking it disrespectful to her memory that the moderation elsewhere practised should be observed at her funeral, resolved to exercise a more abundant hospitality, and, with that view, to relieve himself of the restraint of the minister's presence by not inviting him. The minister, however, on hearing what was proposed, went uninvited. After offering the company one glass of spirits each, which was the quantity allowed, the husband came several times in succession into the place of meeting, with a glass and a large old-fashioned bottle with whisky in it, under his arm, and, after having set the guests an example by quaffing off a glass himself, vainly by all the arguments he could use, attempted to make the others do the same, and as the last and strongest inducement he could think of, he said, " O, lads tak' jist ae ither gless, it's nae ilka day that Nanny Skene dees."

RESURRECTIONISTS

Until provision was made by Parliament for procuring subjects for dissection, students of medicine, or others hired by them, were in the habit of exhuming bodies frozen the retired and peaceful churchyards in the neighbourhood of Aberdeen. This was so abhorrent to the people's feelings, that they used every possible means for its prevention.

Watch-houses were erected in some of the churchyards ; and fire-arms and other weapons were used in protecting from disturbance by the resurrectionists as the students were called, ...

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AGRICULTURE - THE PAST AND THE PRESENT.

Agriculture has reached a high pitch of perfection during the present century. It is in this branch of industry, especially, that the inhabitants of this country have given proofs of their shrewdness and indomitable perseverance. They have achieved marvellous triumphs over a naturally cold climate, and for the most part a rugged and ungenial soil. In 1792, when the statistical account of Scotland was prepared on the suggestion of that philanthropist, the late Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster, in many districts a comparatively small portion of the land was under tillage ; and the thorough cultivation of waste land, owing to the amount of drainage which was necessary, both in main and furrow drains, was only accomplished in later times at an enormous cost both of money and labour. From the circumstance that the greater part of the land in Scotland was held under entail, the proprietors had formerly no way of raising money for improving their estates, and hence the reclamation of land had, for the most part, to be done by the tenants themselves under improving leases. But the results of the tenants' labours were very unsatisfactory, and, where much had to be done in clearing off stones and cutting drains, the work was so imperfectly performed that much had to be done over again. It was not until the landlords, aided by the Government drainage grant, themselves laid their shoulders to the work, that the great results, atpresent conspicuous, were manifested.

Since the year 1792 the County of Aberdeen has been beautified by great additional plantations of wood; the fields have been laid out and enclosed by substantial fences; and the farm houses and farm steadings vastly improved in structure, accommodation, and comfort. By means of the shelter from wood, and the withdrawal of the surface water from the wet land, which, by chilling the atmosphere during a great part of the year, had prevented early tilling, early sowing, and consequently early reaping, the climate has been modified and greatly changed. The soil, moreover, has been so subdued and cheered by the luxury of the home and foreign manures laid upon it that the crops are greatly more abundant in quantity and superior in quality, and the sowing and reaping are not far behind that of the earliest districts in Scotland. The Aberdeenshire farmers are wise men, and recognise and act upon the maxim of Virgil, *justissima tellus*, which may be freely translated "If You don't give the land anything, it will not give you anything." Strangers passing through this county may still think it bleak and unsightly. It is not, however, a county in which they are likely to starve ; and, if we can satisfy them in no other way, we can do so by contrast, as the Highlander did to the Englishman, who complained of the roughness of Marshal Wade's highland roads, "Had you seen these roads before they were made, you'd have held up your hands and blessed Marshal Wade."

In illustration of what I have said of the great change which has taken place on the face of the County of Aberdeen since the first publication of the Statistical Account of Scotland, I take, for example, the parish of Skene, the Eastern boundary of which reaches to within about five miles of the town of Aberdeen. It is thus described by the minister of that parish in the Statistical Account of it in 1792 :-

"On the lands belonging to the proprietor of Skene only, have trees been hitherto raised. No planting has been done till of late, and even that to no great extent, nor improvements indeed of any kind, owing to invincible obstructions. Considering the great quantity of waste land in the parish, fit only for bearing trees, the neglect of cultivating them is much to be regretted. Among the disadvantages of the parish are to be numbered its difficulty of improvement (being in general full of rocks, and a considerable part of it wet and spongy), the small progress that agriculture hath hitherto made, and I may add the quantity of moss in the parish." Now are to be seen the barren land cleared of stones and cultivated; the mosses drained, reclaimed, and covered, in the season, with waving crops of yellow com or other produce ; the ground surrounding the beautiful loch fringed with wood or cultivated to the very edge ; proprietors' seats erected, and the policies about them tastefully laid out ; and no lack of wood in the parish, both profitable and ornamental. It is worth one's while to travel some distance to get such a magnificent view as may be had from the seat of my excellent friend the Laird of Easter Skene, who has done much to the cultivating and beautifying of the district in which he lives. The same thing may be said of many other parishes in the county of Aberdeen, and of none perhaps more truly than my own.

The following is an account of the state of agriculture in the end of last century, in the parish of Tarves, atpresent one of the richest and best cultivated parishes in Aberdeenshire, taken from the second statistical account of that parish by my late friend Mr. Knox the minister, written in the year 1845 :-

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"Seventy years ago agriculture in this parish, as generally throughout the county of Aberdeen, was in a truly wretched condition. The stagnation of water on the low grounds utterly precluded tillage ; while the arable lands were over-run with noxious weeds, and chilled from November to May by innumerable land springs. The cultivated ground was divided into what was called infield and outfield. The former received all the manure of the farm, and was perpetually in crop. The latter consisted of what was called rig- and baulk, that is, of arable ridges, between every two of which there was an interjacent space termed a baulk, which the plough never disturbed. The arable part was cropped five years in succession, and then permitted to lie in pasture for the same number of years to recruit its exhausted powers of production. Green crops, with the exception of a few potatoes and coleworts ("green kail") in the gardens of the farmers and peasantry, were unknown. The implements of husbandry and the mode of using them were equally rude. Two men, with ten or twelve oxen yoked in a team, barely accomplished the work which one man, with two horses in a plough, can atpresent perform without difficulty. The horses employed in agriculture were diminutive in size, and used merely for burden, never for draught. They carried out manure, and home peats in panniers or creels, and the meal to be sold was conveyed to market in sacks, laid across the horses' backs. Carts and wheel carriages were only to be found in the possession of landed proprietors."

Perhaps many of my readers have never heard of the old Scotch proverb, "Hantle o' whistlin' an' little red lan'," which is equivalent to "much labour and little work done," and perhaps some of those who have heard it, and who do know its meaning, do not know its origin. It was usual for the goadsman who drove the team to whistle slow airs, frequently psalm tunes, to the oxen when Ploughing. This music, which suited their pace, is said to have stimulated them to work with greater spirit and steadiness than the goad, and when it failed it was said that there was a "hantle o' whistlin' an' little red lan'."

Such was the state of matters in Aberdeenshire and the adjoining counties a century ago, and for some years later. In the year 1792, when the first statistical account was written, things had begun to mend in many parishes, but not in all.

In Tullynessle, for example, where agriculture, in all its branches, is now as well understood as in any parish in Aberdeenshire, it was in a very backward state.

It appears from the statistical account of 1792 that at that date there were no turnips or rye grass seeds sown in the parish, and the Reporter says, "that the condition of the people would be improved, inter alia, if the proprietors would furnish them at first with turnip and grass seeds." The ploughing was then done on the small farms ploughs "drawn by small steers, or sometimes by an inter-mixture of cows and horses. The larger farms are ploughed by eight or ten small oxen;" and carts had been introduced only about thirty years before the date of the report.

On the subject of prices, wages, &c., the Reporter says It may without exaggeration, be asserted that prices are double, if not triple, of what they were about thirty years ago. About that time an ox sold at twenty shillings, which now costs at least five pounds ; sheep, three to four shillings for the best wedders, now the common price is from six shillings to ten and sixpence; two shillings and sixpence to three shillings for the best ewes and lambs, now they fetch from five to seven shillings or more. Hens then sold for threepence, now sixpence; eggs, a penny the fourteen, now twopence the dozen."

The ordinary wages of male farm servants then were five pounds, of females two pounds to two . pounds ten shillings a year. The first horseman's wages at last feeing market in Aberdeen were £17 to £18, a half year, with food in addition, and the second horseman had from £15 to £16 a half year with food.

The ordinary wages given to labourers when hired by the day were 6d.; tailors 5d. or 6d.; wrights 8d. ; masons Is. 2d. ; all inclusive of victuals.

On the subject of cattle, the Reporter proceeds: "The common breed of black cattle in this parish is a middling or rather small sized hardy kind, weighing from eighteen to thirty stone Amsterdam. They improve very much when carried into richer pasture, and consequently bring good prices from the drovers, who begin to pick them up early in spring, and continue buying through the summer."

As regards rents : "The best infield land lets, at an average, for about sixteen shillings and eight pence an acre, inferior about ten shillings, and outfield from two and sixpence to five shillings, according to its quality ; but in general the tenants pay in meal, in place of money; for the outfield grounds." Eighteen shillings and sixpence was about the highest price paid for land per acre in Aberdeenshire at the time the first statistical account was

published. Many of the farmers of thepresent day may not be aware that in the earlier part of last century, and in some towards the end of it, there were no turnips, potatoes, rye grass, or red clover seeds sown in the county of Aberdeen.

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... in this way which I should not have otherwise possessed.

SEASONS AND CROPS DURING THE LAST PERIOD OF THE LAST CENTURY.

There can be no doubt that the increased extent of cultivated land has had considerable influence upon the climate of the county of Aberdeen for the reasons which have been mentioned ; and this is very apparent from what has passed of thepresent, as contrasted with the last thirty years of the past century. It is to be hoped there will be no such seed times and harvests -such failures of crops and dearth and misery as existed in the latter period. The improvement in the cultivation of the soil and other causes which have been mentioned, and the importation of grain, furnish us with hopes that we shall never see the like again. But our forefathers, arguing from the SEASONS between 1758 and 1765, might have come to the same conclusion as far as climate was concerned.

I have in my possession a minute diary of the weather between 1758 and 1795 , in which the good and bad years are minutely described. The lady who wrote it was wife of the Laird of Kemnay of that period, and aunt of my late uncle, Dr. George Morison, to whom she gave it.

It begins in January, 1758. "21st May, cut spinage that was sown that year; and had peas in full bloom; the 18th June we had full ashet of peas and some cherries and strawberries. In the year 1760 we had a dish of green peas on the 11th of June. 1762, we cut spinage sown that year the 17th May, and had a dish of peas, sown that year, the 17th of June ; had also artichokes and some ripe strawberries. I765, our green peas and strawberries was only at table the 3rd of July ; and tasted some strawberries and cherries in the garden." It is to be observed, however, that the dates here must be old style, and eleven days later, according to our reckoning. But making allowance for the difference of style, these articles were as early then as they are at present.

The diary does not become minute till 1764, but in that year there is only reference to the weather, and not to the crops. The following is the summary this year - "eighty days rain, thirty-five days snow on the ground, and seventeen days wind." The most terrible of all the years of this period was 1782, of which Mrs. Burnet gives a very particular and sad description, and it was all the more memorable in consequence of its being succeeded by two bad years, 1783 and 1784. These years are described in the following lines, which were repeated to me by my father when I was a boy, and which are more remarkable for their truth than their poetical merit :-

A paraphrase on auchty twa,
The sairest year that ere we saw;
An' auchty three was verra sair,
For meal we haed it not to spare;
Auchty four the win' blew high,
Made many a sailor for to die;
Ships in the sea did sink like lead,
Of that we in the newrs did read;
Houses were tirred an' rucks blew o'er
I'm really feared at auchty four."

Auchty two may well be said to be the sairest year that ere they saw. In speaking of that year, the Rev. Patrick Grant, minister of the parish of Duthil, Strathspey, gives the following description of the state of his parish in his statistical account of it in 1792 :-

"The situation of the parish in 1782 and 1783 was truly distressing-. Had it not been for Government bounty, and Sir James Grant's large supplies from distant countries, the poorer class of people would have perished. So great was the destruction of the crop in 1782, by the frost setting in so early as the month of August, that the most substantial corn which was sent to some of the mills in this parish was a crop of wild oats from a piece of ground which had been ploughed, but not sown."

THE PAST AND PRESENT OF ABERDEENSHIRE.

Reverend William Paul MD Manse of Banchory Devenick August 1881
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It may be mentioned as a striking coincidence, having in view the dearth of 1782, and the recent failure of the crops, that there was a terrible famine about the year 1680, of which Mr. Grant gives a harrowing narrative in his statistical account.

The following is an account given of the winds and storms of 1784, by Mrs. Burnet, in her diary of the

weather already referred to :- "1st January, 1784, the air milder ; 2nd, a good deal of wind and drift; at night a violent storm of wind at South-East. The hurricane of wind blowed all the snow into such wreaths as was never seen in this country, many of them eighteen foot perpendicular; many people were two days in their houses before they could be cast so as to let them out. All travelling except on foot put a stop to. At the Cove, and several little harbours near this place, pieces of the rocks were rent off and thrown into the harbour. The sea came out forty yards farther than the oldest man ever remembered, and a great deal of lightning along with the wind, which continued on the 3rd all day. Many houses in the country were unroofed, and stacks of corn and hay carried off: "7th and 8th December, 1784 - The high wind of the 6th and 7th did infinite damage on the coast of England ; more than one hundred ships stranded or lost." Compare the facts with the poetry-

Ships in the sea did sink like lead ,
Of that we in the news did read;
Houses were tirred and rucks blew o'er
I'm really feared at auchty four."

DIFFERENCE OF THE VALUE OF LAND BETWEEN THE PRESENT AND THE PAST.

The following interesting fact, stated by my predecessor, Dr. Morison, in his statistical account of this parish, cannot but be interesting to readers who take an interest in agricultural matters in reference to the increase in the value of land since the middle of last century. A Mr. Fordyce, who had accompanied Lord Anson in his voyages, returned to his native country about the year 1745. He travelled from London to Aberdeen on horseback, with all his prize money, in specie, in his saddle-bag, and bought the property of Ardoe, in this parish, for £500. It is stated by Dr. Morison that when he took possession of his estate he found the mansion house, such as it was, with the garden and about forty acres of land, in the hands of a tenant who paid about £3 6s. 8d. sterling, annually. Having it in contemplation at that time to go abroad again, he asked the man if he would renew his lease, which had expired, at the annual rent of £5 sterling, and his answer was, "Na, by my faith, God has gien me mair wit." The land was sold to the present proprietor, about two years ago, for about £40,000.

Within my memory, no landed proprietor in this part of the country let his moors, or his partridge and other shooting grounds ; and, if I mistake not, the sale of game was illegal. It is impossible to guess the amount now produced from their moors to the proprietors, or the annual sum now realised in Aberdeenshire and the adjoining counties from the sale of game ; or to calculate the sums of money spent by, or the benefit otherwise derived from, the tenants of shooting lodges and their dependants. To say nothing of the opening up of the country by roads, the erection of gentlemen's seats and the enlargement of favourite villages for temporary residences ....