

KILMUIR EASTER
THE HISTORY OF A
HIGHLAND PARISH



BY HELEN MYERS MELDRUM

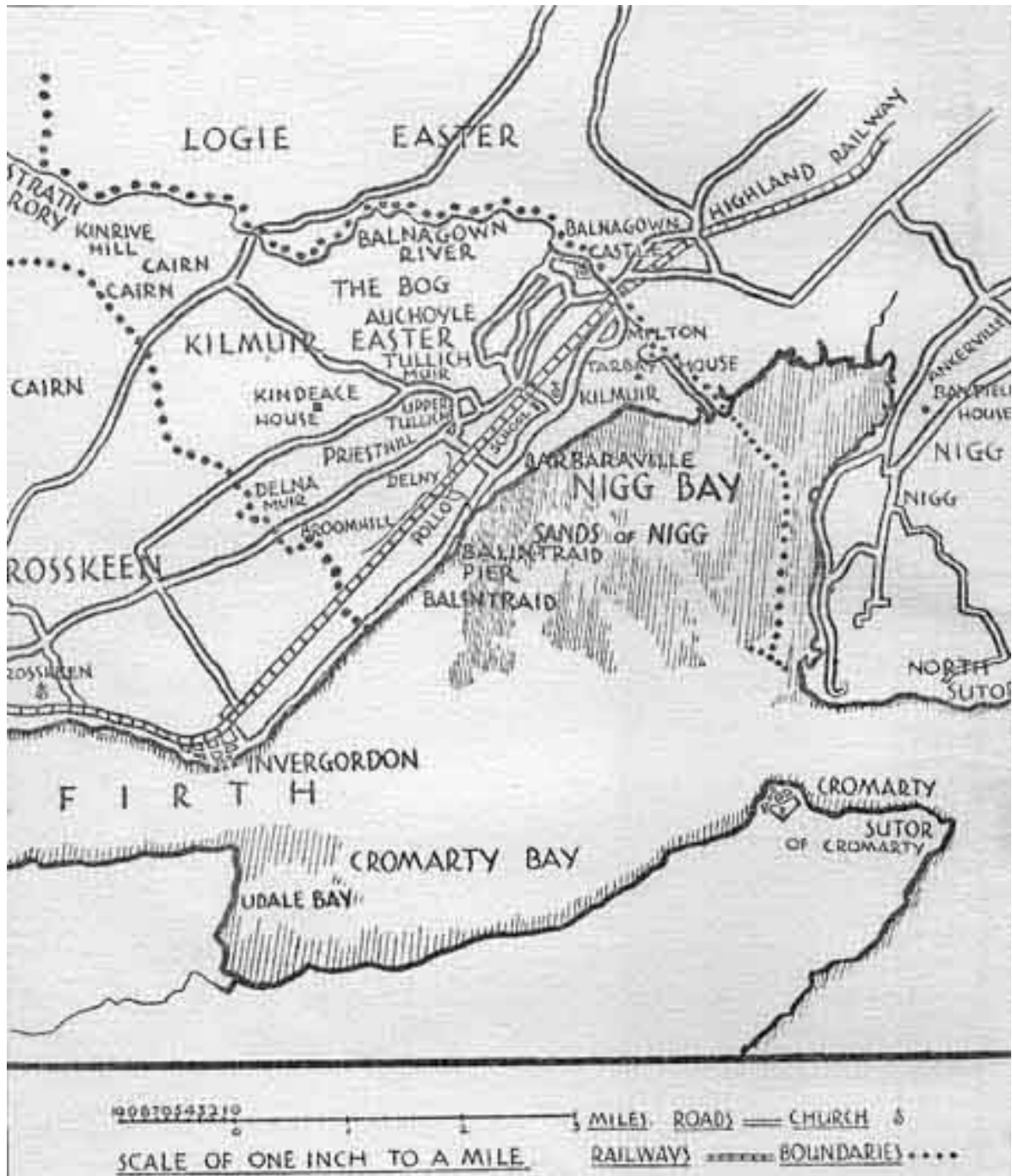
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The History of a Highland Parish

by

Helen Myers Meldrum



Chapter I - The Parish Described

In a corner of Easter Ross, one of the richest agricultural districts of Scotland, lies the parish of Kilmuir Easter. Its name is Gaelic - Cill Mhoir (the Church of Mary) - possibly from an ancient chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which, in pre-Reformation days, stood on the banks of the Delny burn, on the site now occupied by Delny farm steading.

Composed for the most part of rich woods and well cultivated farms and crofts, Kilmuir slopes gently from the hills of Kinrive and Strathroy in the north to the shores of the Cromarty Firth in the south; on the north-east it is bounded by the Balnagown River, the largest stream in the parish, and on the west by the parish of Rosskeen.

The soil by the shore is light and sandy; farther inland there are stretches of rich black loam with a subsoil of clay or gravel, while on the highest reaches of the parish the cultivated parts are interspersed with patches of scrub and straggling woods of birch and Scotch fir. These finally merge into a stretch of heathery moorland which culminates in a height of about 1100 feet.

The scenery has changed in character during the passing of the centuries. In remote times the lower levels were covered by the sea, while only a little over a hundred years ago many acres lay waste - untrenched, undrained and unfenced, with no roads other than rough tracks. Until the seventeenth century the parish is frequently referred to as Kilmuir-Methat, but later the name became Kilmuir Easter.

To-day the parish is one of the most pleasant in the countryside, with rich fields and clustering woods, hedges and rippling burns, neat cottages and comfortable farmhouses scattered up and down, and here and there an imposing mansion.

In every direction there are well-constructed roads, so that there is no corner of the parish which is not easily accessible by any sort of vehicle.

The principal road runs northward along the coast until, at the village of Barbaraville, it slants inland between hawthorn and beech hedges, overshadowed at either side by ancient trees of oak, ash, beech and poplar. It then curves round by the old churchyard, passing the little row of thatched cottages on the right, known as Tornabrock, up Adam's Brae, until it reaches the smithy at Appitauldt, where it turns sharply to the left, under the railway bridge, then, swinging to the right, crosses the old Balnagown Bridge which spans the river, and enters the neighbouring parish of Logie.

The beach is level, and when the tide recedes it leaves a muddy flat with drifts of seaweed. This is in demand as; a covering for the "pits" where potatoes and turnips are stored during the winter.

During the last fifty years the sea has encroached slightly on the land, and the pathway along the shore has become rough, and broken by the little springs flowing out from the land to the sea. At times the tide recedes so far that, at a certain point below Tarbat House to the east of the mouth of Balnagown River, it is possible by vehicle or on foot to cross to Nigg on the opposite side of the Firth. But there are risks and sometimes travellers crossing in this way have been caught by the tide and drowned.

This strip of sand and shallow water extends well up the Firth, but between it and the land on the opposite side the channel is deep enough to float the heaviest of our warships.

A tragic episode of the Great War is still (1935) recalled there by the derelict hull of H.M.S. Natal, which, one sunny December day in 1915, was blown up with the loss of all on board. Stories of spies and of treachery were long current, but the real cause of the disaster has never been ascertained.

From any point in the eastern part of the parish the Firth presents the appearance of an inland loch, the long arm of the Black Isle on the opposite side apparently meeting a tongue of land from the Hill of Nigg. But as one travels westwards to Barbaraville and Balintraid, the entrance leading from the open sea to the sheltered waters of the Firth gradually becomes visible, with the great rocks known as the Sutors of Cromarty towering on either side.

"Black Isle" in spite of its name, is neither "island" nor "black," but about twenty miles of rich and fertile country jutting out from the mainland. The name dates from early times when it was black moorland.

From the shore of Kilmuir can be seen, resting at the base of the southern Sutor, the little old-world town of Cromarty, its light-house being a familiar feature of the landscape at night, with the lights of the town twinkling close by.

Cromarty was long a port of considerable importance, and a centre of the herring industry. It is now known to fame as the birthplace of Hugh Miller, the distinguished geologist, who was born there in 1802. His parents were seafaring people of Scandinavian descent.

As a child Hugh is said to have been wild and intractable. He left school early after a violent encounter with his schoolmaster, whose one method of dealing with every fault was no doubt corporal punishment, psychology at that period not being one of the subjects included in the training of teachers. Hugh's active mind, however, found plenty scope in the study of natural phenomena, in which he was keenly interested.

At the age of seventeen he was apprenticed to a stone-mason. He proved an excellent workman. In 1822 his apprenticeship was completed, and as a journeyman-mason, he pursued his craft in different parts of the country, through the Highlands and the Lowlands of Scotland, visiting towns and villages and country places. In the churchyard of Kilmuir Easter is a gravestone with neat lettering said to be his work.

He acquired a thorough knowledge of the antiquities and geology of his native town of Cromarty and the district around, and of old tales and traditions. He wrote widely on these subjects, and his Writings were received with great delight not only by the general public, but by learned authorities.

In his "Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland" he narrates the various theories regarding the origin of the name Sutors, by which are known the two promontories at the entrance to the Firth.

One tradition ascribes the name to a remote age when the whole country is said to have been peopled by a race of giants. The promontories served as work-stools to two giants who plied the trade of sutor or shoemaker, having only one set of tools between them. When necessary, these they used to fling across the strait to one another.

Another tradition has it that the name originated from a tale of two lovers who, many ages ago, met in a field near by. The youth in urging his suit pointed to the promontories and compared them to lovers advancing towards each other, eager to embrace, while the maiden, in her reply, referred to them as "tongueless suitors", thus bestowing on them the name by which they have since been known.

The Gaelic form - Na Sudraichean - favours a derivation from sudaire, a tanner, and would thus mean the place of tanners, or the tanneries.

In the parish of Kilmuir there are, strictly speaking, three villages. Two of these, Barbaraville and Portleich, are merged in one, Barbaraville proper consisting of a cluster of substantially-built houses, with an inn and one or two shops, while Portleich is a long, single row of cottages. Their roofs were at one time thatched, but these are now replaced by the more durable but less picturesque slates or corrugated iron.

The cottages (except one, larger than the rest, which was an inn in bygone days, and which stands facing southwards at the bend of the road just as it leaves the village) stand well apart from each other and face the sea, their backs to the high-road. One result of this is that those little knots of people which elsewhere foregather of an evening to discuss local or national affairs, are seldom seen here, and the impression on a casual visitor is of a deserted village.

The inhabitants are mostly crofters. Their strips of cultivated land slope from the cottage doors to the shore below. The name of this village, which is from a Gaelic word, meaning 'wet port,' arose from the fact that there were no proper places for landing at a time when fishing was the principal occupation of its inhabitants.

It is, at the lowest reckoning, two hundred years old, but, compared with the village of Milntown at the opposite end of the parish, it is a mere "infant," for the history of Milntown goes back to at least 1479, when it is referred to in a document as "Myltoun of Methat with its two mills."

This village nestles against the woods of New Tarbat, not far from the Balnagown River, and is of entirely different character from Barbaraville and Portleich, being rather English in style than typically Highland. Its street of straggling houses is set round a village green, where a grey old market cross still stands, remnant of stirring days when markets were held here of a week's duration, when crowds travelled from far and near to trade with each other, to meet acquaintances, or to join in the sports of the times.

For this little village was not always so unassuming as it now appears, but was once a "burgh of baronie", possessing the right of holding a yearly fair on "the tenth of August each year . . . with the libertie and priviledge of erecting and making stalls and yaires upon the Sands of Milntown and Nigg."

Round the top of the cross the word Cromartie, now almost indecipherable, is carved, indicating the estate of Cromartie, in which the village is situated, and below that, the date 1799; thus this cross probably replaced an older one, for the markets were in full swing long before that date. They continued well into the nineteenth century. Until 1838 four markets were held in each year, but gradually they became less important, and finally faded out.

A much respected resident, John Munro, who still lives in the village, was one of two men employed by the laird to collect the dues demanded from those who brought their produce to the

market for sale. This included not only farm produce, but all sorts of commodities from gingerbread to wooden tubs. He tells that the charges were 1d for a pig, 2d for a sheep, and 3d for a "beast". On the last occasion when this duty was performed by him and his colleague the drawings amounted to 4d !

Although the markets are no more, the stream flowing under the low bridge at the east end of the village still drives the mill from which the village takes its name, and its flour and oatmeal can stand comparison with similar products from the most up-to-date factories.

In 1780 it was reported that the mill of Milntown was in urgent need of repair. Plans for a new mill and a dam across the water of New Tarbat, with estimates of the cost, were submitted by two men - James Kyle and one Smeaton. Smeaton's plans showed the higher cost, being £179 against Kyle's £157, but were considered the more satisfactory, and the work was begun. It was completed in May 1785, the mason work being carried out by James Anderson, Forres.

It was in the eighteenth century that Milntown reached its zenith as an industrial centre. At that period it was one of the most important centres of the linen trade which was then thriving throughout the Highlands.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Royal mail coach started running between Wick and Inverness, Milntown was one of its stopping places. The ancient weather-beaten inn (now converted into tenement dwellings), before which the coach used to draw up, remains to this day, with the iron fixture from which the sign was suspended, still projecting from the wall.

During the latter half of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth there stood at the east end of the village on the banks of the mill stream a handsome mansion known as Millmount. It is said that the reason for its demolition was the jealousy of one of the Cromartie family who could not tolerate - so near to his own residence - a house surpassing his in elegance. Some loose stones from its foundations, the gateway which led to its policies, and a few straggling gooseberry bushes from its once flourishing orchard, are all that remain to mark the site of the stately edifice, but, in certain houses of the neighbourhood, a table, a mirror, a handsome though cumbersome fireplace may be pointed out as having once been part of its furnishing.

This house was occupied for some years by one James Baillie, who had been a merchant in Rotterdam. An inventory of its contents, dated 1748, was discovered not many years ago among some ancient documents stored in the Municipal Buildings of Tain. Baillie's wife was Marjorie Dunbar, daughter of Alexander Dunbar of Boath, and in terms of the marriage contract, dated 21st January 1745, she had a life-rent of the house with "the Gaerdens and parks enclosures and others therein contained."

Baillie, who died in 1747, was buried in the churchyard of Kilmuir Easter, where a gravestone bears the inscription - "In Memoriam Jacobi Baylie de Migdale Rotterdam non nunquam mercatoris qui 25 Mensis Martii die 1747 Mortem obiit anno AETATIS 45 et cujus corpus hoc sub cippo Humatum est." (In memory of James Baillie of Migdale, sometime merchant of Rotterdam, who died on 25th March 1747, in the forty-fifth year of his age, and whose body lies under this stone.)

A romantic story is told of another occupant of the house of Millmount - a girl whose love was bestowed on one below her in social status, and whom, on this account, she was forbidden to wed. Two foundling children, one discovered at the door of a house in Kilmuir, the other in the

neighbouring parish of Logie, were believed to be the offspring of their ill starred love. They were named Bell Kilmuir and Jimmy Logie, and the descendants of the former can still be traced.

In common with the parish generally the population of Milntown has steadily declined. In 1838 its inhabitants numbered two hundred; they are now about seventy. The army of busy tradespeople has disappeared, the spinning wheels are silent, and long ago the mail coach clattered from the inn door for the last time. To-day life in the old village seems to flow on as placidly as its mill stream, but memories of the past still hover about its ancient ways, endowing it with that quality, subtle and elusive as the scent of thyme or of old lavender, which we call charm.

On the stretch of moorland at the top of the parish there is a rich field of prehistoric remains. Innumerable mounds, believed to be the burial places of our prehistoric ancestors, are dotted about, while no fewer than twelve hut circles may be seen, plainly marked, varying in diameter from 24 to 42 feet. A long burial cairn and, close beside it, a smaller one, lie to the west of these, in both of which human bones have been found.

There are also, some distance to the east of these, the quite considerable remains of an ancient hill fort. It stands on a grassy plateau not far from the edge of Scotsburn Ravine, a picturesque gorge formed by the waters of the Balnagown River, where an extensive view may be obtained of the hills and valleys of Easter Ross. Far away to the west rises lofty Ben Wyvis, the Hill of Fyrish in the foreground, while in the other direction, far below, lie the waters of the Cromarty Firth, with a glimpse between the Sutors of the yellow sands of Nairn, Ben Rinnes faintly outlined beyond.

The fort, still in a fair state of preservation, consists of an inner and outer wall, the latter about 348 feet in circumference, while the inner rampart measures about 35 feet across. Both are well marked, although they consist mostly of small stones, the larger ones having been removed, possibly for building purposes. On a knoll a short distance away is another circle less plainly marked, thought to be a companion fort.

It is said that somewhere in the same neighbourhood until near the end of the eighteenth century there was a Druidical circle, the stones of which were removed by a farmer to "build a dyke". In 1751 some labourers digging near the village of Milntown came upon four large stones arranged in the form of a circle, in the centre of which was a skeleton in a sitting posture on a stone seat, evidently made for the purpose.

There was also at one time near the village quite a number of mounds similar to those described above, which were believed by the people to be the graves of victims of the plague. The plague referred to was probably one that swept over the country in the closing years of the seventeenth century. Whole villages are said to have been depopulated, and so swift was the progress of the disease that people apparently in good health one evening might be found dead in their houses next morning. The living were wearied with the business of burying, and many got neither coffin nor shroud. Such was the horror created among the people that, nearly a hundred years later, few would dare to walk over these mounds or suffer their horses or carriages to come in contact with them.

By 1768 all the mounds had disappeared, except one which remained situated in the middle of the road at the principal entrance to the village, the belief being prevalent that interference with it would bring disaster. At length one man with more courage than his fellows declared his intention of removing it, and in presence of a large crowd who, at a "safe" distance watched the proceedings, carried out his resolution. It is not recorded whether any ancient relics were excavated, but no doom befell the perpetrator, and the superstition died out.

The language spoken by the inhabitants of Easter Ross, in very early times, when the Picts inhabited the country, is said to have been Celtic, more akin, however, to the Welsh or Brittonic than to the modern Scottish Gaelic. Later, it is probable that for a considerable period Pictish, Norse and Gaelic were spoken concurrently. By the beginning of the twelfth century Gaelic, the language of the Celtic Church, had become predominant. By the end of that century intercourse between Ross and the South had increased considerably. The English language then began to creep in, and gradually to spread, until, about the end of the nineteenth century, many of the inhabitants of Easter Ross spoke both Gaelic and English with equal facility.

When, in 1792, Alexander Fraser, kirk officer of Kilmuir Easter, presented a petition to the Sheriff protesting against the action of the minister and the session in dismissing him from his post, the libel against him was read before the session in English, but nine out of the ten elders did not know English. The complainer was also ignorant of English, and had signed a confession written out in that language, not fully understanding its import. It is reasonable to suppose that among the older people the proportion who spoke no English would be as high as that of the Session, but from the Old Statistical Account (1793) we learn that at that time there were few in the parish under the age of thirty who did not know both languages. In 1891, when the population of Kilmuir Easter was 1024, 432 of these were returned as Gaelic-speaking.

With the spread of education Gaelic tended to die out, and now few of the inhabitants of Easter Ross, in spite of the efforts of An Comunn Gaidhealach to keep it alive, can converse with any degree of facility in that ancient tongue, while the majority are entirely ignorant of it.

The ownership of the parish is divided among about seven or eight proprietors, the estates varying greatly in extent. The two most important, Balnagown and Cromartie, extend far beyond the boundaries of Kilmuir.

Kindeace comes next in size and importance, its whole area, however, being contained within the parish, the same being true of the smaller estates of Priesthill, Pollo, Balintraid and Delny.

The estate of Kinraig, the greater part of which lies in the neighbouring parish of Rosskeen, is represented in Kilmuir by the farm of Broomhill.

There are several small general merchants' shops throughout the parish, but the principal shopping centre for the district is Invergordon, in the parish of Rosskeen, that quiet little Highland town on the Cromarty Firth, almost unheard of until the Great War, when it rapidly became a centre of busy life. The Firth was one of the Naval Bases, and a temporary dockyard was set up in the town, with the result that there was a large influx of population, a considerable number of men being employed in the yard who, with wives and children, settled down in the town and district. Many new houses were erected at the east end of the town for their accommodation, while the wives of the officers of the Fleet found quarters in the town and in the villages along the coast. The sailors from the Fleet, and the soldiers from a large training camp which had been established in Nigg, when on leave, swarmed over the countryside, and all over Easter Ross trade flourished as never before in its history.

Chaptetr II - Church Affairs

On a knoll overlooking the Cromarty Firth stands the old Parish Church. Its round tower bears the inscription, BEIGIT 1616, but there is evidence that the tower was an addition to a church that stood there at least a century before this date. Of a still earlier date, however, was probably the chapel on the banks of the Delny Burn.

This chapel, with its graveyard, was left standing long after it had ceased to be used as a place of worship. Near the end of the eighteenth century, James Munro, the farmer who occupied Delny Farm at that time, proceeded to appropriate the gravestones and the stones of the chapel for building purposes, and to plough up the graveyard with a view to turning it into farm land. This aroused considerable indignation in the parish, and the minister, the Rev. John Matheson, at length approached him, pleading with him to desist from his work of desecration. Munro not only agreed to do so, but promised as atonement for his conduct to fence off the spot, sow it with grass seed, erect a stone in the middle with a suitable inscription, and for the future leave the spot undisturbed. Whether or not he carried out these undertakings cannot be ascertained, as no stone with inscription remains, but part of the chapel may still be identified, although now used as a blacksmith's shop.

Two of the ancient gravestones were transferred to the present churchyard-whether at that time or earlier is not known-and may still be seen to the left as you enter by the western gate. One of them stands upright against the wall, its carvings almost obliterated. With difficulty one discerns at the top an angel's head and outstretched wings, in the centre something resembling a large shield, and below that a circle.

The second stone is flat and lies at the foot of the other at right angles, and having been less exposed to the weather, is in a better state of preservation. At the top is apparently a coat of arms (a circle, within which are two animals rampant and a star). In the centre are the usual symbols-hourglass and coffin, bells and skulls, while at the bottom are the cross-bones, a spade and a key. There are no names inscribed on either.

A Church of Kilmuir is mentioned in State Papers as early as 1296, at the time of the Scottish War of Independence, when Roger de Foderingeye, "vicar of the Church of Kilmor", swore fealty to Edward I of England, but though highly probable, it is not certain that this refers to Kilmuir Easter.

Again in 1475, we hear of it when James of Werk (Weik), parson of Kilmuir, witnesses an agreement between McGilleoin of Lochboy and Ross of Ballnagouin.

In 1512, we read that the yearly payment made by Andrew Monro for the croft called the Merkland of Tulloch, then granted to him by King James IV., was "one pound of wax (in the form of a wax candle weighing 1 lb.), to be paid at midsummer within the chapel of Delny."

It was the fashion in mediaeval times among kings, nobles and wealthy commoners to endow chapels and chaplains in order that, on the death of the founder, the chaplain would sing a daily mass for the repose of his soul and the souls of his relatives. The chaplain was known as a chantry priest. In nearly all of those endowment deeds a Paternoster or the Lord's Prayer and Psalm cxxx., "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord," formed part. One of the provisions was the placing of one, two or more wax candles on the altar during the service.

This chapel of Delny was probably founded by the Earl of Ross, whose castle stood close by.

In 1521, James V presented the chaplaincy of Delny to Alexander Dunbar. Eight years later Alexander resigned in favour of David Dunbar, who was evidently a kinsman. David, not desiring the glebe, gardens and buildings belonging to the chaplaincy, let them, with the King's consent, to Thomas Ross of Balintraid and his wife, Elizabeth Dunbar, and their heirs at a yearly rent of 12 marks and 40/-, reserving to himself one acre for the construction of a manse and garden. That transaction is dated 1541, and the lands are specified as Ulladale and Priestshill and the Croft of John the Baptist - obviously churchlands to judge by the last two names. On the death of David, James VI., in 1580, granted for seven years to Colin Dunbar, the son of George Dunbar of Avach "for held of his sustenation and intertenement at the scoles" the chaplaincy of Delny, which in that year did not exceed the value of 20 marks yearly.

Besides the Chapel of Delny, there was a chapel at Balnagown, the exact site of which is not known. We hear of it in 1368, when Mariot of Hirdmannystoun resigns the patronage of the Chapel of Balnagown, and William, Earl of Ross, about the same time grants to his brother Hugh the lands of Balnagown and others resigned by Mariot, the grantee finding a chaplain to officiate twice or thrice weekly "at the altar of the Virgin Mary in her chapel at Balnagown." This chaplaincy was founded for daily prayers on behalf of the reigning Sovereign, and supported by the yearly payment of £4 from the lands and fishings of Eister Tarbat. In 1542 it was held by James Dunbar of Tuliglennis and Elizabeth Leslie, his wife, and in 1558 by James Dunbar, his son and heir. In 1614, William, a son of Thomas Ross, Abbot of Fearn, was chaplain of Balnagown.

At the Reformation, George Dunbar was parson of Kilmuir, the value of parsonage and vicarage of Kilmuir then, as retoured by him to the collector of thirds, being 100 marks £66 13s 4d yearly. Later he was Commissioner of Ross, dealing with teinds under Bishops' jurisdiction. These Commissioners were appointed by the King, and had a seat and vote in Parliament. George Dunbar was evidently of the type of "The Vicar of Bray". He joined the Reformers in 1560, and in 1596, when James VI. introduced Episcopacy into Scotland he retained his benefice and was both "Commissioner of Ross" and "parson of Kilmuir", although between 1560 and 1585, Alexander Sutherland, William Ross, Neil Munro and John Munro were successively presented to the Kilmuir living. Possibly Dunbar drew the stipend and made a small allowance to these men to do the work of the parish in his absence, this being a custom in many parts of the country.

From the Reformation down to the present day almost a complete list is available of the men in charge of the spiritual affairs of Kilmuir Easter parish. Some of these are mere names, with nothing to indicate character or personality, but of others sufficient records remain for later generations to learn something of what manner of men they were, the place they held and the part they played in local or national affairs.

In 1572, Donald Reid was reader in Kilmuir, succeeded in this office in 1574 by Neil Munro.

The duty of readers, who as a rule were not so well educated as the ministers, was to "take care over the children and the young and to instruct them in their first rudiments, especially in the Catechism." At this period they were twice as numerous as the ministers, there being great difficulty in securing a sufficient supply of qualified ministers for the parishes, owing to the deplorable condition of church buildings and to the lack of manses, glebes and stipends.

Knox and his coadjutors decided (as is laid down in the First Book of Discipline) that for a parish minister a stipend of "at least 40 bolls meal and 26 bolls malt to find his house, breid and drink",

with a sum of money, perhaps 200 marks, for buying of other provisions, should be sufficient. The readers were paid at a much lower rate, as they usually had additional duties, as, for instance, schoolmastering, for which they received payment. It was thought, therefore, that for them 40 marks a year would be enough, though those who ranked as exhorters might fitly receive 100 marks a year, exhorters being a little better educated, and therefore allowed to explain the Scriptures read, and "exhort" the people - hence the name.

In spite of an Act of Parliament specifying that no more readers should be appointed, they continued for some time subsequent to that to carry on their work in the parishes. The last of them was James Patterson, who died in Aberdeen in 1800.

In 1575, when William Ross, who had been presented to the living in 1569, demitted office, the above Neil Munro, who had been acting as reader, was appointed minister. Ten years later he was deposed for "non-residence and not serving the cure". John Munro then took over the charge, succeeded by John Ross, who had been translated from the neighbouring Parish of Logie-Easter.

From 1618 to at least 1639, Alexander Hossack was minister of the parish. On 3rd December 1633, he and Isobel Ross, his wife, acquired from Walter Ross certain land in Nigg.

In 1653, James MacCulloch, who had graduated at St Andrews University in 1628, was admitted to Kilmuir church, and in 1671 he was still minister there. His death must have occurred before 1680, as in that year Master John MacCulloch, who is registered heir to "deceast Andrew MacCulloch of Glastullich", is described as son of the deceased "Mr James MacCulloch sumtyme minister of Kilmuir Easter".

A deed by Sir George Mackenzie, afterwards the first Earl of Cromartie, is witnessed in 1684 by William Denoon, described as minister of the parish.

In 1687, Donald Forbes, graduate of Aberdeen University, became minister of Kilmuir. His ministry was notorious. The countryside hummed with scandals regarding his conduct, until at length the Presbytery were obliged to enquire into the matter, and at a meeting held on 27th April 1699, a charge was brought forward against him of grave errors, "Sabbath-breaking to a most scandalous degree", immorality, negligence in the discharge of his duties, and other misdemeanours.

It is difficult to decide whether Mr Forbes was as black as he was painted, or whether the scandals which were circulated regarding him had much foundation in fact, for those were the days when rumour was busy, and every scandal, however groundless, every charge, however absurd, was greedily listened to and believed by the credulous Commission of elders and ministers who sat in judgment on the Episcopal incumbent.

It is certain that the parish was not unanimous in their condemnation of him, and among his supporters was Lord Tarbat, later the first Earl of Cromartie, who informed the Chancellor that Mr Forbes was to be libelled as an Armenian and charged with some private faults, but that the true cause of the proceedings, although this would not be mentioned in the indictment, was his adherence to the principles of the Church of England.

This, however, had no effect on the case, and the Presbytery, following the usual mode of procedure, intimated to Forbes that there would be a visitation of Kilmuir by the Presbytery. The date chosen for this was 31st May, on which day he would be required to preach before them from a prescribed text, after which an enquiry would be held.

Forbes treated these instructions with contempt, and on the appearance of the Presbytery in Kilmuir, informed them that, in his opinion, he was not subject to the authority of the Presbytery, but to that of his Majesty, to whom he appealed for protection.

The Presbytery, however, proceeded with the case, holding that the protection of his Majesty did not apply to persons accused of faults so grave. They suspended him from the exercise of his ministry until he agreed to appear before them and clear himself of the faults with which he was charged, but Mr Forbes ignored both prohibition and summons. The next step was to depose him, and Mr William Stewart, of Kiltearn, was appointed to preach in Kilmuir Church and declare the church vacant. On 8th June 1699, this was duly carried out, and at a later date confirmed by the General Assembly. In defiance, however, of both Presbytery and General Assembly, Forbes continued to deliver his weekly sermon from the pulpit of Kilmuir Church. The Presbytery then instructed Mr John Fraser, Alness, to proceed to Kilmuir on a certain Sunday, take possession of the pulpit, and conduct the service.

This was the signal for an outburst of indignation on the part of Forbes and his supporters, who, on the appearance of Fraser to carry out his injunctions, met him in the graveyard, and noisily objected to what they considered an unwarrantable intrusion. Mr Fraser expostulated with them on their conduct, and proceeded to justify his presence there by referring them to the decree of the General Assembly, which ordered the church to be declared vacant.

After some discussion the protesting party withdrew to the house of Mr Forbes, where he delivered a sermon, after which he and his supporters returned to the churchyard in time to waylay Mr Fraser as he emerged from the church at the close of the service there. Then they surrounded him, renewing their protestations, and threatening to use violence. The Lairds of Balnagown, Culrain and Newmore, who were the principal heritors, and who stood apart for some time looking on at the disturbance, at length went to the support of Fraser, but it was a considerable time before the tumult subsided and the crowd dispersed.

At a later date the Presbytery succeeded in obtaining possession of the keys of the church, which were handed into the custody of David Ross of Balnagown.

Eventually Forbes wearied of his efforts to assert himself, and finally disappeared from public notice.

It was during the troubled period of Forbes's ministry that the Old Mort Bell, still preserved, was presented to the church of Kilmuir. It bears the inscription, "Gifted Be Donald Mackenzie to the Church of Kilmuir of MEDAT EDR. 1696. J.M." The final initials are probably those of John Miller, of a well-known firm of bell-makers in Edinburgh. At that time it was the custom for a bell to be rung at the head of funeral processions as they made their way through the graveyard to the place of burial. Hence the name "Mort Bell."

In 1701, Daniel McGilligan, son of John McGilligan famous Covenanter, was called to the Church of Kilmuir. It was common about that time for ministers up and down the land to suffer from negligence on the part of the authorities in the payment of their stipends. There had been trouble in Kilmuir in this connection. In 1688, Mr Forbes, never one to rest under an injustice, had brought an action for stipend "4 chalders bere and 4 of meal". Consequent Mr McGilligan at first declined to accept the charge on the grounds of there being neither manse, stipend nor glebe. The Presbytery, however, assured him that these deficiencies would be made good, whereupon he intimated his

acceptation with the proviso that if these promises were not implemented within a reasonable time he should consider himself free to accept a call elsewhere. In due time he was ordained and admitted minister of the parish, Mr John Fraser preaching the ordination sermon in English from Isaiah LXIII: 6 - "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

McGilligan was the first Presbyterian minister admitted to Kilmuir after the Revolution. He was forceful and energetic. For a considerable period during his ministry the parish lacked a schoolmaster, and it was mainly through his efforts that eventually one was settled at what was considered in those days a competent salary.

At this time the questions of doctrine were agitating the Church, and the Tain Presbytery decided to appoint certain ministers to deliver discourses dealing with these. McGilligan was chosen to expound the doctrine of Predestination.

The heritors were slow in fulfilling the promises they had made to McGilligan on his appointment. The church continued in a state of disrepair, and no manse was provided. In 1707 the Laird of Balnagown, showing more generosity than heritors in general and the heritors of Kilmuir in particular, set about having the roof of the church slated and other necessary repairs attended to. At the same time he took the opportunity of pointing out to the other heritors their duty in this matter, and recommended that in future they should undertake to keep the church in good repair. The question of the manse, however, was left in abeyance, and the payment of the stipend neglected.

At length, in 1711, McGilligan, losing patience, followed the example of his irascible predecessor, and sued for his stipend. He was unsuccessful, and very shortly afterwards he intimated his resignation as minister of the parish. Immediately a meeting was convened by the Presbytery, to which the heritors were summoned. All agreed that the question of a manse was urgent, and the tradesmen present undertook to see that the rebuilding of a suitable manse was begun as soon as possible. This came to nothing, and in 1713, McGilligan, his patience thoroughly exhausted, accepted a call to Alness. The Earl of Cromartie and Lord MacLeod announced their intention of lodging an appeal against his translation, but owing to the death of Lord Cromartie this was not done.

McGilligan was succeeded by Walter Ross, who had been educated at Marischal College, Aberdeen, and licensed for the ministry in December 1714.

Walter Ross's grandfather was Donald Ross of Torrenliah, who, by a charter, dated at Logie, 16th April 1627, had received from his father, Thos. Ross of Logy, half of the church lands of Priesthill, and in 1630 of the lands of Dalaclerach. Walter was executor and nearest-of-kin to his father and to his brother David.

Ross found the parish in a rude and unruly state, said to be due to careless habits formed by the people during the years when Episcopacy reigned there. With immense patience and determination he tackled the task of raising the moral standard of the community. To great force of character he added strength of muscle, and when moral suasion failed to produce the desired result, he did not hesitate to resort to more drastic measures until at length his efforts were rewarded by a remarkable improvement in the character and conduct and church-going habits of the parishioners.

One example of his assiduity in the matter of discipline may be quoted. In 1728 he reported to the General Assembly that an accusation had been made in the Kilmuir Kirk Session against George

Mackenzie in Milntown of profaning the Sabbath in the parish by buying chickens for Lord MacLeod's hawks upon a certain Lord's Day, that he had been summoned to three several diets of the Session, but did not compear, upon which the Session found him contumacious and referred him as such to the Presbytery. On witnesses being cited before the Session it was found proven that George Mackenzie was guilty of Sabbath profanation. The persons who sold the chickens were also censured for their part in the transaction. But, considering discretion the better part of valour, the accused left the district, and was therefore denounced as a fugitive from discipline.

When most of the parishioners had been won over to better habits and a higher standard of conduct, the fishing community still remained obdurate. The appearance of Mr Ross approaching their village by the shore to visit them was a signal for flight, when the whole population would take to their boats with all possible speed, and remain out on the Firth until he had taken his departure and they considered it safe to return.

One day he and the church officer set off for the village, taking with them one or two small carts such as were then in use. As usual, on catching sight of the minister, the population fled, and by the time he and his man reached the village it was completely deserted by the inhabitants, who, in their haste, had omitted to take the precaution of locking the doors of their houses. On arrival at the village, the couple proceeded to enter each house in succession, and help themselves to every cooking utensil they could find. These they piled on to the little carts brought for the purpose, carrying them off and placing them under lock and key in a building which stood in the churchyard.

The indignation of the fishers on their return was intense. No food could they prepare. For two days they fasted. At the end of that period Mr Ross sent a message requesting them to come to the manse. They would fain have declined the invitation, but the pangs of hunger had become more than they could any longer endure, and they reluctantly set off.

To their astonishment, Mr Ross received them with great cordiality, and conducted them without delay to a room where a substantial repast was awaiting them. To this they did ample justice, after which they apologised for their discourteous behaviour, but laid the blame on the curates, who, they said, had given them a false impression of Presbyterian ministers.

This incident marked the beginning of more pleasant relations between the minister and that section of his flock. No longer did the sight of him approaching their village send them scurrying to their boats, and in their general conduct and church-going habits they gradually reached the standard of the rest of the parish.

On 29th December 1733, Walter Ross died. His widow, Catherine Wilson, of Edinburgh, who was his second wife, subsequently married Daniel Beaton, minister of Rosskeen. Ross's first wife, Jane Innes, had predeceased him ten years before at the early age of 27.

When the parish next became vacant, among the candidates who came forward two were proposed. One was Daniel Munro, the other John Porteous. On a vote being taken of heritors and heads of families, the latter was elected by a large majority of both, and on 27th November 1734 he was admitted to the Church of Kilmuir Easter. The sermon was preached in English by Mr John Balfour, of Nigg, on 2 Tim. ii., 2 - "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

John Porteous was a grandson of an English soldier of Cromwell's army, said to be a relative of the Bishop of London, who settled in Inverness, where John was born in 1704. He was also said to be

cousin to the notorious Captain Porteous, whom the mob in Edinburgh hanged in the Grassmarket. His mother was a daughter of the celebrated John Fraser, of Alness He was educated at King's College, Aberdeen, where he distinguished himself as a classical scholar, graduating in 1720.

In later life one of his intimate friends was Dr Adam, the famous rector of the Royal High School, Edinburgh, and a native of Rafford, where Porteous's brother, William, was minister from 1727 to 1738.

On one occasion, in a conversation with Dr Adam, Mr Porteous remarked that it was a pity that Milton had not written "Paradise Lost" in Latin, to which Adam replied that that would be no ordinary undertaking.

"I think I could do it myself," said Porteous. Whereupon Adam prescribed one hundred lines to him for translation. The following day Porteous handed him the lines in hexameter verse, which the rector pronounced pure and beautiful Latinity.

He was licensed by the Presbytery of Elgin on 24th October 1727, and in 1729 was to have been settled at Daviot, but the Episcopalians, who were in the ascendancy in the parish, strongly opposed his election, and on his appearance there to preach he was met by a hostile crowd, chiefly composed of women, who, armed with stones, were determined to prevent him from entering the church. Considering flight the wisest policy, he took to his heels, hotly pursued, and being young and swift of foot, he succeeded in outstripping his pursuers.

His settlement at Kilmuir also met with opposition from one or two of the proprietors, and certain of their retainers and tenants, who from fear of falling into disfavour with them, dared not take any independent action.

It is said that the Laird of Newmore went so far as to threaten violence to any of his tenants who would sign Porteous's call. One man on the estate was courageous enough to disregard the threat and follow his own judgment rather than that of the Laird.

One day some months later, Newmore's tenants were engaged in reaping his crops, as it was then the custom, when he arrived on the scene. On this occasion the tenant who had defied him by signing Porteous's call found his courage not quite equal to meeting him face to face, and promptly disappeared. Newmore, on being informed of the reason of his, absence, sent for him, and in presence of the other reapers assured the trembling man that he had nothing to fear. Turning then to the others, he said, "I have more respect for him than for any of you, for he is the only man on my estate in this parish who has the courage of his convictions."

Another laird, who had no friendly feeling for Mr Porteous and took every opportunity of showing his dislike - even at public worship behaving in such a way as to leave no doubt as to his intentions of annoying and insulting him - was the Earl of Cromartie.

One day Mr Porteous received an invitation to visit him at his castle. On arriving there he was met at the door by the Earl who, in answer to Mr Porteous's enquiry as to his reason for wishing to see him, replied, "To show you out at the back door. "

Mr Porteous, who did not lack spirit, retorted, "You have sent for me in order to insult me, but the time is not distant when I shall be able to enter at this door and pass through all the apartments in

your castle, and you will not dare to come near it. It will no longer be an abode for human beings, but for the fowls of heaven, and thorns will grow where I now stand."

This prediction was duly fulfilled, and after the Jacobite Rebellion the fine old baronial edifice fell into ruins, becoming the home of rooks and jackdaws, while a thorn bush grew at the main door.

Porteous was a supporter of the Hanoverians, and for a few months after the Battle of Culloden, while the country was in a condition of disorder, he resided at Halmaderry, in Kildonan. During his absence the rebels entered his manse and stole a flute with which he was in the habit of amusing himself at intervals during his hours of study.

Of deep piety and a preacher of remarkable eloquence and power, people came from far and near to hear him. His appearance was striking, his figure being unusually tall and erect. A story is told that on one occasion the wife of Patrick Grant, the minister of Nigg, whose services were far from acceptable to the people of his parish, on catching sight of the crowds crossing the sands on their way to hear Mr Porteous, exclaimed to her husband, "Why do you stay in this place? Do you not see the sands black with the people going to Kilmuir?"

"Oh, let them go," was the laconic reply, "They're no' taking the stipend wi' them."

Both in his ordinary conversation and in his sermons, Mr Porteous was in the habit of using metaphors. Many of them have been handed down. He was very fond of his garden, and liked to compare the various plants there to the different classes of Christians in his parish.

On one occasion a worthy man, named Donald Og, from the neighbouring parish of Fearn, came to visit him. Together they strolled round the garden, Mr Porteous drawing his attention to the roses and the various other flowers that grew in profusion. "There goes Donald Og," he would say, as they passed some particularly beautiful blossom, and Donald, with characteristic modesty, would reply, "Indeed, it is very unlike the ugly body."

At length they came to a plant which seemed to be completely composed of foliage.

"There, then," said Mr Porteous, "is Donald Og."

"Well," replied Donald, "it is certainly more like him, than the beautiful ones we have already passed - it looks so sullen and gloomy."

Mr Porteous then stooped down and gently bending back the leaves and exposing the hidden blossoms, said "It certainly does resemble Donald Og more than any of these that we have already passed, for the beauty is hid under the foliage. The King's daughter is all glorious within. Her beauty is hid from herself, but seen by Christ and by His fellows."

So great was his reputation for wisdom and piety that people visited him constantly to consult him on spiritual matters - not only his own people, but those of other parishes, and he was loved and respected even by those whose way of living was anything but creditable.

When Roderick MacCulloch of Glastullich, a man of rough manners and careless conduct, was before the Presbytery of Tain for some delinquency to which he refused to plead guilty, Mr Joseph Munro, minister of Edderton, addressing him, said, "I appeal to your conscience, Glastullich. Are you guilty of this charge?"

"Conscience!" replied MacCulloch. "Were it Mr Porteous there who so addressed me I would take it from him, for we must all allow that he is a man of conscience and a man of God; but, as for you, Joseph, I cannot endure this appeal from you, for the very dogs know that you have no conscience."

One day Mr Porteous, accompanied by his servant, rode across the sands of Nigg to assist at the Communion in Cromarty. On his arrival he searched his pockets for his snuff box, but failed to find it.

" Oh, Donald, I must return home. I have forgotten my snuff box, and cannot get on without it."

"Oh," said Donald, "here it is."

" You have done well in having brought it."

"You brought it yourself. Do you not remember when passing through the sands you threw it from you ?"

"Well, Donald, I do now recollect when tempted by Satan's suggestions I threw the snuff box at him; but you did well in having picked it up."

Porteous was somewhat absent-minded, and on one occasion he failed to recognise his own horse as it graze on the glebe, making enquiries as to its owner, and requesting that it should not be allowed to stray again, as the grass was scanty enough for his own cattle.

A story is told of a man who late one evening, after doing business in Invergordon, set off for his home in Kilmuir. He had not long proceeded on his way when he was joined by a tall, dark man of distinguished presence, who asked the pleasure of his company along the road.

This was granted, and they set off together. The conversation flowed so easily and delightfully that the boundary between the parishes of Rosskeen and Kilmuir was reached all too soon. Here the stranger halted, signifying his intention of parting from his fellow-traveller, who, loath to lose the company of one so charming, endeavoured to persuade him to go with him a little further. Politely but firmly, however, he declined, saying, "I dare not cross the threshold of Kilmuir, for the godly Mr Porteous is now on his knees in prayer." At that moment, observing a pair of cloven hoofs, the Kilmuir man, with horror and dismay, realised the identity of him whose company he had found so entrancing.

While Mr Porteous did not experience the same difficulty as his predecessors in obtaining payment of his stipend, it was admitted to be inadequate, and in 1766, with the object of having it augmented, the Laird of Balnagown, supported by some of the other heritors, brought forward a proposal to join the parishes of Logie and of Fearn to Kilmuir, under the charge of Mr Porteous. This was objected to by the majority of the heritors on the grounds that the arrangement might be prejudicial to the spiritual life of the people in that area, the inadequacy of the stipend being considered insufficient justification for such a step being taken. Further, it was considered probable that another method of augmenting the stipend might be found which would not endanger the spiritual welfare of the people nor cause the identity of one parish to be merged in another. This was by inducing the Commissioners in charge of the teinds to apply certain free teinds in the parish to the augmentation of the stipend, particularly those belonging to the annexed estate of Cromartie, which did not contribute to the support of the Church in the same proportion as the other lands in

the parish. There was an impression among the members of the Presbytery that the Commissioners would be sympathetic to this suggestion, and that the application had every chance of being successful. Whether or not the matter was proceeded with the records do not disclose.

The death of Mr Porteous in 1775 caused intense grief throughout the whole district. The coffin rested for a short time before interment in front of the manse. About two hundred women surrounded it, and during its transport to the churchyard their wailing could be heard half-a-mile away. It is stated by the writer of the New Statistical Account of the parish that even sixty-three years after his death his memory "is still cherished with the highest veneration."

His dust reposes in Kilmuir Churchyard under a flat stone. The inscription in parts is now almost illegible. Once a sacred shrine to the people of the neighbourhood, the grave, though still tended, arouses no interest in the passer-by.

In 1764, eleven years before the death of Porteous, John Matheson, then a youth of seventeen, had been appointed schoolmaster of the parish, and five years later he was licensed as a preacher of the Gospel by the Presbytery of Tain. In 1771 he resigned the position of schoolmaster to be itinerant missionary at Kincardine and Creich, at a salary of £25 per annum, with, in addition, £10 from the parishes.

He had been held in great respect by the people of Kilmuir and on Mr Porteous's death in 1770 they presented a call to him to return to the parish as minister. He accepted the call, and on the 22nd day of September in the same year he was admitted into the church. He received a warm welcome from the large gathering present, the heritors, elders and heads of families, according to the usual custom, giving him the right hand of fellowship.

About three years later he married Anne, daughter of John Montgomery, merchant in Milntown. John Matheson was a man of independent views, with the courage of his convictions, and did not hesitate to speak his mind when occasion arose. We find him reprimanding the farmer of Delny for ploughing up an ancient graveyard on his land, and inducing him by the influence of his personality to give an undertaking that no further acts of desecration would be committed by him.

On another occasion he appears as a supporter of an application by Mr John Mackenzie student of Divinity in Kilmuir Easter parish, for a Presbyterial certificate. The application was opposed by another member of the Presbytery on the grounds that the applicant held "loose and advanced" views on the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion, and that his "walk and conversation" were not what one would look for in a student of Divinity.

A thorough inquiry into this was held by the Presbytery. Among the witnesses examined was Mr Gustavus Aird, of Heathfield, either father or grandfather of the Rev. Dr Aird, of Creich. The Presbytery decided against Mackenzie, who, nothing daunted, appealed to the Synod, which reversed the judgment of the Presbytery. The Presbytery then took the case to the General Assembly, but there they again found opinion against them, and the decision of the Synod was upheld, the Assembly finding "the proceedings of the Presbytery of Tain in relation to Mr John Mackenzie highly irregular and injurious to him." The Assembly, therefore, overturned these proceedings, and ordered the entry relating to them to be expunged from the Records of the Presbytery. On 7th July 1802, at a meeting of the Presbytery, this was duly carried out.

During Mr Matheson's ministry the church was rebuilt. It then contained nine hundred sittings. About that time there was great activity in the building trade in Kilmuir and the neighbouring

district, several substantial buildings, including the present mansion-house of Tarbat, Kindeace House and Bayfield House, in Nigg, being built in the same year, 1798.

In 1811 Mr John Matheson, whose health for some time had been giving cause for anxiety, applied for an assistant and successor, and on 5th February of that year he presented to the Presbytery the following letter from Edward Hay Mackenzie of Cromartie, patron of the church and parish in right of his wife. It was written from Newhall, and dated

13th January 1811

" Dear Sir, - We are sorry to see by your letter that you are not recovering as well as we could wish. It will give Mrs Mackenzie and myself great satisfaction that your son, Charles, has it in his power to accept of being assistant and successor to you, as we consider him, from the character given us, to be a young man fully qualified in all respects for the charge.

I am, dear Sir, Yours very sincerely,

(Signed) EDWARD HAY MACKENZIE.

Charles then presented himself before the Presbytery for examination as to his fitness for ordination. His answers to the usual questions and the two discourses which were required from him being approved, he was accordingly ordained as assistant but not successor. The reason for this, was probably the smallness of the living. The ordination was at Tain, and not at Kilmnir, where it would have taken place had he been appointed both assistant and successor.

Later, his father's health must have improved temporarily, for in 1813 Charles was admitted to the Gaelic and English Chapel, Edinburgh. The death of his father, however, occurred in April of the following year, and Charles was, in September, admitted to the church of Kilmuir Easter as its minister. Mr Neil Kennedy preached in Gaelic to a crowded congregation, who later listened to the English sermon of Mr Matheson, after which his name was added to the Presbytery Roll.

In those days each parish had its catechist, appointed by the minister, with consent of the congregation. The salary was found partly by the minister and partly by the parishioners. It was the duty of the catechist to visit the people, examining both children and adults in their knowledge of the Shorter Catechism. He was allowed to read the Scriptures but not explain them, this duty being reserved for the ordained minister.

The parish of Kilmuir had several notable catechists. One, Hugh Ross, was in his youth somewhat careless regarding spiritual matters. He was also known to be rather proud of his personal appearance, and of his strength, and was leader in the shinty matches. He was also the best dancer in the district.

On one occasion when he set off to attend the Communion services in Fearn his thoughts were more on a new suit of clothes he was wearing and the impression he was likely to make than on the service of worship in which he was ostensibly to take part. The preacher was Mr Porteous, whose eloquence was so moving that Ross soon forgot the new clothes in repentance of his worldliness, and in a sincere desire for a change of heart and life. Not long afterwards he was appointed to the office of catechist in the parish.

Another catechist who gave valuable service in Kilmuir was John Ross McEan, who is described as a man of gentle, amiable disposition. He was succeeded by Donald Ross Mitchell, who was known as "the model catechist of Ross-shire". Few were so well equipped for the work. He had great natural abilities, but was illiterate until after his marriage when, by diligent application he succeeded in learning to read Gaelic. In spite of his limited education, his knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures and his skill as an instructor of the young were held in high respect. For thirty-two years he laboured with great acceptance in the parish. He died in 1833. During the closing days of his life he suffered great pain, but his faith remained clear and steadfast to the end.

His successor was Donald Mackay, who held the office for nearly forty years. After the Disruption he acted as precentor in the Free Church. His son, Alexander, or "Sandy," as he was more commonly referred to, was a much respected member of the community, and succeeded his father as precentor, which duty he continued to perform until his death in 1889. Several of their descendants still reside in the parish. With Donald Mackay's death on 30th August 1872, at the age of 79, the office fell into desuetude. The minister himself then undertook the work of catechising, and paid an annual visit to each home, for the purpose of examining the members of every family, child and adult, in their knowledge of the Shorter Catechism. Before the century ended that custom also died out.

In 1838 the Church of Kilmuir, rebuilt in 1798, was in a good state of repair. The manse had been built in 1738. There were six acres of glebe, valued at £12 per annum, and the stipend was 87 bolls, 1 firlot, 1 peck, 3 lippies oatmeal, 9 stones (Ross-shire boll) and £62 0s 4d sterling. The stipend awarded by the Court of Teinds was 15 chalders; but the teinds did not pay the stipend nor the sum necessary to purchase the Communion elements. The church contained nine hundred sittings, and the congregation was drawn from three hundred and fifty families, about eight hundred individuals being in regular attendance, the number of communicants averaging sixty.

A Bible Society met once a quarter for prayer, and once a year to distribute its funds to the necessitous poor of the parish. From eighty to a hundred were in receipt of relief. The funds were derived from various sources. In 1793, besides the weekly collections, there was a sum in hand which had accumulated in plentiful years, and a legacy of £24 from Mrs Fraser of Pitcaillen. Those who begged from door to door were allowed a sum sufficient to purchase a pair of shoes annually. In 1838 the rent of a house in Tain supplied £15 to the fund, while the hiring of the mort cloth yielded £2 per annum, and a mortification of barley by George, Earl of Cromartie, dated 1686, produced 5 bolls annually for distribution. Certain conditions were imposed on those who claimed benefits from it. They had to be regular in attendance at Divine worship, and innocent of the sins of blasphemy, lying, drunkenness, fornication and of speaking disrespectfully of his Majesty or his Government in Church or State. For a first and second offence the transgressor was admonished by the minister, and for a third offence he was reported to the Trustees and fide-commissaries, and disqualified from further benefit. Other mortifications amounted to £1. 3s 10d yearly.

The average sum distributed annually to each recipient was about 5/- to 6/- annually. It would appear that in those days poverty was regarded not only as a misfortune, but a disgrace, for we are assured by the writer of the New Statistical Account of the parish that "none but the extremely necessitous receive parochial aid, and others are dissuaded from seeking it, and taught to consider it as degrading". Those receiving only occasional assistance were not required to suffer the humiliation of having their names entered in the list of paupers. Fortunately, our outlook has changed in this respect.

No Session Records of the parish have been preserved prior to 1771. The date of the first entry, signed by Mr John Porteous, moderator, is 11th October 1771. The elders present on that occasion were William Munro in Delny, Hugh Mackenzie in Achyle, and Donald Ross in Knockgarty, the heritors being:-

Captain John Ross in Balnagown;
Sir John Gordon of Invergordon, Baronet;
Charles Robertson of Kindeace;
William Ross of Aldie and Newmore;
David Ross of Priesthill;
Roderick Mackenzie of Scotsburn;
Colin Mackenzie, writer in Dingwall for Captain Forbes of Newmore, factor on the annexed Estate of Cromartie;
George Mackenzie of Redcastle upon the Estate of Kincaig.

The Session Clerk was Jno. Oliphant.

In 1843, owing to dissatisfaction with the system of patronage, there occurred that great schism in the Church of Scotland known as the Disruption, when the majority of the clergy and the people left the Church of their fathers and formed a new Church, called the Free Church of Scotland. All the members of the Tain Presbytery joined in the secession except Hugh Ross, minister of Fearn. The neighbouring Presbytery then stepped in, declared the churches vacant, and expunged from the roll of ministers of the Church of Scotland the names of the seceding ministers, including that of Charles Ross Matheson, of Kilmuir Easter. The Clerk was then instructed to intimate the vacancies to John Hay Mackenzie of Cromartie, patron.

In the same year, Daniel Macbride was presented to the Kilmuir living, Mr Matheson remaining in the parish as minister of the Free Church congregation, which in due course acquired a new building not far distant from the site of the mediaeval Chapel of Delny.

"The Trustees of the Free Church congregation, Kilmuir Easter, seised, in a triangular Piece of ground, being part of the lands of Delny on which a church has been built, par Kilmuir Easter, on ch. by Roderick Macleod of Cadboll, Nov. 8, 1848 " (Sasines, 1781-1814).

In 1903, when the Union took place between the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church, the church erected in 1876, which took the place of the Disruption building, became the property of that small section of the Free Church which refused to be a party to this Union. The former Free Church now changed its name to the United Free Church, and a building of wood and iron was erected to accommodate the congregation of Kilmuir, quite near to their old place of worship. In the year 1929, when the United Free Church and the Church of Scotland became re-united, it reverted again to its old name, the Church of Scotland.

Daniel Macbride, who replaced Matheson in 1843, was translated, in 1851, to Little Dunkeld. His wife was Anna Stewart, whom he had married in 1845.

His successor was William Macpherson, who died in 1866, after a ministry of eleven years. Two of his sons - Duncan and William - were knighted for their services to the State. Sir Duncan was in the Bengal Civil Service, becoming head of the Customs Department in Calcutta, afterwards Commissioner of two divisions in succession, and during the last three years of his Indian service, head of the Board of Revenue for the whole Province of Bengal. Sir William had an equally

distinguished career in Medicine. He was Director-General of the Medical Services at the time of the Great War, and was the author of a book on the Medical History of the War. A third son, Charles, was a successful chartered accountant in Edinburgh, well-known in the city, and much respected. He had varied interests, rendering valuable service in many spheres, and was the President of the Society of Accountants in Edinburgh.

Charles Matheson, who had left the Church of Scotland at the Disruption to become the first minister of the Free Church of Kilmuir, died in the same year as Macpherson, his successor being Donald Campbell Macdonald, M.A. Austere and dignified in manner, Macdonald was an earnest preacher and a sincere friend. His son, John Somerled Macdonald, M.A., D.D., was for some years minister of Sefton Park Church, Liverpool, Ian Maclaren's old church, and is now (1935) minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Syracuse, New York State.

His father's death occurred in 1904, when he was succeeded by John Fraser, M.A., who later went to Renfield Church, Glasgow, and then to Dornoch. His successor is the present minister, Roderick Cameron, M.A.

Donald Stuart, minister of the Parish Church, demitted office in 1900, when Henry Reid Chalmers, M.A., became parish minister. In his time the parish church was restored and altered, two sides of the gallery being removed and the pulpit taken from the south wall and placed at the wall next to the old tower. The high-backed enclosed pews, reserved for the large heritors, were replaced by less pretentious seats, and a collection plate at the door took the place of the fivefeet long-handled ladles which had been in use for generations.

On Mr Chalmers's translation, in 1907, to Duffus, Dugald McCallum, M.A., now minister of the neighbouring parish of Rosskeen, was chosen to succeed him.

The present minister is John Campbell McNaught, B.D., author of "The Celtic Church and the See of St Peter."

Chapter III - Schools and Schoolmasters

Following on the settlement of St Columba and his twelve disciples in Iona, monasteries had sprung up at different points all over the country. In Ross-shire there were at least three of these institutions. There is a vague tradition that one existed in Kilmuir Easter. Each monastery had a school attached to it, in which certain branches of knowledge were taught, including Latin, which was the language used in the service of the church.

At first the pupils were composed entirely of boys considered suitable for service in the Church, but gradually others were enrolled, as the value of education came to be recognised.

At the Reformation the Reformed Church took over the work of education, and aimed at having a school in every parish, but it was not until 1616 that this was embodied in an Act of Parliament. In 1633, Parliament found it necessary to re-enact the measure, with the addition of a clause that provided that the bishops should have power to impose taxation for the maintenance of the schools with consent of the heritors and the majority of the parishioners, and if the heritors should refuse to agree to this, with consent of the latter alone.

In 1641 a petition was presented to Parliament by the General Assembly for the establishment of a school in every parish for instruction in reading, writing and the rudiments of religion, and every minister was asked to report to his Presbytery if this had been carried out.

In 1646 an important Act was passed, which, with certain modifications, was revived towards the end of the century. It enacted that in every parish lacking a school the heritors should provide a schoolhouse and a stipend for the master, and if they failed to do so the Presbytery should proceed to nominate a dozen persons and empower them to establish a school and tax the heritors for its maintenance.

With the Restoration this Act of 1646, along with all others of the period, were declared invalid, but in 1696, in the reign of William and Mary, its main principles were reaffirmed by the "Act of Settling of Schools", which ordained that "there be a school settled and established and a Schoolmaster appointed in every parish not already provided, by the advice of the heritors and Minister of the Paroch; and for that effect that the Heritors in every Paroch meet and provide a commodious house for a school and settle and modify a salary to a Schoolmaster which shall not be under one Hundred merks nor above two Hundred merks, to be payed yearly at two terms, Whitsunday and Martinmas, by equall portions."

This law, however, like its predecessors, was as a general rule disregarded, in spite of valiant efforts on the part of Presbyteries to awaken heritors in the country and magistrates in the towns to a sense of their duties and their legal obligations in the matter. Consequently, education was in a deplorable condition all over the country. In the Highlands it was hampered still further in many places, even when schools existed, by instruction being given in English to children who spoke only Gaelic.

In 1707, the minister of Kilmuir Easter, Daniel McGilligan, in response to an enquiry by the Presbytery regarding the position in his parish, reported that the schoolmaster had been removed, but that another was being sought for. McGilligan, indeed, made strenuous efforts to have a schoolmaster settled there at the legal salary. Following instructions from the Presbytery, he called a meeting of heritors and parishioners, but no one appeared. He then called on Lord MacLeod, who

was one of the principal heritors, but MacLeod, on the plea of indisposition, excused himself from seeing him. Eventually, McGilligan succeeded in getting the heritors together and persuading them to agree to having a schoolmaster appointed at the minimum salary of 100 merks.

There is no record of the immediate appointment of a schoolmaster, but in 1715, John McArthur, who later became minister of Killearnan and then of Logie Easter, was schoolmaster of Kilmuir Easter.

About that time the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge became active, and did valuable work in supplementing parish schools. It decided that a school should be established at Balintraid, where there were seventy families, and that the school should be ambulatory to other corners of the parish. This meant that the teacher went from place to place teaching his pupils in any odd barn or shed available, and living in the houses of the parents. Even when a house was provided for him it was usually a mere hovel, consisting of one, or at most two, rooms. This building served as both dwelling-house and school, and in the case of a teacher with wife and family the condition of things may be better imagined than described.

The formation of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was the outcome of a desire on the part of a small private group of Edinburgh philanthropists to bring civilising influences to the remote districts of Scotland.

After some not very successful efforts in the opening years of the century to set up one or two schools, the supporters of the cause in 1709 received "Her Majesty's Letters Patent, Erecting a Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge," with authority to use such money as might accrue to them, the members of the Society, "to Erect and Maintain schools to Teach to Read especially the Holy Scriptures and other good and pious books; as also, to Teach Writing, Arithmetic and such like degrees of knowledge in the Highlands, Islands and remote Corners of Scotland." Thereafter the Society was indefatigable in its efforts to establish schools throughout the country, not only for teaching scripture and reading, writing and arithmetic, but schools for technical instruction in agriculture, gardening and spinning.

The Society met with the greatest discouragement in the heart of the Highlands and in remote corners of islands where the Heritors were Papists or opposed to the established government; and the people themselves, not realising the benefits of learning, were slow to send their children to the schools. In some cases the tenants who did enrol their children received notice to quit.

But an appreciation of education and its advantages gradually grew, until it frequently happened that servants would leave their employment for a time so that they might be free to attend the school, or they would go privately at night to the schoolmaster, or to the more advanced of the scholars in order to learn to read, and the Society began to receive petitions from various parts of the country for schools to be set up.

Unfortunately, the men who were put in charge of the Society's schools were not as a rule very well qualified for the work. This is not surprising, considering the miserable payment they received.

Sir George Stewart Mackenzie, in his "General Survey of the Shires of Ross and Cromarty," published in 1810, while admitting the good work done by this Society in opening the minds and dispelling the ignorance of "the lower orders of people", describes the schoolmasters appointed by the Society as "weak, miserable creatures." He despises their methods of teaching and deplores the

fact that their teaching of reading is entirely confined to the Bible, which, he remarks may be the best reading material, but is not, in his opinion, the only book necessary.

Many of the parish teachers, in order to earn a little more than their meagre salary, undertook other duties when these were available to which a small fee was attached. They might act as registrar of births, marriages and deaths, as precentor and as session clerk. Yet all these offices, combined with that of schoolmaster, seldom produced more than £10 a-year.

One luckless dominie who, at the end of the eighteenth century, was schoolmaster of Heriot, and, in addition, precentor, clerk, beadle and gravedigger, only succeeded in bringing his income up to a sum of £8.

Towards the middle of the century the teachers, feeling the hardships of their lot almost more than they could bear, decided to make an attempt to have their conditions improved. They prepared a statement, which in 1748 they presented to the General Assembly and to Parliament. They urged that the salaries of the schoolmasters of Scotland should be increased, and made a special appeal to the members of the General Assembly to support them, but the clergy, engrossed with their own affairs, paid no attention. Parliament also turned deaf ears to their plea, and as the schoolmasters possessed neither money nor influence, they were unable to bring pressure to bear on those in responsible quarters, and the effort which started with such determination had to be dropped.

In 1782 they renewed their endeavours to obtain relief from their poverty and degradation, but although the wages of all other workers had increased, they were again unsuccessful.

The conditions in Kilmuir were exactly similar to those in other parts of the country. The salary of the parish schoolmaster there at the earliest period known was about £5 sterling. The subjects he taught were the rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic, together with English grammar, Latin and book-keeping. Between 1780 and 1803 the conditions had not changed.

In addition to the parish school, one had been erected in Kinrive, in the upper part of the parish, by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge.

From 1769 to 1771 the schoolmaster of this school was John Davidson, who was paid at the same rate as the parish schoolmaster-about £5 sterling per annum.

In erecting a school one of the conditions laid down by the Society was that a sufficient number of heritors and parents must bind themselves to make an addition for a certain term of years to the salary paid by the Society. At first the period was ten years, but in 1764 it was shortened to three years. This addition had to be paid in advance each year, and the receipt produced to the visitors of the said schools, who had to report to the Society. Failing this the school was liable to be removed to another district.

The number of pupils attending the school at Kinrive in 1769 was fifty-four - twenty-eight boys and twenty-six girls. The following year there was a drop in attendance to forty-seven - twenty-three boys and twenty-four girls.

Davidson's successor was Duncan Robertson. In his time the attendance dropped still further, the number on the roll in 1772 being forty.

Donald Grigor succeeded Robertson in 1773, and in 1775 the school was removed from Kinrive to a point lower down, somewhere on the site of the present farm of Calrichie [i.e., Heathfield]. Grigor's name is changed in the records to McGrigor, and then to McGregor, doubtless due to the repeal of the law against the use of the name McGregor. During his term of office his salary was gradually increased. From £5 it was raised to £7, and then to £8, and finally £10. He remained in office until at least 1778.

For a few years following this date there are blanks in the records relating to the school at Calrichie, but in 1783 it appears again with George Ross as schoolmaster. His salary was £10, and there was an attendance of forty-three scholars. In 1793 the two schools in Kilmuir-the parish school and the Society school-had in all one hundred and twenty pupils.

Although the cost of living had risen considerably, the salary of the parish schoolmaster had remained stationary at 100 merks Scots (£5 14s 1d), which is described in the Old Statistical Account by the Rev. John Matheson, as "insufficient to provide the common necessities of life." George Ross, the Society schoolmaster, was more fortunate with a salary of £13 per annum, the number of pupils attending his school being seventy-five - fifty-three boys and twenty-two girls.

It was not until after 1802, when the Schoolmasters' Act was passed, that there was any mitigation of the sufferings of teachers. This Act provided that no schoolmaster's income should be under 300 merks (£16 13s 4d) nor above 400 merks (£22 4s 5.5d), and in addition the heritors had to provide a house, consisting of not less than two apartments and ground for a garden of not less than a quarter of a Scots acre. Where there was no garden ground, heritors might make an addition to the salary. Further improvement was made in 1861 by an Act requiring the house to consist of three apartments besides the kitchen.

In spite of the poverty of the teachers and the reluctance at that time of men with any claims to culture to take service in the profession, good work was done in many of the parish schools of Scotland, and the intellectual standard of the people rose. Many among the humblest classes in the country were prepared there for the University, where they brought credit to themselves and to their teachers. Among them were men who afterwards distinguished themselves in the learned professions and in other spheres.

The history of education in Kilmuir is, on the whole, like that elsewhere in Scotland, but while the schools in many rural parishes of Scotland, after their separation from the Church, became institutions where only elementary education was given, the parish school of Kilmuir Easter retained its original character, and provided instruction in the higher branches of learning. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century, when a scheme for centralising secondary education was brought into effect, and certain schools were selected at suitable points to provide secondary education for particular areas, that the classics and other advanced subjects ceased to be taught in Kilmuir Easter school.

A Sheriff's warrant of 1751 refers to the "Grammar School", Kilmuir Easter, thus indicating a school of advanced type. It reads:- "That whereupon . . . Wm. Ross, son of Alexr. Ross in Dalnacleragh, now prisoner in the Tolbooth of Tain, has been taken up and incarcerated for wearing and using the Highland dress and arms contra to and in defiance of the Act of Parliament . . . summoned Hugh Rose, teacher of the grammar school of Kilmuir Easter, and Donald Ross, Roderick Ross and Alexr. Mackenzie students at the said school, to bear leal and soothfast witness as they shall be spaired at."

Here we have a vivid reminder of the law against wearing the kilt which was enforced rigidly until 1782.

In 1764, Mr John Matheson, who some years later became minister of the parish, appeared before the Presbytery as an applicant for the position of schoolmaster of Kilmuir Easter. He was examined regarding his fitness "to teach a Grammar School", and having satisfied the examiners, he was recommended by the Presbytery to the heritors and Kirk Session and forthwith appointed parish schoolmaster.

From a factor's report on the forfeited Estate of Cromartie one gathers that in 1768 the parish school of Kilmuir served both the parish of Kilmuir and that of Logie.

Matheson was licensed for the ministry by the Presbytery of Tain on 9th August 1769, and two years later he left to take up duties as ordained missionary at Kincardine and Creich; he returned to Kilmuir as its minister in September 1775.

His successor in the parish school of Kilmuir was Alexander Campbell, who in 1772 was transferred to Tain Grammar School.

In a history of Tain, written by Rev. W. Taylor, a native of the burgh, Campbell received the following high tribute:- "Of the quality of the teaching in the Grammar School in Tain in the latter half of the eighteenth century tradition speaks well. Under a teacher of the name of Campbell it was apparently very high, and from his school not a few boys were sent forth into the world with classical as well as other attainments, which enabled them to shine, and to rise to honourable positions in life."

By 1810 the salary paid to the parish schoolmasters of Ross-shire was not less than the maximum rate of £22 4s 5.5d. In Kilmuir, for the year ending in 1825, it was slightly more, being £23 7s 2d; school fees were £14 1s 6d; for acting as session-clerk the salary was £1, and there were fees in addition which amounted to £1 12s.

The house met the legal requirements. The size is given as "30 feet by 18 over walls, side walls seven feet six inches high, wing 23 feet three inches by 18 feet, and six feet nine inches high."

The fees were as follows:- Book-keeping, 7s 6d per quarter; Latin, 4s; arithmetic, 2s 6d; writing, 2s; English grammar, 3s; reading, 1s 6d.

The average number of scholars in attendance was sixty.

Mr Donald Munro, who was licensed to preach in both Gaelic and English, was parish schoolmaster, while in the Society's school at Calrichie, George Ross, who had been there from 1783, was in charge, his salary being now at the rate of £18 per annum, with a house and croft furnished by the parish. He received scarcely any fees. The subjects he taught were English and Gaelic, reading, writing and arithmetic, the number of children in attendance being about fifty. Ross continued to teach this school until at least 1822, his salary remaining stationary at £18, but the attendance gradually fell off from eighty-one in 1816 to forty-three in 1822. An old gravestone in Kilmuir Churchyard tells of his death in 1824, aged 72, his wife, Janet Urquhart, having predeceased him in 1807.

Mr Donald Munro was still parish schoolmaster in 1838, the date of the New Statistical Account, of which he is the author. From the information given there one gathers that conditions had improved still further on those of a dozen years earlier. His salary had increased to £32. 2s. 9d, which, with the fees, brought his income to £40. The salary of the Society teacher had remained stationary at £18, but the fees he now succeeded in collecting amounted to £16. The total roll of scholars in attendance at both schools had increased to a hundred and sixty.

The fees at the parochial school were:-

Reading, writing, arithmetic 2s 6d per quarter
Latin and Greek 5s per quarter
Book-keeping 7s 6d per quarter
English grammar 3s per quarter.

The instruction was conducted in Gaelic as well as in English, and the children were taught to read in Gaelic. This conduced to more rapid progress than formerly, when Gaelic was banned, and the instruction given entirely in English to children who were unfamiliar with that language.

Following Donald Munro, John Forbes became parish schoolmaster. In 1844 he left to be schoolmaster of Edinkillie, but on his retiral he returned to the district. He resided in Invergordon, and for some years filled the office of Inspector of Poor for the parishes of Kilmuir, Alness and Rosskeen.

The parochial system of education was not at first in any sense denominational. It was only when divisions took place in the Church of Scotland that it took on that character. Even then, the scholars attending the parish schools were never restricted to those whose parents attended the Parish Church, but included children from other denominations.

In 1843 many teachers who joined the Free Church had to give up their positions in the parish schools. It was mainly in consequence of this that the Free Church Education Scheme was commenced, the aim of which was to have a school in connection with every congregation.

It is reported that in 1866 there were three schools in Kilmuir Easter with two hundred and eight children on the roll, and an average of a hundred and forty in attendance. The total number of children in the parish in that year between the ages of three and fifteen was six hundred and thirteen.

These schools were the parish school, the Free Church school, and a school which succeeded the one established by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. This last was situated in Delny Muir, and was supposed to serve both the parish of Kilmuir and the neighbouring parish of Rosskeen.

Naturally a keen controversy arose between the parishes as to whether the minister of Kilmuir or the minister of Rosskeen had the right to conduct the examination. At that time the management of each school was in the hands of the Presbytery of the denomination to which the school belonged, the minister of that denomination in the parish being deputed to undertake an oral examination of the scholars once a year, usually in presence of a gathering of parents and others interested.

On the occasion of the last examination of the school the ministers of both parishes arrived to conduct the examination, and a heated and prolonged argument took place between the members of

the audience representing the two parishes. At length one of the ministers, no doubt with the laudable object of introducing a more peaceable atmosphere and thereby closing the discussion, rose, saying, "Let us pray." But the spirit of peace was not so easily invoked. One of the disputants immediately jumped to his feet, angrily shouting, "There shall be no pray or preach here this day."

How the matter ended is not known, and, soon after this episode, the school was closed.

The last teacher in charge of it was Alexander Ross, who became headmaster of Bridgend Public School, Alness. His predecessor in the Kilmuir School was James Munro. Neither had any special qualifications as teachers.

In addition to the three schools mentioned above, was the school for daughters of employees on the Balnagown Estate, carried on in a cottage within the policies, and maintained by Lady Mary Ross. It was closed shortly after the passing of the Education Act of 1872. The last teacher of this school was Mrs Watson, a widow who, on leaving Balnagown, started a small school at Balintraid Pier, but not long afterwards was appointed to a school at Caputh, Perthshire. She subsequently married Alexander Wills, teacher of the General Assembly School in Scotsburn, and later Clerk to Kilmuir Easter School Board and Inspector of Poor for Invergordon.

In 1844, John Mitchell, a graduate and licensed preacher of the Gospel, became parish schoolmaster, his appointment being made on 14th September of that year. There had been several applicants for the post, and certain of these were selected for interview. One was from Dundee, another from Leven. On examination, Mitchell was the only one found to possess the necessary qualifications.

At one of the meetings of heritors and kirk-session, when the appointment was being discussed, there was some difference of opinion regarding the emoluments. One of those present proposed that £50 per annum should be offered, another moved that it should be £35. The final decision is not recorded.

Mitchell, who was the son of an Inland Revenue officer at Invergordon, and unmarried, remained in the parish as schoolmaster for twenty-five years, and for part of that time he acted as session-clerk. An old pupil tells that towards the end of his time he gave only one lesson per day, spending a great part of his time in friendly chat with an old gardener, who was one of his neighbours. This inattention to duty was due, no doubt, to physical disability, and eventually he intimated to the heritors and kirk-session that, owing to illhealth, he was unable to carry on his work. Submitting certificates to this effect from several doctors, he craved permission to be relieved of his office. This was agreed to, and in 1869, when only about fifty years of age, he retired on a pension of £40 a year. He left the district and resided in Edinburgh for a considerable number of years until his death.

His successor in Kilmuir was Thomas Guthrie Meldrum, a native of Tomintoul, Banffshire, where his father was postmaster and sheriff-clerk-depute. He was educated in the parish school there and at the Old Grammar School of Aberdeen, graduating M.A. at Aberdeen University in 1869.

The election of a parish schoolmaster was vested in the heritors and parish minister, who fixed the fees, regulated the hours of teaching, and settled the length and the dates of the holidays. His tenure of office was "ad vitam aut culpam" (for life if he continued to exercise the office without fault), and on retiring he was entitled to a pension amounting to two-thirds of his salary.

At the Reformation schoolmasters were required to sign the Confession of Faith and the Formula of the Church of Scotland. The General Assembly of 1700 confirmed this, and made the Presbyteries responsible for seeing that every schoolmaster fulfilled this obligation. On election he also had to undergo an examination by the Presbytery of the bounds.

The Act of 1861 abolished these provisions. He was no longer required to sign the Confession of Faith, and his examination was conducted by examiners appointed by the University Court of each University. For this purpose the schools were distributed into four districts, each of which was attached to one University. The schoolmaster, on satisfying the examiners, was entitled to a certificate as evidence of his competency for the office.

Some dissatisfaction existed among teachers over the fact that this examination was held after their election and not prior to it, for there was a danger of the teacher's losing both posts if the certificate was withheld, as, naturally, he was expected to resign from the one on being appointed to the other. This was known to have happened in one or two cases.

Mr Meldrum's appointment was made at a meeting of the heritors and the minister of the parish, held on 14th September 1869. Those present were Alexander Mathieson of Ardrross, M.P.; Charles Robertson of Kindeace; John Forsyth, factor for Balnagown; and Donald Stuart, parish minister, Kindeace, being chairman, and Mr Stuart, clerk.

According to regulations, the schoolmaster-elect, on his appointment, had to appear at Aberdeen and undergo an examination by a professor or professors appointed by the University.

On this occasion the examiner was Dr Scott, known as "Hebrew Scott."

As the candidate was about to enter the room where the Professor awaited his arrival, two teachers there for the same purpose emerged, and one of them in passing muttered, "Don't be afraid. It's a proper farce." And a farce it was.

The first question was, "Where are you going?" and on the candidate's replying, "To Kilmuir in Easter Ross." "Oh, I know that district. I was for twelve months Rector of Tain Academy."

The next enquiry was whether the candidate knew the Shorter Catechism, and on his replying, with becoming modesty, that he thought he did, he was asked to repeat the answer to "What is Effectual Calling?"

This being done to the satisfaction of the examiner, he received the certificate guaranteeing his competency for the post !

I have before me a sheet of notepaper, stained and tattered, on one side of which is inscribed the time-table of Kilmuir Easter School, and on the other a list of the school fees charged. It was written by the Rev. Donald Stuart, the parish minister, who handed it to Thomas Guthrie Meldrum for his guidance on taking up his duties as schoolmaster. It may interest readers to compare the school timetables of today with that which obtained in Kilmuir in the "sixties" and "seventies" of the nineteenth century.

KILMUIR PARISH SCHOOL

ROUTINE OF WORK

10.00am to 10.40am - Script. & Cat. and Slate

10.40am to 11.00am - Writing and Children's English

11.00am to 11.30am - Gramr. classes 1, 2, 3

11.30am to 11.50am - Latin and Prepare English

11.50am to 12 noon - "Little Play"

12 noon to 1.00pm - English Classes 1, 2, 3, 4, & Prepare Geography & do.Arithmetic

1.00pm to 2.00pm - Play

2.00pm to 2.40pm - Geography Classes 1, 2, 3

2.40pm to 3.30pm - All Arithmetic

In Gramr., Geography, Latin and Arith. John Elliot to be alone. In Scripture, Writing and History to be with the others.

School Fees to be charged at end of each qr. as follows:-

Children on	Fees
English and Slate	2s per quarter
Writing, Arithmetic and Catechism (Junr.)	2s 6d per quarter
Scripture and Geography	3s per quarter
Grammar and Senr. Geography	3s per quarter
History Senr., Gramr. and Geo.	4s per quarter
Latin	4s 6d per quarter
Greek	5s per quarter
Mathematics	5s 6d per quarter

An allowance to be made when more than 3 members from the same Family attend.

The schoolmaster was allowed to retain the fees as part of his payment, and he received in addition the Government grant and about £52 a year from the heritors.

He found, however, that it was one thing to draw up a scale of fees, but another matter to collect the money. Only about a third of what was due to him could he depend on receiving, and when those parents who were able and willing to discharge their obligations called at the schoolhouse to pay their fees, he and his wife, in their youth and inexperience, and being more hospitably than commercially minded, used to give them a sixpence back and a glass of wine! This may have done much to foster friendly relations between parent and teacher, but did little towards helping to balance the household budget.

To qualify for the Government grant the school buildings, the qualifications of the master, and the efficiency of his teaching had to satisfy the requirements of the Education Committee of the Privy Council. The amount paid depended on the number of children in attendance and the number who passed the examination conducted by the Government Inspector.

At the time of Mr Meldrum's appointment education in the district was at rather a low ebb. The schoolmasters showed varying degrees of proficiency for their work. One or two were graduates, others might have had a couple of sessions at one of the Universities, but many had no academic qualifications whatever further than having shown ability a little above that of their fellow pupils in the class-room. Discipline in many cases was weak and the teaching poor.

The new parish schoolmaster of Kilmuir was young and enthusiastic, and he soon gained a reputation for efficient teaching and strict discipline, with the result that the number of pupils in attendance at his school increased with lightning rapidity. There were twelve present on the day he entered on duty, but before the end of the year the number in attendance was a hundred and thirty.

The school building consisted of one long class-room, where children of all ages and stages of advancement were taught by the schoolmaster himself, with no assistance whatever, the subjects of instruction ranging from the alphabet to the classics.

The building was in a deplorable condition. One morning, on entering, he found that the back wall had split in two, the inner part having fallen inwards, while the roof remained resting on the outer half. This was the inevitable result of the wall being of clay, the roof water having soaked into it for years.

The schoolmaster's dwelling-house was no better. After a rainy night it was not unusual for the inmates to find, on descending in the morning, the ground floor ankle deep in water. In places the ceiling was in a parlous condition, and small pieces were continually breaking off to the surprise and discomfort of anyone who at the moment might be underneath.

This condition of affairs was not exceptional, for in a report published in 1866 it is stated that in the north-east of Ross-shire there was a district where out of the five parish buildings, two were bad, one indifferent, one barely sufficient, and one good, the last mentioned having been built within the past year. This refers to the parish school of Logie Easter, the adjoining parish to Kilmuir, where a new school had been built by a railway company, to take the place of the old building, which had to be removed in order to allow the railway to be laid.

The report goes on to state that this district was "worse provided with educational machinery" than any other part of the country in that area, that the teachers were good, one of them excellent, but the appliances found elsewhere had no existence here. In one parish the parochial teacher had given up the sitting-room of his house for the accommodation of the younger children, and to qualify his building for the Government grant, was compelled to live in a garret, and arrange to have his meals when the children were out.

In 1846 the pupil-teacher system had been instituted, the object being to improve the instruction given in elementary schools by providing the over-worked schoolmasters with a little assistance, and to ensure a supply of students for the colleges which in 1841, with liberal aid from Government, had been started in Edinburgh and Glasgow for the training of teachers.

The most intelligent among the pupils were chosen to fill these posts, and they had to serve an apprenticeship of five - afterwards reduced to four or three years. During that time, under the supervision of the schoolmaster, they received practice in teaching, generally being put in charge of one of the classes, and out of school hours they continued their studies with the teacher. They received a salary which was generally on a rising scale from £10 in the first year to £20 in their final year.

In Kilmuir the rate of pay to pupil-teachers was below that in most of the other parts of the country, being £10 each year during the whole of their apprenticeship. They sometimes, however, received a small bonus in addition.

In 1870 two pupil teachers were appointed to Kilmuir School. They were John Mackay and Samuel Mackay, who both remained in the profession as certificated teachers, the former graduating M.A. at Aberdeen University.

The pupil-teacher system lasted for about sixty years, and turned out as a rule excellent teachers. It was felt, however, that to require young people to teach for the greater part of the school day, and keep abreast with their studies was putting too heavy a burden on them, and the system was abolished.

It will be seen that, however strict the discipline and however successful a master might be in obtaining obedience and orderliness from his pupils, instruction given by two or three teachers in the same room at the same time presented difficulties. A certain amount of simultaneous work was necessary in the younger classes, and this interfered with the concentration of the older scholars on their work, and even prevented the voice of the teacher from being heard. To avoid this the kitchen of the Kilmuir schoolhouse was utilised for the younger children in charge of a pupil teacher.

It is unnecessary to elaborate the disadvantages of this arrangement-hygienically, educationally, and from the point of view of the comfort and convenience of the schoolmaster's household. It continued, however, until a new school was built in 1876.

Shortly after Mr Meldrum's appointment he started an evening school during the winter months, which continued for many years, the average attendance being usually about forty. Besides youths in their teens, the pupils included bearded men from the farms, who had been at work from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Conquering their inclination to spend the evening with a pipe at their own firesides, or to tumble into bed and sleep the heavy sleep of the open-air worker, they hurried over their evening meal, washed and dressed, and arrived punctually at the school, to sit uncomfortably for a couple of hours on the hard, narrow benches, in order that their knowledge of English and arithmetic might be improved. They paid no fees, the schoolmaster receiving for his services the Government grant.

In 1872 an Education Act was passed, by which the State charged itself with the entire responsibility of providing primary education for the people. It took from the Church all right and power of controlling and managing schools, thus abolishing the parochial system, which had done so much for Scotland, but was now inadequate for the needs of the times, and transferred to School Boards, appointed by the vote of the ratepayers of the parish, the powers and duties formerly held in rural districts by the Church, and in cities by the Town Councils.

The two principles on which this great Act is based are provision for the education of every child of school age in the country, and compulsion on the guardian of every child to take advantage of the education thus provided. Those who failed to comply with the provisions of the Act were liable to prosecution.

It abolished for future appointments the "ad vitam aut culpam" tenure, and made no provision for pensions to retiring teachers. They had now no protection against unreasonable prejudice on the part of School Boards, who had the power of doing a good deal of harm to the school, and could dismiss a teacher on very slender grounds. The rights of parochial teachers who were in office before the passing of the Act were protected. They still held their appointments "ad vitam aut culpam", and were entitled on retiring to a pension amounting to two-thirds of their salary.

It was fortunate for the parochial teacher of Kilmuir that this was so, for his relations with the first School Board were far from being of the most pleasant character.

This Board was elected on 27th March 1873. The members were Charles Robertson of Kindeace, William Gunn, factor for Cromartie Estate; John Forsyth, factor for Balnagown; the Rev. Donald Stuart, parish minister; and the Rev. Donald C. Macdonald, minister of the Free Church.

The new era began quite auspiciously. At the very first business meeting, held on the 9th day of April 1873, when all the members were present, it was decided that the precarious system by which the schoolmaster's salary was allocated should be abolished and a rate of salary fixed, equal in amount to the sum which the schoolmaster ought to, but did not always, receive, from the joint sources which hitherto provided him with his income. This was reckoned as £150 per annum.

Before a year elapsed certain of the members were attempting to overturn this decision.

At a meeting held on 25th February 1874, there was a notice of motion to this effect, and that the former system of payment should be restored. At a meeting in the following April it was decided by a majority that this should be done. Mr Meldrum refused to agree to this, and a heated controversy followed.

Just at this time the Court of Session was dealing with a similar dispute which had arisen between the schoolmaster of Mochrum in Wigtownshire, and the School Board of that parish. The result was anxiously awaited in Kilmuir, and when judgment was pronounced in favour of the schoolmaster the matter was promptly and finally dropped. But unpleasant relations had been created between the School Board and the teacher, and it was long before harmony was restored.

When any expenditure of money was concerned the members showed a grudging spirit. It was with great difficulty that they were induced to provide maps and other equipment necessary for the instruction of the pupils. For considerable periods the schoolmaster had to supply coals for the school at his own expense. It was almost impossible to get repairs done. Roofs might leak and chimneys fall - and did - to the danger of human life; the wind, the rain and the soot might go whirling through the rooms, but over such trivialities the members of Kilmuir Easter School Board refused to be hustled.

The following letter from the schoolmaster to one of the members gives an idea of the condition of things:-

Schoolhouse,
Kilmuir Easter, 5th July 1875.

Sir,

I have to inform you that I have repeatedly within the last few months repaired the school desks with my own hands, but they are now entirely beyond my power. Perhaps you would be kind enough to order their immediate repair. Otherwise I shall be obliged to put them outside the school as encumbrances and report accordingly to the Board of Education.

I am,

Yours truly,

THOS. G. MELDRUM.

In order that the school might be eligible for the Government grant the girls in attendance over the age of seven had to receive instruction in "sewing, shaping and knitting", and for a period the schoolmaster's wife undertook this work. She received no salary. When later, at a meeting of the School Board, the appointment of a teacher of sewing was discussed, it was moved, seconded, and carried (one member dissenting) that the teacher appointed should be paid at the rate of one shilling per hour, this amount to be deducted from the schoolmaster's salary.

In time a better spirit prevailed, and conditions improved.

In 1876 new school buildings were erected and equipped according to the most up-to-date ideas of the time. A certificated assistant was appointed for the junior pupils.

The old school premises are still in existence, but have been converted into cottages for farm workers.

In 1921, with a record of fifty-two years' service in the parish behind him, Thomas Guthrie Meldrum retired - one of the last of the

In the year 1658 a library, for the benefit of the teachers and pupils, was established in the High School of Edinburgh on the recommendation of the headmaster, the Council, as "and favourers of nurseries of learning, approving of the good and commendable notion of Mr John Muir". This library grew until it contained 7000 volumes.

About the same time the Magistrates of Aberdeen, Glasgow and Montrose took steps to institute libraries in connection with the grammar schools of these cities.

Other councils followed. But by the beginning of the nineteenth century many of those collections of books had disappeared or were little used.

A merchant in Tain left a sum of money to Kilmuir Session, and part of the money was used to purchase a collection of books for the school and a cupboard to hold them. Later, when the schoolroom became too crowded, it was transferred to the vestry of the Parish Church, and subsequently disappeared.

In 1838 the writer of the New Statistical Account of the parish remarks on the absence of a parochial library, but adds that "many of the more respectable inhabitants are connected with a district library, which affords many valuable works."

In the "nineties" some progressive men and women in the parish formed a committee for the purpose of instituting a library and reading-room for the use of the parishioners.

Concerts were held in order to raise money for the purchase of books, and with the proceeds from these and by donations from generous and interested people a considerable collection of books was acquired. It was housed in a small hall in the village of Milntown.

Before Carnegie libraries were planted up and down the countryside this was a great boon, educationally and recreationally, to the community, old and young. In these days there were no Rural Institutes to relieve the dull routine of the everyday life of country women, no Scout and Guide movement for the pleasure and profit of the young people. Therefore, many an hour which

would otherwise have been empty and aimless was occupied happily in the perusal of the much-thumbed pages of the treasures from the shelves of Milntown Library.

Chapter 4 - Social Conditions and the Development of the Land

Easter Ross is fortunate in having an excellent climate and soil of great natural fertility. These advantages, combined with the system of cultivation which has been practised for many years by the farming community, have resulted in making it one of the finest agricultural districts of Scotland.

Except for some moorland on the higher reaches of the parish, Kilmuir is divided into well-cultivated farms of varying acreage, where, particularly on the largest farms, the latest type of machinery is used and the most modern methods of cultivation followed. A great change has taken place from conditions prevailing towards the end of the eighteenth century, when only the most primitive of implements were in use, and oxen were employed for the farm work, the harness being made by the farmers themselves, of ropes of straw or rushes. Not until well into the nineteenth century was there any improvement in these respects. No regular rotation of crops seems to have been followed, and while potatoes were grown to some extent and a certain quantity of barley and oats, neither turnips nor clover and very little wheat were raised. In Kilmuir only sufficient wheat was grown to meet the requirements of the parish, but there was a small surplus of oats and oatmeal which was sent to market, and about two-thirds of the barley grown was distilled.

Many acres of the parish were bog or moorland, which by dint of hard labour were gradually brought under cultivation. This was for the most part the work of the small holders or mealers, encouraged by the proprietors. In a period of twenty-five years about three hundred acres were reclaimed. In the same period, Sir John Lockhart Ross of Balnagown reclaimed forty-five acres of moor in the vicinity of Balnagown Castle, and laid out extensive plantations of fir on his estate.

A Balnagown laird of an earlier date also was interested in the culture of trees, and a document dated 1735 tells of instructions being issued to "all tenants, maillers and servants" on the estate "to make their reive gardens sufficiently fencible, and carry each of them from the nurseries of Balnagown 20 young trees of such kinds as shall be given them to be planted at 5 foot distance in gardens, to be thereafter duly preserved by them." The penalty for letting them perish was ten pounds Scots for each tree.

The document is signed by George Ross, afterwards 13th Lord Ross of Hawkhead, whose family acquired the estate of Balnagown in 1711.

A report in 1768 by the factor for the annexed estates of Cromartie contains much interesting information regarding the condition of agriculture on that part of the estate within the parish of Kilmuir, known as New Tarbat.

He states that there the soil is sandy, but produces a good deal of barley, rye, oats and pease, that some flax and potatoes are grown, but not in great quantities. A considerable portion of the land is wild and barren, with very little pasture ground, except for sheep, the black cattle having to be sent in the summer time to remote Highland grazings not belonging to the estate. Indeed, few cattle were reared at that time on New Tarbat, and these of a small kind, which were of little value, as they did not yield sufficient milk for making butter and cheese. There were no woods or plantations, except a few ash trees and planes and some elder bushes, and no land was enclosed, except upon the mains of New Tarbat, where also some land was sown in grass.

The people are described as being sober and honest, and more industrious than in any other part of the estate, which may account for the fact that the court-house and prison at Milntown was allowed to fall into disrepair !

In 1787, when Lord MacLeod was pardoned for the part he had taken in the Rebellion of 1745 and restored to these estates, he immediately set about improving his property. He planted many thousands of fir trees and built a handsome mansion. On his death the work was continued by his successor, Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.

It was about the end of the eighteenth century that the proprietors, not only of Kilmuir, but all over the Highlands, saw the advantage of using the land for the rearing of sheep. For this purpose they proceeded to take possession of the farms. They joined together the smaller ones, and compelled the tenants to leave the land which they had tilled and the houses which they had built, and settle down on waste ground, where they were forced to begin once more the toil of bringing the rough soil into cultivation. Here they planted potatoes, and by industry and perseverance brought two, three or more acres into cultivation in the course of seven years, during which period they paid no rent with the exception of a small acknowledgment in hens and eggs. They received an advance of 20/- to assist in the building of a house, which, on their leaving, had to be handed over to the landlord in good repair. If they continued in possession after the expiry of the seven years, a rent was charged according to the estimated value of the land at that time.

A favourite device of the landlord to get rid of these small crofters, whose land they desired, was to raise the rent until it reached a figure which the poor crofters were quite unable to pay. One outstanding example of this occurred about 1770, on the estate of Balnagown, where three small farms were let to nine tenants at a rent of £9 sterling, each tenant contributing £1. Their joint possession consisted of a hundred acres of meadow on the banks of the River Oykel, some tracts of hill land which afforded good heath pasture, and an extensive stretch of moor and moss on which there was a considerable quantity of coarse pasture.

By degrees the rent was increased until it reached the sum of £30. This demand they were quite unable to meet, and notwithstanding a passionate attachment to the spot where they had expended so much labour, they were turned out and had to start afresh to make a home elsewhere.

Immediately on their departure their land was converted into a farm for the rearing of sheep, the farmer who got possession of it, considering £100 per annum a moderate rent to pay for such a profitable concern.

In the parish of Kilmuir Easter the land which lay near the shore was considered most valuable, and was rented usually at about 20/- per acre, that further inland at 15/-. Near the village of Milntown, where there were fifteen small feuars holding about three-quarters of an acre each, seventeen larger and forty smaller tenants, and a great number of new settlers, the rent was anything from 51/- to 30/- per acre - land which, before being reclaimed, was estimated as being worth about 1/- per acre.

Forty-eight families of disbanded soldiers and sailors had been settled in the parish. They received a house and three acres of arable land. The Government hoped they would be a nursery for the Army and Navy, but in ten years they had all, with the exception of two families, abandoned their holdings and left the parish.

Great dissatisfaction was felt among the country folk regarding the annexation of their land for sheep rearing, and about the year 1792 their smouldering indignation reached its height. The farmers, tradesmen and labourers determined to retaliate on the proprietors, and planned to collect the whole stock of sheep in Sutherland and Ross and drive them into Inverness-shire. The arrangements for this enterprise were announced by proclamation at the church doors.

Following instructions, a crowd gathered and, collecting over ten thousand sheep, were proceeding along the heights of the parish of Alness when the rumour reached them that a company of the 42nd Highlanders, under Sir Hector Munro, was on its way to suppress them. The crowd immediately dispersed, but a considerable number were apprehended and tried in the Circuit Court, Inverness. Two of these were transported, and a number imprisoned.

The system of granting leases to tenants came into vogue in Ross and Cromarty at an earlier period than in other counties in the North of Scotland, and resulted in great improvements in the agriculture of these counties. Gradually also the custom of payment of rent in kind fell into disuse, but as late as 1877 there were still two tenants on the Balnagown Estate whose rents were paid in this way, on the understanding, however, that the arrangement would terminate on the expiry of their leases.

At the end of the previous century, from August 1696 onwards, there had been several successive years of bad harvests, the sheep and oxen perished in thousands, and the population was destroyed in large numbers by disease and starvation.

A man who was an elder in Kilmuir Church for sixty years, and died in Kilmuir in 1791 at the age of a hundred, remembered as a child seeing the common coffin with hinged bottom then in use to allow of the bodies being dropped more expeditiously into the shallow graves prepared for them.

In the years 1770 and 1771, and again in 1782 and 1783, the history of a hundred years before repeated itself, and the same conditions prevailed, 1782 being known as the Black Year. An abnormal amount of rain fell. In the spring there was scarcely a dry day, and the summer and autumn were not much better. Crops were consequently very poor, and the condition of the people became desperate. Hoping for better times in a new country, many of them emigrated.

In the beginning of the new century weather conditions seem to have been more favourable. The advantage of draining the land had come to be more generally recognised, and draining operations on an extensive scale were undertaken, and certain proprietors received loans to cover the cost of these.

In 1850, Charles Robertson of Kindeace got a loan of £125 from the Inclosure Commissioners of England and Wales, the whole cost being estimated at £1189, "in respect of the drainage of certain lands, including Easter and Wester Inchfuires and Manor Place thereof, Kearnive and the lands of Torranlea and Miln thereof, Town and lands of Kearnive and the lands and grazings of Strathroy".

The Marquis of Stafford and his wife, Anne, received, in 1853, a loan from the same body of £2868, the estimated cost being £10,000 - "in respect of the drainage of the lands of Milntown of Meddat and the Miln thereof: lands of Kilnimuir, Dalnacleroch, Polnicol, etc., being parts of the Barony of Tarbat".

Thomas Ogilvy of Corrymony was granted £802, the total cost being £2000, "in respect of the drainage of the lands of Wester Pollo and Balintraid and Mill thereof and Teinds".

This improved drainage, together with the planting of trees all over the countryside, not only beautified the landscape, but sheltered the fields from blasts and drifting snow, and also helped to drain the soil. It also reacted beneficially on climatic conditions, causing them to be drier and more equable.

Proprietors had begun to study to some purpose the farming methods of the South. As early as 1763 we hear of the factor for Balnagown, in order to effect improvements on the land, engaging John Baldrey, an Englishman, as manager of the home farm, for "£15 sterling a year, 10 bolls oatmeal, two cows' grass and fodder with their calves till they are one year old, a suitable dwelling-house, peats for fire, and a kail-yard". Later in the same year there is a report by Baldrey, in which he advises, in place of oxen, which were then employed to draw the plough and other farm implements, "four able horses", which he promises will do "twice the busyness" - also 200 stots and the same number of sheep, and intimates his intention of sowing 20 acres with turnips, and "plenty clover and trefoil" among the barley, oats and wheat to keep the animals from turnips till after Christmas, also black oats and vetches, white oats for meal, carrots and horse beans. In land that is foul he will "sow rape which will get it very clean". He suggests engaging the farm labourers by the year rather than by the day.

Gradually by the first half of the nineteenth century a complete revolution had taken place, not only in the system of agriculture, but in social customs. Baldrey's methods had become general, the crops of barley, oats and potatoe being supplemented by wheat, turnips and clover. The breed of animals was also much improved.

About 1840, Alexander Matheson, a member of the Attadale family in Lochalsh, returned from China. He was only thirty-five years of age, but was the possessor of great wealth, and he immediately set about acquiring property in the Highlands. He started with certain land in the vicinity of Lochalsh, and gradually extended his possessions to Easter Ross, purchasing, with other lands, the estate of Ardrross. Spending money lavishly, he entered with enthusiasm into schemes for bringing prosperity to the Highlands. The extension of the Highland Railway, which brought the Highlands into closer touch with the South and gave a great impetus to cattle feeding, was largely due to his efforts.

One of his undertakings was the draining of a large flat of swampy land on the estate of Delny. The greater part of the flat, now the property of Matheson, was at one time a common shared among five surrounding proprietors, whose tenants had the right to cut their peats from the common. The burn of Delny, which has its source in the valley of Strathy and near Strathrory, followed a winding course through this boggy flat, at times overflowing until the whole area became submerged. The soil is described at that time as of "peaty bog and marsh and spirity sand, charged with noxious, ochrey-coloured water, impregnated with sulphur and saltpetre". In its dry state the pasture was poisonous, and caused, it was believed, black cattle to turn grey in the course of one season. Various attempts had been made to drain the flat, but were unsuccessful.

Matheson determined to undertake the task, and in 1868 a start was made, Mackenzie, his factor, being charged with the carrying out of the operations.

The first step was to secure a proper outfall for the water, and for this purpose a large, stone-built, two-feet-square drain was run from the sea west of Balintraid farmhouse, while a main leading drain, laid with vitrified pipes, 10 to 15 inches in diameter and jointed with cement, was continued for about 800 yards through the flat to a depth in some parts of 8 feet. To relieve the main drain, part

of the drainage was directed to the old mill dam of Delny and part towards Pollo. About 800 acres were drained by these three outfalls.

The process was attended by tremendous difficulties. The subsoil was of sand, and was so charged with running water that, in cutting the drains for the main leading pipe, the sides had to be supported with a framework of wood, and at the bottom of the drain only the length of one pipe could be excavated at a time. From the main drain a system of smaller drains extended in all directions. On the completion of this process the land was limed and manured, and in a marvellously short time the poisonous swamp was transformed into a stretch of fertile land, producing excellent pasture and rich crops of corn.

Like all classes of industrial workers, although, perhaps, more slowly, the wages of farm workers have gradually increased, while their standard of living has also risen.

At the end of the eighteenth century, ploughmen and carters had on an average in money from £2 10s to £6 per annum, with six bolls of oatmeal (9 stones to the boll) and a ridge of land well drained for potatoes. Day labourers had from 6d to 9d per day. Trenching new ground was paid at the rate of 6d per rood of thirty-six square yards; draining three feet deep and felling back the earth, a penny per yard; building hollow drains with stones, from a halfpenny to a penny per yard; boring and blowing stones (powder and irons furnished) at a penny per inch.

Conditions varied slightly in different localities. In Kilmuir, in 1793, the wages of labourers are given as 6d and 8d per day, according to skill and strength; the wages of women, which are said to have increased about that time, were 4d to 6d per day, no food being provided in either case.

Masons, carpenters and slaters got from 1/2 to 1/6 per day; on the farms, out servants received £3 wages per annum, with six bolls of meal and a piece of arable land rent free, sufficient to provide seven or eight bolls of potatoes, free house and garden and peats, all of which were reckoned to be worth £12 per annum. This was considered in those days, according to the Old Statistical Account of the parish, "a sufficiency to enable a careful, sober man, with the assistance of a virtuous wife, to live more comfortably than many of the farmers, and to rear a family of children till they are of an age to work for their bread".

Food was correspondingly cheap, but even so, labourers and their families fed on extremely plain fare.

In a manuscript, written by a farmer named John Wallace, in the neighbouring parish of Rosskeen, who died at the age of ninety-three, and whose father was farmer of Culrain from 1779 to 1792, is given the usual dietary for servants in his youth -

Breakfast - Brochan o' peasemeal; bread.

Dinner in summer - Whey and bread.

Dinner in winter - Potatoes and bread.

Supper - Sowens or brochan.

Once a week cabbage was served at dinner, and next day a sort of porridge made of what remained of the cabbage was taken with butter at breakfast. Sometimes a cow was killed, and as long as it lasted, servants got broth and sometimes beef. During winter and spring there was always plenty of home-made ale, and occasionally the servants got butter and curds.

Sir John Sinclair, in his view of the Northern Counties in 1795, mentions oatmeal as the principal article of consumption, about six bolls per man, four bolls per woman, and one boll per child, being the average consumption in a year. Potatoes were also a great stand-by, and there would be an occasional haddock in the summer time. Not 5 lbs. of meat would be consumed by a family in a year, and an egg, though cheap, was a luxury seldom enjoyed.

In 1838 the wages of farm labourers in Kilmuir are stated to have been, for men, 1/- per day, no food being provided; for women, 6d per day. Masons and joiners received 1/6 to 2/- per day. Farm servants who resided on the farm had an income, including everything, of from £18 to £20 per annum, with a house in addition.

About that time the large farms employed for the harvest work sixty to eighty women, and from ten to twelve men. A woman was paid at the rate of 30/- for five weeks, a man at the rate of £2 for the same period, sleeping accommodation being provided, but by the time the century was well advanced the reaping machine had almost completely superseded the scythe for cutting, and steam had begun to be utilised for driving the threshing-mill. Consequently, fewer men and women were required, and although the wages were higher than formerly, the total cost of the harvesting operation was much less.

Regarding hours of labour, Sir John Sinclair states in 1795 that "gentlemen have restricted the hours of labour on their farms from six in the morning to six at night," and adds that "the tenants' servants naturally wish to have that rule everywhere adopted, but in so unsteady a climate, where an additional hour either in the morning or evening may save a stack of hay or a field of corn from destruction, any restriction of that sort may be attended with fatal consequences, and ought to be discouraged as much as possible."

Almost a century elapsed before there was any shortening of the hours of labour for farm workers, or any appreciable improvement in their conditions generally. Then the Ploughmen's Union was formed, and through its efforts wages were gradually raised, hours of work shortened, more holidays given and better houses provided.

A woman known to the writer, who died in Milntown within the last twenty years, was left a widow in 1870, with four small children to support, and in order to supplement the meagre allowance she received for them from Kilmuir parish, went to work on the fields. Her wages were 10d per day, her working hours being from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., with a couple of hours off for a mid-day meal, and in harvest time there might be a short interval for tea, served in the field at the farmer's expense. If by some mischance she had to be absent for an hour from work, 2d was deducted from her day's pay.

In 1793 the average price of barley, meal and pease for fifteen years had been 12/6 per boll. Potatoes were from 8/to 10/- per boll (of 9 stones). From October to January, beef, mutton, pork and veal cost 3d per lb. for the best quality, 2d per lb. for inferior quality. For the rest of the year the price of butcher meat was higher. Fresh butter cost 8d per lb., salt butter about 10d, cheese was from 4/- to 6/- per stone. A good hen cost 6d, a duck 8d, a chicken 2d, and eggs were 1d per dozen.

In 1695, just a hundred years earlier, the value of beef per carcass in Ross-shire is given as £1; mutton per carcass, 2/6; capons, 4d; farmyard fowls, 21/2d; eggs, 1d per dozen; boll of oats, 5/-, and a load of peats, 21/2d.

In 1838 oats were £1 5s per quarter; wheat, £3 per quarter; barley, £1 13s; potatoes, 10/- per boll; turnips, £5 per acre; hay, 9d per stone; rye, £1 14s per quarter; peas and beans, £2 per quarter.

Farming was not the only occupation followed by the people of Kilmuir in the eighteenth century and earlier. It has already been mentioned that fishing was also engaged in, chiefly by the inhabitants of the village of Portleich, who at one time were entirely fishers.

Prior to the Revolution and up to the reign of Queen Anne, herring, that most capricious of fish, frequented the Cromarty Firth and were caught by the fishers of Portleich and the other villages round the shores of the Firth.

There is an old tale that, shortly after the Union, a great shoal of herring, pursued by a school of whales and porpoises, came swimming into the Bay of Cromarty, and were stranded there a few hundred yards to the east of the town. The beach was covered with these fish to a depth of several feet, and although the fishers worked hard to get the whole catch salted and packed, it was impossible. Most of it perished, and had to be carted away to be used for manure by the farmers of the district.

It is said that not long after this, following a successful fishing season, the herring left the Firth in a single night. They have never returned in sufficient quantity to affect the prosperity of the district.

By 1838, fishing had been almost entirely abandoned by the inhabitants of Portleich, although some still continued to own boats, which went to waters other than the Cromarty Firth for the herring fishing. This custom was also discontinued, and the population came to depend for their supply of fish on the fishers of Fearn and Nigg, who came to Kilmuir by train, and carried in creels supplies of haddock, cod, skate and flounders for sale in the parish.

There was also carried on in the parish during the 18th century a very flourishing trade in lime making. The sands of Nigg, opposite New Tarbat, at that time contained quantities of cockles and mussels and other varieties of shell fish. Five boats belonging to the parish were employed for three or four of the summer months in transporting the shells from the bay to the shore. In 1782, forty horse loads are said to have been taken out of the bay in one day.

At full tide the workers went out in the boats and cast anchor over the bed of shells, at ebb tide they dug up the shells and again at flood tide returned with their freights to the shore.

The shells were manufactured into lime, which was used to make a cement for building purposes. It was considered peculiarly suited for plastering work. About twenty men, with their wives and children, were employed in this trade.

The fishers of Cromarty also found the shell-fish a useful commodity, and until well on in the nineteenth century used to cross in their boats and secure quantities of the shell-fish for bait. For this privilege a tax was imposed on them by the Laird of Cromartie, who claimed this part of the Firth as his property. This the fishers considered a grave injustice, and at length their indignation reached such a height that they boldly refused to pay. The laird retaliated by issuing orders forbidding them to fish for bait any longer in these waters. To prevent any attempt on the part of the fishers to defy the prohibition, a man armed with a gun was posted on the shore.

One day a wealthy Englishman, who had come to reside for a time in the town of Cromarty, crossed the Firth to enjoy a day's fishing at the mouth of the Balnagown River, which was part of the prohibited area. He had scarcely got his fishing tackle ready when one of the laird's gamekeepers appeared, and in a rude and threatening manner ordered him off. He obeyed, but vowed he would

make the laird of Cromartie pay dearly for this affront. Returning to Cromartie, he immediately offered his financial support to the fishermen in their dispute, and with this assurance they took the case to the Court of Session. The result was a victory for the fishers, and the consequent loss to the Cromartie Estate of a steady source of income.

That was not the first time that Cromarty and Kilmuir came into conflict. A century earlier the body of a native of Kilmuir was being brought from Cromarty, where he had been resident, for interment in the Kilmuir Churchyard. As the cortege reached the boundary of the parish it was met by a contingent of Kilmuir men, who claimed the prescriptive right of carrying the corpse when it had entered their own domain. This claim was disputed by the Cromarty party, and the argument became heated, finally developing into a lively skirmish, from which the Cromarty men emerged victorious, after having broken the heads of most of the male population of Kilmuir.

An industry which flourished in the parish in the 18th century—as it did all over the Highlands—was the manufacture of linen. In addition to the spinners and the weavers, this industry absorbed a large number of the parishioners, as a quantity of the flax used was grown in the parish, and between the sowing of the seed and the weaving of the yarn there were many processes. A strip of reclaimed land in the centre of the parish, between the farms of Polnicol and Garty, is still reminiscent of those days, being known as the "Lint Pools". Here it was the custom for the flax to be steeped. About fifty years ago, while this bit of land was in process of cultivation, a bunch of flax was discovered there, deeply imbedded in the ground.

The centre of the industry was the village of Milntown. In a report submitted in 1756 by the factor on the annexed Estates of Lovat and Cromartie, the writer urged that there ought to be an English school erected at or near the Church of Kilmuir, and a Spimling School at Milntown of New Tarbat. This recommendation regarding a spinning school was never carried out.

William Sandeman, a manufacturer in Perth, was the chief organiser of the linen industry in the Highlands, especially upon the annexed estates. His principal establishment for spinning was in Kilmuir Easter, under the management of John Montgomery, a merchant, who had come to reside in the village of Milntown about 1751. His daughter later became the wife of the Rev. John Matheson, minister of the parish.

The Commissioners for the Forfeited Estates, in response to applications from Sandeman, seem to have given him a considerable amount of financial support in his undertakings, and the industry flourished, notwithstanding certain losses, as, for example, when, owing to a fall in prices he fails to realise on the sale in London of £500 worth of linen cloth as much as the cost of production.

In Sandeman's letters there are frequent references to his manager, John Montgomery, of whom he speaks in high terms, commending his fidelity and care. He assured the Commissioners that should they want a "carefull honest man in that part of the country for promoting any improvements they cannot well have a better man than this Mr Montgomery."

On one occasion he urges them not only to pay Montgomery the sum of £75 18s 4d, which he claims for the trouble he has had in the management, but to increase it to £100, as he considers that he well deserves it.

In 1769, however, we find an action being raised against Montgomery by William Sandeman and Co., for failing to account for £168 worth of flax which they had consigned through him, as their agen, to George Ross, Tain, to be manufactured there. The result of the action is not recorded.

A rival of Sandeman in the trade appeared in 1763 in William Forsyth, of Cromarty, who claimed to have been the first to introduce the spinning of linen yarn into the counties of Cromarty and Ross, and this as early as 1748. There certainly was a factory in Milntown in that year, for we find in a summons of that date, "James Ross, master of the linning manufactory at Milntown".

Forsyth asserted that he still continued to carry on the spinning on a greater scale than any other in the North, but had obtained no bounty or encouragement. He advanced as an argument in his favour that he employed the disbanded soldiers and their families in the business, and asked to keep supplied with a certain number of wheels and reels, and a sum of money to erect a suitable house at Milntown of New Tarbat for storing the flax and yarn. He submitted to the Commissioners elaborate plans for the whole scheme with probable costs, including the instruction of the work people.

As the nearest place to New Tarbat for landing boats was Portleich, he pointed out the advantage of having a pier built there, and a store house for lodging the flax and other materials until transported to and from the factory.

In 1764 it was decided that a house should be built at Portleich, "to serve as a granary for part of the Estate of Cromartie, and also as a storehouse for the manufacturers, Sandeman and Forsyth, according to an estimate amounting to about £100."

The boats used at Portleich were flat-bottomed cobbles, and they worked with the tide. They ceased to ply there when Balintraid Pier was built.

Finally, Forsyth requested that he should be supported in preference to any other.

Sandeman, however, seems to have continued to hold the monopoly. He petitions for the "large house of New Tarbat, at present not in use, to my Doer there, Mr Montgomery, for a Store House to hold the Flax and Yarn."

He, too, must have seen the advantage of a pier at Portleich, but there is no trace of one having ever been there. The remains, however, of an old store house stood near the shore until the end of the nineteenth century. In its later days it was used as a coal store.

All through the eighteenth century the industry continued to prosper. In 1766 there were of spinners alone over one thousand employed in the parish.

The following statement may be of interest as showing the extent of the industry carried on at Milntown of New Tarbat:-

Accompt of the Trade of Spinning Linen Yarn Carried on at New-tarbat, Milntown, by John Montgomery on Account of William Sandeman, Merchant in Perth.

The Account of the True State of the Spinning Trade

Perth 27 July 1763. The above Acct. is a true State of the Spinning Trade carried for me at Newtarbat Milntown by John Montgomery taken from my Books and his Accompts. (Errors excepted) Willm. Sandeman.

At the end of the century the trade was still being carried on. In 1798 a Weaving Company, with works at Spinningdale and Milntown of New Tarbat, petitions the Sheriff for a warrant to apprehend two apprentices who had absconded, breaking an indenture being a serious offence. The apprentice had to bind himself to "erve faithfullie for five years under penaltie of 1 mark a day". He undertook not to waste his time in "carding, dicing, drunkenness, nor night-walking, nor defile his body with uncleanness under penalty of serving other 2 years".

Unfortunately, partly owing to the production of cheap Manchester cotton and partly to the changed conditions resulting from the consolidation of small holdings into large sheep farms, a period of depression in the linen trade set in. The people lost heart, and gradually this most profitable of Highland industries ceased to flourish, and finally disappeared from the Highlands.

The population of the parish has declined since then. In 1755 it contained 1095 persons. In 1794, when it was at its maximum, there were 1975. Soon afterwards it began to show a steady decrease until in 1879, when it is 1024, 434 of these being returned as bi-lingual. At last census the population was 705.

The following table shows the number of baptisms, marriages and burials from 1784 to 1789:

Year	Baptisms	Marriages	Burials
1784	40	7	54
1785	46	10	28
1786	44	10	41
1787	42	8	25
1788	45	8	38
1789	53	9	32

Smallpox was prevalent in 1784, which accounts for the large number of deaths in that year.

Nothing undergoes more changes during the passage of the years than fashions in clothing. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the garments of both men and women were gay and very elaborate, tending as the century advanced to become more sober.

An idea of the fashions in men's clothes among the upper classes may be gained from an inventory of the wardrobe of the Hon. General Ross of Balnagown, dated 1718 :-

"Ane plain coulered cloth coat and britches with a brocade westcoat Ane suit of light coulered cloth trim'd with silver. Ane druget suit trim'd with gold. Ane grey coat and britches trim'd with gold. Ane blew westcoat. Ane silver camlet westcoat without buttons. Ane camlett riding coat and britches . . . pairs of scarlett stockings, grey, light coulered and Thred . . . 3 hatts 3 wiggs . . . boots . . . spurs . . . gaiters . . . boot stockings, 8 new and 11 old rufled shirts. 12 new cravats 5 night caps."

Some light on the fashions for ladies of that date is shed from an account dated 1724 from John Hossack and Co., leading merchants in Inverness, to the Laird of Newmore for articles supplied for the use of his daughter, Mary Munro, then at school in Inverness, and later known as the Lady Newmore:-

" 1 yd. flowered saine ribbon. A fine straw Hat 30d. ... A paper patches 5d. . . . To a sizzars 31/2d.....worsted stockings for Miss at 30d . . . fine white gloves 16d . . . whalebone 2/9. To 1 yd. stencill (?) to mend a hoop. A Belt Buckle 6d. A paper patches 3d. To 1 lb. white powder for Miss. 1/8 yd. cherry persian 61/2d (coloured cord) . . . a pair Teiking shoes . . . 3s 6d. silk bynding for a tyer (head-dress) . . . a pair Pattens for Miss 14d . . . a bone comb 6d, a horn comb 2d..... wool to twill a petticoat 4d . . . a fine fan 30d.... a pair mourning buckles . . . silver ribbon. 14 yds. Callimanco. A powder box and pluff 9d."

In 1763 there is an inventory of the "Body Cloaths" of Lady Newmore now deceased. Among other items it mentions "a suit of blue riding cloaths with a black satin vest and Scarlet Joseph (riding habit with buttons down to the skirts) a black velvet cap and neck. A Black silk negligee and petticoat. A gray silk nightgown. A Black nankie petticoat. Four Dimity and three flannell smock Petticoats and a red freize. Two sleeping Dimity Jackets. 19 shifts 'twixt coarse and fine. Two lawn and one muslin hood. A Black gauze sewed hood. . . Two Black satin cloaks and a hat. A white silk shoulder cloak. Seven pair thread and three pair cotton stockings. 2 pair black lasting shoes. A silver mounted shell snuff box. A pair goggles. A gray fur muff and tippet."

The fashionable young men of that day in Ross wore coats, vests and breeches of red, brown, yellow and green, gold buttons and feathered hats.

By the end of the eighteenth century clothing had become simpler. By the men of the working classes knee breeches were worn with coats of bright blue made by their wives and after 1782, when the ban against the wearing of the Highland dress was removed, some of the younger men wore the kilt. Farmers of all classes wore broad blue bonnets, and no hats were to be seen. About 1792 trousers began to be affected by the young men, and by 1850 breeches had almost entirely disappeared.

The dresses of their wives were usually of wincey of their own making. A small tartan shawl was frequently worn round their shoulders, and it was considered suitable for married women to wear a mutch on their heads and to have a clean white kerchief tied over it. Young single women had no covering on their heads. Their hair was worn hanging down, but when at work tied back with tape.

In this present age fashions in clothes undergo rapid change, and it is a brave woman or an exceptional one who can wear last season's outfit with no adjustments to bring it into line with the latest mode. The working women of an earlier day made no attempt to keep abreast of the fashions in clothes, for money was scarce, and, further, it was not considered fitting that the humbler classes should ape those who belonged to the higher social circles. All that the more selfrespecting aimed at in their garments was that they should be clean and whole. Fortunately, the fabrics of the period were strong and durable, and could be depended upon to give reliable and lengthy service.

There is no doubt that in the matter of clothing we have in some ways improved on the customs of our ancestors. Our standard of hygiene has risen and our artistic sense has become keener, but we have lost much of the old Scottish thrift and carefulness which was the pride of our fathers.

The changes which have gradually evolved in other departments in the life of the Highlander are mostly to the good.

To show the alteration in his drinking habits it is sufficient to mention that in 1793 there were "30 tippling houses" and one "principal inn" in the parish of Kilmuir; by 1838 there were only "2 inns and 4 public houses", while to-day there is but one licensed house in the whole parish.

In no department have greater developments taken place than in methods of transport.

In the present age in almost every department of life - industry, sport and locomotion - speed is considered of paramount importance. The firm that can execute orders with the greatest promptitude is the firm that captures the trade, and he who beats the latest speed record on road or water or in the air is the hero of the hour. In spite of the greater risks to life which increased speed in locomotion carries with it life is richer and infinitely more comfortable than in the old days when, according to a coachman of the beginning of the nineteenth century, fashionable people used to leave Inverness for London about the end of October and reach their journey's end in about two months, travelling each day about thirty miles, staying ten days or a fortnight in Edinburgh to dine with the lawyers and settle their law pleas. "When we got near London," he says, "we would meet other families also going in, and the young folks would have rare times. We left London about the beginning of April, and took a similar time to reach home. Of course, we often had to rest the horses and get them shod, and such events lost us a day now and then."

This was a considerable advance on the travelling facilities of a hundred years earlier, for in 1720 there were no carriages to be found north of the Tay. When in 1725 the first chaise drawn by six horses appeared in the streets of Inverness excitement ran high.

Letters at that time were conveyed through the country as far as Thurso by men known as foot-runners (though they were never known to run!), and it was not until 1750 that horses were employed and mail bags carried stage by stage by different postmen. Consequently, news of public events reached these remote parts slowly and fitfully. It frequently happened that prayer would be offered up for the life of some notable personage after the funeral had taken place, and thanks for victory in battle when the troops were retreating before the foe.

Even at the beginning of the nineteenth century the only proper road in the Highlands was one that ran along the east coast to Wick, going by Beaulieu, Dingwall and Tain. It passed through Kilmuir along the shore of the Cromarty Firth, and through the village of Milntown into the parish of Logie-Easter and further north. This road is shown in an atlas of Scotland published by authority of Parliament in 1776. It was probably constructed a dozen years earlier, for in 1764, Captain John Lockhart Ross of Balnagown wrote to Baillie, his factor, informing him that he had obtained a promise from Lord George Beauclerk that soldiers would be sent to assist in the construction of the road from Beaulieu to Dingwall, and from thence to Tain.

At that time traffic or travelling by wheeled vehicles was accomplished with difficulty north of Inverness, and north of Tain it was almost impossible, owing to the condition of the roads and the difficulty of obtaining horses. The mails, which had been conveyed to Inverness by pony-chaises, were carried thence as far as Tain by a man and pony, and still further north by post-runner.

In March 1808 the first carrier going beyond Dingwall started on the road. His name was Donald Ross, and he travelled as far as Tain. In 1809 a diligence commenced to run from Inverness to Tain, and in September 1818 a proposal was put forward to start a mail diligence to the North, as far as Wick and Thurso. The authorities at Inverness, Bonar, Helmsdale and the counties of Ross and Sutherland agreed to let it pass their bridges toll free, each subscribing £200 to assist the enterprise. The coach started in July 1819. It left Inverness at 6 a.m., arriving in Wick at 7.30 a.m. the

following day, and at Thurso four hours later. This coach passed through Kilmuir by the shore road, one of the stopping places being in the village of Milntown, where the parish post office was.

On 6th January 1820, a report appeared in the Inverness Courier that the coach had been prevented for some time from proceeding further than Tain owing to a deep fall of snow.

No county, however rich its natural resources, can do much in the way of developing its industry without proper means of transport. Easter Ross was fortunate in having an outlet by sea, thereby establishing regular intercourse by sea between Ross-shire and the south. In 1839 the steam ship, Duke of Sutherland, began to trade in the Moray Firth. It sailed between Leith, Inverness and Invergordon, calling at all the intermediate ports going and coming. Then two steamers began to sail from Invergordon once a week.

At that time Balintraid Pier was of considerable importance. It served not only the parish of Kilmuir Easter, but a large part of Easter Ross for the importation of coal, lime, timber and general merchandise. The chief exports were firewood for the coalpits and railroads of the South, and grain. Coal was, perhaps, the principal commodity unshipped there.

The pier was built about the beginning of the nineteenth century by Kenneth Macleay, who was proprietor of Pollo and Balintraid. His initials may be traced above the door of the old building which still stands, where the goods were stored until collected by carriers for distribution. "The pier is in a good state of preservation, although thickly carpeted by a growth of turf and rough grass, the sides encrusted with barnacles. It is seldom used now, as the approach to it is so silted up with sand and gravel that no ships can come near unless an occasional small boat from Cromarty or from one of the fishing villages on the Firth."

On 3rd March 1809, a boat from Balintraid Pier, loaded with peat, was upset by a squall, and six persons were drowned.

Again there came a change in transport, when, in 1862, the Highland Railway reached Invergordon, causing most of the traffic to be diverted from the sea to the railway. Two years later the railway was extended through the parish of Kilmuir and further north to Tain, and then to Bonar-Bridge.

In addition to trains there is now an excellent service of 'buses plying up and down the country. They carry passengers into the remotest parts, so that it is no longer necessary for country folk to traverse long weary miles on foot in order to reach a railway station, there to be picked up for conveyance to their destination by trains noted neither for punctuality nor comfort.

Times have changed since the days when men and women were content to live out their lives in the place where they were born, and when only a daring spirit here and there, athirst for adventure, or driven by force of economic circumstances, would turn his back on the simple life of the village or the croft, and fare forth to the great cities or to the lands beyond the sea. Looking back down the centuries, along the path civilisation has taken, one may see life as a simpler and more picturesque affair than in the rush of modern times, but in the light of history it is clear that to the majority of people it was both dull and hard, with little comfort and security for anyone, tyranny and bigotry riding rough-shod on every side, and freedom for the individual unknown.

Chapter V - Lairds and their Lands

In the course of the years estates no less than countries have a way of shifting their boundaries. Proprietors may add to their lands, or, which is perhaps more general at the present day, part with portions of them as the demands of the Treasury become more exacting.

An outstanding example of shrinkage we find in the estate of Delny, which is now merely a farm of about four hundred acres, with one or two crofts. In the sixteenth century the barony of Delny included not only the area to which the name is limited at the present time, but a vast tract of land stretching from Alness River to Tarbat Ness. It comprised the lands of Allan, Calrossie, Glastullich, Meikle Meddat, Wester and Easter Pollo, Balintraid, Inchfuir, Kinncraig, Balconie, Culcraggie, Miln of Alness, the Yair of Balconie, Swordale, Fyrish, Miln of Culcraggie, the fishings of Ardmore, Morrichmore, Petmillie, Balicherry, the superiority of Dingwall, Kinmandie, Glach, Dalmalook, Inchvandie, Ochterneed, Drumglist, Western Fairburn, Urray, Arcan and Inchmaclearoch, upper waters of the Conon, the Mill of Culbokie, and others which cannot now be identified, the names having become obsolete. With this tract went the patronage of Kilmuir Easter, Ardersier, Killearnan, Logie, Tain, Edderton, Kennettas, Rosemarkie, Cromarty, Urray, Rosskeen, Kincardine, Alness, and the chapels of Alness, Tarbat, Newmore and Tarlogie.

At least a couple of centuries earlier there stood somewhere on the site of the present farm standing the Castle of Delny, long since demolished with not a trace of it left. It was one of the principal residences of the Earls of Ross. Here in January 1322, William, the third Earl, died. He it was who took an active part in fighting for Scotland against Edward I of England, and was one of the commanders of the Scottish army in 1296, when the Scots succeeded in occupying the Castle of Dunbar. Later, in recovering it, Edward captured the Earl and had him lodged in the Tower of London. There he remained until 1303, when he was released. His wife, Euphemia, all along a consistent supporter of the English party, was granted by Edward during the Earl's imprisonment maintenance from the Earl's lands. In 1305 he was appointed warden beyond the Spey. In the following year he brought discredit on himself by violating the sanctuary of St Duthus, in Tain, in order to deliver up to the English, Bruce's Queen and daughter, who had taken refuge there from the advance of an English Army.

William, the fifth Earl, brother of Hew, first laird of Balnagown, also died at Delny on 9th February 1369. His only son having predeceased him, his two daughters became heirs-portioners. Euphemia, the elder, who on the death of her father became Countess of Ross, married Sir Walter Lesley, who died about 1379. Subsequently pressure was brought to bear on her to marry Sir Alexander Stewart, fourth son of Robert II., generally known as "the Wolf of Badenoch" on account of his deeds of atrocity and violence. Eventually the marriage took place, when a royal charter of all his wife's lands was granted to him, and the title of the Earl of Ross. Owing to his cruel treatment of her, and because of his relations with one Mariota, daughter of Athyn, by whom he had five sons, the Countess left him. She took up residence in the Castle of Dingwall, while he appropriated when in Ross the Castle of Delny, in Kilmuir. In 1384 he dates a charter there.

About a century later the lands, including Delny, belonging to Elizabeth, Countess of Ross, widow of John Earl of Ross and Lord of the Isles, were the subject of a long litigation between the Countess and James Dunbar of Cumnock, who occupied them.

The title of Earl of Ross has been long extinct, but a petition signed by well-known Scotsmen, Peers and Commoners, was submitted lately to the King, asking that his Majesty should revive the ancient Earldom in favour of his second son, the Duke of York, several of the early Scottish Kings having conferred it on their second sons.

In 1586 James VI. granted in heritage to William Keith, his master of the wardrobe, for his good services, certain lands in Ross. In these were included Delny, Badebaa and Balintraid, all in the parish of Kilmuir Easter, the grantee paying yearly for Delny "3 chalders bear and oatmeal, 8/- of bondage silver, and 6 poultry; the same sum every five years as gressum (i.e., a premium paid by vassals to superior on entering land) for the alehouse with toft (homestead) and croft; 13/4 for the alehouse without toft and croft; and 30/- for the orchard and the croft called Gardinaris croft; for Badebaa 20/-, and the same every five years with the usual services; for Balintraid 40/-, 9/- of bondage silver, one poultry and 40/- gressum, with the usual services."

Some of the lands must have been in the possession of Keith's family many years earlier, for in 1542 there is reference in a document to "Sir Wm. Keyth of Delny, Knight."

William Keith was noted for the part he played on behalf of James VI. in the negotiations with Queen Elizabeth regarding his mother, Mary Queen of Scots. He was selected by James from the royal household to proceed to England as one of a deputation to discuss with Elizabeth the fate of Mary, then a prisoner in England. The request he put forward was two-fold-first, that proceedings against Mary should be delayed until James could send some of his Council; and, second, that nothing should be done to the prejudice of the King's title to the English Throne.

Keith had several audiences of Queen Elizabeth, but the mission was unsuccessful as far as regards saving the life of Mary. It was recognised, however, that Keith had handled the affair with great skill, and that, in spite of attempts on the part of his enemies to prove the contrary, his sincerity and loyalty were above reproach. In token of his appreciation and gratitude for his work in this connection, James presented him with these lands, made him a Privy Councillor, and appointed him as his ambassador on several important missions.

In addition to his services to the King, Keith took an important part in the local affairs of Easter Ross. In 1588 there is a record of his demitting the office of Provost of Tain when he nominates Alexander Ross of Balnagown as his successor, "the bailies, counsel and haill communitie voting and consenting".

Keith's death occurred in 1601, and in 1608 the Barony of Delny and the patronages which belonged to it were acquired by Lord Balmerino, formerly Sir James Elphinstone, Secretary of State from 1598 to 1609, and for the last four of these years President of the Court of Session.

In 1624 a dispute occurred between him and the Bishop of Ross, who had succeeded in obtaining the rights and patronages of the Churches in his diocese, including those in the Barony of Delny. Balmerino declared that this had been done by subtlety, and suppression of facts on the part of the Bishop, and demanded restitution.

On being appealed to, the King took the side of the Bishop, but in 1631 the Barony and patronages which went along with it were conveyed to Sir Robert Innes. Later, the Bishop raised an action against Sir Robert, and the patronages in dispute were resigned into the hands of Charles I. in favour of the Bishop and his successors in office, but during the suppression of Episcopacy Sir

Robert again got possession, and in 1656 made them over to Sir George Mackenzie, the first Earl of Cromartie.

The barons of the Middle Ages held their criminal courts at Delny, and sometimes at Balnagown and Milntown. Some fragments of records of the 17th century survive, but the cases dealt with concerned not crimes, but matters of rents, service dues and the like, the settlement of disputes between tenants, and the preservation of woods. How far the Barons exercised their right of pit and gallows, which was part of their charter rights, we are not informed.

It was probably at Delny that a disturbance took place on one occasion in the year 1586 while Sir William Keith, described as heritable feuar of the barony of Delny and bailie principal of the Earldom of Ross and lordship of Ardmannoch, Johnne Vaus of Lochslyne, his bailie depute and Johnne Keith apparent of Ravensoraig, his Majesty's immediate bailie were holding a court for administering justice "to the King's proper tenants within the said earldom and lordship". There arrived on the scene a large band of the Monros, accompanied by some Rosses, about four hundred in all, led by Andrew Monro of Newmore, wearing "jakkis (tunics of leather, plated with iron) and steil bonnettis", armed with pistols and bows, and bearing darlochs (quivers for arrows), determined to be avenged for a wrong they alleged had been done in that court to their leader, Andrew Monro. One is not surprised to learn that in consequence of this threatening force the sitting of the Court had to be abandoned. Later, they were cited to answer to a charge of a breach of the peace, but disdaining to appear, were in accordance with legal practice denounced as rebels.

Early in the seventeenth century the lands of Delny lying within the parish became the property of the Baynes of Tulloch (near Dingwall). In 1682, John Bayne, son of Alexander Bayne of Tulloch, is proprietor, and in 1742 we find the lands still in the same family, Ronald Bayne being seised in "the Towns and Lands of Meikle and Little Delny with the mannor place, houses, Biggings, etc., with the miln, Milnlands and Multures".

The above John Bayne of Delny, in 1688, when fifty years old, figures as one of the most important witnesses in a case concerning the slaying of William Ross, Younger of Kindeace, by Lord Duffus at some point between Delny and the Ferry of Inverbreakie (Invergordon), in the presence of Bayne and a company of friends, who had previously eaten and drunk amicably in Bayne's house at Delny.

Duffus was debtor to Kindeace for a bond of 10,000 merks, but the quarrel does not seem to have had any connection with that, but to have arisen from a dispute regarding the relative merits of the horses ridden by the company, and also concerning an insulting remark alleged to have been made to Kindeace by George Ramsay, son of the Bishop of Ross, who was present. The argument ended in Duffus running his sword through Kindeace, who expired on the spot.

Evidence points to considerable provocation on the part of the latter, and to attempts by Delny to pacify the combatants. Witnesses deponed that he said repeatedly to Kindeace, "Dear Kindeas, ryde aff and doe not contend with Duffus," and that he implored Duffus to "hold his hand and not to doe mischief." He even attempted to ride between them in order to separate them.

Duffus was said to be in great distress at the fatal ending to the dispute, but claimed that the act was committed as the result of great provocation, and in self-defence.

Not long after this, John Bayne of Delny, with John, Master of Tarbat, as his cautioner, entered into a bond which narrated that he had raised an action against the laird of Balnagown and other friends of the deceased William Ross of Kindeace, younger, for slandering him before the Commissioners

of Justiciary and others, implying that he was guilty of or accessory to the murder of Kindeace, although of this crime the Lords of Council had found him innocent. On this account he had been obliged to give an undertaking to keep his Majesty's peace, particularly towards Balnagown and his dependents, under a penalty of 5000 merks.

In 1744 there is a sasine in favour of "Jean Gray, widow of Alexander Bayne of Knockbayn of the lands of upper and neather Delny with the miln and pertinents of the same proceeding upon a liferent disposition made and granted by the deceast, Ronald Bayne of Delny, by which she is provided with the yearly annuity of Five hundred Merks Scots money.", Eventually these lands pass out of the possession of that family, and in 1786 we find the Trustees of Sir John Gordon of Invergordon obtain them in disposition by the said Sir John Gordon, March 1776. Subsequently, the Macleods of Cadboll become the owners, and in 1841, James Balfour of Whittinghame holds the "Towns and lands of Easter and Wester and Little Delnies with the Manor Place thereof and Mill of Delnie and Mill Lands and Teinds" as security for loan of £8000 to Robert Bruce Aeneas Macleod of Cadboll and Roderick Macleod, younger of Cadboll. They were purchased from the Macleods in 1861 by Alexander Matheson of Ardross. About fifty years later Delny was sold to Thomas Urquhart, on whose death it went to Leslie Urquhart, his nephew, whose death occurred in 1933. The farm of Delny is now the property of Charles Mundell.

Bordering on Delny is the estate of Kindeace, composed of a number of farms and crofts of varying extent. These are, besides the home farm and Heathfield, the small farms of Inchfuir, Middle, Easter and Wester Lonevine, Kinrive Easter, Dorachan, Strathrory, and one or two small crofts.

The original estate of Kindeace was situated in the parish of Nigg, in the middle of the seventeenth century the owner being Malcolm Ross, designated first of Kindeace. Long after the Rosses had any connection with the estate, the decendants of Malcolm continued to style themselves "of Kindeace".

Malcolm was the third son of David Ross, second of Pitcalnie, who was grandson of Alexander Ross, ninth of Balnagown.

In April 1661 he made a contract of wadset with David McCulloch, "heir of James McCulloch of Kindeis, his immediate elder lawful brother", and on 2nd March 1667 obtained a disposition from Sir George Mackenzie of Tarbat of the town and lands of Meikle Kindeace, in Nigg parish. These lands were acquired before the end of the seventeenth century by William Robertson, merchant and burgess of Inverness. About 1788 they were purchased by John Mackenzie, commander in the Navy, who changed the name to Bayfield.

Another piece of land in Nigg Parish, known as Little Kindeace or Easter Kindeace, had been acquired in 1721 by Alexander Ross, known locally as "Polander Ross, "from his connection with Poland, where he had been a merchant. He changed the name of Kindeace to Ankerville.

About 1751 the Robertsons, whose progenitor was the above William Robertson, came into possession of the estate of Old Inchfure, in Kilmuir, re-naming it Kindeace after their Nigg property. At that time it comprised "the town and lands of Kearnrive and Strathrory lying within the parish of Kilmuir Easter, the Town and Lands of Easter and Wester Inchfures, the lands of Easter and Wester Carntotacks . . . now the western part of Inchfure farm, with the seat of Inchfure in the parish church of Kilmuir Easter, and lands and mill of Torranlea, Auldnamain, Burnside and Dalnaclearach."

The Robertsons held the estate of Kindeace in Kilmuir until 1920, when it was sold to Louis Beauchamp, who, two years later, disposed of it to Brigadier-General John Buchanan Pollock-McCall, C.M.G., D.S.O., the present proprietor, who is one of the Deputy-Lieutenants of the County.

It has been already mentioned that the small estate of Priesthill, which adjoins Kindeace, was during the Middle Ages part of the church lands of the Church of St Mary. Mr Donald Ross, second son of John Ross, fifth of Balnagown, seems to have had some rights to these lands, for he is designated first of Priesthill. He was Dean of Caithness, and died in 1487, his descendants for several generations retaining the title "of Priesthill".

The death of another Donald Ross of Priesthill is recorded in 1571, and in a charter dated 1601 the name of William Ross of Priesthill, who was probably son of the above Donald, occurs as granting to "Donald Ross his son and Agnes Innes his spouse for fulfilling of a matrimonial contract . . . towns of Wester Pollo and Balintraid" in the newly-erected County of Ross.

In 1590, David Monro of Nigg and others were summoned to appear before the Justice in the Tolbooth of Edinburgh on a charge of coming in arms to the house and lands of Balintraid, belonging to William Ross of Priesthill, and breaking up "per force of the duris thairof reving and taking away furth of the samis, of killing ling, skait, haddokis and utheris to the nowmer of fourty dusane", and also for hurting and wounding a certain Thos. McConnachie. This attack on the property of William Ross can be understood when we hear that in the same year William was imprisoned for debt to the above David Monro, and caution of £1000 had to be found that he would not harm David. A further caution of £2000 was found for him that when released from the Tolbooth of Edinburgh he should keep "ward in the said burgh till he find surety for the entry of himself and of Johnne Ross, his bastard son, and others to answer for certain crimes specified in the letters raised against him by David Monro of Nigg, also that the said William shall remain in the said burgh till he satisfy the treasurer-depute for his escheat fallen to the King through his having been put to the horn at the instance of the said David."

Twenty-five years later Mr Thomas Ross of Priesthill, whose wife was Janet, daughter of George Monro, VI. of Milntown, is accused of having with others, in defiance of the law, on various occasions "borne and worne hagbutis and pistolletis upon their bodyies and in their company." They do not appear in answer to the charge, and are denounced rebels.

In 1740, David Ross, younger of Priesthill, obtained the lands of "Meikle Dahn Miln and Miln lands," and in the following year in a contract of marriage there is a sasine in favour of him and his wife, Margaret Sutherland, in the town and lands of Rhives, as also in the town and lands of Parkbill and Baddibaa. His name occurs in the list of heritors minuted as being present at a meeting of the Kirk Session of Kilmuir Easter in 1771.

It is evident that Ross held merely the title, for early in the eighteenth century, Priesthill had become part of the Cromartie Estate, and prior to 1745 the Earl of Cromartie wadset these lands of Priesthill to Bain of Delnies, the rent being "22 bolls Bear and 22 bolls Meal and £12 8s of money."

Delnies was allowed to retain 42 Bolls victual and £12 8s as interest on his money while paying to the Cromartie farnily 2 Bolls yearly. Later the wadset was transferred to Sir John Gordon of Invergordon, and from 1765 to 1783, while the estates were under the management of the Commissioners for the annexed estates, Sir John Gordon was debited with the rents of the lands of Priesthill. These lands had been "seised upon and surveyed and published agreeable tv the "Vesting

Act," but neither Delnies nor Sir John Gordon seems to have entered a claim in the Court of Session under the Vesting Act.

In 1765, Sir John Gordon passed a charter of his estates in the County of Cromarty, and from that date Sir John was fully vested in the lands of Priesthill, redeemable on payment of the wadset sum.

Later, Priesthill reverted to the Cromartie Estate, the farm being let, the last tenant to occupy it being George Cruickshank. It was sold in 1920, along with the land of Lower Tullich, to Gilbert Ross, whose forbears came from the Balnagown Estate, in Edderton, and settled on Delny Muir, which was part of Kindeace Estate.

In the west of the parish bordering on the Delny Estate is the small estate of Pollo, its name derived from the Gaelic meaning "pool" or "hole".

In 1786, William Ross Munro of Newmore is registered as heir to Mary Munro in the lands of Wester Pollo, Balintraid, and mill in the parish of Kilmuir Easter.

There is evidence that this William Ross Munro wished to secure as his wife a daughter of Baillie, factor for Balnagown. A scrap of a letter, dated 1767, from Munro to the father of the young lady on the subject remains to tell the tale. There he states that he expects Baillie "to send for Miss Betty this day, and talk seriously to her", and refers to his good fortune if he succeeds in his suit.

Betty's affections, however, seem to have been already engaged "to a gentleman who apply'd earlier", which circumstance her father breaks to Munro as tactfully as possible.

He assured him that Betty "expressed a true sense of the honour" he had done her, but did not think it "consistent to break off abruptly" her relations with her other suitor. Baillie does not leave him wholly without hope, for he goes on to say that he may "depend on every good offices of mine as if Betty Baillie had been this night in your arms. . . . You have acted with honour and steadiness and generosity that must forward your matrimonial views."

Poor Munro's wishes, however, were never realised, for Betty became the wife of Major, later Colonel, James Sutherland, who was in all likelihood "the gentleman who apply'd earlie".

Betty lived until 21st October 1831, when she died at Millmount, in the village of Milntown, at the ripe age of eighty-eight. She was buried in the Churchyard of Kilmuir Easter beside her son, George Sackville Sutherland, who predeceased her. Her daughter-in-law, Jean Mackay, wife of the above George, who died in 1858, at Inverness, also lies there.

In 1804, David Munro succeeded William Ross Munro in the lands of Wester Pollo and Balintraid, but in the same year Charles Ross, advocate, was seised in the lands on Disp. by David Munro of Newmore.

Kenneth Maclesy, sometime in the Island of Barbadoes, now of Newmore, was registered three years later as owner of them, followed in 1843 by Francis Mackenzie Gillanders on Disp. by the Trustees of Kenneth Macleay with consent of Kenneth Macleay, his son and heir.

In 1853, Thomas Ogilvie, described as a merchant of Liverpool, purchased these lands from Gillanders for £4000, this debt not being discharged until 1856. Alexander Matheson became proprietor in 1861, adding them to his other possessions in Easter Ross.

Later the property of Balintraid was purchased from Matheson by Cran, of Invergordon Bone Mills, and afterwards sold by him to John Macdonald Cameron, at one time M.P. for the Northern Burghs. It now belongs to his grandson, who resides in Australia, the tenant occupying it being Ian Forsyth, whose father, John Forsyth, was factor for Balnagown for many years.

Pollo was sold by Matheson to James Ross, who erected a distillery there, which no longer functions, and a large mansion~house.

During excavations connected with the building of the distillery an ancient grave was found.

Pollo is now the property of Mrs Florence Redhead, who also owns the village of Barbaraville.

The Estate of Kincaig is represented in the parish by what was once the farm of Broomhill, but is now broken up into small holdings, and is the property of William Martineau, knighted during the present year (1935).

In contrast to the changes of ownership which these smaller properties have undergone through the centuries, the broad lands of Balnagown and those of the Cromartie Estate, both of which extend far beyond the boundaries of the parish of Kilmuir Easter, have remained in the possession of one or two families for centuries.

It would not be astonishing if confusion sometimes arose between the Estate of Cromartie - with which we are concerned - (which comprises not only Tarbat, Polnicol Farm, Kildary Farm, and the village of Milntown in the Parish of Kilmuir Easter, but Castle Leod and Strathpeffer in the Parish of Fodderty and Coigeach in the west of Ross) and the estate of the same name, which is situated around the town of Cromarty across the Firth from Kilmuir and in the Parish and County of Cromarty proper.

The latter was originally the Crwmbawchty, of which Macbeth was reputed Thane before he became King of Scotland. In the thirteenth century this property was owned by the family of Mouat. But in the beginning of the following century it had accrued to King Robert the Bruce, who granted it to Sir Hugh Ross, eldest son of William Earl of Ross. He in turn handed it over to Adam Urquhart, whose descendants retained it for many centuries.

It now belongs to George Duncan Noel Ross, a son of the late Sir Walter Ross. He does not inherit the title, but is designated "of Cromarty," similar to the proprietor of the other estate, the only difference being in the spelling.

Viscount Tarbat, later the first Earl of Cromartie, was responsible for an Act of Parliament, passed in 1685, by which several lands in Ross were annexed to the shire of Cromarty. This Act was repealed in 1698 on the plea that it included lands not belonging to Viscount Tarbat, in whose favour the said annexation was made, and who desired that only the barony of Tarbat and other lands in Ross belonging to him or his brother or mother-in-law in life-rent, or by some wadsetters of his property, should be annexed to the shire of Cromarty. This included the Estate of New Tarbat and Priesthill, in Kilmuir Parish.

Thus the County of Cromarty consisted of several detached parts, an inconvenient arrangement which came to an end nearly two centuries later, when the Counties of Ross and Cromarty were joined, to be known henceforth as the County of Ross and Cromarty.

In the sixteenth century a considerable area of the parish of Kilmuir, at present owned by the Countess of Cromartie and others, was in the possession of a branch of the great clan Munro, whose feudal titles to their possessions were acquired about the middle of the fourteenth century from the Earl of Ross as their feudal superior. They were known as the Monros of Milntown, from the name of their estate, now changed to New Tarbat.

The first of the Munros or Monros of whom we have authentic information is believed to be George Munro of Fowlis, who is said to be mentioned in a charter of William Earl of Sutherland, as early as the reign of Alexander II.

In the civil war of the seventeenth century the Monros were on the side of the Government, as they were also in 1745, their Chief, Sir Robert Munro of Fowlis, being killed at Falkirk, fighting against the Stuarts.

The first of the Monros of Milntown was John, son of Hugh Munro, tenth Baron of Fowlis, by his second wife, Margaret, daughter of Nicholas, son of Kenneth, fourth Earl of Sutherland. He was senior cadet of the House of Fowlis, and consequently of the whole clan. He held many important offices, one of them being Chamberlain for the Earldom of Ross. His death occurred about 1475, his son, Andrew, succeeding him as Andrew II. of Milntown.

Andrew II. is described as a bold, austere and gallant gentleman, esteemed by his friends and a terror to his enemies, About the year 1500 he built the original Castle of Milntown, the site of which may be identified by an underground chamber not many yards distant from the present mansion of New Tarbat. It is said that during its construction the Rosses of Balnagown made determined attempts to prevent the work being carried out, and John, Earl of Sutherland, went to defend Munro against them, leaving behind him on his return to Sutherland a company of men for the protection of the Monros until the Castle reached completion.

According to an entry in the "Kalendar of Fearn," this castle was burnt down accidentally on the 12th of May 1642, through fire breaking out in some mysterious manner in a jackdaw's nest, which had been built in a corner of the castle.

Andrew II died in 1501, and was succeeded by his more notorious son, Andrew III, known as the "Black Baron", or "Black Andrew of the Seven Castles", his chief castle being this Castle of Milntown.

In 1512, King James IV. granted to Andrew Munro "the lands of Myltoun of Meath, with the mill, the office of chief mair of the earldom of Ross and the croft called the merkland of Tulloch in the earldom of Ross, the rental being 8 chalders, 4 bolls of victual (half oats, half wheat), and to augment the rental by 8 bolls, and for the croft of Tulloch one pound of wax on the feast of St John the Baptist (24th June) within the chapel of Delny."

The name "mair" or "maor" was applied to the governor of a province who held judicial office under the king. It carried a territorial title equal to Baron among the Highlanders and to Jarl among the Norwegians.

In addition to Milntown, "Black Andrew" acquired by grant and purchase other lands, including Delny, Newmore in Rosekean, Contullich and Kildermore in Alness, Docharty in Dingwall, Allan in

Fearn, and Culnaha in Nigg. He had a castle on each estate. Hence his title, "Black Andrew of the Seven Castles".

He was a tyrant of the worst type. In an age not conspicuous for gentleness his deeds of cruelty horrified the countryside. The people of his lands lived in abject fear of him. With his own hand he had slain eight heads of families who had incurred his anger for some trivial reason, and he caused to be buried alive, head downwards in a pit, an old woman because she had given evidence against him in a case concerning a disputed march between himself and the Laird of Balnagown. A favourite custom of his when angry was to order the object of his wrath to be stripped naked.

On one occasion during a late harvest, when the vassals had come, unwillingly, no doubt, as their own crops were rotting in the ground, to fulfil the prescribed obligation to the maor, "out of everie house ane shearer to sheare ye mairs cornes", he ordered that the women should work stark naked. On his emerging later from the castle to satisfy himself that his orders were being carried out, he stumbled as he descended the stone steps, and fell and broke his neck. The field where the women worked is believed to lie between the present mansion and the shore of the Cromarty Firth.

The gallows-hill of the Barony of Milntown is situated on the march between Tarbat and Balnagown, not far from Logie United Free Church Manse, and the site of the drowning pool is adjacent to the Manse. In 1864, while excavations were being carried out there in connection with the construction of the railway, a quantity of human bones was unearthed, believed to be those of the wretches condemned to death by Black Andrew when acting in his capacity of principal maor; and in 1849 a cartload of human bones was dug out of an underground chamber beneath the site of the old Castle of Milntown, which also, no doubt, were those of the victims of Black Andrew's vengeance. These were gathered together and buried reverently in the churchyard of Kilmuir Easter.

Andrew's wife was Euphemia, daughter of James Dunbar of Tarbat and Ballone Castle, Easter Ross.

His death occurred before 1522, and he was buried in the east end of Kilmuir Easter churchyard, near the Allan burying-ground.

He left three sons-George IV of Milntown, his successor; William I of Allan, and Andrew I of Culnaha.

Queen Mary, in 1561, appointed George Monro Bailie and Chamberlain of her lands and lordships of Ross and Ardmanach, the appointments to continue during her pleasure, and in 1567 she exempted him for life on account of his age from all service as a soldier, from sitting on assizes, and from appearing as a witness in any court. His appointment as Bailie and Chamberlain was renewed by James VI. to continue during the pleasure of the King and his Regent.

Monro, in 1565, held the Castle of Inverness for the Earl of Moray, and the following order was issued by the Queen and her consort requesting him to deliver it up: -

"At Edinburgh, 22nd September, A.D. 1565:- The King's and Queen's Majesties for certain occasions moving them, ordained an officer of arms to pass, and in their Highnesses' name and authority command and charge George Munro . . . and Andrew Monro, his son, and all others, havers and withholders of the Castle of Inverness, to deliver the same to Hugh Ross of Kilravock, whom their Majesties have recommended to receive the same within six hours next after they be charged thereto, under pain of treason.

"(Signed) MARIE R., HENRY R"

George died at Milntown Castle on the 1st of November 1576, and, like his predecessors, was buried in Kilmuir Easter churchyard.

He was succeeded by Andrew V., a rigid and austere Protestant. He must have been given the lands of Newmore in his father's life-time, as he is referred to as Andrew Monro of Newmore.

About 1567, John Leslie, Bishop of Ross, who had been secretary to Queen Mary, fearing the effects of public opinion he North against Popery, made over the rights and titles to the Castle and Castle lands of Chanonry to his cousin, John Leslie of Balquhain. He thus divested them of the character of Church property, and preserved them to his own family - not an uncommon device on the part of Roman Catholic churchmen after the Reformation. Notwithstanding this grant, the Regent Moray gave the custody of the castle to Andrew Monro of Milntown, promising Leslie some of the lands of the Barony of Fintry as an equivalent, but before this transaction was completed and Andrew Monro had obtained titles to the Castle and Castle lands, the Regent was assassinated. Monro obtained permission, however, from the Earl of Lennox during his regency to take possession of the castle.

Colin Mackenzie, XI of Kintail, jealous of the Monros occupying the stronghold, purchased Leslie's right, and on the strength of it demanded delivery of the fortress. Whereupon Kintail and his clansmen laid siege, against which Monro held out for three years.

In 1591 Andrew Monro obtained a decree from the Lords of Council and Session against Andrew Dingwall and the feuars, farmers and possessors of the Earldom of Ross for 40/8, his ordinary fee of office, and for every sack of corn brought to shore to be shipped "ane gopin of corn", estimated at a halfpenny per lippy, and out of every chalder of victual delivered thereat, two pecks. The collection of these fees caused irritation, and the law had occasionally to be enlisted to enforce payment.

Some letters written by this Andrew Monro have been preserved. One is an invitation to the Laird of Balnagown to attend the funeral of his wife, "To ye ryt honl Laird of Balnagown younger. Richt Honl. Sir, my heartliest dewtie rememberit. Pleis with ye Monnonday be ten horis at ye guid pleasr of God my wyff is departit yis lyffe quha is to birrei ye nixt Wodins-day in Kilmuir Eister be ten houris in the morning qn I requiest you wt yor freinds to be heir befor said hor to conveye her buriell qlk I trust ye will do to ye quilk I rest. Committis you to God. Miltoun this 4 of April 1610. Andrew Monro."

He died when almost a centenarian, and was succeeded by George VI of Milntown, designated also "of Meikle Tarrel".

George is credited with the building of the tower and belfry of the old parish church, and according to the inscription, BEIGIT 1616, they must certainly have been erected during his life-time.

He was principal tacksman of the Chantry of Ross, and in 1621 M.P. for Inverness-shire, which at that time included Ross, Sutherland and Caithness.

His death occurred at Boggo on 6th May 1623, and he was succeeded by his eldest son, George VII of Milntown, who was served heir to his father, along with other lands, in the lands of Milntown, "with the mills and office of chief mair of the Earldom of Ross, of the extent of 8 chalders, 4 bolls of victual, a croft named the Merkland of Tulloch, of the extent of one pound of wax; and the lands and town of Meikle Meddat, of the extent of 6 chalders of bear and oatmeal, and other dues, its alehouse with toft and croft, of the extent of $13/4$, and its other ale house, without toft and croft, of the extent of $6/8$ -in the Barony of Delnie, Earldom of Ross, and Sheriffdom of Inverness."

George married Margaret, daughter of Sir Robert Innes, XXIII of Innes, by his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Alexander, Lord Elphinstone.

He died in 1630, his son Andrew succeeding him as Andrew Monro VIII.

Andrew was only eleven years old at his father's death, and was the last of the Monros with any claim to the estate of Milntown. He was not, however, allowed to take up residence in the castle or to enter into possession of the lands, as his maternal uncle, Sir John Innes, claimed the estates for debts due to him by Andrew's father and wadset held by him over the estate. In 1645, Andrew was killed at the Battle of Kilsyth. His death was a great blow to his friends, whose hopes that one day he might have succeeded in redeeming the debts and other burdens contracted by his father were thus destroyed. He was unmarried.

In 1656, Innes sold the property to Sir George Mackenzie, later the first Earl of Cromartie, whose descendants still hold it.

Sir George's judiciary title as Lord of Session was Lord Tarbat, taken from the property in the parish of Tarbat, known as Easter Tarbat or Ballone, which had been acquired by Sir Rorie Mackenzie, his grandfather, in the year 1623 from George Monro of Meikle Tarrell and VI. of Milntown, for the sum of 110,000 merks, and to which Sir George had succeeded on the death of his father, John Mackenzie. In 1656, when he had purchased the castle and estate of Milntown, he immediately changed the name from Milntown to New Tarbat, by which it has since been known. The name Milntown now applies only to the village on the estate described in a previous chapter.

Chapter VI - The Cromartie Family

Sir George Mackenzie, who acquired the estate of Milntown in 1656, was a descendant of the Mackenzies of Kintail. His grandfather was Sir Roderick Mackenzie of Coigeach, Knight, who in 1605 married Margaret, daughter of Torquil Macleod of Lewis. Eleven years later he built the mansion of Castle Leod. Not long before his death in 1626, Sir Rorie had become owner of the lands and barony of Tarbat, but he very rarely adopted the designation of that estate, which became the territorial title of his son, John, who succeeded him, as well as the judicial and peerage designation of his grandson, George.

Sir John married Margaret, daughter of Sir George Erskine of Innerteil. He was created a Baronet of Nova Scotia by King Charles I in 1628. A Covenanter and one of the lay elders in the famous Assembly of Glasgow in 1638, he was nominated one of the committee appointed by the Assembly for examining the libels against the bishops. But, like Montrose, in spite of his attachment to the Presbyterian form of Church government, he cherished an unfaltering loyalty to the King. This led subsequently to his deserting the Covenanters, and joining Montrose in support of the royal cause. As a consequence of this he suffered imprisonment under Cromwell.

On his death in 1654, George, who was his eldest son, succeeded to the title and estates. George was educated at St Andrews University, then at King's College, Aberdeen, where he graduated in 1646. He was a distinguished scholar, excelling particularly in classics, and he had a fancy for sprinkling his letters, even love letters, with Latin phrases.

At the time of his succession, Oliver Cromwell was in control of the Government of the country, General Monck being Commander-in-Chief of the English Army in Scotland. George was an ardent Royalist, and having obtained a commission to raise forces in support of King Charles, he succeeded in gathering together a considerable number, and joined Glencairn in the famous rising on behalf of the Royal exile.

After the failure of that attempt, Sir George, with others, fled to the Castle of Island Donan. Afterwards he made a tour through the Western Isles, where he employed his time in noting "the tides and fluxes and refluxes of the sea, the natural products of the Isles", and in acquiring knowledge of all matters which might help in the advancement of Natural Philosophy. In that subject he was deeply interested. He was one of the earliest members of the Royal Society of London, and a valued contributor to its transactions. He was also the author of many works on political, historical and ecclesiastical subjects.

At the Restoration the Earl of Middleton, King's Commissioner in Scotland, appointed Mackenzie his principal adviser, and in 1661 he was nominated one of the Lords of Session, when he adopted the judicial title of Lord Tarbat. In all the proceedings at the Restoration he took a prominent part, his opinion being much respected by that rough, astute soldier, Middleton, who consulted him constantly.

With Middleton, Lord Tarbat was concerned in intrigues for the overthrow of the unpopular Earl of Lauderdale, and helped to draw up the Act of Billeting, by which, it was hoped, the removal of Lauderdale might be accomplished. The scheme failed, however, the result being the displacement, not of Lauderdale, but of Middleton himself, who was discovered to have been misleading both

King and Parliament. Lord Tarbat shared in his downfall, while Lauderdale retained his office of Secretary of State for many years.

Tarbat was deprived of his seat as a Lord of Session, and kept out of all official employment. He continued, however, to represent the County of Ross in the Scottish Parliament for years, and was active in all measures which had for their object the public good, particularly of the Highlands.

In 1678, mainly through the efforts of Archbishop Sharp, he was restored to public employment. In that year he was appointed to the high office of Lord-Justice General of Scotland. At the same time he received from King Charles as a token of appreciation of his loyalty to him a grant of a pension of £200 a year.

King James also, two years after his accession, in recognition of his services as Lord Register and for other services, as well as for his fidelity during the "Usurpation", created him a Peer of Scotland. The titles of Viscount of Tarbat, Lord Macleod and Castlehaven were granted to him and his heirs - male.

While holding the offices successively of Lord-Justice General and Lord Clerk-Register, Lord Tarbat was admitted a burghess of several of the royal burghs of Scotland, including those of Haddington, Dunbar and Montrose.

Notwithstanding a life crowded with affairs of State, he found time to indulge in his favourite sport, which was hawking.

Nor was he unmindful of the necessitous poor on his estate, for it was in 1686 that he executed the deed of mortification in their favour, described in a previous chapter.

When the Prince of Orange was preparing to invade England, Lord Tarbat was not only Clerk-Register, but one of the seven members of the Secret Committee of the Council. But as soon as he realised that the cause of James was lost and the Prince of Orange likely to prevail, he set about providing for his own safety by seeking the favour of the Marquis of Athole, one of the Prince's supporters. In this he succeeded for a time, but later, suspicions of his loyalty being aroused, he was arrested at his lodging in Parliament Close. He succeeded, however, in making his escape to London, where he gained the ear of the Prince before any information regarding his antecedents reached him, and made such an impression on the Prince that he accepted him as his friend, regarding him as one more worthy of trust than any other of his professed supporters.

Eventually he was restored to his old post of Lord Clerk-Register, and continued in high favour during the Prince's life-time.

In many difficult problems Tarbat showed great wisdom and astuteness. By advising in council the disbanding of the Militia he helped to facilitate the peaceful establishment of the new Government.

After the Battle of Killiecrankie he was deputed by the Government to enter into negotiations with the Highland clans, and was successful in bringing about a settlement. Macaulay asserts that if certain of his suggestions had been adopted earlier much bloodshed might have been avoided.

His proposal to the Government in 1689 of a joint recognition of Presbytery and Episcopacy, though not acted upon, showed how far in advance he was of that age of intolerance.

He professed great friendliness towards the Episcopal clergy, but Lockhart throws doubts on his sincerity in this respect, and states that the only act he did in favour of them was when, as secretary to Queen Anne, he procured an Act of Indemnity and a letter from the Queen recommending the Episcopal clergy to the protection of the Privy Council. He certainly could drop his political principles with great facility and adopt others of an entirely different complexion. He seems, however, to have been a sincere advocate of the Union of Parliaments.

Contemporary writers had little respect for him as a politician. His career was perhaps more variable and inconsistent than that of any other statesman of his time, but, personally, he was very popular, having great charm of manner, with a gift of making interesting and amusing conversation.

On his retiral in 1690 he was granted by King William and Queen Mary, in gratitude for services rendered to them, a pension for life of £400, payable yearly out of the feu-duties and casualties of the Earldom of Ross and Lordship of Ardmanach, and in 1696, in spite of charges against him of irregularities in his conduct as Lord Clerk-Register, these charges, being unsubstantiated, he received a further pension of £400 per annum.

On the death of King William and the accession of Queen Anne, Lord Tarbat entered official life again, although now advanced in years. In 1702 he was appointed Secretary of State for Scotland, and in the following year he was raised to the dignity of Earl of Cromartie. The title was taken from that part of his estate consisting of Tarbat, Castle Leod, Strathpeffer, Coigeach, and other lands in Ross-shire which were disjoined from the shire of Ross and annexed by Act of Parliament to the shire of Cromarty.

In 1654 he had married Anna, daughter of James Sinclair of Mey, Baronet. She died in 1699, and six months later he married the Countess of Wemyss, peeress in her own right, widow of Sir James Wemyss, of Burntisland, who had died in 1685.

The marriage caused much amusement among their friends, owing to the disparity of their ages, she being forty-one, he seventy, and the following couplet was composed:

"Thou sonsy auld carle, the world has not thy like,
For ladies fa' in love with thee, though thou be an auld tyke."

The marriage was extraordinarily happy. There was a deep affection on both sides, and when parted they were restless and unhappy until reunited. On one such occasion she wrote:- "The Lord send us a happy meeting! My dearest love, be carefull of the best part of me, and do not fast long, nor sitt up late. There is great care of me here, but I fear there will be some tears att parting, tho none frome me, my dear."

On her death at Whitehall, London, in 1705, he composed a Latin inscription for her tomb, enumerating her virtues, and expressing his deep grief at her loss, and the hope of a future reunion. He desired that his body should be laid beside hers, and made arrangements for this, but his wishes were not carried into effect, and he was buried at Dingwall.

The Earl's last years were spent in retirement in Ross-shire. Swift writes of him that "after four score he went to his country house in Scotland with a resolution to stay six years, and lived thriftily in order to save money that he might spend it in London." But before that period expired, he died at New Tarbat on 27th August 1714, in his 84th year.

His son, John, born 1656, succeeded him as second Earl of Cromartie and Viscount Tarbat. During the life-time of his grandfather, John held the courtesy title of Lord Macleod, the name Macleod coming through the heiress of Lewis, who was his great-grandmother. When his father was created the Earl of Cromartie, John naturally assumed the title of Lord Tarbat. At the time he was Member of Parliament for the County of Ross, but Parliament decreed that as his father was "nobilitate", he could not as a Peer continue in Parliament, and a new election had to be held.

At the Revolution he was suspected of hostility to William and Mary, and was arrested by order of Major-General Mackay, Commander of the Forces in Scotland. For a few months he remained under surveillance of the Laird of Balnagown, at that time Governor of Inverness, but later was released on parole, by order of the Privy Council.

In August 1691 he was tried for the murder of Elias Poiret, Sieur de la Roche, a French Protestant refugee, and Gentleman of the King's Guard, who was killed in a scuffle in an inn in the Kirkgate of Leith. The following extract from a letter, dated March 1691, written by D. Ross at Edinburgh, to the Laird of Balnagown, gives some details of the incident:-

"Saturday's night last the Mr of Tarbat, Laird of Mey, James Sinclair a wryter, and one Ensigne Mowat, being drinking late . . . in Leith, and the Mr having offered kindness to the maid, who to shun him removed, the Mr followed her, whom he having misst stept into a room qr a frenchman was sleeping who as the Mr laid hand on his face awaked and said What for b-r the Mr struck at him in the face . . . he cryth.. . . . Other frenchman . . . came down wt swords and pistolls.... Ensigne Mowat ran in assistance of the Mr and after some reasonings one of the frenchmen was run throw the body and died. The Mr is now in the Castle and Mowat in the Tolbooth. They were seized by the guard."

He remained a prisoner in the Castle for some months, but was ultimately acquitted of the charge. At his trial he asserted his innocence, maintaining that in the scuffle Poiret was killed accidentally by his own friends, there being little light in the room.

When quite a young man his father had given him directions regarding the rebuilding of the mansion-house of Tarbat, and entrusted him with the supervision of it.

After his accession to the estate, he resided very seldom at New Tarbat, and on 27th September 1717, his Chamberlain wrote: - "I am hopefull, now that your lordship is married that you will winter yett att bonie New Tarbatt where I am shour your Lordship will be much easier than in the hurie of the city." His pecuniary affairs becoming embarrassed, the estate was sequestrated in 1724.

Though he and the Laird of Balnagown were near neighbours, they were not on friendly terms, and in 1694 the latter, believed to be of a somewhat timid disposition, was charged with absenting himself from funerals through fear of the Master of Tarbat. This he denied.

The Earl's first wife was Lady Elizabeth Gordon, daughter of the Earl of Aboyne, whom he divorced in 1698. There were no children of the marriage. In 1701 he married the Hon. Mary Murray, eldest daughter of Patrick, third Lord Elibank. By her he had several children, the eldest of whom, George, succeeded him on his death at Castle Leod in 1731, as third Earl. He had married a third time the Hon. Anne Fraser of Lovat, by whom also he had issue.

George was born in 1702. In 1721 he married "Bonny Bell Gordon", aged 19, a daughter of Sir William Gordon, a wealthy London banker, but any hopes that Sir William might help to lighten the burdens on the estate were vain, and three years later it was once more in sequestration.

Almost immediately, after the landing of Prince Charles Edward in Scotland in 1745, a letter was received by Lord Cromartie from him, announcing his intentions of taking steps to restore his father to the throne, and, as a preliminary, setting up the Royal Standard at Glenfinnan. He indicated that the Earl was expected to join him. This was somewhat embarrassing to the Earl, as just at that time he was professing loyalty to the House of Hanover, but after a little hesitation he decided for Prince Charles, and, with about four hundred men, whom he had enrolled, joined the second army at Perth, after the Young Pretender had marched into England. Having definitely declared for the Prince, he proved one of his most ardent supporters. He collected money for the cause in Fife, superintending the transportation of the French artillery across the Forth from the Siege of Stirling, and took part with his son, Lord Macleod, in the Battle of Falkirk on 17th January 1746. When the Jacobite forces retreated northwards, Lord Cromartie accompanied Lord George Murray's contingent. Later, he was given command of the Earl of Kilmarnock's troops. This command was afterwards transferred to James Drummond, titular Duke of Perth, and Cromartie given command of the troops in Sutherland. In April 1746 he was surprised at Dunrobin by the Earl of Sutherland's militia, under the command of Lieut. Mackay, and defeated. Shortly afterwards he was captured at Dunrobin by stratagem while conferring with the assailants regarding offers of surrender, in spite of the attempts of the Countess of Sutherland to save him, who was unwilling that a friend and neighbour should be taken in her house.

Lord Cromartie and the other prisoners were carried in a sloop of war to Inverness two days after the Battle of Culloden, then sent to London, and committed to the Tower.

His trial took place before the House of Lords, in the Rufus Hall of Westminster, the scene being described by Horace Walpole as "the most solemn and fine". The Earl pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to be beheaded, his honours and estate to be forfeited.

His wife, determined to save his life, applied to the Earl of Sutherland for a pass to permit her and her daughters, Isabella, Mary and Anne, to travel to London. This was granted to her. At the same time, William Earl of Sutherland ordered - the order being dated at Tarbat House - twenty-four men of the Sutherlandshire Militia to act as a guard to the mansion of New Tarbat.

Meanwhile Lady Cromartie, with her daughters, hastened to London. On her arrival there she immediately wrote to the Hon. Mrs Poyntz, preceptress to the family of the Duke of Cumberland, asking her to intercede for her. She went in person and petitioned the Lords of the Cabinet Council, and on the Sunday following proceeded to Kensington Palace, dressed in mourning, and took up her station in the entrance through which the King had to pass to attend Divine service in the chapel. On his approach she fell on her knees before him, and presented her supplication that her husband's life might be spared.

King George II was most courteous and kind. With his own hand he raised her up, and gave orders that she was to be conducted to an apartment, where care might be taken of her. He declined, however, to give her any hopes of her petition being successful.

The Princess, however, took up her cause, and pleaded for her, while several of the courtiers and Lord Sutherland also used their influence on her behalf. Her strenuous efforts were ultimately successful, and the sentence of death was commuted to imprisonment in the Tower.

In February 1748 the Earl was released, and given permission to lodge at the house of a messenger, and in the following year he received a pardon under the Privy Seal on condition that he should reside in such place as the King should direct.

During his later years he was reduced to extreme poverty, and his eldest daughter, who had inherited her mother's beauty, was not too proud to perform the most menial tasks for the comfort of her parents and their younger children.

A daughter - Lady Augusta - whose birth occurred shortly after her father's trial, married Sir William Murray, Baronet of Ochtertyre. There is a story that (as the result of the intense emotions of her mother before her birth) she was born with the mark upon one side of her neck of an axe and three drops of blood.

Lord Cromartie died on 28th September 1766. His widow was granted by Royal warrant a pension of £200 a year out of the rents of the forfeited estates, but the Barons of Exchequer did not pay it until after she had presented a petition representing her impecunious condition. This pension was subsequently doubled.

She died in 1769, in Edinburgh, aged 62, and was buried in the Canongate Churchyard.

Her son, Lord Macleod, born in 1727, who had joined with his father in risking life, title, fortune and lands in the Stuart cause, shared also with his father the humiliation of being arrested and charged with high treason. Like his father he pleaded guilty, and was imprisoned. In January 1748 he was offered a pardon on condition that within six months of attaining his majority he should convey to the Crown all his rights to the estates of his father. This he agreed to. The following year he went to Sweden and entered the military service of that country, where he rose to high rank. In 1777 he returned to England, and petitioned for the restoration of his estates, offering to raise a Highland regiment for the Government. Through the influence of his cousin, Henry Dundas, this offer was accepted, and he was given the rank of Colonel. He was successful in raising two battalions of Highlanders, which were named the 73rd Foot, a regiment known later as the 71st, afterwards the 1st Battalion Highland Light Infantry.

His regiment was dispatched to India under his command, where it saw active service against Hyder Ali. While there in 1780 he was elected M.P. for Ross-shire, and there were great rejoicings all over the estate. Bells were rung, the Tower of Tain was illuminated, and balls were held to celebrate the event. In 1781 he returned home, and in 1783 he was raised to the rank of a major-general. The following year the family estates, but not the title of Earl of Cromartie, were restored to him on payment of £19,000, the amount of debt affecting the property, and in 1787 he arranged to take up residence in New Tarbat. On the death of Sir John Gordon, kinsman through his mother, he inherited the estate of Invergordon, but he sold it to Macleod of Cadboll.

The mansion of New Tarbat, a stately, turreted edifice, had been allowed, during the forfeiture, to fall into dilapidation, so Lord Macleod set about building a new residence, the present Tarbat House.

The beautiful trees, the pride of the district, many of them believed to have been planted by Sir Robert Innes during the short time that he held Milntown after the Monros, had been cut down and sold to a company in Leith, and the ground parcelled out in lots to disbanded soldiers and sailors.

Lord Macleod started planting again, and soon the estate began to show signs of recovering its former grace and beauty.

With the estates went the patronage of Kilmuir Church, and on his restoration, Lord Macleod immediately made enquiries regarding his rights to certain seating accommodation in the church, and requested that the Presbytery should hold a meeting at an early date to consider the matter.

This request the Presbytery complied with, and at the meeting a letter from Lord Macleod was read, in which he stated that when the church was rebuilt in 1736 or thereby, by a scheme of division which then took place the whole aisle, with a part of the body of the church, fell to the share of his father, the Earl of Cromartie. He declared that the aisle, as well as the fitting up of the gallery and furnishing a room with a fireplace behind the family seat, had cost his father a large sum of money, and he complained that the seat and the room had been removed and the gallery opened up and filled with pews. He now claimed that his share in the church should be restored to him.

At the meeting, Baillie, factor for Balnagown, objected to Lord Macleod's claims on the grounds that a final division had been made in 1771 after extensive repairs had been undertaken by the heritors, and that the Presbytery had no jurisdiction in the matter.

The Presbytery, anxious to avoid unpleasantness, and hoping that in time an understanding might be arrived at between the heritors and Macleod, delayed giving a reply, but the death of Macleod in Edinburgh in the spring of 1789 ended the matter. He was buried beside his mother in Canongate Churchyard.

In 1786, at the age of 59, he had married Margery, daughter of Lord Forbes, but there were no children, and his cousin, Kenneth Mackenzie, who was the only son of Captain Roderick Mackenzie, brother of George, third Earl of Cromartie, succeeded him. In his favour an entail of the Cromartie estates had been executed by Lord Macleod.

Kenneth continued the improvements on the estate which his predecessor had begun. On his death in Middlesex in 1796, he was succeeded by his cousin, Lady Isabella Mackenzie, Dowager Lady Elibank. She was the eldest daughter of George, 3rd Earl of Cromartie, born March 1725, and had married, in 1760, George, sixth Lord Elibank, and had two children, Maria and Isabella.

Isabella died in 1801, and was succeeded by Maria, who had married Edward Hay of Newhall, brother of George, seventh Marquess of Tweeddale.

In terms of Lord Macleod's entail, the surname of Mackenzie was assumed by Mr and Mrs Hay.

Mrs Hay Mackenzie died at No. 10 Royal Circus, Edinburgh, on 8th October 1858, and her eldest son John succeeded her. He had the fee of the Cromartie Estate conveyed to him by his mother in 1822. In 1828 he married Anne, third daughter of Sir James Gibson-Craig of Riccarton, Baronet. They had one child, Anne, born in 1829, who on her father's death in 1849, succeeded to the estates. In the same year Anne married George Granville William, Marquis of Stafford, who in 1861 became the Duke of Sutherland, the premier peer of Scotland.

The Duchess was a close friend of Queen Victoria, and held the office of Mistress of the Robes for several years. The old titles were revived in her favour, and she became Countess of Cromartie, Viscountess Tarbat of Tarbat, Baroness Macleod of Castle Leod, and Baroness Castlehaven of Castlehaven, by patent, dated 21st October 1861.

Her death occurred in 1888, and she was succeeded by her third son, Francis, Viscount Tarbat, the second son being heir to the Dukedom, the eldest having died.

Francis was born in 1852, at Tarbat House. He was Vice-Lieutenant of Ross and Cromarty, and Deputy-Lieutenant of Sutherland. In 1876 he married Lilian Janet, second surviving daughter of Godfrey William Wentworth, 4th Lord Macdonald.

They had two daughters - Sibell Janet, the present Countess of Cromartie, born 1878, and Constance, born 1882. Constance married Sir Edward Stewart-Richardson, 15th Baronet, who died, in November 1914, of wounds received in the Great War. In 1921 she married Dennis Luckie Matthew. She died in London on 23rd November 1932.

In 1900 the present Countess married Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Walter Blunt, who on his marriage assumed the surname Mackenzie, thus becoming Blunt-Mackenzie.

Of the marriage there are two sons and one daughter:- Roderick Francis Grant (Viscount Tarbat), born 1904, who married in 1933 Dorothy Downing, of Kentucky; Hon. Walter Osra, born 1906; Lady Isobel, born 1911.

Chapter VII - Balnagown and its Lairds

The name Balnagown might have been bestowed as fitly on certain other tracts of land in the Highlands as on that with which we are concerned in this chapter. It is of Gaelic derivation, meaning "town of the smiths", and must have originated in those remote times when small iron works were common all over the Highlands.

It is known that at least fourteen of these ancient smelting places existed at some period in Ross-shire, one of them being at Fearn and another at Edderton, on the present estate of Balnagown. It does not take much imagination to picture the little townships where the smiths and the smelters attached to the furnaces would dwell, little dreaming of the extent to which the industry would develop in the far future, or of the huge factories that would spring up with their armies of workpeople, when the small furnaces would have entirely disappeared and the name by which their townships were known come to indicate these great stretches of country - mountain and moor, forest and rich farmland - which now constitute the Estate of Balnagown.

It was in 1333 that Hugh, fourth Earl of Ross, gave a charter of the lands of Balnagown to his third son, Hugh, who was the eldest son of the Earl's second marriage with Margaret Graham, daughter of Sir David Graham of Old Montrose. This Hugh, known as Hugh Ross of Rarichies, thus became the first Laird of Balnagown.

The charter of the Balnagown lands was drawn up in the name of both Hugh and his wife, Margaret de Barclay, and about 1368 it was renewed by his brother William, the fifth Earl, and later confirmed by David II. In 1375 "that gift and grant which the late William, Earl of Ross, made to the late Hugh Ross, his brother, of the lands of Balnagown, Achahawyt and Gorty, and of the yearly revenue of four pounds from Tarbet with its pertinents in the Earldom of Ross" was confirmed by Robert II in favour of William Ross, son and heir of the said late Hugh Ross.

At that time the Rosses were the most powerful clan in Scotland, their increase in influence having commenced in the previous century after the downfall of the Morays, the tribe which had previously held the position of pre-eminence in the country.

After the death of the last Earl of Ross, the Lairds of Balnagown became the chiefs of the clan, their principal residence being Balnagown Castle, still one of the most picturesque mansions in the North of Scotland, but at present unoccupied, except by a couple of caretakers. It is for the most part built in the Old Scottish Baronial style of architecture, and a portion of it belongs to probably the 15th century. Part of it was rebuilt towards the end of the 17th century, in the time of David Ross, 13th laird, who was particularly interested in architecture. In 1763 there is a record of its being repaired and thatched, while the most recent part of all was constructed in 1838.

It stands on the banks of the Balnagown River. The beautiful Italian gardens, terraced from the lawns to the edge of the river, were laid out in 1847 according to plans drawn up by the laird and lady of that period.

To artists and lovers of ancient things the interior contains many objects of interest, including portraits by Raeburn. In one of the walls of the dining-room is a recess, pierced at the bottom by a shot-hole, on the sides of which are mural drawings of warlike figures in the garb of the 15th century, which were brought to light in the course of repairs. Above the fireplace of one of the

rooms is a lintel of stone, on which are carved three circles. Above the middle circle is A-M-M-F 1680; below it, SOLI - DEO - GLORIA (To God alone be the glory); within it a man in a Geneva hat cloak and bands, holding an open book, on which is inscribed - FEAR-God-in heart-as ye-my-bedded. Around the effigy are the words - SERVIRE-DEUM-EST-REG-NARE. (To serve God is to rule.) M-H-M-E-R. In the other circles are escutcheons, one bearing the motto NOB1LIS-EST-IRA-LEONIS (Noble is the anger of the lion.)

Little is known of the history of the Rosses during the fifteenth century or of the lairds of that period - Walter, Hugh and John, father, son and grandson; but we learn that towards the end of it the clan was engaged in a bitter feud with the Mackays, at that time a clan of great strength, and a source of perpetual irritation to the Rosses by their frequent incursions into the Ross domain.

One day a roving band of Rosses came upon a company of Mackays in the Church of Tarbat, and before the latter had time to realise the presence of their enemy, the building was in flames. The Mackays were unable to escape, and were burned to death. The Chief of the Mackays was determined that this deed should be avenged, and on the occasion of the coming-of-age of his son John he mustered the clan, and with the support of the Earl of Sutherland's men, they marched into Strathoykill, the Ross country, slaying and burning as they went. Alexander Ross of Balnagown, who had succeeded his father, the above John, as sixth laird, hurriedly gathered together as many of his men as possible, and meeting the invader at a place called Aldycharrich or Alt Charrais, engaged in battle. The result was the complete rout of the Rosses. Alexander was slain, along with seventeen landed proprietors of the County of Ross. The Rosses never recovered from this disaster, and remained afterwards a clan of no great strength or importance.

Alexander's son, David, was the next laird, seventh in the line. His first wife was Helen Keith, daughter of the Laird of Inverugie, described as "ane guid woman". She died in May 1519, and David married Margaret Stewart, who, like most people then, could not write. A receipt from her, dated 1546, has been preserved - "Ye relict of umqll. David Ross of Balnagown to her grandson, Thomas Stewart, taksman of my conjunct fie and tierce lands of Balnagown for the soum of twa hundred merks.... In witness heirof becaus I could not wreit it myself I haif causit ye notar underwritten subscribe yir putis wit my hand at ye pen. At Edinburgh ye twenty twa day of Marche ye yeir of God 1546 befor yir witnes."

David's death had occurred in 1527. His son, Walter, succeeded him, who, however, was slain at Tain the following year. His wife was Marion, daughter of Sir John Grant of Grant.

Little is known to the credit of their son Alexander, who next entered into possession.

In 1569 he and other lairds signed a bond, in which they swore to serve and obey as "becumis, dewtifull subjects the maist excellent and michtie Prince, James the Sext, be the grace of God, King of Scottis, oure onelie Soverane Lord . . . affirming and swering solemptlie upon our faythis and honouris, to observe and keip this our declaration and plane profession and every point thair of be God himself and as we will answer at his generall jugement."

But from Alexander such a declaration was valueless. Fearless and utterly unscrupulous, he entered on his career of destruction and outrage, raiding lands, destroying mansions, getting agreements drawn up in his favour by force, in utter disregard of law and justice.

From time to time certain persons became surety for his good behaviour under penalty of large sums of money.

John Campbell of Calder and James Scrymgeour of Dudhope, Constable of Dundee, were among those who undertook this onerous duty under penalty of £10,000, but Alexander refused to be bound, and continued his career of lawlessness. The result was that a decree was brought against those two men, and payment demanded of the said £10,000, failing that their "gudes and geir" would be arrested and their lands confiscated to the value of the sum agreed upon.

In 1580 a complaint was made to Sir William Murray of Tullebardin, knight, comptroller, by tenants of Alexander, that they had been so "herreit and wrakkit" by him that they were unable to pay their taxes, and if some action was not taken to put a stop to this treatment they could not guarantee to pay anything in the future.

There was a complaint also by Thomas, Commendator of Fearn, of "barbarous cruelties, injuries and intollerable oppressions and bludesched" committed by Alexander on his tenants, some of whom from fear of their lives yielded to any demand he was pleased to make. Others were obliged to leave their homes, and were unable to pay the commendator any "maill or dewitie they being compellit to mak payment thairof to the said Alexander" and were forbidden by him on pain of their lives to answer or acknowledge the said Commendator. He in turn was therefore unable to support himself, his wife and family, or to discharge his obligations.

Alexander, on being summoned to answer these charges, failed to appear, and was denounced as a rebel.

For some time he was confined in the Castle of Tantallon, but later released, and in 1592 he died at Ardmore, and was buried at Fearn.

He was married twice. His first wife was Janet, daughter of John, third Earl of Caithness, by whom he had a son, George, who succeeded him, and a daughter Catherine. His second wife was Katherine, daughter of Kenneth Mackenzie of Kintail, who bore him two sons - Nicolas, first of Pitcalnie, and Malcolm.

In 1496, about a century before the time of Alexander, an Act was passed in which it was ordained that the sons of barons and freeholders should send their eldest sons and heirs to school, "fra thai be auct or nyne zeries of age" and to remain there "quhill they be competentlie foundit and have perfite Latyne."

The object of this early example of compulsory education was a worthy one, namely, that those who became sheriffs and judges might have sufficient knowledge to administer justice. The penalty for neglect of this Act was twenty pounds.

Whether as a result of this law, or because, in spite of his discreditable conduct in other respects, Alexander realised the advantages of education and wishing his son to benefit from them, he sent George, his eldest son and heir, for a period to attend the University of St Andrews.

Evidence of this remains in receipts received by him for certain payments for board, etc. The originals are still in existence.

"I maister Johne Douglas, Rector of ye university of Sanct Andros, grantis to have ressavit fra Thomas Smyt (Smith) stewaird to ye laird of ballnagown ye soume of thretty twa libs tway schillings in complet payment of ye burd

of George Ross sounne to ye said laird for all ye tyme remaint student wt. me
. . . nynt day of Januar ane thousand fif hundreth thrie scoir sevin zeirs."

The maister Johne Douglas mentioned here was in all probability he, described as Provost of the New College of St Andrews, who was associated with John Knox in the drawing up of a national scheme of education.

Another receipt is in the following terms:

"The savinteen day of Februar ye yeir of God 1566 yeirs I Andrew Watsoun,
Stewart in ye New College of Sanct Androw, grants me to have resavit fra . .
. Maister Thomas Ross . . . on behalf of Alexr Ross of Balnagown, for ye
thrie quarters boyrd of George Ross his son . . . twentie sevin pundis
witnesses George Ross, Johne Chalmers and James Tago."

On the other side of the document is inscribed,

"Heir follows ye money yt said Thomas Ross left wt. Androw Watsoun.
Item to buy tway sarks wt. ij neipkyrus XXXIV sh. Item to by ij pair shone
ane pair gloves and ane coird to ane bonat 14 sh. iiijd. Item for ane pound of
candill XVI. sh."

George does not seem to have been far behind his father in recklessness and utter disregard of law and order.

In 1589 there was a complaint by James Dunbar of Tarbert that George had been building certain dykes and marches on the lands of Kindeis, the property of Dunbar, and in 1592, Johne Ros, in Edinburgh, complained that George, with his brothers Nicolas and William, and other sixty accomplices, had taken him captive with violence and detained him in Balnagown Castle against his will.

In the same year George Ross and his father were accused of the slaughter of certain subjects, and of assisting the fugitive Earl Bothwell over the ferries of Ardersier, Cromartie and Dornoch.

Four years later, Hector Munro of Assynt accused him of stealing his cattle, while in 1603 he was summoned for laying waste lands, destroying "hained" grass and pasturage, and stealing salmon, corn, cattle and other goods.

To one and all of these charges he failed to answer, and was denounced as a rebel.

George Ross owed sums of money to various individuals, and was in arrears with his taxes, decrees for the discharge of these debts being constantly served on him, but without result.

George married, first, Marjory, daughter of Sir John Campbell, by whom he had one son, David, who succeeded him, and four daughters. His second wife was Isobel, daughter of Angus McIntosh, who survived him, and took as her second husband Mr John Munro, minister of Tarbat. Some trouble followed over the possession of "ane tack of the miln of Balnagoune," which had been left to her by George without the consent of the heir, and the miller had some difficulty in obtaining the necessary warrant to carry on his business. On becoming a widow for the second time, Isobel married as her third husband, Mr McCloyde of Tallaster.

No member of the Balnagown family made more of a stir, not only in Ross-shire, but all over the country, than George's sister Katharine, who was the principal figure in one of the most famous trials for witchcraft in the sixteenth century.

She was the second wife of Robert More Munro of Foulis, who possessed extensive lands in Ross, Sutherland and Inverness, and whose family was of great antiquity. He represented Ross in the Parliament of 1560.

The "contract matrimoniall" is dated 1563, and reads as follows:-

"Alexr Ross of Balnagown taking burden for Katrine his dochter and Robert Munro of foulis his aires . . . (bot-without) ony impediment of consanguinitie or affinitie . . . sall . . . obtein sufficient dispensation . . . sall infest . . . said Katrine and her aires . . . landis of Contulie . . . mylle of ye samyn . . . Meikle Dawan . . . to be holden of . . . queen's majestie." Then follows signatures of witnesses and of both Alexander Ross and Robert Munro.

A receipt dated 1568 reads-

"I Robert Munro of Fowlis . . . resavit pay . . . Robert Munro my servand . . . four scoir pundis and pay Alexr Sutherland twenty. . . . in name and behalf of Alexr Ross of Balnagown and in pairt payment of my tochir geir that I suld have pay the said Alexr - afoir yir witnesses Robert Munro, vicar of Urquhard, Sir John Sidserf and Donald McCuloich bishopis sone."

"Robert Munro of Foulis"

Robert Munro and Katherine had seven children - George, John, Andrew, Margaret, Janet, Marjory and Elizabeth. By his first marriage with Margaret Ogilvy, of the house of Findlater, there were two sons, the elder being Robert, who succeeded him on 4th November 1588, as sixteenth baron, and the second, Hector, who on 7th October 1589, succeeded Robert. There were also three daughters - Florence, Christian and Catherine.

It was, perhaps, natural that Katherine Ross should wish that her own children should take precedence of her stepchildren in the inheritance of the lands of Fowlis, but this was not legally possible. She was prepared, therefore, to resort to any means to bring it about. Another of her ambitions was that a marriage might take place between the young wife of her stepson, Robert, and her brother George of Balnagown, who was already married to Marjory Campbell. This also in spite of obstacles, she determined to effect. With this object she entered into a compact with certain individuals believed to possess supernatural powers, to remove those who stood in the way of her desires, by means of witchcraft and poisoning. Several unsuccessful attempts were made, but ultimately the plot was discovered. Some of the conspirators were arrested, and on the 28th day of November 1577, in the Cathedral Kirk of Ross, two at least of her accomplices - Cristian Roys Malcolmsonne and Thomas McKean - were tried, and, having confessed their guilt, were "brint for saim".

Lady Foulis took fright, and fled to Caithness, but was brought back by her husband, and it was not until 1590, two years after her husband's death, that she was arrested, the trial taking place in Edinburgh before the Supreme Criminal Tribunal of Scotland.

The "dittay against the Pannell" was a lengthy one. The main charge was of plotting against the lives of Robert Monro "thane apperand of Fowlis" and Marjory Campbell, "spouse to George Rois of Balnagown". In collaboration with her hired accomplices she was accused of making two images of clay, the one representing the young Laird of Fowlis, and the other the lady of Balnagown. Two elf arrow heads were then shot at these images by Katherine and her accomplices with the object of effecting the death of the originals.

Another charge was of making "ane stoup-full of poysoint new aill" devised for Hector, the Laird's brother, "his bairnis, the haill sonis of vmqll Johne Monro of Urquhart, Hucheoune Monro of Assent, Andro Monro of Newmore, and the remanent of the speciall of their kynne", so determined was she to make a complete clearance of all possible claimants to the estate. This "aill", however, was spilt, but a still ranker poison was ordered. Again the potion miscarried, this time through the messenger who had been entrusted with it falling a victim to his curiosity. In order to discover its composition, he tasted it and died, the vessel being broken and its contents spilt.

The "cuik" at Balnagown Castle - Johne MoLaren - was also one of Katherine's confederates, and was induced to administer to the Lady of Balnagown "rattoun" poison to be mixed with "ane kiddis neir". The victim, although not immediately succumbing to the effects of this diet, developed a lingering illness, from which she never recovered. The indictment contained many other charges of a similar nature, but in spite of the evidence, a packed jury, composed of dependents in the families of Munro and Ross, all of an inferior rank to the accused, declared her innocent of the "haill poyntis of the dittay". Thus the guilty woman was acquitted.

On the death of George Ross in 1615, he was succeeded by David, his son by his first wife, Marjory Campbell.

David married, first, Lady Mary Gordon, second daughter of Alexander, Earl of Sutherland, "a vertuous and comely lady of ane excellent and quick witt." She died in 1604, and was buried in Dornoch. David subsequently married Lady Annabella Murray, daughter of John, Earl of Tullibardine.

David must have been a more peace-loving and law-abiding subject than his father and grandfather, for only one instance of his disobeying the law is recorded. That is in 1613, when he is fined the sum of £1000 for being concerned in resetting some members of the clan Macgregor, in spite of the fact that in the previous year his father, on the principle, perhaps, of setting a thief to catch a thief, had been appointed to a Commission at Inverness for trial of resetters of the Macgregors.

During his time the estates were heavily encumbered. His creditors were continually pressing for payment, and threatening to "apprise his lands" and incarcerate the person of his son David, who was then a minor.

On the grounds that this procedure would interrupt his education, the Government was petitioned to give the boy protection from arrestments on account of his father's debts, until he reached the age of seventeen years.

This was granted, and, later, the protection extended to cover his time in Edinburgh, where he went to study philosophy.

On the death of his father in 1632, he succeeded to the estates, having just attained his majority. His wife was Marie Fraser, eldest daughter of Hugh, Lord Lovat. She died at Ardmore on 22nd December 1646.

In 1635, Lord Lovat was cautioner for David that he keep the peace as chieftain of his clan.

Along with Sir John Mackenzie of Tarbat, David received a commission to apprehend Papists. He also acted as one of the Ross-shire representatives on the Commission of War from 1643 to 1646. He was a supporter of the Royal cause, and fought at Worcester in 1651, where he was taken prisoner, and then sent to the Tower, where he died on 29th December 1653.

He had been unable to free the estate from its burdens, and on several occasions while he was a prisoner in the Tower, soldiers were quartered on Balnagown for default of taxpaying. His two children, David and Alexander, were kept mostly in Tain and Sutherland.

In 1648, 1650 and 1651 there are records of complaints being lodged against David Rosse of Balnagown for non-payment of maintenance, and the Lords grant warrant to the Captain of his Majesty's Lifeguard and Governors of the Captain of his Majesty's garrisons to quarter parties of horse or foot upon him until he pays what is due.

After his death conditions did not improve, and in 1655 there is a note of items supplied to the troops quartered on the estate, as follows:-

"Item at severall tymes to the horsemen payit for their quarteris ryding money and all they receavit of me for deficiencie, 98 merks. Item payit for thrie furnished beds to the six horsemen qlk quarterit on Balnagown his rent at 33 m. 6s. 8d. the bed is 100 mks. . . kidds, capons, henns and eggs gevin to the trouperis."

The neighbouring Estate of Milntown suffered similar treatment. As might be expected, this system of obtaining payment of taxes due to the Government was often abused by the military, and complaints were frequent of unlawful plundering by the soldiers, and of poor people of the estate having to supply "bedding, ale and candle who are not able to furnish fyre to mak readie meat and brew drink for our selfis."

David, the thirteenth laird, who proved to be the last of his line, was born on 14th September 1644, so that he was only nine years old when his father died, and it was four years later before he entered into his possessions. David, son of Pitcalnie, acted as his guardian.

He married Lady Anne Stewart, daughter of James, Earl of Moray. The marriage contract was dated 10th April 1666. They were childless, but David had several illegitimate children.

It is recorded that in 1668 he gave part of Oxgate lands of the Drum of Fearn to John Ross, mason in Balnagown, and to Margaret, his wife, one of whom, it is not clear which, being his illegitimate child. John Ross died before 1717, and his wife before 1741, having had an only son, David, who predeceased his father, and three daughters. The eldest daughter married James Ross, a tailor in Fearn, who in 1717 purchased the portions of the other two daughters. He died in 1738, leaving three daughters, Francis, Elspeth and Enphemia, who inherited his property. The above James Ross, however, owed money to Bailie Donald Ross, of Tain, and in payment of this debt these lands were ceded to him by the above heirs.

From what is known of David it is quite evident that he was a person of somewhat weak intellect, much under the influence of his wife, a capable, strong-minded woman, to whom he deferred in all matters connected with the business of the estate. She in turn was under the domination of the Presbyterian clergy, particularly Mr William Stewart, of Kiltearn, and Mr Daniel Macgilligan, formerly of Kilmuir, later of Alness.

On account of all his father had done and suffered in the Royalist cause, David had been granted a pension of £200 a year by Charles II. Therefore his sympathies at the time of the Revolution might be expected to be more on the side of James II. than on that of his rivals, but he had plenty of astuteness when his own safety was concerned, and seeing how events were shaping, he had no hesitation in joining the supporters of William and Mary.

A few months later he received a letter from Major-General Mackay, acting for the Revolution Convention, in which, in one long sentence, he, as commander-in-chief of King William's forces, expressed his confidence in David's help and in his support of the Protestant religion, inveighed against the Papists as betrayers of their country, and declared that, under William and Mary, he expected all the advantages

"accompanying the government of princes zealous of God's glory and the interest of his true Church, and just and equitable towards their subjects, whereof if you be pleased by letter to assure me I shall labour to improve it to the most advantage of you and your family, as far as lyes in my power. . . .tho' I am in a manner a great stranger to the country , . . not ignorant that your concurrence with us is of great weight having the command of numerous friends and a considerable following allways reputed prety forward men, and if such in causes of less importance much more may it be expected in this which comprehends the safety of all that ought to be sacred and deare to all Protestant Christians. . . all be at stake if these kingdoms were recovered by popish forces out of Ireland and France for King James . . . if I can be serviceable to you . . . be freely persuaded of what lyes in the power of. . . .

"H. Mackay, Edr 12 Apprile 1689."

In that year David was appointed Governor of Inverness, but there is some difference of opinion among his contemporaries as to how he acquitted himself in this position. Some assert that he held the post only for a few days, that he deserted his Government, and stole away in the night time when he heard that an army in command of Sir James Leslie was within a few days' march of the town. Others deny this, and maintain that he was held in great respect in Inverness, that he was no coward, but a brave, resolute man, and that he remained at his post as Governor of Inverness until relieved by an order from General Mackay.

There is, however, some reason for believing that he was decidedly lacking in force of character and self-reliance, that among his social equals he was an object of amusement, and that the boys and idlers of Inverness were in the habit of following him up and down the streets to jeer at him. He had sufficient astuteness, however, to keep in favour with whatever Government happened to be in power.

In private life he showed conscientiousness and a sense of duty regarding his obligations as laird, superior to many of his contemporaries among the neighbouring landowners. He kept his property

in good repair, and undertook more than his share as heritor of the upkeep of Kilmuir Easter Church. He also had a cultured taste in architecture, and largely rebuilt Balnagown Castle.

There is a contract, dated 1699, between David Ross of Balnagown and John Ross, mason in Pitmaduthie, to repair Balnagown Bridge, in which John Ross, mason in Pitmaduthie . . . "binds . . . himself as principall meason to caus hew as many sufficient hewn stones . . . as will serve a stone pend (arched or vaulted passage) clost without cupples to the Bridge of Balnagown where it is pitt founded, and that the cost of the said pend shall be according to the rule of airt in hight and goodness and approven be John Ross before the making of the centires for the sd. pend and for the wholl meason work of the said bridge . . . John Ross oblidges him for the laying and hewing thereof and to uphold in its full integritie, on his own charges, for . . . nynetein yeares after . . . 1700 . . . dammage if any happin to be repaired out of . . . my gods and geir leaft be me . . . David Ross oblidges him . . . lead stones for the sd. hewen work to the bridge end . . . and to pay . . . for hewing twentie pundis Scots for each sex scoir eylers (?) and essler wark . . . and to caus build a centrie for the sd. pend . . . For John Ross his care . . . ane hundreth merks as master and overseer besyds his monthly wadges . . . begin immediately in order God willing to be readie for laying the 1st of March. . . Laird furnishing all material . . ." Both sign. From this one gathers that in 1699 there was a good stone bridge there, and apparently the approach at one end had got undermined, and was to be renewed by a dry arch carrying the road.

Unfortunately, David seems to have been in continual financial straits, and to have lived in constant dread of being arrested for debt. To tide him over his difficulties he received a loan of 36,000 marks from his brother-in-law, the Earl of Moray. Further sums he obtained from Mr Duff, Provost of Inverness, and others, to whom for security and payment of the loans he presented a "locality of victual and salmon."

His affairs would have been in a still more unsatisfactory state were it not for his wife, who had plenty of commonsense, and whose business ability was of a high order. Her rule over him was entirely a beneficent one, and the value of David's share in the directing of public affairs was certainly enhanced through her guidance. Her letters to him during his absences from home show that, in spite of his feebleness of character and his frequent infidelities, she had a deep affection for him and an appreciation of the kindness and consideration shown by him to her.

"My Dearest Heart," she writes on 7th June 1686, from her Castle of Balnagown, "I reseved your letter by the Chanrie post with the shous you sent me lykways yours by Strathnaver's man I reseved, with the box and things inclosed they are verie pritie and well sented the lemons and chesnets I reseved and I love chesnets verie weill . . . hartie thanks my dearest love, and good experience confirms me that you are not unmindful of me. . . . Your kindness is my greatest earthly comfort, and my dearest dear I pray the Lord reward you for I shall never be abell to doe it by the confusions that are, and is expected in Edr. troulay I imagine ther is bot litill satisfacktion to be had by being there and if what is feared goe through as is designed those that is not in Edr, will find the smart of it . . . if ever ther was time to be earnest with God Almightye shour this is it the Lord bless you with much of his saving greas grant it may be his gloire you may mainely aime at ought . . . cheirfullay to submit to whatever the Almightye treist us with . . . My Dear Heart the wether is so cauld and ranie that no peats is yet easen in Ross bot if they can win in to the mose . . . begin this wick. I shall give them bear out of the barne . . . Alexr. Lammie should pey. Its like non of it will be gotten

out of his hand this year. . . . I meet with troubill enough in small matters. . . . I was last week in Westray causing clip my wethers, and notwithstanding of my often sending both my word and wret to McCoulahan to have a cair to haine the grass for your horses yet I found it had not been hained. . . . God keep you in health and bring you saif home my dearest life your most affectionate wyff while I breathe.

"A. STEWART"

"(P.S.) Dearest remember me to my nephie Frank since I can not wret to him bot tell him he shall be most welcome to me."

The letter fills two folio pages, and she continues on a third:-

"Dear heart, I pray remember to buy two locks having a brass handle . . . which will shut and open without delay.... My life is melancholy and lonlay and has many to troubill me but non to comfort me save God alon. . . . You may judge whether I doe not long for your company yet I dare not complean . . . convinced it is necessitie keeps you from me. . . . God give me to be content. I have now wretn more than I believe you will get weill rede. The blessing of the Lord Almightye be with you and to the last I continow . . . Your most affectionate wyff to Death. A. STEWART."

As early as 1685, when there seemed no prospect of Balnagown's leaving a son to succeed him, the succession was being discussed by interested parties. Lady Anne naturally favoured her own family and actually succeeded in having some rights to partial succession drawn up in favour of her nephew, Francis, second son of the Earl of Moray, but as the elder brother died, and consequently Francis became the heir-apparent to the Earldom of Moray, dissatisfaction arose in the Ross family at the idea of the lands of Balnagown becoming an appanage of the Earldom of Moray. Francis, on his part, does not seem to have pushed his claims to any extent, although it was said on his behalf that the loan of 36,000 marks to Balnagown from the Earl of Moray was in respect of his son's ultimate succession. This was denied, of course, by the rival party.

About the year 1694 a new claimant appeared in the person of William, Lord Ross, whose family, the Rosses of Halkheid, had been enobled in 1501, and who claimed to have sprung from the same stock as the Rosses of Balnagown. Lord Ross seems to have resembled David in respect of being rather a turncoat in his political sympathies. He was an ardent persecutor of the Whigs, but at the Revolution went over to their side. Then he plotted to restore King James, ultimately supporting William and Mary. These facts were used by his opponents to prejudice his claims to the Balnagown lands.

In order to ingratiate himself with Lady Anne, who looked with anything but favour on his claim, he offered to procure for her the title of Countess. He pointed out the advantage it would be to the Presbyterian cause if he had an interest in Balnagown, and argued that the fact of his bearing the name of Ross should weigh in his favour. No stone was left unturned by him to further his cause. Mr Stewart, minister of Kiltearn, was induced to use his influence, which was considerable, with Lady Anne, in his behalf, in return for which Lord Ross undertook to serve him on any occasion. Eventually Lord Ross came to an agreement with the Earl of Moray, and, in return for a large sum of money, Francis resigned his rights, and Lord Ross got a disposition and taillie of the estates.

Encouraged by this success, he made a further claim to obtain a grant of the Earldom of Ross, which would have made him the feudal superior of many of the heritors of the shire of Ross. Lord Cromartie, whose estate adjoined Balnagown, was greatly indignant, and in a letter referred to "all the fidling of this hot-headed fool in that, having made of late a new kind of purchass in Ross of a reversion of David Ross of Bellnagowan lands . . . he must therefore be successor to and will needs be Earle of Ross, who is indeed one of the first Earles in Scotland and hade great superiorities." Mainly owing to Lord Cromartie's opposition, Lord Ross was unsuccessful in obtaining the desired grant.

Soon afterwards, for reasons which do not appear, he resigned in favour of his brother, General Charles Ross, and by the time some of the deeds were signed, David was on his deathbed.

He died on 17th April 1711, and was buried in Fearn Abbey. An eye-witness tells that the burial was "very throng" and the grandest he ever saw, that most of the gentlemen of the neighbouring counties were present, and two or three thousand were in arms.

The receipts granted by the two doctors who attended David during his last illness are preserved:-

"From Surgeon William Frogg:

"Received from James Wilson, in Balnagown, by an order to him, from Lady Balnagown, four bolls meal, 1 mean oatmeal. April 1711, and that for my attendance to the laird, February and March preceding his last sickness. I say February and March 1711. As witness my hand at Apidald, the 9th day of February 1712 years." "(Signed) Will. Frogg."

Another from George Cuthbert, doctor of medicine:

"I, George Cuthbert, doctor of medicine at Inverness, grant me to have received from Lady Anne Stewart, Lady Balnagown, five guineas, being called out of Inverness to see the Laird of Balnagown on his deathbed; I say received from the said Lady Anne, after Balnagown's death, the said five guineas, the-day of April 1711 years. In witness thereof have written and subscribed these presents at Kessock, the 29th day of January 1714 years.

"(Signed) Geo. Cuthbert."

The funeral charges are heavy:

"29th May 1711. William Duk carpenter New Tarbat for coffins etc, £180 . . . Wm. Kerr painter in Nairne for Scuthins and Branches, £306. William Frogg chirurgeon in Milltown embowelling and sheer cloath £120. Thomas Fraser, Inverness baking cookery . . . flour . . . turkis £126 . . . T. Robertson, Inverness . . . clarett. Brandis and bottles £386 . . . half hoghead of sack £96. . . . John McKay Inverness . . . spiceries sweetmeats etc . . . £253. Murnings from Edinburgh £204 paper, wacks etc. for writing funeral letters £351 etc."

Certain of these items have reference to the custom of these times when a death occurred, of all those connected in any way with the deceased expressing their grief by weeks of feasting at the

expense of the relatives of the departed. From the cost some idea of the lavish scale in which this was done may be learned.

General Charles Ross succeeded David as laird. He died at Bath on 5th April 1732, leaving no issue, and the estates passed to his grand-nephew, the Honourable Charles Ross, son of George, 13th Lord Ross. In a letter from London to his factor, dated February 25, 1742, regarding some matters connected with the business of the estate he remarked- "I set out for Flanders very soon. What to do the Lord knows." He was killed at the Battle of Fontenoy in 1745. His father, George, 13th Lord Ross, succeeded him, followed in 1754 by his brother William.

Lord Ross was disinclined to spend any money on the estate beyond what was necessary, while his son remained unmarried.

"I own to you freely," he wrote in 1746, to William Baillie, his factor, "That if my son does not marry soon . . . I would grudge every expense about Balnagown . . . if it was to go out of my family I should be a loser by it." Again, in 1752, he wrote in the same strain:- "That enclosure about Balnagown may be very useful in time, but I would have ye young man marry before he lay out any more money there."

In spite of the persuasions of his father, however, William died a bachelor in 1760. The estate, after some litigation, passed to his cousin, Sir John Ross Lockhart, who was the son of Grizel, daughter of William, 12th Lord Ross, and niece of General Charles Ross, who acquired the estates in 1732. His father was Sir James Lockhart of Carstairs. His claim to the estates was confirmed by the House of Peers in February 1756, and his name changed from Ross Lockhart to Lockhart Ross.

Sir John was a good type of laird according to the standard of that period, anxious that his estate should be run on the most progressive lines. He studied the latest ideas in agriculture, and in 1763 imported an English farm manager to Balnagown, in order to effect improvements by introducing some of the farming methods of the South. By trenching, building, fencing, he reclaimed forty-five acres of muir ground, adding it to the policies round the Castle. He laid down plantations of fir, and in twenty-five years made Balnagown one of the most desirable seats in the North of Scotland.

Eager to help, according to his lights, in any scheme which seemed likely to benefit the community in general, he gave his support to the linen industry, carried on for many years in the parish, and to a stocking factory in Milntown. He also took an active interest in the construction of the East Coast road from Beauly to Dingwall, and from there to Tain, which was being engineered about the time he came into his inheritance.

He was one of the pioneers in sheep-farming in the North. At the time he succeeded to the estate of Balnagown the general opinion was that no sheep could survive a severe winter in the Highlands, but Sir John held that the climate of the lower levels of Ross-shire was as mild as any part of Scotland. He had observed that the same varieties of corn ripened there when properly cultivated, and the same fruits as in the low parts of Perthshire. He therefore concluded that as the hills of Ross were not higher than those of Perthshire they were likely to be quite suitable for rearing the same kind of stock, and determined to make the experiment.

In this he encountered more than ordinary difficulties, for at that time a great proportion of Highland property was divided up into farms and leased, the tenants reserving for themselves as much land as would support their horses and milk cows during the four months of summer and autumn dividing up the rest and sub-letting it. When these leases expired Sir John did not renew

them, and the farmers made no demur, as it had not been a very profitable arrangement for them. The sub-tenants, on the other hand, were indignant.

Sir John took one of these farms into his own hands, and put a stock of sheep on it, brought from the Lothians. He also imported shepherds from that district to look after the flock. These men were looked upon by the former small tenants as intruders, and subjected to many annoyances.

The losses of sheep, from the depredations of the people and from mismanagement, were enormous.

The opposition to Sir John's scheme came not only from the people of his estate who had been dislodged from their holdings, but from the farmers, who attributed his want of success to the climate. But he refused to yield, and succeeded ultimately in proving that it was possible for sheep when properly treated to live in the mountains of Ross during the severe seasons.

He had entered the Navy in 1735, at the age of fourteen, and rose to be Vice-Admiral.

As a commander he had a reputation for great courage and ability. It was said that in the course of fifteen months, when in command of a frigate, the *Tartar*, he captured in the Channel with this single ship, nine of the enemy's ships of war, several being of superior force.

For several years he was Member of Parliament for the county.

His wife was Elizabeth Baillie, heiress of Lamington, eldest daughter of Robert Dundas of Arniston, Lord President of the Court of Session.

He died in 1790, at the age of sixty-eight. An eloquent funeral sermon, the manuscript of which has been preserved, was preached by the Rev. John Matheson, who was minister of Kilmuir at the time.

In glowing terms he spoke of his great physical courage and his success as a commander in the Navy, of his faith in God's providence, and his deep reverence for the things of the spirit. Referring to his many acts of kindness, he said, "That the poor and indigent have been often and liberally supplied from his family there are many grateful witnesses now in my hearing."

He was succeeded in the estates by his eldest son, Sir Charles Ross, Lieutenant-Colonel of the 37th Regiment, educated at Eton and at Christ Church, Oxford. He followed in his father's steps by representing the County in Parliament. In 1807 he was elected Provost of Tain.

He died in 1814, survived by his widow, Lady Mary Ross, who was a daughter of the Duke of Leinster.

Lady Mary was interested in education. She had a full realisation of its value, and did not consider it a monopoly of the upper classes, as so many in her position did at that time, but an advantage that should be enjoyed by all classes. Determined, therefore, to bring its benefits, as far as she could, within reach of those less fortunate than herself, she started a school for girls on the estate, which was carried on for many years. She not only paid the salary of the teacher and all other expenses connected with the school, but provided the clothing of the girls.

Lady Mary died at Bonnington, County of Lanark, on 28th September 1842, having survived her husband for twenty-eight years.

Her son, Sir Charles Frederick Augustus Lockhart Ross, born 1812, succeeded his father as seventh baronet.

His first wife, Elizabeth Joanna Baillie, daughter of Colonel Robert Ross, 4th Dragoon Guards, whom he married in 1841, died in 1848, aged 32, and in 1871 he married Rebecca Sophia Barnes, whose son, Sir Charles Henry Augustus Frederick Lockhart Ross, the present representative, and the last of his line, born 4th April 1872, succeeded to the estates on the death of his father in 1883.

Educated at Eton and at Trinity College, Cambridge, he held a commission in the 3rd Battalion Seaforth Highlanders, and during the South African War was Captain in the Lovat Scouts. He invented a rifle, which was used by the Canadian forces in the Great War.

On attaining his majority, he married Florence Winifred Berens. In 1897 the marriage was dissolved, and in 1901 he married Patricia Ellison, of Kentucky, U.S.A. This marriage was dissolved in 1930.

Sir Charles has made his home in America, and in 1931, before the District of Columbia Supreme Court, when denying certain claims against him in connection with the dissolution of his marriage, he is reported to have stated that he no longer owned land in Scotland.

So the Castle stands silent and deserted, save for a couple of caretakers, and seems to wear an air of mournful dignity, as it looks down on the once trim lawns, where now the grass grows rank and high, and on the old trees which throw their shadows on avenues almost hidden beneath a flourishing crop of weeds, while deep in their tombs the old lairds, descendants of the powerful Earls of Ross, lie sleeping, careless of the changes the years have wrought. And the seasons pass, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, for one generation passeth away and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever.

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*Duncan Forbes Ross of Kindeace. [Photo of oil painting
courtesy of Bradley Ross of North Carolina, USA.]*

*Mr Bradley Ross believes the painting is approximately 250
years old. It was discovered at an auction in Portland,
Oregon, USA, c.1960.*