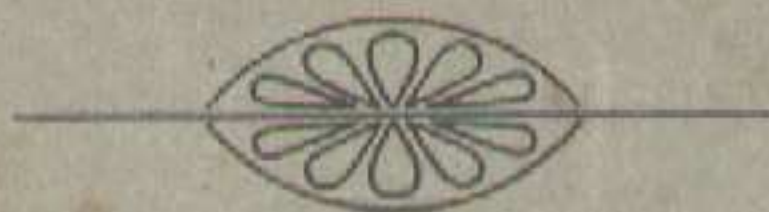


Elizabeth Robb
4 Anderson Crescent
Sorn

SORN PARISH:

ITS HISTORY AND ASSOCIATIONS.

BY HELEN J. STEVEN.



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INTRODUCTORY

CAIRNTABLE dominates the view: it shuts out the world beyond and throws its deep shadow over moors and moss-hags where Covenanters fled, nimble-footed, from the heavy-mounted dragoons of Clavers and Lee. A delicate haze softens the distance, and the grey-blue sky and the pale grey mist imperceptibly blend into each other. The cosy looking farm-houses in the valley are seen through the enviroing trees, stripped of their leaves, with branches delicately interlacing, like a homely face softened and refined by the lace-work of a veil. The Wealth O' Waters, well named, races through its rocky bed in miniature cataracts and waterfalls and lifts up a brawling, braggart voice in the rocky shallows as it hastes to join the Ayr, its deep, rugged valley a striking contrast to the smiling fields through which it cuts its way. The beech trees stand bare and beautiful but like a daintiest carpet of Indian red, the fallen leaves border the edges of the woods, or lie, a soft, bright patch of colour on the yellowish-green of the mossy grass by which the isolated trees are surrounded. In the hedges the russet-red of the low-growing beech is still conspicuous, bright bars athwart the bluish-purple of the hawthorn branches. Or here or there is a long stretch of hedge of beech, winding uphill and down dale, a fiery border to the dull, grey road. Again comes the purplish hawthorn, with long trails of bramble-berry leaves of every shade of crimson and green and yellow; the bright red seed-pods of the dog-rose gleam like stars in the dark hedges. All over the country-side there are belts of fir, dark green and intensely restful to the eye, standing compact and firm like an unbroken line of soldiers, or with their palm-like outspreading branches clearly defined against the blue of the sky, as they march single file along a field hedge-bank. Deep down in a valley there is a quaint little clachan built beside a bridge, so low, and the road leading to it so steep, that one could almost throw stones into its chimneys. Some of the small cottages are built far under the level of the road, and the inhabitants, as the infrequent stranger passes by, climb a few steps and thrust their heads above the level of the roadway, only the faces seen, like a mushroom growth of human kind. The shoemaker stands at his door arrayed in his leather apron, and the guid wife also, with arms akimbo and floury hands from her baking; a dog barks aggressively, and white barn-door fowls flee in aimless helter-skelter. Beyond the bridge which spans the brook, the road rises steeply, and, looking back, the red beech hedge, the bridge, the elbow-like turn in the road and the homely cottages with the hill as a background, form a pleasing picture of quiet, rural beauty. Cairntable disappears and the fir-trees march in battle array along the road: or rather, it is a church, and we wander among the pillars, and hear the choir sing, soft and low, from the holy rood. Then the way is paved with leaves of the beech trees, and the road goes down and down and turns, and once more there is a bridge and the Cleugh falls into the Ayr. And the high bank of the Ayr is wooded, and on the low bank opposite, the trees are decked in garments of every shade of red and brown and gold and green; and see how daintily they lift their skirts that the river may not splash them, and nod proud heads to the Autumn sky. And the Ayr, "gurgling, kisses its pebbly shore," or its waters are imprisoned for a little while in a long slanting weir, as it bends gently to the south; and high on its rocky hank stands the Castle of Sorn, like an old-world picture, with red walls and quaint chimney-stacks appearing above the trees. Lean over the bridge awhile and gaze upon the scene. It is a picture of idyllic loveliness and peace, with only the murmur of the water breaking the peaceful stillness. The road still winds downhill, and in the valley through which the Ayr flows in stately fashion stands the little village of Sorn. A bridge, high in the centre, with two arches, spans the river, a quaint old bridge that seems to have stepped out of some Flemish picture, but finding itself quite at home in this beautiful spot has resolved to stay, and so adds to its charm. A mill is built beside the bridge and a cottage, white washed, with roses climbing to its thatched roof. And close by stands the parish church, its walls of red sandstone which two hundred years of wind and weather have but little stained, its little open belfry, its outside stairs to the lofts or galleries worn by the feet of many generations of worshippers, and around it lie

the quiet dead. And truly there could not be found a resting-place in a more beautiful spot. On the hill-side above the fir trees stand solemn in their perpetual green; along the churchyard wall the beech, in Spring, sends forth tiny buds of hope; and in Autumn blazes into a triumphant red, like a shout of joy. The yew tree is there, so long-lived as to seem immortal, and sweet flowers which fade so soon, like human-blossoms, early gathered. And the river glides on to the sea, murmuring and talking as it goes, singing softly sometimes, but silent in its deepest depths. Does it tell of life and death, of joy and sorrow, of sunshine and shadow, of narrow ravines, dark and dismal and God forgotten, and lovely plains like smiles of Heaven? Does it tell of work, as it turns the mill-wheel, the panacea of all woes? Does it dream, like Jacob, as it lies asleep on its stony bed, of a ladder, which reaches to Heaven? Does it whisper so gently to those who are lying still beside it of eternity and immortality and life? Or is it mourning as it goes, fretting and complaining, wailing out in the night time that it must hurry onwards to the sea, to be lost in the world of waters, to be forgotten, to be drowned and never found again?

And thus 'twill flow for ever,
Till Time shall cease to be
Oh, weary, weary river,
Oh, bitter, barren sea

And the villagers quietly live on the riverbank and place flowers in their cottage windows, and the women sing at their work, and at nights the red glow of household fires streams out into the darkness. And the flyer flows on unceasingly and each one interprets the voice of the waters for himself.

The parish of Sorn forms nearly a square of about 6 miles. It is bounded on the east by Muirkirk, on the west by Mauchline, on the north by Galston, and on the south by Auchinleck. Sorn did not exist as a separate parish until 1692. It was then detached from the overgrown parish of Mauchline, which until a few years of that time included Muirkirk also. It formed part of the original grant to the monks of Melrose made by Walter the High Steward in the twelfth century. It was then in a state of nature, but doubtless was cared for, as time passed, by the monks, the agriculturists of the day. In the present parish of Muirkirk, then the further confines of the large parish of Mauchline, the monks erected a chapel on the Water of Greenock for the convenience of the people, and another, dedicated to St. Cuthbert, in the present parish of Sorn, in a field eastward of the village of Catrine, called St. Cuthbert's Holm to this day. After the Reformation, the barren lands which the monks acquired four hundred years previously were gifted by the Crown to Hugh, Lord Loudoun, and if the description at all tallies with the gift, the monks and their tenants had not been idle. The following is an extract from the deed of gift-

"All and hail the landis, lordschip and baronies, with castellis, townis, fortalises, maner places, yairdis, orchardis, hous biggingis, mylnis, multuris, woodis, fischengis, tennentis, tennandries, servuce of frie tennentis, few-fermes, annexis, connexis, dependences, pairtis, pendiclis, and pertenantis of the same quhatsumevir," etc.

It is very interesting to notice how that the lannenlis, tenandries, and servuce effrie tennentis are particularly mentioned, showing the condition of serfdom or slavery of the people; the tennentis, who were bought and sold with the land, and the frie tennentis, who held their land under a tenure of service to their lord, and who could not leave the place without his permission.

A church was built at Dalgain in 1658, although it was not until 1692 that the establishment of the new parish was completed. The parish was first called Dalgain, and the ground on which the church and manse was built, and also the glebe, were a gift from Hugh Mitchell of Dalgain. The church became known as the Kirk of Sorn, possibly because of the near vicinity of Sorn Castle, and gradually the name was adopted for the whole parish. The word Sorn is Celtic, and means a projection, or promontory or snout, and may have been applied originally to the rocky eminence on which the castle was built. Dalgain is also Celtic, and means the field of sand or gravel (Dal and gaineimh), a name which accurately describes the site of the ancient house, In Cornwall and South Devon, where the Celtic language was spoken until the beginning of last century, and where traces of it still linger

in the speech of the country people, many of the place names show their Celtic origin. Such is Torquay in Devon, for being Celtic for a hill, and there is a village called Sorne in Cornwall. In the island of Mull there is a farm called Sorn. Thus the names show the footprints of history. The parish of Sorn contains two villages, that of Sorn and that of Catrine. The village of Sorn is built almost in the centre of the parish, about four miles from Mauchline station, and consists principally of a long street extending along the bank of the River Ayr. The church, the manse, the mill, and the bridge are all clustered together at the bottom of a steep hill, while the village street begins at a bend in the road a few hundreds of yards away. It is a clean, tidy, little village, with houses built on a line with the road. Behind some of the houses there is another row of dwellings reached by closes from the front a very characteristically Scottish style of architecture and which may be seen exemplified at its best (or worst) in the old streets of Edinburgh and Perth. It is a matter of regret that Scottish village houses have not as a rule the little plots of ground in front which English villagers cultivate so assiduously, and which help to make the country villages so pleasant and picturesque. In Sorn, as in other places, the gardens are principally behind the houses. Most of the houses are good, of one or two stories in height, and are above the average of village houses, especially of a village so remote from a railway. There are about 300 inhabitants, and besides the usual tradesmen, the population consists chiefly of miners. Fifty years ago Sorn was not cut off from its neighbours in its present isolated condition, and for that time it was wonderfully far advanced. The mail gig, with the mail from Ayr and Kilmarnock to London, passed through Sorn every morning on its way to Douglas Mill, where it met the mail coach from Glasgow to London, and awaited the arrival of the mail from London to Glasgow. On the afternoon of the same day it returned, bearing the mail bags for Ayr, Kilmarnock, Cumnock, and Mauchline: and so the little Scottish village was within forty-four hours of the metropolis. The mail coach for the south passed through Mauchline every afternoon. Now there is daily communication with Mauchline by means of a post cart, and by omnibus twice a week and the bicycle, that modern invention which does so much to annihilate distance, brings Sorn within a few minutes of Mauchline and railways.

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Matters Ecclesiastical

The ecclesiastical history of the parish of Sorn, although of respectable antiquity, does not stretch backward for so many hundreds of years as that of some country parishes in the neighbourhood, as it was only late in the seventeenth Century that it and Muirkirk, were finally severed from Mauchline. Before the Reformation Mauchline was a priory of Melrose, a place of considerable ecclesiastical importance and a burgh of regality. The wide-spread parish had two chapels or oratories, one on the Water of Greenock, and the other on the Ayr, about two miles from Sorn, both, doubtless, situated for the convenience of the population in the country around. The chapels were suppressed at the Reformation, and in all probability the minister, or reader, of Mauchline had his hands filled with work nearer home and found it impossible to visit the outlying districts very often. In 1636 Sorn was disjoined, but it was not until 1658 that a place of worship was erected. It was a troubled time in the history of the Church and matters did not go smoothly in this little inland parish. Various men were appointed to the charge in the days of the Episcopacy, but, from the record in the "Fasti," they seem to have shared in the disaffection of the people. Kyle was a home of the Lollards before the Reformation, and when the great day dawned, the people were so impregnated with the new doctrines, that they passed easily and happily from the old to the new order of things. When Episcopacy was imposed upon them, they were ready to resist to the death. The first minister of Sorn, John Campbell, A.M. (University, Glasgow), was deprived of his living, and summoned to appear before a committee of the diocesan synod for nonconformity, April, 1664. The next minister, Andrew Dalrymple, previously of Auchinleck, was fined in half of his stipend, for one year, for neglecting to keep the 29th of May, the day of the Restoration. In 1672 John Campbell again obtained the living in the status of an indulged minister, but six years later he was accused of preaching at conventicles and officiating in private houses. Such things were then considered treasonable crimes, and he was remitted by the Lords Justiciary to the Privy Council. He confessed that he had not read the proclamation for thanksgiving for the Restoration and that he had officiated in private families. His license to preach was taken from him: he was fined and ordered to leave the country, and thus John Campbell disappeared, and nothing further is known of him. In 1684 William Blair, A.M. (St. Andrews), was ordained, and five years later was transferred to Symington. In 1689 William Anderson, A.M. (Aberdeen), became curate of Sorn, but his day came to a speedy end. The people of Sorn could not lay the accusation against the men who occupied their pulpit, which many parishes could justly place to the account of those charged with their spiritual oversight, that they were uneducated. To a man they were well educated, with honourable degrees from the various Universities. Uncultured lads were often taken from the plough and set as curates over large parishes, and a grim joke of the day was to the effect that no ploughmen could be had for love or money as they had all become Curates. William Anderson, as subsequent events proved, was not a favourite with the people. It may be that he exacted his pound of flesh too rigorously, but it would have been impossible for anyone in his position to have ingratiated himself with the stern Covenanters of the district. Nothing definite is known of the character of this last of the curates, but doubtless he was not of the easygoing type that allowed the parishioners to enter by one church door, walk through the building, and leave by another, and counted that as church attendance. Indeed, the presence of Lieutenant Lauder, who was quartered with his dragoons at the castle of Sorn, would have precluded such a possibility had the curate been ever so willing. The moorland toward the north, and in the neighbouring parish of Muirkirk, saw many a tussle between the Covenanters and the dragoons, and many a time the friendly mist descended and interposed like a wall between the soldiers and their prey, and many a time the yielding moss proved a friend to light-footed men and women fleeing for their lives, but a treacherous foe to the heavily-accoutred horsemen in pursuit. It did not happen always that the peasants, so strong in their faith, escaped with their lives, and at least one martyr's tombstone is raised in the quiet little churchyard of Sorn; and on Sunday mornings, when the music of psalms and hymns steals out through the open church doors, the sound is wafted over the last resting-place of many who could only sing their songs of thanksgiving in secret. A crouching figure starts before the mind's eye, leaping from crag to crag in the river, hiding behind trees, and living in caves and dens of the earth. Such was Peden, the martyr

prophet persecuted and hounded like a wild beast for the faith that was in him, spending one happy night in the church during his miserable wanderings, and at last dying grandly, with unbroken vows.

But to return to the curate of Sorn. After the Revolution, when the persecution of Presbyterians ceased, and in the see-saw of life and politics they were once more in the ascendant, the curate of Sorn was rabbled- his gown torn, his person roughly used, and it may be he was carried, as was done elsewhere, in mock triumph round the parish. The rabblings were disgraceful affairs, and could only have been permitted in a very unsettled state of society-certainly very little of the spirit was shown which one could have expected from heroes of the faith. But the minds of men lost their balance from the cruelties and insults to which they had been subjected, and women, much repressed and hysterical, whose feelings are apt to carry them away at all times, took part in them. Those same dragoons of Lauder shot a lad, near Tarbolton in cold blood-a youth of eighteen who had done absolutely nothing to merit his death, or even to incur the displeasure of the powers. Such things sink into the hearts of men and women, and the curate, under the protection of Lauder, would seem to them the personification of all the evil that had gone before, and so the highly-wronged, untutored men and women wreaked a little of the vengeance upon him, which had rankled in their hearts so long. A pass near Sorn Castle over which the luckless man fled is called the Curate's Steps to this day. A thought of compassion and pity, however, we may spare for the poor curate, for he died in the following year, only thirty years of age. It may have been the rough usage to which he was subjected hastened his end, and whether or no, it could not have failed to embitter the last days of his life.

In 1692 the church was opened as a Presbyterian place of worship, a minister was ordained, a manse was built, a glebe and stipend provided, and the parish completely severed from that of Mauchline. The first minister was the Rev. Mungo Lyndesay, who began his duties with great zeal and ardour. The first entry in the Session records shows the thorough character of the man. The following is an extract: -

"Dec. 18, 1692.-Whilk day, after calling on the name of the Lord, the minister, Mr, Mungo Lyndesay, inquired whether or no there was any parish register belonging to the Session or congregation, and it being answered and declared that there was none since the disjoining of the paroch from the paroch of Mauchline, the late Prelacy being not long thereafter introduced into the national Church, and during it the said paroch not being planted with any ordained minister, but men of a prelatic stamp intruded thereupon, and in such tymes of confusion there was no register kept. The minister farther inquired if any other elders used to sit as members of the Session than those present, and it was declared that Robert Farquhar of Catarin, Andrew Wylie, portioner of Logan, John Peden of Blindburn, and Alexander M'Kerrow in Blackside, were yet living in the paroch, that had been established elders; that Robert Farquhar, though in late times, through the power of temptation, and through the persecution, did swear that abominable oath called the test, yet, to the knowledge of many, he grievously repented that sin; of the others, two were also guilty of the same desertion."

Six years afterwards we find the indefatigable minister urging upon the heritors the necessity for a school in the parish. At a meeting held to consider the matter, although the attendance was pretty fair, "not being present the major part of the heritors of this paroch, (those present) found and declared themselves not to be in a capacity to stent the paroch for a schoolmaster." In 1702, "The Earl of Loudoun and many other heritors present, met for the purpose of appropriating his room to every heritor for a seat, the aisle for the Earl was determined on, and for Dalgayne three pews south of the pulpit," etc. The whole was apportioned at that time, and it was also resolved to erect "lofts" or galleries. In 1698 Jean M'Latchie was recorded for profanation of the Sabbath, and was punished by standing in the "jougges" from the ringing of the first to the ringing of the third bell. In 1700 "Christian Beg in Corsebogue confesses voluntarily that she inned some stuff on Saturday near the Sabbath, and on Sabbath night she caved some corn from the shaw and gave it to the calfs. She was dismissed with a sessional rebuke, as she had not waited for a judicial summons, but told voluntarily; but the congregation is to be told that she was rebuked, and the magistrate has decerned her in a personal fine which she is to pay." All of which goes to show the strictness with which the letter of the law was enforced in those days. Poor Christian Beg, with her tender conscience, had to pay pretty dearly for what, even to the most fastidious church-member of to day, would not cost a

second thought. People had to walk most circumspectly at that time, for the Church was argus-eyed and extracted fines and imposed penalties on both civil and ecclesiastical shortcomings.

Mr Lyndesay remained in Sorn until his death in 1736. He was married to someone of the name of Christian Beg, in all probability the Christian Beg of the Session records. It may have been the tenderness of Christian's conscience which recommended her to the minister, and aroused thoughts in the mind of the worthy man as to her suitability for the position of a minister's wife! It is hardly likely that Christian's tender regard for the well-being of the calves would have carried her away so completely, to the grievous wounding of her conscience, had she thought that the minister was looking upon her in the light of a future helpmeet! Or was it a little ruse on Christian's part to fall under the notice of the hard-working man? History is silent on the point, but the fact remains that Christian Beg became Mrs Lyndesay, and her epitaph to her husband can be seen and read on the church-wall to this day. When Mr Lyndesay died he left 200 marks to the poor of the parish. He seems to have been of upright and exemplary life, and a faithful and loving pastor.

Mr Steel, with his usual earnestness of purpose, resolved that no more accidents should happen at the ford, and set about collecting money to build a bridge. The money was gathered together, the bridge was built, and remains to this day. It is a quaint-looking structure, very high in the centre, with two strongly-built arches. It is not unlike, on a small scale, the old bridge over the same river at the county town. Another work by Mr Steel was the building of the manse, or rather rebuilding, for we read that a manse had been provided for Mr Lyndesay. Mr Steel's manse was a model of accommodation and neatness, and was built almost entirely at his own expense. He enclosed the glebe with hedges, which were then a novelty in the district, and laid out a garden of half-an-acre in extent. Mr Steel was also distinguished as a speaker in Church Courts, and in 1751 was chosen as one of the Commissioners by the General Assembly, to apply to Government for the augmentation of ministers' stipends in Scotland. The application failed through the heated opposition of the landed interest. The writer of the Statistical Account makes a little moan over the fact that Mr Steel and his fellow-Commissioners missed a grand opportunity. Although no augmentation was granted in money or in grain, it was whispered that they had only to ask to have their glebes enlarged. But the short-sighted ministers, full of chargin at their failure, and remembering how little value was attached to land, turned away from this crumb of comfort and so lost a considerable benefit to their successors. Mr Steel did not return to Sorn. Perhaps he had pictured a triumphant home-coming, crowned with success and with all the prestige which would accrue to him from his honourable position as Commissioner, and as a travelled man- for in those days a journey to London was looked upon as a perilous adventure, and men made their wills before setting out, and looked on familiar scenes as those who might never see them again. Mr Steel had not the moral courage to return to face his people, or perhaps he felt the bodily fatigue of the journey was more than he could bear; in any case he did not return to Scotland. The congregation of Salter's Hill invited him to become their pastor. He accepted the call, but London was not congenial to him. Doubtless he missed the breezy freedom of his country parish, and the kindly interest and respect of his Scottish congregation. He fell into a consumption and died within a year, finding his grave far from the murmuring Ayr, far from the home he had done so much to beautify, far from the rugged faces and kindly hearts he had known and loved so long.

3

Later Ministers

Mr. Steel died in London shortly after his settlement at Salter's Hill. Although he had left his Ayrshire parish, his memory was still green in the minds of his people, and his many useful works and pleasant personality had greatly endeared him to his parishioners. It must have been a shock to them to hear of his untimely decease, and their sympathy was displayed in an exceedingly kind and practical manner. Mr. Steel had evidently been one of those unselfish men who think of every one but themselves, and his stipend being principally paid in kind, as was then quite a common thing, he had had but little opportunity of providing for his wife and family, and when he died they were left in rather straitened circumstances. His former congregation showed the estimation in which he had been held by making his widow the recipient of the handsome gift of two hundred and fifty pounds, which meant a good deal more a hundred and fifty years ago than now. Mr. Steel's speech before the General Assembly (1749) was published.

Rev. James Connel succeeded Mr. Steel in 1752, and remained minister of the parish until his death in 1789. His successor, Mr. Gordon, who had perhaps as good an opportunity of judging of him as any one, recorded that he was "a man of respectable character, good sense, and moderation." The only other remark which Mr. Gordon offers about his predecessor is regarding an addition he made to the manse, which had been almost entirely rebuilt by Mr Steel,- "The late Mr. Connel, having a large family, added to the west end of it a handsome wing of one floor with a slated roof." After Mr. Gordon's settlement the heritors added another at the East End, corresponding with the first, all of which is rather bewildering as to whether there was any of the original structure left.

The Earls of Loudoun had been patrons of the Church of Sorn from 1692 until 1782 when the estate was sold to Wm. Tennent, Esq., of Poole, and the patronage went with the estate. In 1790 the Rev. George Gordon was presented to the parish by Mr. Tennent. The presentation was a most unpopular one; not perhaps that the people had anything to say against Mr. Gordon, but feeling ran high against patronage. During Mr. Gordon's ordination in the church a stone was flung from the other side of the river, passed through a window and struck one of the elders. Other stones struck the bell. Up till that time there had been no dissent in the parish, but one or two farmers left the church then, and their families are dissenters till this day. There is no dissenting church in Sorn, but in Catrine, in the same parish, there are now several. The church members who seceded a hundred years ago went to Cumnock to worship, as there were no dissenting church nearer. The mere fact of a man being set over a parish, whether or not it was the mind of the people, was quite enough to set a section of a congregation against the minister when it was really the system that was the objection. In his "Annals of the Parish" (Ayrshire), John Gait tells very quaintly of the forcible settling of Mr. Balwhidder. We copy a few lines as giving a picture of the times.

"The An-Dom. one thousand seven hundred and sixty was remarkable for three things in the parish of Dallmailing. First and foremost was my placing. . . . First of the placing. It was a great affair, for I was put in by the patron, and the people knew nothing whatsoever of me, and their hearts were stirred into strife on the occasion and they did all that lay within the compass of their power to keep me out, in so much that there was obliged to be a guard of soldiers to protect the Presbytery, and it was a thing that made my heart grieve when I heard the drum beating and the fife playing as we were going to the kirk. The people were really mad and vicious, and flung dirt upon us as we passed, and reviled us all and held out the finger of scorn at me; but I endured it all with a resigned spirit, compassionating their wilfulness and blindness. Poor Mr Kilfuddy of Braehill got such a clash of glaur on the side of his face that his eye was almost extinguished. When we got to the kirk door it was found to be nailed up, so as by no possibility to be opened. The Sergeant of the soldiers wanted to break it, but I was afraid the heritors would grudge and complain of the expense of a new door, and I supplicated him to let it be as it was. We were therefore obligated to go in by a window, and the crowd followed us in the most unreverent manner, making the Lord's house like an inn on a fair day with their grievous yellyhooing. During the time of the Psalm and the sermon, they behaved themselves better, but when the induction came on their clamour was dreadful; and Thomas Thorl,

the weaver, a pious zealot in that time, he got up and protested, and said, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.' And I thought I would have a hard and sore time of it with such an outstrapolous people. . . . After the ceremony we then got out at the window, and it was a heavy day to me."

In 1806 the Rev. Lewis Balfour was presented to the living by Wm Somervell, Esq., of Sorn and Hamilton's Farm, who had in turn bought the estate of Sorn. Mr. Balfour was minister for twenty-three years. He was translated to Colinton, near Edinburgh. One of the daughters, born just after her parents left Sorn, became the mother of the celebrated writer, Robert Louis Stevenson. One of Mr. Balfour's sons is Dr. G. W. Balfour, the heart-specialist in Edinburgh, a man who has made his mark in his profession. R.L. Stevenson bore his middle name in remembrance of his grandfather, the Rev Lewis Balfour, sometime of Sorn. The next minister was the Rev. John Stewart, who came from Liverpool. After a ministry of seventeen years he was presented to Liberton, near Edinburgh, in succession to the late Dr. James Begg, afterward of Newington Free Church. Two of Mr. Stewart's grandsons are ministers of the Church of Scotland- one of St. Andrews, Dundee, and the other at Kinfauns, Perthshire, where he succeeds his father, who was Mr. Stewart's son-in-law. Mr. Stewart was succeeded by Dr. Rankine who was minister of Sorn for the long period of forty-three years. He exercised a vast influence for good, and was regarded as a model parish minister. In 1883 Dr. Rankine was appointed Moderator of the General Assembly, the highest honour in the power of the Church to bestow upon one of her ministers. He was much loved in the parish and left a record of honourable work. One of his sons is at present Professor of Scots Law in the University of Edinburgh. Rather curiously Dr. Balfour, of Edinburgh, and Prof. Rankine, both sons of the manse of Sorn, were presidents of the Glasgow Sons of the Clergy Society in successive years. During Dr. Rankine's ministry there were five assistants to help him in the work of the parish- Rev. M. C. Thorburn, Rev. G. Milligan, B.D., Rev. R. Menzies Ferguson, M.A., Rev. R. Spencer Ritchie and the present minister of Sorn. Dr. Rankine was succeeded by the Rev. R. Spencer Ritchie. He was minister only for a little over three years and was translated to Mains and Strathmartine, Dundee, in 1888.

The present minister of Sorn, Rev. H. C. Begg, ably upholds the good traditions of the past incumbents. He is also a son of the manse, his father being the late Dr. Begg of Falkirk, and his grandfather the late Dr. Begg of New Monkland. At the centenary soiree at Calton, Glasgow, ill 1894, Mr. Begg of Sorn was invited to be present to represent his grandfather, who was the first minister of Calton and inducted in 1794. In the autobiography of Dr. Begg of Edinburgh, there was a little story told of his father, Dr. Begg of New Monkland, and of Dr. Mackinlay of the Laigh Kirk, Kilmarnock. "Dr. Mackinlay did what was generally held to be a very imprudent thing, namely, married his own servant. There were circumstances connected with the marriage, which gave rise to remark, as for example, on his marriage jaunt he was alleged to have worn a coat with metal buttons, and some other circumstances of which a handle might be made. But my father, who investigated the whole matter, was convinced there was nothing in it but a proceeding of doubtful prudence and taste, and especially that there was nothing morally wrong. He therefore stood bravely by the doctor, as did also his own numerous congregation at Kilmarnock. He went as usual to assist him at his Communion when others refused, till the cloud had passed away, which it did most thoroughly. On the arrival of my father at Kilmarnock, he announced to Dr. Mackinlay that he would do the whole usual work of his assistants single-handed. And often I have heard him mention it. Accordingly, he preached twice on the Thursday, twice on the Saturday, exhorted ten tables, and preached in the evening on Sabbath, and wound up all by preaching twice on the Monday. Some one who was present at the ten tables declared that the longer he spoke, he spoke the better. On one occasion a warm admirer of his said that he had 'a Bothwell Brig face; and he was just the man to carry out his resolution in such circumstances with heroic determination." In the manse of Sorn is the jubilee portrait of this old minister of New Monkland and friend of Dr. Mackinlay. From his bold, determined appearance, even at the advanced age of eighty-one years, extraordinary record in the matter of preaching, which in he seemed quite capable of even beating this most those days of long sermons and no paper was truly a most extraordinary again became vacant three years afterwards by the translation of Mr Ritchie to Mains. Mr. Begg, who was the only nominee of the committee, was elected to performance. Mr. Begg was for a few months assistant at Sorn under Dr. Rankine,

and on that gentleman's death in 1885, he was elected assistant to the Rev. W. W. Tulloch, D.D., Maxwell Parish, Glasgow. The parish the charge by a very large majority and received a unanimous call.

4 The Church

From a wide, panoramic vista of grey and bluish tints and yellow and purple-brown, with moorland and mountain, brawling streams and solemn pines, and away, toward the west a dreamy glimpse of the restless sea, the outlook narrows- a grey road, bordered with trees, zig-zags down a steep hill, Sorn Castle peeps through interlacing boughs, the Ayr, unmoved, receives the tributary Cleugh, and the bridge of Sorn, as if in high disdain, arches its back over the pellucid stream it spans. In a quiet corner, under the shadow of the pine-clad hill, the white head stones clustering to its door, stands the Kirk of Sorn. It is a quaint little building, with outside stairs and open belfry, and tiny cross, raised like a benediction above its ancient walls; a relic, surely, that same cross, of the stormy days when the church was new and the royal Stewarts thought that by a mere command they could sway the minds and hearts of men and establish a uniform religion in their dominion; or, is it but a later symbol of truer catholicity- the spirit which looks beyond the stereotyped forms, which holds as nothing the divisions in the household of faith, and sees only in the Cross the symbol of humility, the tree on which the God-man died?

The little church standing in the midst of the God's acre, with its background of the deep green of the pines, and in Autumn the brilliant flush of the beech trees, is quietly and peacefully picturesque and beautiful. In Summer, a crimson flare of roses, like the glory of a sunrise, covers its walls, and in Autumn the Gloires des Dijon hang their heads bashfully as they peep through the pointed windows, and the Virginian Creeper dyes the stones with its crimson death. There are ivies too, broad-leaved and variegated, raising their clinging arms about the ancient Kirk; low growing still the plants are, and young, for an ivy-tree speaks of ruin and desolation, and the church is still strong and fair to look upon. And the river Ayr sings a lullaby as it hurries onward, past the churchyard to the sea- a cradle song to the dead who died so young, for surely life is but the infancy of immortality a slumber song to the tired workers who have lain down to sleep, wearied with the heat and labours of the day- but ever bearing in its softest, sweetest notes, like petals folding over the heart of a flower, the burden of hope and expectation -

Till they waken on yon bright Sabbath morning

The parish of Sorn began its ecclesiastical history in a very stirring time. The church was built in the middle of the seventeenth century, and, like many other works of men's hands, it survived change and upheaval, while the men who raised its walls fell, if not before an earthly power, certainly before the grim enemy, Death. Like the leaves of Autumn, they were swept away, but like the leaves, they died to live again, for the influence of strong men in this little, quiet spot, and of others like it, has not died with them, nor will it ever die for with bleeding hands they helped to raise on high the chief corner-stone of our Scottish constitution. The bravery of those peasants is almost beyond belief. And for what did they suffer and die? For something so subtle that the broader (more indifferent, may it be said) mind of to-day can scarcely grasp it. And yet had they missed it, surely we had missed a greater blessing! The church was built in 1658, as a tablet in the wall bears testimony, but it was not until 1692 that it was opened as a Presbyterian parish church. Up till that time Sorn had a nominal connection with Mauchline, but the parish was then completely severed and the church provided with a minister of its own. The church, manse, and glebe were all on the estate of Dalgain, and at first the parish was called by that name, but the near proximity of the church to the castle of Sorn associated it with the name of Sorn, and when the estate of Dalgain was merged into that of Sorn, the name, Dalgain, was completely dropped. The church is built of the abundant sand-stone of the district, greyish pink in colour rather than the deep red of the new red stone-stone of the Ballochmyle quarries. Although two centuries and a half, almost, have passed since the kirk was erected it still retains its pretty, delicate tint, and is as fresh and undiscoloured as if newly built. More than a century ago, in 1788, the galleries were added, and in the style of the period, economical both as regards space and money, the stairs were built outside. Each of the three separate galleries has a stair for itself and is quite shut off in the interior of the church from the others, so that it is impossible for one in one gallery, or loft, as such erections were first called, to reach the other,

without descending the outside stairs. The church was re-seated at the same time, and probably floored, for very few country churches had other than earthen floors until that date, and some for long after. The church was again re-seated in 1826, and the roof raised.

The interior of the church is fresh and pleasant. It is prettily painted and decorated, and the pulpit and seats are of pitch pine. It is well lighted too, with pointed windows set deep within the thick walls. Behind the pulpit is a small, round window filled with tinted glass, not a rose-window, nor even a miniature of such an ecclesiastical feature of architecture, but rather like the windows of staircases in ancient Scottish dwelling-houses, through which women thrust their heads to gaze up and down the narrow streets. On each side of the pulpit there is a tall, pointed window in stained glass, one in memory of the Somervells of Sorn, the other of one of the Farquhars of Gilmilnscroft. They are both beautiful windows, with quiet, rich colouring, and give an air of distinction to this little country church. One has the crest of the Somervell family- an anchor-and their motto, "Hold fast," and bears the following inscription: "In memory of Graham Somervell, of Hamilton's Farm and Sorn, born 15th January, 1819, died 11th November, 1881; and Louis Somervell, Lieutenant 74th highland Light Infantry, born 1st June, 1858, fell at Tel-el-Kebir, 13th September, 1882. Presented by the widow and mother." The other window is also in memory of a gallant young soldier. It bears the Farquhar coat of arms and the motto, "Mente manque" (By mind and hand). The inscription is as follows :-

Trevor Farquhar, Gilmilnscroft,
died October 23rd, 1882,
aged 22.
Erected by his brother officers,
78th Seaforth Highlanders."
The young officer,
who fell so early in life's day,
met his death by fever,
in the Black Mountain expedition.

There is also a brass tablet on the church wall to the memory of the Rankens of Glenlogan, rather an unusual mural monument in a Scottish country church. Two of the galleries belong respectively to the estates of Sorn and Gilmilnscroft, and the third to Dalgain but is occupied by the tenants on that portion of Sorn property. Mr Somervell and Mr Farquhar are the only two resident heritors. Each seat in the area of the church has the name of the seat holder painted upon it, or the name of the estate to which it belongs. Thus some seats have "Ballochmyle "- part of Ballochmyle estate being in the parish of Sorn - others "Auchmannoch," one "Schoolmaster," and some are merely "Parish." Possibly those happy beings belonging simply to the parish are the only members who have the privilege of changing their sittings. There is an air of permanency about a name painted upon the wood, which a little card in a mere frivolous slit, does not possess. What would members of a city church think of such a thing- they who flit about like bees seeking honey, or, perhaps, more like butterflies In front of the pulpit are two handsome lamps presented by the Women's Guild. There is also a harmonium, used in the Sunday School, presented by the same institution, both as results of sales of needle-work of the Guild. There is no instrumental music in the ordinary Sunday services, and the old fashion of having a precentor still holds good. The present precentor has held his honourable position for forty-seven years, and his predecessor "raised the tunes" for forty-two years. That is surely a record in holding such an office- only two men during the greater portion of a century. A story is told of the former precentor and a former minister, which illustrates the homely ways of church services long ago. The minister had unwisely given out a Psalm without first submitting it to his faithful musical henchman, whereupon the old man turned round and chid the worthy minister in the pulpit-" There's nae tune to that yin," he said. The Psalm was changed.

In 1892 the bi-centenary of the church was held, a great function for this quiet rural parish. A special service was held, when the Rev. John Keith, B.D. of Largs, officiated. The parishioners collected a very handsome sum among themselves and presented new Communion cups of solid silver to the church to take the place of the former cups of pewter, which bear the date 1811. The new cups are of very artistic design and were made by an Edinburgh firm whose speciality is ecclesiastical work of

such a kind. The style belongs to the period of 1616-1618, when Gilbert Kirkwood was famed for the chaste and beautiful designs, which he furnished to many of the churches of the day. The Sorn cups are modelled after two of his patterns, the stem being the same as supplied to the church of Fyvie, and the bowl like that of Blantyre. The congregation at the same time presented two solid silver patens for the Communion service. The following inscription encircles the outer rim: "Gifted to the church of Sorn by the parishioners, on the occasion of the bi-centenary of the parish, 1892."

Old tokens of the Communion at Sorn are still in existence, the oldest bearing the date 1736, and the most recent 1863. The first of these belongs to the days of tent preaching and great gatherings from far and wide. It is within the memory of people still living that an inn was removed, a very pretty country inn, standing picturesquely near the church and mill, an inn to which many of the worthy people retired between the long services of Communion Sunday, and varied the religious services with copious refreshments. But in every great enthusiastic gathering there is an element of the unworthy, and when that element dominated the better the system came to an end. Burns's satire undoubtedly hastened its downfall. The stipend of Sorn is 175 bolls of victual with £37 in money. This being considered inadequate for the requirements of the parish, especially in these times of depreciation, a movement was set on foot for the further endowment of the living by voluntary contribution. With the help of the Church and the Baird Trust, a sum of £1000 has been invested for the benefit of the parish in all time coming. The new income from this source is £30. Considerable credit is due to Mr. Somervell, the chief heritor, the minister, and others, who brought the movement to a successful termination in May, 1897.

The manse of Sorn has always been one of the best in the district. Mr. Steel rebuilt the first manse, and his successors added to it, and in the Statistical Account of a hundred years ago Dr. Gordon has only pleasant things to say of it-" While other Manses, within the bounds of this Presbytery, have been built and rebuilt, some of them more than once, the manse of Sorn has already stood firm and unbroken for nearly sixty years, and will probably do so for many years to come. It likewise still maintains a respectable station among its neighbours, even in a country where the heritors have of late displayed a commendable liberality in the building and repairing of churches and manses." Fifty years later, the Rev. John Stewart writes of it-" If thoroughly repaired it might prove a comfortable manse for some time to come. An almost entirely new and commodious manse was built shortly after that date, the study of the old manse being retained, which must have been in use considerably over a century now. Dr. Rankine added oriel windows to the manse, and with its large and beautiful garden and attractive situation it still holds its place in the forefront as a residence for a country parish minister. The glebe, which consisted at first of a little over five acres, was enlarged in 1793 to nine Scots acres, Dr. Gordon, the then incumbent, representing that five acres necessitated keeping a man, and therefore did not pay the cost of working, while nine acres was sufficient to cover the necessary expense and possibly a little over. The large garden, with fine old fruit trees, and shrubs, and old-fashioned walks of grass, forms no inconsiderable feature of the attractions of the manse of Sorn.

5 The Churchyard

De mortuis nil nisi bonum.

How it grates upon our feelings to hear evil spoken of the dead, especially of those who have just gone from us! They have passed the bourne; they are beyond our ken; let us leave them in higher and gentler and juster hands. They have lived out their little fever of life, they have pierced the veil, they have entered into the mystery; let us not, still outside the gate, with impious finger point scornfully at their memory; it is not ours to judge. Imperfections drop as a garment from the holy dead. All that was little and unworthy in their lives is forgotten. We picture them in our minds with grand and flowing lines- all gracious! So it is that on tombstones we seldom read other than a eulogy of those who have gone before. The characters portrayed are not untrue- only the truth told lovingly.

On the outside wall of the church of Sorn are placed tablets, one or two of them with some pretensions to beauty of sculpture, in memory of various ministers, and others, of the parish. Perhaps the most interesting, as well as the oldest, is that to the memory of a young lad who was killed in the times of the Persecution by one of the dragoons stationed in Sorn Castle. The tablet is placed very near the ground, and the style of lettering is uncouth, although the wording has all the strength of righteous indignation. The inscription is as follows:-

Here lyes Georg
Wood, who was shot
at Tinkhornhill by
Bloody John Reid, trvper,
for his adherence to
the word of God and
the covenanted vork
of Reformation, 1688.

The stone has been carefully preserved, and the old lettering has recently been restored and painted to keep it from further decay; but the action of the weather has told upon it, and, probably in fear that this memorial of a brave young martyr of the Covenant might be lost to posterity, a later stone has been placed above it, bearing the following lines:-

To preserve from oblivion
the fate of
George Wood,
Who was shot at Tinkhornhill, 1688,
"For his adherence to the word of God,
And the covenanted work of Reformation,"
And to manifest gratitude
For the invaluable religious
privileges now enjoyed,
This stone was erected by subscription, 1828.

The later monument was erected by the liberal aid of Miss Ranken, of Glenlogan, sixty years ago, but unfortunately it is of a soft splint stone and is already in need of restoration. The former stone, though exceedingly rude like others of its kind, is of a very hard nature. A few years ago, through the ravages of time, the lettering had become very indistinct, and Mr. George Cameron, mason, Sorn, acted the part of Old Mortality and restored it to its original crude form. Mr. Cameron is an

expert with the chisel, and it is said that the stone, as restored by him, should last for two hundred years.

George Wood was only sixteen years of age when he became a martyr of the Covenant. Little is known about the event except that he was shot in cold blood by a common trooper, who gave as an excuse that "he knew him to be a Whig and the country was better rid of such." The trooper was acting quite within his powers, bestowed by an Act passed in 1685 against Conventicles. Whether his own conscience would excuse him for such a dastardly deed is quite another matter. Tinkhornhill was at one time a farm, and there is still a hill called by that name, on Blackside Farm, a little to the south-east of Blacksidend. The principal part of the Farm of Tinkhornhill, however, is now included in West Town. The grey, ruined walls of the farmsteading were standing a few years ago.

Another very old stone is to the memory of the first minister of the parish, the Rev. Mungo Lyndesay. We have already had occasion to mention this man, whose high personal character and strong Presbyterian principles eminently fitted him for his position in a district in which such qualities were held in the greatest esteem. He was young, only twenty-six, when he entered upon his labours and he remained minister of Sorn until his death, forty-six years afterwards. He came with all the enthusiasm of youth, and he was received with the enthusiasm of men who had battled and fought for their principles and had at last reached the desired result. One of Mr Lyndesay's manuscript sermons is still preserved. From the church records, written in Mr. Lyndesay's own beautiful handwriting, a little of the integrity of the man may be gathered-his methodical habits, the zeal he felt for his church, the integrity with which he discharged his duties, his firm faith and unflinching courage. He was especially helpful to the poor, indeed his work for them seemed unending. He was also anxious for the intellectual enlightenment of his people, and desired to have a school in the parish, but in this, unfortunately, he failed. His widow, Christian Beg, placed a little tablet to his memory on the church wall and its inscription is clear and distinct to this day. Indeed, it is a feature of the church and churchyard that the stones are so fresh and in such remarkably good preservation. Very few, if any, are covered with the grey lichen, which defaces so many interesting monuments in almost every country churchyard. It may be partly due to the clear, pure air, and still more, no doubt, in consequence of care and attention. The inscription is as follows:-

Mr Mungo Lyndesay, born anno. 1666, and placed 1692, deceased March, 1736.

So long he lived in this secure retreat,
 Neather affecting to be known nor great-
 Humble and painful taught the great concern,
 Which yet he thought he never enough could learn;
 Skil'd in the tongues of heavenly truth,
 The only language of Jehovah's month,
 He led his flock through the delicious fields
 (Heaven's gentle deus and rain it yields).
 Shuning law suits by deeds he used to write,
 He sav'd their purse and cleared their doubtful rights,
 And with rare bounty gratify'd the poor
 From the rich treasure of his blessed store,
 Which, by the laws of God and mail, descends
 To his long, dear, and valuable friends.
 Christian Beg, his relic, caused erect this tomb.

It seems a pity that no one placed Christian's name beside that of her husband when the time came that she too laid down the burden of life. Perhaps it was she who wrote the lines; if not, certainly it was her heart, as well as her will, that dictated them. The Lindesay's had no children, and of their money, 200 merks were left to the poor of tile parish.

Another tablet is to the memory of the Rev. James Connell, who died in 1789; and another to the memory of two sons of the Rev. Lewis Balfour, who died respectively in 1816 and 1821. Those lads

were brothers of the mother of Robert Louis Stevenson, and thus uncles of the novelist. Is it not possible (we may say in passing) that R. L. Stevenson got the idea of the name of one of his heroes-David Balfour from the surname of his grandfather of Sorn? Under the motto "Spero Meliora," (I hope for better things) is an inscription to still two other sons of Sorn manse, sons of the Rev. John Stewart; one born in 1825, the other in 1827; one was drowned in the China seas in 1854, and the other died at Liberton manse in 1858. The graves of the two are far apart, but to the home of their youth their thoughts would return in fancy many a time, and together their names are written on the walls of the church they knew so well. There is still another mural monument to the memory of a minister and his family. It is

Sacred to the memory of
Rev. George Gordon, D. D.,
Minister of Sorn,
who died 25th December, 1805.
Anne Lawrie,
his widow, daughter of
Rev. George Lawrie, D.D.,
Minister of Loudoun,
who died at Liverpool, 12th November, 1834;
and of their sons.
Captain George Lawrie Gordon,
8th Regt. Bengal, N. I.,
Political Agent, Mannipore,
where he died 30th December, 1844.
Aged 43.
Archibald Campbell Gordon, M.D.,
Surgeon, H. E. I. C. S., Bengal,
who died at Jallundur, 30th November,
1849, aged 49.

Both of those sons of Dr. Gordon, and grandsons of Dr. Lawrie, died while comparatively young. It is interesting to notice to what prominent positions many of the sons of the ministers of this quiet place have risen. But "sons of the manse " all over the country have distinguished themselves in life's battle. In the list of the Glasgow Society of the Sons of the Clergy, we see how many have risen to distinction, not only in the various services but also in the professions and other departments of life. Ministers' sons have gained a reputation for themselves as stirring lads, but their experience in many a country parish seems to stand them in good stead when they go out to seek fame and fortune in all parts of the world.

The churchyard is neat and orderly and well-cared-for; very different in that important respect from many country burying-places. There is a stone with the following epitaph, which tells a life story of rather an unusual kind:

To the memory of
John Nicholson Brown,
a self-taught man.
He supported himself from the age of eight;
Attended Sorn School only 18 months;
Devoted his leisure hours from daily toil
To the pursuit of self acquired knowledge.
Became (in Paris) at 21 years of age
Teacher of English
In some of the first families of France,
and was appointed
Professor in the College
of St. Barbe, Paris.

He died at 34 years of age.
Erected in 1861 by his friends.

The career is a most extraordinary one for a poor boy born to such hardships in a remote Scottish village. Probably his early death was caused by the privations or overwork of his early life. He must have been both ambitious and courageous, and it is good that he reaped a little of the harvest of his toils and hopes before he found his premature grave.

There are tombstones of beautiful design, and many of the ordinary description of upright slab. There are not many very old stones, such as one sees sometimes in churchyards of older parishes, but still there are several with the old, deeply-cut style of pictorial sculpture. One of those represents, in a very life-like way, a shepherd with a crook and with his dog behind him, and another has a representation of a face surrounded by a great wig. It may be meant for a judge, or for a portrait of the deceased, if it was the fashion in his day for men to wear such wigs. The inscription on the other side shows it to be a blacksmith's tomb. The names most frequently occurring in connection with Sorn in old days were Thomson and Kirkland. A rather curious place-name on one stone is "Wealth O' Waters." It was at one time a smithy on the Galston Road, and took its name from a tributary of the Ayr, which, rising on Sorn Moor, joins the main river near Catrine.

In the part of the churchyard allocated to the heritors, a tablet on the wall denotes a space belonging to the Duke of Portland, who was formerly an heritor of Sorn parish to a considerable extent, but the estate passed ultimately to the Dowager Lady Howard de Walden. All the ground allocated in this fashion is not used. The Campbells of Auchmannoch, a very ancient family, carried their dead to Mauchline, which was the original parish. The Farquhars of Gilmilnscroft also buried there, but the right to burial was not claimed when the churchyard was closed some years ago. Miss Farquhar lies in Sorn Churchyard. Mr. Graham Somervell, the last patron of the church, is buried in a quiet corner of the churchyard. A beautiful white marble cross is placed over his grave, bearing the high and well-deserved eulogium, "After he served his own generation, by the grace of God he fell on sleep." There is a beautiful unique monument to the Rankens of Glenlogan, erected quite recently. It was designed in Australia and executed in Ayr.

There is a vault belonging to the Buchanans, formerly of Catrine Bank. Catrine Bank is now part of Sorn estate. There is a monument to the Rev. John Rankine, D.D., who is buried there. He was minister of the parish from 1843 until his death in 1880, aged 68 years.

Until about forty years ago the ancient joughs hung from the kirk wall. They were removed, no one knows by whom. About fifty years ago the parish school and schoolhouse stood nearly opposite the mill at the east end of the old bridge, and the little corner where the school stood now forms part of this quietest of country churchyards. A tall tree grows on the very spot where stood the desk of good old dominie Smith, who was master there for forty years.

Quietly the dead folks lie, surrounding the little church. The waters murmur their requiem and "the solemn pine trees like a funeral crowd" whisper their virtues. Not many great, not many noble, as the world counts such, lie there, but to all life is dear and death its inevitable shadow.

Through the clear silence of the moonless dark,
Leaving no footprint of the road it trod,
Straight as an arrow to its mark,
The soul went home to God.
"Alas I" they cried, "he never saw the morn,
But fell asleep, outwearied with the strife;"
Nay, rather he arose and met the dawn
Of everlasting life.

6 Sorn Castle

Sorn is a Celtic word, meaning a promontory, or rising-ground of frowning aspect. Sorn Castle undoubtedly received its name from its situation, as it stands high on a precipitous rock overhanging the water of Ayr. Almost sheer down from its massive walls, forty or fifty feet below their foundations, the clear stream dashes and tumbles over its rocky bed. At the time when the castle was built a site was eligible only as it showed advantages for purposes of defence. In such days the situation must have seemed an ideal one. From the side facing the river, the castle was almost impregnable, and the undulating country which stretched beyond could easily be overlooked from the castle walls. In front, the bare, treeless expanse of those days would offer no hiding place from watchful sentries. Such a stormy, troublous epoch has, happily, long since passed away, and the castle has again and again been adapted to meet the wants of the times, but in all its changes it has ever been the effort of its restorers to conserve its strictly Scottish style of architecture. In that they have been successful, and it is now a stately pile, with turreted windows, or low, broad casements, the crest of the Somervell family carved in high relief beside the entrance hall, the new part and the old blending into each other without the slightest incongruity. Its situation, chosen at first undoubtedly for defence, is now considered admirable because of its beauty. At an elbow-like turn in the river, near the kirk of Sorn, the bank on one side rises from almost canal-like flatness to steep bluffs and perpendicular scars of rock. And high on its rocky promontory above the clear, impetuous stream, where its waters are caught and deepened and silenced in a long, slanting weir, stands this castle of Sorn. Of reddish stone, with windows set far back, like eyes deep-sunk with age, it is outlined through intervening trees or seen above their swaying branches. From the high road, which winds downhill not far from the castle, or from the bridge, which spans the tributary Cleugh, it gives the added touch of life and its associations to a beautiful picture.

The lands of Sorn belonged originally to the Keiths of Galston. Janet de Keith, heiress of Galston, married, first, Sir David de Hamyltoun of Cadzow, ancestor of the ducal house of Hamilton, and, secondly, Sir Alexander Stewart of Darneley. To her son of the first marriage, Andrew de Hamyltoun, she granted the lands of Sorn among others, and the charter was confirmed under the great seal on the 11th December, 1406. Whether the castle was built before that time or no does not appear, but the likelihood is that its erection was of an earlier date. Its first form was that of a keep, and there is a tradition to the effect that the masons employed in building it had the option for their wages of 1.5 d per day or a peck of meal. If not built before Andrew de Hamyltoun's time, it must have been built when he acquired the land, for it became his residence. The proprietors of Sorn Castle and descendants of Andrew de Hamyltoun have been among the most illustrious families in the kingdom, as the following genealogical record will show:-

" Andrew Hamilton married Agnes, a daughter of Sir Hugh Campbell of Loudoun, Sheriff of Ayr, and by her had a son, Sir Robert Hamilton of Sorn and Sanquhar. Sir Robert married a daughter of Sir William Crawford of Lornorris; and Sir William Hamilton of Sorn and Sanquhar, a son of this marriage, was one of the Senators of the College of Justice and Lord Treasurer to King James V. This Lord Treasurer married a daughter of the family of Cassilis, by whom he had an heiress, Isobel Hamilton, who married George Lord Seton, and became mother to Robert, first Earl of Winton; to Alexander, first Earl of Dunfermline; and to Margaret, the wife of Claud Hamilton, Lord Paisley, ancestor to the Earl of Abercorn. The lands and castle of Sorn were sold by the succeeding Earl of Winton to the family of Loudoun, and after remaining in that family for upwards of a hundred and fifty years they were sold to William Tennent, Esq., of Poole, in 1782." Mr. Tennent retained possession of the castle and lands for only a few years and Mr. Graham of Limekilns, and Mr. Stevenson of Dalgain, became the next proprietors. In 1795 Mr. Somervell of Hamilton Farm, who was a partner in the house of Somervell, Gordon & Co., long known as one of the most eminent mercantile families connected with our colonies, bought the lands and castle and they remain in the Somervell family to this day.

There is a tradition that James V. visited Sorn Castle on the occasion of the marriage of Isobel Hamilton, the daughter of his Lord Treasurer, with George Lord Seton. The story, however, does not hang very well together, and another and much more likely version has it that it was James VI. who visited Sorn Castle on the occasion of a wedding. Isobel Hamilton, heiress of Sorn, married the fifth Lord Seton, and her son, sixth Lord Seton, became a great favourite of James VI. and was created by him first Earl of Winton, by a charter dated 16th Nov 1600. His only daughter, Isobel, married James, first Earl of Perth, and the more probable story is that James VI. honoured that marriage ceremony with his presence. The chair which His Majesty is said to have used on the occasion was kept in Sorn Castle till the sale of the estate in 1782, when it was transferred to Loudoun Castle, where it still remains. It is a large chair of oak, of curious workmanship, with the arms of Sir William Hamilton carved upon the back. Vet the marriage of the first Isobel was a very important one also, and Sir Richard Maitland in his "Historie of the House of Setoune," says that "the union was devised to bring about an alliance betwixt the Setounes and the Governor Arran, to whose house Sir Wiliam belonged, and was of such political importance that a medal commemorating it was struck, bearing the initials of the bride and bridegroom, I. H. and G. S., and the motto, "ung loy, ung foy, ung roy," all of which is of great historical interest, and the motto is curious as an example of ancient phonetic spelling of French!

There is a story told of the King as he travelled to Sorn. The journey was undertaken in the depth of winter, and in those good old days travelling was quite a different matter from what it is now. The King was heartily tired of his ride over moor and moss and clay, and said "if he could play the Devil a trick he would send him from Glasgow to Sorn in the depths of winter." A well about half-way from Glasgow, from which His Majesty drank, is called the King's Well to this day. At the present time it would not be a very evil thing to wish for His Satanic Majesty that he might take a journey to a much remoter place than Sorn in the middle of winter. The horse upon which the King rode came to grief near the well. It sank in the bog, and His Majesty was rescued with some little difficulty. The King made a joke of it, and said that his horse was stabled, and even now, or until a few years ago, the spot was known as the King's Stable.

Charles II. seized Sorn Castle, among others, about the year 1665, by virtue of an obsolete Act, and garrisoned it with dragoons for the purpose of overawing the Presbyterians in that quarter. Among the family papers of Auchmannoch is the following relic of those eventful times :

"God save the King."

"I, Lewis Lauder, Governor of Sorn Castle, dow heirby certifie and declare, vlz.-Kirkwood, servitor to Arthur Campbell of Auch-mannoch, in the parish of Sorne, did compeir before me, on solemn oath before Almighty God, did abjure and renounce the late traitorous apologeticall declaration, in so far as it declares war against his majestie, and asserts that it is lawful to kill all such as serve his majestie in church, state, armie, or countrie, conform to his majestie's late proclamation of the 30th Daye of December last.-Given at Sorn, the aught day of February, 1688 zeirs.

"LEWIS LAUDER."

The troop of dragoons quartered at Sorn killed at least two lads in high-handed fashion, one at Tinkhornhill, and another, at the instigation of the curate of Sorn, at Tarbolton; many a conventicle was scattered at their approach, and the moors and moss hags in the neighbouring parish of Muirkirk are dotted with memorials of martyrs of the Covenant. What tyranny they exercised over the poor people we can well imagine. Their power was unlimited, and they were not the men, as those murders testify, to fall short in its use. The prayer which heads the written oath "God save the King " was the watchword of the day. If a suspect repeated the words he was allowed to go; if not, so much the worse for him. We read of brave men and women who refused this watchword or test, not, surely, because they wished other than good to their sovereign, but to utter those words implied that they gave their adherence to the King and to all his decrees, and swore the whole of the test

oath. Adherence to their sovereign was their duty, but when a King calmly declared himself arbiter of a nation's conscience, it was altogether another matter.

A large, beautiful flag of white silk is carefully preserved in the castle of Sorn- somewhat frayed now and discoloured with age. It was carried by the Covenanters at Drumclog, and again in procession when William III. was declared King. It bears the motto

"For God and the Presbyterian Reformation, for crown and country " - a crown, the letters W.R., and the date 1689. The lettering is in gold, the crown in blue and gold. The crown, initials, and date must have been added at a slightly later period than the motto, which in all probability was all it bore at first. With William and Mary dawned a brighter day for the Church of Scotland. Sixty years ago, the flag was showing signs of the decay of age. The silk had rotted so much that there was a danger of losing it altogether. The Curlers' Club had it repaired very carefully with a backing of new silk, and inscribed that fact upon it. It now reposes in state in Sorn Castle, in a mahogany chest, in a quaint old cupboard of the library.

About the beginning of the eighteenth century, Hugh, first Earl of Loudoun, married a daughter of John, first Earl of Stair. The lands of Sorn belonged to the Earl of Loudoun, and in the year 1727 the Countess took up her residence at Sorn Castle. She came to Sorn as the Dowager-Countess, and lived there for the long period of fifty years. When she died she was within a few months of completing her hundredth year. In those days servants clung to the service of one family, and seemed almost as much a part of the household as the sons and daughters. Most of the servants that the Countess brought with her remained during her life in her service, and some of them attained nearly as great an age as their mistress. The Countess was very beautiful as a young woman, and with greater age, although the freshness of youth must have gone, she did not lose her charm, and through all her long life-time was ever a sprightly, handsome, and dignified gentlewoman. When she came to Sorn her health gave her friends some cause for alarm, but she speedily recovered tone in the pure bracing air, and was almost untroubled by sickness again until a few days before her death. Besides being beautiful the Countess was a most cultured woman for her time, and she acquired a "large portion of those mental and liberal accomplishments which so much adorned the brilliant courts of Queen Anne and George I., and possessed moreover in a high degree that dignity of character and deportment, and that vigorous and active spirit, by which her brother, the celebrated Ambassador, was so eminently distinguished."

When the Countess of Loudoun came to Sorn, instead of the beautiful grounds laid out in the highest style of art which now surround the castle, and the lovely winding walks, shadowed by great trees along the banks of the Ayr, and a highly-cultivated tract of country stretching on every side with hedges and trees and plantations, the Countess found a bare, dreary expanse, with not a single road or hedge and very few trees. The castle was built around a courtyard at that time, and had all the characteristics of a fortress or keep. Her chronicler quaintly says that the Countess was not discouraged although she came from "a better country." She immediately set about working a great reformation in her surroundings. She found only a very small garden and orchard; those she enlarged considerably and improved. She took an extensive farm into her own hands, enclosed the fields in hedges and interspersed them with belts and clumps of planting. She also adorned the banks of the river with trees and walks and the banks also of tributary rivulets. Scenes of beauty sprang up around her, to her great enjoyment. Many of the trees were planted and pruned by her own hands, and some of them remain to this day-giants of the woodland. The reformation the Countess initiated in agricultural matters was gradually followed by neighbouring proprietors. Mr. Steel, Mr. Farquhar of Gilmilnscroft, and Mr. Dunlop of Garnkirk took up the matter enthusiastically and the centre of the parish soon displayed a wonderful improvement. Roads were made, hedges planted, drystone dykes erected, growing of trees was much encouraged, and reclaiming of moorland was gone into with great zest. The Countess died on the third of April, 1777. She had been a most liberal benefactor of the industrious poor, a most faithful steward of her goods, a gentlewoman of the old school, a happy, clever, sprightly personality. When she died, her passing left a blank, which to her many friends could not be filled.

The ancient keep, in the Countess's old age, must have sheltered a striking household. The castle itself accorded well with its inhabitants- brown with age as it was, old-fashioned, with stories of other days haunting every nook and corner; grey-haired retainers in the servants' hall, an ancient waiting-woman keeping watch and ward over her still more ancient mistress, whose spirit was as young as her body was frail and old! Twenty years after the Countess died, four of her servants were still living- one who had become the church officer and was at that time eighty-five years of age; a gardener and his wife, both ninety-four, who had been married sixty-eight years; and the possessor of a small farm, who was ninety-six. The last was the most vigorous of all, and made a point of walking several miles every day.

Mr. Tennent, the next proprietor, repaired the castle in a most thorough manner and built large additions to it. Among the additions was a most magnificent drawing-room, and a very handsome staircase. The castle was described by a writer of the time as a most spacious, commodious, and comfortable mansion.

In the year 1837, while a walk was being formed along the side of the Cleugh, some workmen came upon a wonderful treasure-trove. It was no less than five hundred coins of copper and silver, some of them dating so far back as the fourteenth century-the reign of Robert III. There were also representative coins of the reign of each James. It was supposed that they had been hidden by the Covenanters in the days of the Persecution. Perhaps the exact spot where they were hidden was forgotten, and some expectant soul may have toiled and dug many places in vain for his hidden treasure, or death may have come suddenly and snatched away their owner without giving him time to confide the secret of the hiding-place to another. They may have been stolen and hidden there, but it seems more likely that it was a treasure hidden for safety. The denomination of the coins is pathetically small, even for the great value of money of the times, like a long, well gathered hoard. The silver coins are very little- some of them round, others octagonal, with edges as if clipped. Such a find naturally was noised abroad, and although the workmen delivered the coins to Mr. Somervell, he was not allowed to keep them. The Government claimed them, and they were sent off. About fifty were returned from the Exchequer, and are kept as antiquarian curiosities in the castle.

The last time that the castle was repaired or restored was upwards of thirty years ago, when Mr. Somervell again added to it and very considerably improved it. It is of the pure Scottish type of architecture, and has not suffered from the many heads and hands that have planned and worked at it, for it has been the endeavour of each succeeding restorer to retain its characteristic style. It is a handsome building in every way, and a commodious and beautiful residence. In the Island of Westray there is a ruined castle of massive Scottish architecture to which the castle of Sorn bears a striking resemblance. But while the castle of Westray has become a ruin, the castle of Sorn has had a happier history, in that it has been carefully preserved, and century after century has been the home of noble and patriotic Scottish men and women.

7

Retrospective

Sorn is not the only name in the parish of Celtic origin. Dalgain is Celtic also, and means a field of sand; Auchmannoch, the hill field; Auchincloch, the stone-field; Barbioch, comely grove; Blairkip, the field of archers; Glenshamrock, clover-dale; Daldarch, oak field ; Dalldilling, a field that may be overflowed; indeed, most of the place-names are Celtic. The names were doubtless descriptive when they were given, but improved methods of agriculture have done much to redeem the country, and many of them are no longer appropriate. Thus Auchincloch is not particularly stony, nor Daldarch remarkable for its oak trees.

It is interesting to glance at the attitude of some of the county families as regards religion in the Covenanting times. It is a mistake to suppose that the rising was only a movement of peasants. Many men of the highest standing took part in it, and suffered as severely as their poorer brethren. The Campbells of Auchmannoch were directly descended from the Loudoun family, and the many Campbells settled in Sorn and neighbouring parishes, were evidently of one blood, for they all engaged in the most clannish fashion in the same quarrels (which were the principal recreation of the times), and are mentioned in each other's documents. In matters of religion they seem to have been divided, for while Hew and Robert Campbell of Kingencleugh (in Mauchline parish), and George and Arthur Campbell of Auchmannoch, were ardent Reformers and Presbyterians, their cousin of Loudoun, Sheriff of Ayr, took his place in the opposite camp, and did not spare even his own kinsfolk when it came to a matter of fulfilling the duties of his office. Thus, when Hew Campbell brought the Reformer Wishart to preach in the kirk of Mauchline, the Sheriff of Ayr, at the request of the Prior, sent his soldiers to prevent him, and as the church was filled with hostile soldiery, Wishart, much to Hew Campbell's chagrin, advised that there should be no fighting, and he preached instead on Mauchline Moor. George Campbell of Auchmannoch was active in the support of the Presbyterian Church during the reign of Charles I., and took the field with General Leslie in 1639. His son, Arthur Campbell, who was retoured heir to his father in 1668, was also engaged in the cause of the Covenant. He was fined by Middleton in 1662, and afterwards was imprisoned in Strathaven. His name is among those of many other Ayrshire gentlemen appended to an address regarding grievances in 1701. The crest of the family is rather a striking one- a double-headed eagle issuing from flames, and looking to the sun, and the motto "I byde my tyme."

The Reids of Dalldilling were not of the same mind as the Campbells of Auchmannoch, and George Reid was one of those stated by Knox to have held the kirk of Mauchline against Wishart. He was a noted persecutor, and must have been employed by Government, for he was stationed with some troopers in Kingencleugh for a considerable time, as Lauder was in Sorn, to overawe the Presbyterians in the district. Yet it is difficult to account for fines levied both upon Reid of Dalldilling and Reid of Ballochmyle, before this date, by the insatiable Middleton. Possibly they were inflicted for some trifling falling away or oversight from the principles which they always seem to have held. Dalldilling now forms part of Sorn estate.

The Rankens of Glenlogan are of a very old family and descended from the Sheills of Ochiltree, and in the wild stirring days of fighting and feuds they entered into all the quarrels of the district. "Peter Ranken of Sheill, in 1508, is found banded with Craufords of Kerse, and several others, chiefly Craufords and Cathcarts, His son William is also in the number. Kerse was fined five pounds and the rest forty shillings each for convocation of the lieges, and coming to the court of the bailliery of Carrick on occasion where of the bailie (Hew, Earl of Eglinton) was obliged to resume the brief of the Laird of Kilhenzie, and thus impeding the said bailie from holding his court." A grandson of Peter Ranken, Lawrence Ranken, Laird of Sheill, is represented by Knox as much affected by the preaching of Wishart on Mauchline Moor. At Glenlogan House, on the south-side of the river Ayr, about a mile east from the village, John Knox preached tinder the spreading branches of a great oak-tree, during one of his itinerancies to the West country. Perhaps it was in the year 1566, when Knox visited his friend, Campbell of Kingencleugh, and dispensed the sacrament in the grey old castle.

The Farquhars of Gilmilnscroft are also of a very old family. John Farquhar had a charter from the Commendator of Melrose of the lands of Castle Cakil, in 1445. In 1535 Alexander Farquhar of Gilmilnscroft obtained a charter of Camys and Glenshamroch from the Abbot of Melrose. It is as follows: -

" Be it kent to all men, me, Alexander Farker, to be bonden and oblissit to ane reverend fadder in God, ye Abbot of Melrose and Convent. Not withstanding they have laitten to me in feu heritage and myn airs, the lands of Ower and Nether Camys and Glenshamroch. I nevertheless bin and obliss me and myn airs to the said reverend fadder and convent, that I shall never molest and trubul nor mak requisition to the persons which are at this present time namit and wrytten in the rental of the said abbey, under payn of forfaultin my feu,

(signed) Alex. Farchar, with my own hand."

This document seems to show that the Farquhars of that date were tenants, and not proprietors of the lands mentioned, although they may have had others. The Farquhars were engaged in all the broils of the period, but managed to get better out of them than some of their neighbours.

In 1648 Alexander Pethein was served heir to his grandfather, Alexander Pethein of Auchinlongford. He was one of the many Pedens or Petheins in the district, and to one of them, Alexander Peden, the martyr, belongs, but to which family is a disputed point to this day. It is thought that all the Pedens sprang from the family of Auchinlongford. It was on the banks of the beautiful River Ayr that the persecuted man hid for long, weary years; and from dens and caves of the earth he crept, like some uncanny thing, in the dead of the night, to the friendly shelter of a kinsman's farmhouse where he might snatch a few hours of restful slumber. His weird utterances were looked upon as inspired, by the simple country-folks, and many of his prophetic words really came to pass- not surely a matter to be wondered at, for if any quick-witted person took the trouble to predict the future, some chance utterance would be sure to hit the mark. But we can hardly accuse Peden of such subterfuge. He was an enthusiast- his enemies said a fanatic; but if by fasting and prayer one's spirit attains a higher plane, surely Peden had reached that state, and with clearer vision he may have seen beyond the stumbling-blocks and rocks of offence which obstructed his path, to the dawning of the morning of a better day on the mountain-tops beyond.

A hundred years ago agriculture was in a very imperfect state in the parish, but matters were gradually becoming better, The influence of the Dowager-Countess of Loudoun had been directly for good, and neighbouring proprietors were following in the train of her improvements. Indeed, all over the country at that time there was a marked advance in agricultural matters, and a breaking away from old unintelligent systems and traditions. The parish of Sorn consists of about 19,000 acres, and a century ago there were 3000 acres of moss, 7000 of hills, moor, and other pasture lands, 200 acres of natural wood or plantings, and of the remaining 9000 or so of arable ground, all was not under actual cultivation. Few tenants possessed more than a ploughgate of land, and many of them much less. Those small holdings were a decided disadvantage to the parish, as the farmers could not afford to keep the necessary implements or horses, and so were often dependent for ploughing upon hired labour, or had to wait until someone else could lend them implement or horse, and often they missed their season. They seldom could afford to pay a rent, or paid a very small one when the season was good; and there was not sufficient work on their small holdings to keep them busy all the year through. The proprietors of such small farms, if they farmed their land themselves, simply made a shift to exist and exerted themselves as little as possible. A farm of moderate size was much better kept and more profitable than the very small holdings, and much more provocative of industry. But even the best of farmers was very far behind, as looked at from the standpoint of scientific farming of today. The leases were for eighteen or nineteen years, and a rotation of crops was prescribed, but, through inattention of farmers and absence of landlords, was not strictly enforced. The general rules of rotation were the following: Only one third of a farm to be ploughed at a time, the first two crops to be oats, the third bear and grass seeds, the fourth hay, and the next five years pasture. The farms were not properly subdivided, however, and the farmers were careless of rules made by absent, uninterested landlords. Too often, instead of varying the third and fourth

crops, a crop of oats was taken from the ground three or four years in succession, and then, without any kind of seed being sown at all, it grew a rank kind of pasture for the cattle.

Farm-houses were beginning to be rebuilt, a century ago, in a better style than the cot-houses or hovels which formerly were the dwelling-houses, with men and cattle living under the same roof, and often only a narrow passage between the byres and the kitchen. Some of the cot-houses fell into ruins and the pendicles were annexed to the adjacent farms. The cottars went to live in the villages, where they found employment of various kinds, the young people readily getting work in the new mills at Catrine. The rent of the arable farms under the old leases was only about five shillings an acre; but as the leases expired the rents were much raised, and a century ago, ten or twelve shillings an acre was quite common, and near the villages as much as twenty or thirty shillings was asked and obtained. A ploughman received £10 or £12 per annum for wages, a woman-servant £4. A farm-labourer earned 1s 3d a day in winter and 1s 8d in Summer. Tailors went from one farm to another and made the household garments, of good home spun, on the spot. A tailor received one shilling each day, and his food; a mason received 8d per day. All those prices are quoted as a great advance on what had been until a few years previously. In 1790 a man-servant's wage was £7 or £8; a woman's £3 10s; a tailor received 8d a day; a labourer 10d in winter and a shilling in summer. There were three corn-mills in the parish and a wauk-mill or bleaching mill, all on the river Ayr, and the farmers were thirled to a particular mill. The farmers reared most of their own horses, some of the old diminutive breed of the country, others middle-sized and hardy and suitable for purposes of agriculture. There were about eighty ploughs in the parish and twice that number of carts. Farmers' gigs were utterly unknown, and the farmer rode to market with his wife seated behind on a pillion. The cattle were almost all black, of a small ancient breed, and were reared for dairy purposes, few, if any, for the market. The making of cheese had just been introduced into the parish by some farmers who had settled there from Dunlop. Before the advent of the cheese-makers, butter, exclusively, was made in the dairies and sold in the neighbouring villages and in Glasgow. The potato was a staple article of diet both for man and beast, for it seems at that time both horses and cows were partly fed with it, and many of the villagers rented a small piece of ground from the nearest farmers to grow the favourite tuber. For the ground they paid a small rent, at the rate of sixpence a fall, The average produce of an acre was about thirty bolls, and a hundred acres were under such cultivation. Every farmer and cottar grew a small quantity of flax, sufficient for his own domestic purposes, but little or none for sale. Wheat had been grown experimentally and successfully on some holm-lands, but oats and bear were the principal crops.

There was a lime-stone quarry, a hundred years ago, employing twelve men, and a small colliery near the castle, the seam of coal only eight or nine fathoms deep. Nine men wrought at this pit, and the output on an average per week was two hundred and fifty loads. The price retail per load was sixpence or eightpence. Twenty years previously it had been only fourpence. There were seven loads in a ton. There was a lime-work of eighty years' standing belonging to Mr. Farquhar Gray of Gilmilnsroft, and two other collieries, one belonging to Mr. Gray also, and the other to Mr. Logan of Logan. By a memorandum in the charter-book of the Gilmilnsroft family it seems the standard for the coal-creel was fixed in 1623 at 14 inches wide, 16 inches deep, 30 inches long; and the price 2d sterling. It further adds that the coals had been wrought in the "Burrowlands" since 1497.

Scholastic matters were in a very backward state. There was a school in Sorn and another in Catrine, but the school and dwelling-house of the master in Sorn were described as wretched. The schoolmaster received for salary, besides the fees of the scholars, £8 6s 8d per annum and a small emolument for his services as session-clerk. There were from twenty-five to thirty scholars, The school fees were; For reading, 1s 8d each quarter; for reading and writing, 2s 6d; writing and arithmetic, 3s. From all sources the worthy dominie drew only the meagre salary of £20 per annum. Some families in remoter parts of the parish united in hiring a teacher for their children. The number of poor on the roll was twenty-two, and they received each from 1s 3d to 4s per month from the church funds.

8

Improvements, customs, and stories

Fifty years ago the parish of Sorn had improved much in agricultural matters, compared with its condition half a century previously. The good work begun by the Countess of Loudoun had been carried on by her successors in the castle, and Mrs. Somervell, proprietrix, when the last Statistical Account was written, is awarded great praise for her zeal in improving the condition of the land. Mrs. Somervell planted trees and hedges, not only in the vicinity of the castle, but all over her domain and on the higher parts of the parish. Her immediate predecessor in Dalgain, Mr. Stevenson, had planted two hundred acres in young trees, and those were in a flourishing condition and added much to the beauty of the country. Other proprietors in the neighbourhood had also thriving plantations on their estates, and the one-time bleak parish of Sorn rivalled the fairest in beauty, with its natural advantages of hill and dale and holm-land, the swiftly-flowing river and the many tributary brooks. Larch and Scotch fir were the trees of which most were planted at that time, although there was a proportion of oak, ash, elm, beech and birch. Now it would be difficult to find a better wooded parish in the West of Scotland. Scotch firs are among the most picturesque of trees. Standing alone, with their dark-green, feathery branches well defined against the sky, their sombre colouring and graceful outlines are strikingly beautiful; a plantation of such trees, with tall, straight stems uprearing themselves at regular intervals, with the interlacing branches high overhead, forming a screen through which the sunshine falls in fitful bars, seems like a natural cathedral, with dim, religious light and pillared aisles. Beech hedges are common in the parish, green in summer and russet-brown through the long winter; and even in spring, when green buds are swelling and bursting on the hawthorn branches, the brown of the beech takes on a darker, rustier hue. But not for long, for the tiny buds outgrow their shelter and a new generation of leaves elbow the old ones off the scene. Which thing is an allegory, and he who runs may read! Instead of 200 acres of wood, as a hundred years since, fifty years ago there were 600, and that has been considerably increased. Much moss-land was reclaimed, and although there is still a portion in a state of nature, the good work has gone steadily on. The rent of land, half-a-century ago, was from 12s to £1 2s, on the higher land, but near the villages it rose as high as £3 per acre, and sometimes even higher. Furrow-draining with stones was carried on, to the great improvement of the land, and even the tile-draining had been introduced. Now, it is needless to say, the drainage is all done by tiles. Some of the mossland up till that time was worse than useless, as the damp arising from it often mildewed crops in neighbouring fields. The rate of wages had increased very considerably. Farm-servants received as much for six months' work as for a whole year a century ago: now the wages are again doubled, or more. Cows were mostly of the Cunningham breed and the sheep of the common blackfaced kind. At the present time agricultural matters are in as forward a state in the parish of Sorn as anywhere in a wide circuit. The natural disadvantages of the soil are its mossy nature and the heavy substratum of cold clay. These have been overcome as much as possible by scientific and careful farming, and in many places the pasturage is now excellent. Dairying is carried on to a large extent. The farmers take their place with the other farmers of the county. They are hard-working and industrious and keep up a high-class stock, and their occupation was fairly remunerative until the recent fall in prices of dairy produce. Cheese is made chiefly on the Drummond principle, and milk is sent to Glasgow and other large towns. The largest dairy establishment is that of J. Somervell, Esq., of Sorn Castle, and indeed the present laird of Sorn has been so identified with the improvement of dairy farming as to have constituted Sorn a kind of "Mecca" of improved dairying long before the formation of the Kilmarnock Dairy School. The responsibility of the model working dairy at the Glasgow International Exhibition of 1887 was in the hands of the laird of Sorn. Mr. Somervell was Member for the Ayr Burghs from 1891 to 1893, and is proprietor of the famous business in Glasgow known as the Sorn Dairy Supply

Education in Sorn, half-a-century ago, compared favourably with that of other country places. There was one parochial school in the parish, situated, as was often the case, close beside the church, doubtless because it was an ecclesiastical adjunct. The school had the legal accommodation and the maximum salary. There were other teachers, besides, in the rural districts and in Catrine. Now the School Board of Sorn, which consists of seven members, looks after the schools of Sorn, Catrine, and Auchencloigh, the last a little side school on the Galston Road. Each of the schoolhouses is excellent

of its kind and with a fully-equipped staff of teachers. The population of the village is about 300 and consists chiefly of the usual tradesmen, the workers at a wool mill (which has considerable valuable machinery and where wool is prepared for carpet factories), and miners. The population of the parish, not including Catrine, which is a parish quoad sacra, is 1460. Sorn is rather remarkable for longevity. Had a record been kept of those who considerably exceeded the three score years and ten, the list would have been a long one. We have already instanced the Countess of Loudoun and her servants. An old woman died within the last ten years who had completed over 90 years of life. During her time she had seen six parish ministers, the first of whom, Dr. Gordon, was the writer of the old Statistical Account. The last of the weavers has just passed away (Blackey Reid), an old man of nearly ninety, one of the heroes of Mr. Aitken's poem below. The fiddler, "Songie," as he used to be called in old times, who played at weddings for two generations, has also recently died.

Sorn Races

A hundred and fifty years ago an annual race was instituted at the village of Sorn, and although the function has lost in importance, it is continued to this day. Long ago, on its occurrence in the month of March, traders came from far and wide, and buying and selling went on to a considerable extent. It was looked upon as a sort of fair in the district and was the only annual re-union of the farmers of the parish. Now it is almost, or quite, a farce. For the last few years the chief competitor in the race has been the pigman with his horse from Kilmarnock. After bringing the pigs, the horse is taken from the cart and sometimes gives a good account of itself on the course. This function is called the "big race." On the following day the "wee race " takes place, in which the children of the village and neighbourhood take part. There is always great interest manifested in the "wee race," and a collection is made in the villages for prizes. An ancient drum, said to have been used at Drumclog, but about which some people are a trifle sceptical, is in the hands of the Race Committee. It was played for sixty years at the two races by Blackey Reid, the last of the weavers.

The following is a characteristic description of Sorn Race, written by Mr. Wm. Aitken, formerly of Catrine, now Inspector on the railway, Greenock:-

The first Sorn Race I e'er was at, I still can min' it weel,
It cheers my heart, the thocht o't yet, and mak's me younger feel
And weel the clachan callans kent that this day was in store
No ae broon bawbee had we spent for many a day before.
And time seemed sweart tae slip away- no ane o' us was richt
We couldna eat oor meat by day, nor tak' oor sleep at nicht;
We smiled, and sae did aulder fools, and wore a cheery face,
Instead o' gangin to the schules, we'd all gang to the Race.

And when the schule-clock hauns drew near the magic 'our O' twa
Oot cam the ancient Halberdier, the Committee and a';
"Wee Jamie" lookin' lairge as life, wi' swallow-tail and lum,
"Co " threshin' at it wi' the fife, and "Blackey" wi' the drum
And foremost 'mong the ither folk who followed up the hill,
Was " Moleman Miles" and "Hedger Jock," and hamely "Butcher Will,"
And burly "Farmer Rab" sae big, and mony a weel-kenn't face,
A' makin' for the "Timmer Brig" tae see the famous Race.

The horses were a'body's talk-some five were entered in,
The first o' which could scarcely walk, the next yin couldna rin
The third was no like yin wad fag, but then 'twas nearly blin'
The fourth yin was a sorry nag-a bag o' banes an' skin
The fifth, though like a racin' beast, rode by a pigman chiel,
Wad no dae ought but jump and re'ist, and caper through the fiel';
A mair unlikely lookin' set could hardly shown their face,
Yet oot the five 'twas thocht we'd get a fairish kind O' Race.

When tae the scratch at length they cam', nae time ava was lost-
To start them "Blackey" beat the drum, while "Jamie" stood the post-
And sic a race ye ne'er did see, though yin and a' did feats,
For out the five auld horses, we had hauf-a-dizzen heats;
Sic riders, tae, they wadna need tae been the least thing frail-
Some tumbled owre the horse's heid, and some fell owre the tail;
Ae horse dang owre a sweetie stan' erected near the place;
'Twas liker eatin' beans and bran than rinnin' at a Race.

Back tae the town we a' came down as sune's the race was by,
When, though the nicht was queer and wat, some folks were queer and dry;
And siccan horrid stuffs they selt's for drink that afternin,
'Twad gur'd a vera grunstone melt, and burn'd a hole in whin
Yet some sae quick their cash did spen'-while rows got unca rife-
That thrippence wad that nicht ere ten ha'e almost saved a life;
And even when next day was come it didna men' the case;
It took till that day week wi' some, tae finish up the Race.

A number of stories are told about characters in the village in the good old days- and especially about one Tom Humphrey, who was "simple," as country folk say in kindly fashion of those whose intellect is not of the brightest, but who often have a wonderfully keen eye to the main chance. Mr. Stewart, a minister of the parish, who was translated to Liberton in 1843, was a kind-hearted man, and showed his liberality in a very practical fashion. Doubtless the fact that he had a large garden and plenty of vegetables had something to do with his scheme; he caused a great pot of broth to be made every week in his kitchen for the needy of the place, who gladly availed themselves of his kindness, and they carried home with them the good wholesome soup in pitchers and jugs. Mr. Stewart's successor did not continue this work, doubtless thinking it rather troublesome, and preferring to do his charitable deeds in some other way. But he was not to be let off so easily. In the village one day he was buttoned-holed by Tom.

"A word wi' you, Maister Rankine."

"Well, Tom," says the young minister, afterwards so famous, "What can I do for you?"

"Will ye tell me this, Maister Rankine," says the unblushing Tom, "When Mr. Stewart left the parish did he tak' the kailpat wi' him?"

Another story is told of "Cork" Reid, the father of "Blackey." Cork (everyone had a nickname) was fond of a dram and sometimes got a bit breezy. One day he had been refreshing himself, not wisely but too well, and was making his way with rather unsteady steps from the Greenfoot Inn, past the mill-lade toward the manse gate. Mr Balfour had often remonstrated with him about his falling, and just then, to his dismay, he saw the worthy minister approaching. At that moment Cork got particularly unsteady, his foot slipped and he fell into the lade. Mr Balfour took the opportunity of administering a deserved rebuke, but the unabashed Cork, from the midst of the water, was quite equal to the occasion.

"Mr Balfour," he cried out, "I've naething mair to dae wi' you. I've jined the Anabaptists and I've jist got dipped."

The late beadle, John Cameron, was a very worthy man, and a character in his way. He was church officer and sexton for the long period of forty-eight years. He died only a few years ago. A good story is told of him in connection with a strange minister who was preaching. John had a trick of looking into the Bible to see what the manuscript was like. On one occasion, after a flowing discourse which took the congregation by storm, John's son said to his father,

"Weel faither, I'm thinking that was a gae guid sermon the day."

"Ay" said John, "it was a guid sermon, but it was awfu' weel thoomed!" During a recent vacancy, when the nominee of the committee was going to the church to preach before the congregation, he met John, who extended a very hearty welcome to him, for he knew him of old when assistant in the parish.

"I'm rale prood to see you. I hope you'll get it. The warst o't, the kirk is no weel heated, for there's something wrong wi' the flue o' the stove."

"Never mind, John," said the preacher, "It'll not matter, I'll warm them up myself to-day."

Alexander Anderson, the poet-surfaceman, and more lately librarian in the University Library and Philosophical Institution, Edinburgh, occasionally visits Sorn. A poem on Sorn Bridge from his pen appeared in a popular periodical a few years ago. It begins-

I lean on the ledge of the bridge
And I hear the waters flow,
I lean on the ledge of the bridge
As I leant long years ago.
One voice bad the waters then,
And it was sweet to hear;
But today I hear another
That none but myself can bear.

The reference is to the death of his brother-in-law, who was killed in an accident, and was buried in Sorn Churchyard hard by.

Distinguished visitors to Sorn were the mother and aunt of Robert Louis Stevenson, who paid a visit of a fortnight to the old home of the family about eight years ago. At that time Dr. G. W. Balfour, and the family generally, to the third and fourth generations, made a picnic to Sorn, and spent the afternoon in the manse and garden. We may say that Dr. Balfour, as well as Professor Rankin, Edinburgh, still take a warm interest in the welfare of their native parish. To all schemes promoted for the welfare of the church they have been liberal subscribers. Joseph Train, the antiquarian correspondent of Sir Walter Scott, was a native of Sorn.

9

Village Of Catrine

When Aiton wrote his "General View of the Agriculture of the County of Ayr," at the beginning of the present century, he did not confine himself strictly to agricultural matters, but had a word to say in passing as to the towns and villages and the customs of the people. His picture of village life is far from an attractive one. The houses were small and mean and unpleasant in every way; there were no gardens in front but frequently heaps of rotting rubbish, or hay stacks, peat stacks and dilapidated coal houses. Sometimes it needed considerable skill for a stranger to reach the door of the house through all the accumulations of years of untidiness, which lay in front of it. If anyone cares to read the "Cottagers of Glenburnie" now-a-days, he may see in that once popular booklet a picture of village life pretty much as Aiton depicts it in Ayrshire in the beginning of this century. But although the condemnation is sweeping and general, Aiton individualises a few places for special remark. Some of the villages and towns he says are "despicable"; for others he uses the word "tolerable"; while of some he says "they have a confused and shabby aspect"; and of the few he considers the "handsomest," it is pleasant to notice that Sorn and Catrine come first. The villages that share the honours with those in the parish of Sorn are Straiton, Galston, Dalrymple, Kirkmichael, Dundonald and Kirkoswald. One matter that may have helped the villages of Sorn and Catrine to the honourable position which they occupied in Aiton's list, was the fact that they are both comparatively modern. When a town or village has the growth of centuries, and of styles of architecture and phases of thought and custom as variable as the periods through which it has existed, it cannot have the regularity of plan (however picturesque it may be), or nicety of detail which is characteristic of more rapid growth. The further back we go we find the cottages of the people the more squalid. The village of Sorn or Dalgain was built by the proprietor of Dalgain to accommodate his work people. Catrine is little more than a century old. Up till 1786 there were only a miller and a blacksmith settled there.

Catrine is situated on the north bank of the River Ayr, in the western extremity of the parish of Sorn, about two miles from the village of Sorn and about the same distance from Mauchline, which is the nearest railway station. It's situation is an exceedingly fine one and with considerable climatic advantages. It is sheltered on every side by sloping hills and wooded pasturelands, and few places in the same latitude and so far from the sea have such a genial climate. The village is regularly built, clean and bright looking, and through the midst of the wide principal street, runs the tail-water of the mill, or by-wash from the mill wheel. About the centre of the village is a large square of 300 feet where the tall, red-stone, many-storeyed cotton mill has stood for over a hundred years. The houses are chiefly of two storeys, slated and built on a uniform plan. The Ayr, which is here particularly beautiful, flows past the village and through the estate of Ballochmyle close by. It is also the motive power of the great wheel of the cotton works. But Catrine is synchronous with the cotton works, and the history of the cotton works is the history of Catrine.

Toward the close of last century the cotton trade received a great impetus by the invention of Arkwright's Throstle Spinning Frame. Up till the last quarter of the eighteenth century spinning was a purely domestic industry and almost entirely in the hands of women. In Lancashire and the great weaving centres every cottage had its spinning-wheel, and the women span the lint or wool in their own homes. About the middle of last century cotton began to be more used, the warp being of linen and the weft of cotton. As the weavers had to supply the weft for themselves spinsters had more work to do than they could well undertake. A spinning jenny was invented in 1765 by James Hargreaves, but unfortunately was not patented. Ignorance was rife and the weavers and spinsters looked upon Hargreave's machine as a direct intervention with the ways of Providence. Riots ensued, and all the machines were broken. In 1769 came Arkwright's invention, which was patented, and although rioting still broke out at intervals against the machinery, it had come to stay; the cotton industry began its flourishing career, and trade generally, instead of languishing with plethora of hands, as had been predicted, entered upon a brisker era. In 1787, while the great cotton industry was still almost in its infancy, Mr Alexander of Ballochmyle, who was proprietor of Catrine, and Mr Dale of Glasgow, built a twist mill in Catrine (where the advantages in the way of water-power were

obvious), with a fall of water from the dam-head, to where it returned to the river, of forty-six feet. They built a large mill containing 5240 spindles. The same fall of water drove a jean-erie factory and a corn-mill, and it was proposed that by-and-by a wauk or fulling mill should be erected on the same stream. Such a large work necessitated a corresponding number of workers, and a village sprang up like a mushroom. Mr Alexander of Ballochmyle, as proprietor of the ground, laid it off according to his own plan. The village he made of oblong form, with the large square in the middle, in the centre of which stood the mill, and streets led off from the square, east, south and west. The access to the village was from the north and south, and the river was spanned by a wooden footbridge only. Carts and carriages had to cross by a ford, which in time of flood became impassable. The principal street was made sixty six feet wide, with the clear water from the mill running down the centre, and crossed by wooden bridges. Mr Alexander also built many of the houses, and bound all those who took feus in that street to build houses two storeys in height and to slate them. There were thirty feuars in the village. When the village was commenced, and for several years later, the rate of feuing for a house and garden was fourpence per fall, but in 1789 it was raised to sixpence. The feus are perpetual, or, as the legal documents say, "as long as trees grow and rivers run." The houses were built of the tenement description, where often a whole family occupied a single apartment. Even enlightened gentlemen like Mr Alexander evidently did not think, in those days, that one apartment was too little for the accommodation of a whole family- a room, sixteen feet by fourteen, let at thirty shillings, or finished in a superior style, at two pounds annually. Such a room was sleeping, eating and living room for an indefinite number of people and is, unfortunately, too often so to this day.

The following extract from the "Statistical Account," published a hundred years ago, or about ten years after the erection of the mills, may be of interest.

"Three hundred and one persons) old and young, are just now employed (1796) in carding, roving and in spinning, with an overseer and two clerks; clock-makers, smiths, millwrights and other mechanics amount to fifteen more. The women who pick cotton in their own houses are at present 226 ; in all belonging to the twist mill, 445. Of these 118 are under 12 years of age, 128 are between twelve and twenty, and 200 are above twenty years of age. The total amount of wages paid from October, 1795, to October, 1796, is £3,193 stg. ; and as far as can be ascertained the average quantity of cotton spun weekly is 2260 lbs. In the year 1790 the same Company built a jean-erie factory, which contains 76 jean-eries, the motive power for which was derived from the tail-water of the twist mill. Here 200 persons, including an overseer, 2 clerks, and mechanics find constant employment, besides 55 women who pick cotton in their own houses. Forty-three are under twelve years of age; 72 from twelve to twenty; the rest are above twenty years of age. The wages per week are about £80 sterling."

We see from the above quotation that a total sum of £4000 was paid annually in wages in the new mills of Catrine and 700 people were directly supported by them, not including wives of workmen, aged people and young children. Such an influx of money and work must have had a most beneficial effect on the district. Farmers would find a ready market for their produce and many tradesmen must have been employed even in raising houses for such a number of people. Children were not admitted into the mills under nine years of age; which was a very humane regulation for those days. Weaving was carried on in the village, but that industry was then in its infancy. A hundred handlooms were erected and the weavers were supplied with work from the cotton manufactories in Paisley or Glasgow, which seems like a carrying of coals to Newcastle. The yarn spun in Catrine was sent to Glasgow weekly by the Company 's carrier. The population of Catrine amounted at that time to 1350 souls, a diminution during the three years previous of 250. It is difficult to say why the people had left, unless that the novelty had worn off and some of the newcomers went back among their old friends. It was not for want of work, for the Company had work and to spare, and the houses remained empty, waiting in vain for new occupants. So, instead of machinery driving workmen off the field, it had only increased the demand for skilled labour. Besides those employed in the cotton manufacture, the population included the usual tradesmen and shop keepers necessary in every community.

The mill-workers were a very healthy class. Inoculation for smallpox was the rule and not the exception. The different apartments in the mills were kept as clean and as free from dust as

possible. Mr. Alexander also introduced a scheme of farming on a small scale, which possibly, by taking the workers into the open air, had a beneficial effect upon their health as well as teaching them thrifty habits. Mr. Alexander let each year from fifteen to twenty-five acres of ground to the villagers, for which they paid him from fourpence to sixpence a fall, according to the quality of the ground. There they planted potatoes and other vegetables, and a spirit of emulation sprang up as to whose ground would be the most fruitful and free from weeds. Mr. Alexander made small enclosures also, in the vicinity of the village, for those who kept cows. This was found advantageous both to the villagers and to the proprietor. He also built a brewery in the village and let it to a Kilmarnock man, and although it has changed hands more than once it is still a flourishing concern. It was an attempt to introduce malt liquor instead of the more fiery whisky. This plan succeeded fairly well, as far as consumption of beer was in the question, for 500 bolls of malt were brewed annually. Nothing is known about the consumpt of whisky; whether it decreased in favour by reason of the charms of its milder rival, or if both were used instead of one! We must remember that tea was an expensive luxury at that time, considered effeminate, and tending to make those who indulged in it weak and delicate. In some quarters the farmers, and even Town Councils, banded themselves together to discourage its use by all means in their power, and took a vow, as teetotalers do now regarding strong drink, to abstain from the use of the stimulating and insinuating beverage. The people of Catrine at that time were practically vegetarians. Potatoes and cheese, a most nourishing diet, formed the staple dinner in many a family, and for breakfast and supper there were porridge and milk, oat-cakes, eggs, and butter; a much more wholesome and healthful bill of fare than the constant tea-drinking which obtains in many a home of the same class now-a-days.

A chapel-of-ease, which still remains, was built in 1703. Out of the population of 1350, about 300 were Anti-Burghers and Burgh-Seceders, who trudged many miles each Sunday to attend divine service in their respective churches in Cumnock and Auchinleck. The schoolmaster engaged by the Company had a free house and the small salary of £15 sterling. For that he taught the children employed in the works from seven till nine o'clock in the evenings. He had an assistant for the mill children, whose salary was only £5, but as he was a junior clerk in the mill, his duties as schoolmaster were only secondary to his position as clerk. The schoolmaster had day pupils also, whose fees doubled his salary. The scholars met in the school on Sunday mornings, were catechised by the teachers, and marched to church, where they sat in rows under the vigilant eyes of the schoolmaster and his assistant. The teachers of those days found their post no sinecure, and the scholars, even in church, were not free from the dread of a tingling box on the ears, or a resounding whack on their young shoulders.

10 Catrine Mills

The building of the cotton mills at Catrine by Claud Alexander, Esq. of Ballochmyle, and David Dale, Esq., merchant in Glasgow, wrought a great change in the appearance of the western extremity of the parish of Sorn. Instead of green fields on the banks of the river, with one or two thatched cottages, a model village sprang up, with wide streets and substantial two-storey dwelling-houses. The mill itself was a large building, built of red sandstone, pinned with whin, five storeys in height, with sky-lights in the tall, pointed roof, and a handsome flight of steps leading up to its principal entrance. It is there to this day, strong and virile as ever, a very hive of industry, with a record behind it of a hundred and ten years of honourable work within its walls, and it is now a centre of commercial influence, which finds its limits only with civilisation. Besides the principal, or twist mill, a jeanie-house was added in 1790, built on a line with the main street. This jeanie-house or spinning-mill received its rather curious name from the fact that at first, when spinning weft by machinery was introduced, it was found difficult to get away from the idea of spinning by women. The first machines were called spinning-jennies or spinning-jeanies, which simply meant that they were substitutes for spinsters or spinning women. The jeanie-house is used to this day as part of the mill, but now called the mule-house, a name which receives its derivation from the machinery in use- a hybrid between the throstle and spinning jenny. The old knocker of the jeanie-house can still be seen- a cast iron, miniature representation of a lion, and beneath it the inscription on a brass plate, "Alexander and Dale's jeanie-house." Old people still call the mule-mill by its former name.

In 1801 the cotton works and all in connection with them were purchased by James Finlay and Company of Glasgow. The whole of the machinery was bought with the mills, the staff of the employees was retained and the workmen's houses were taken over. Weaving of cotton was continued and trade grew enormously in the hands of the new Company. In 1824 an extensive bleach-work was added, not on the old-fashioned system of bleaching in the open, but bleaching by chemicals, which permitted the whole process to be carried on within doors; and not only the cotton cloth manufactured in the village was successfully bleached at the Catrine works, but that manufactured at the other mills in Perthshire belonging to the same Company. Fifty years ago it was estimated that from fifteen to twenty-five thousand yards a day were bleached and finished at Catrine.

The great water wheels for supplying the motive power of the cotton mills were built in 1827. They were considered a marvel at the time and people thronged from far and near to, see them. They were the largest in Britain and possibly in the world. Even yet they are eclipsed in Britain in size only by the Laxey wheel in the Isle of Man, which is a few feet more in diameter; but as there are two wheels at Catrine, they are really a greater feat in mechanics than that of Laxey. The great wheel at Earl's Court Exhibition can hardly be regarded in the same connection, as it is used merely for amusement, while the Catrine water wheels have been in working order and in constant use for seventy years. The first wheel was much smaller, and of wood, and was broken up when the new wheels were built, but reappeared in various shapes and forms, principally as snuff-boxes, from Mauchline box-work. On the lids of the snuff-boxes made from the old wheel, were the following facetious lines written by a clerk in the cotton mill:-

Time's various changes here behold in me;
 Drumlanrig's woods me fostered while a tree,
 Transported next to Catrine- there design'd
 To form me to be useful to mankind.
 By art constructed to a water wheel,
 I daily laboured for the public weal
 A new creation, by my toil uprear'd,
 Amidst the dreary solitude appear'd,
 The thriving village and the busy swain,

Spread wealth and comfort o'er the cheerful plain.

But Time's fleet pace no earthly thing can stay,
Age on me came, and with it came decay
Unfit to labour longer for their weal,
They soon replaced me with an iron wheel.
My new successor, following out my plan,
Like me, a benefactor proved to man;
Time also o'er him triumph'd, as he must,
And doomed him to the furnace- or to rust.

Two mighty wheels the work then undertook,
Of iron formed, and of gigantic look-
Huge Herculeans ! of men's work the chief,
Whose just description far exceeds belief.
Justice forbids me to disguise the truth,
I could not match them though in vig'rous youth;
Majestic grandeur, strength, and power combin'd
Declare them offspring of some mighty mind.

Art's plastic hand, by native skill applied,
Again to change my form her genius tried
Transformed, from public use I then withdrew
To carry snuff, respected sir, to you.
Yet judge not from this relic, chang'd by fate,
Though little now, I once rank'd with the great;
My gfeatness now departed and forgot,
I'm still contented with my humble lot,
And now proclaim, even in this lowly guise,
This truth to man- To be content is wise.

R. WRIGHT.

Two huge reservoirs at Glenbuck in the parish of Muirkirk belonging to the Catrine Co., are the source of the River Ayr. Gathering volumes on the way, the water is again impounded in reservoirs at Catrine and led by an aqueduct to the top of the wheels. The wheels enclosed and roofed, are each 50 feet in diameter and 12 feet broad. The floor is hollowed out and perhaps a fourth of the wheels are under the level of the ground outside. The high breast water pours itself into the buckets of the wheels and the weight of the water forces the wheels round, performing three revolutions in a minute. The spokes of the wheels are remarkably slim-looking for such gigantic pieces of mechanism, but needless to say, they are of ample strength, and somewhat resemble the wheels of a modern bicycle. At one time it was thought of building still two wheels more, but the project was abandoned and the existing twin-wheels were speeded up. They drive on the same intermediate shaft, and the main shaft goes underground across the street to each mill, where its power sets the machinery in motion. The waste water is led under ground for a considerable distance and flows into the Ayr on Ballochmyle estate. There is a stair along the side of the interior of the building enclosing the wheels, with various platforms at different elevations. Visitors who see the wheels for the first time are much impressed by the sight; the motion is so uniform, the height so great, and there seems such an amount of suppressed power in the gigantic curve as they slowly turn round with elephantine playfulness! They seem instinct with life and glorying in their power-a Frankenstein that could easily overpower its master and maker at any time; and as the wheels move around in their stately fashion a shower of sparkling drops of water falls from their serrated sides. They are terrible to look at as a whole, and yet beautiful in minutiae. A few years ago, when there was a long and severe frost, the drops of water froze as they fell on the rims of the wheels, and formed long slender icicles. The sight was beautiful, especially at night, when a fire was kindled on the platform between the wheels to reduce the temperature, and the icicles sparkled and shone in the fitful glow. A visit to

the cotton mills is most interesting, but almost bewildering from the amount of complicated machinery seen in motion. When one has passed through the mill the wonder becomes to the uninitiated that, after all its many processes, cotton cloth can be sold at the cheap price it obtains. All the various stages can be seen, from the bales of cotton clamped with flexible iron bands covered with sack-cloth, as they are taken from the ships at Liverpool, to the finished cotton cloth with its high gloss, cut into lengths and carefully packed for shipment to North or South America or elsewhere. Let us glance at the various processes. After unpacking the tightly compressed bales, it is noted to what class the cotton belongs. Cotton is judged by its colour, its cleanliness, and by the length of fibre or staple; the longer the staple the more valuable, as long fibre makes stronger strands of thread or yarn. Some cotton is much cleaner than others, part of the seed pods being left in great profusion in some bales, which is the cotton picker's fault. Others again have a proportion of sand mixed with them, inadvertently or otherwise. The first process is called scutching, probably from the fact that at one time the cotton was beaten or scutched with long rods by hand. The scutching machine opens the fibres, and by an exhaust arrangement the particles are sent flying against a perforated cylinder, and the seed pods and sand fall through a grating. We next see the cotton in the form of a lap or great round bale. It has been scutched or opened and cleaned and passed through another machine and is now rolled in layers round an iron rod, and called a lap. It is classified according to its different qualities- extra, good-middling, middling, waste, and low America. Then comes the mixing of the different qualities according to the different kinds of yarn wanted, and the cotton again emerges in the form of a lap. The laps are all of the same length and weight. The next process is carding, for which there is a most intricate and beautiful machine. In this process the final cleaning of the cotton is carried out. It is separated, thin as a spider's web, all the fibres are loosened and the web of cotton is gathered into a narrow ribbon, and it then drops into a tall cylindrical can, a compressed strand of perhaps an inch in width. Then comes the drawing machine, where six strands are carried over four rollers, those in front moving six times as quick as those behind, where the strands are led in. This gives the final straightening to the staple, and eliminates the slightest lumpiness or knots. Then comes the slubbing frame. In the slubbing frame the sliver is drawn to the utmost extent which it can attain without damage to the strength, and as it emerges from the drawing roller is given a twist, as the thread has become too attenuated to be handled without twist. It is thereafter still further reduced in size in the roving frames.

Then follows the spinning of the thread by self-acting mules, the most beautiful and wonderfully complicated machinery. Girls look after the spinning. The machine draws out the thread to the requisite fineness, twists it, and winds it upon a spindle. Should any thread break the girl is at hand to mend it, which she does with the utmost delicacy of touch, as the machine works. So delicate is this work that only girls who have learned the trade from their school days can work at it. When this machine is seen with its many hundreds of spindles all in process of filling at once, it is a matter of surprise to think of the old-fashioned spinning wheel, with its one spindle being used with such good effect by the women folks of other days, that often the whole of the household clothing and napery were spun by it.

The yarn is next steamed to prevent it being curled in the weaving. It is packed into a malleable iron chest and steamed under pressure. The yarn is numbered and marked as follows:- No 16 means 16 hanks in the pound, and each hank contains 840 yards. The number of hanks in the pound determines the quality of fineness of the thread.

The various stages of manufacture thus described are connected with the production of the weft or woof of the cloth; identical processes are required for the making of the warp, up to the roving frame, but instead of the mule, the machine known as the throstle frame (invented by the great Arkwright) is employed. It is of two sorts, the fly throstle and the ring throstle (the latter an American invention). In that machine the yarn is spun direct from the rollers to the spool, and as the warp yarn is subject to greater strain than the weft, more twist is required, and in addition warp yarn is invariably of superior quality. From the throstle bobbin, the yarn in the winding room is transferred to large spools, and these are placed in the bank of the warping frame and run on to a beam, each carrying from 500 to 600 separate ends. The beams are transferred to the dressing machine, where the yarn is passed through troughs of size- or dressing-the superfluous size squeezed out and the yarn dried on a huge steam cylinder and again wound upon a beam. The next process is heddling or

drawing the threads into the heddle. It is performed by girls, one in front and one behind. The girl sitting behind places the thread in position, and the girl in front, by a clever manipulation, draws it through the heddle with a needle. Then comes the reeding, when the threads are drawn through the reeds, ready for the weaver. The many threads are wound evenly round a large roller, or reel, ready for weaving. On one end of each reel is marked the number of threads, length, name and width of fabric to be woven, weight of yarn and number of warping machine.

The weaving shed is a scene of great animation. There are 450 looms in it, driven by overhead shafts. The shed is divided into five sections or rooms, for convenience of reference, and each loom in a line has a given number, beginning with 100. Thus, in one line from east to west the looms may all belong to the number of 300, and the lines of looms from north to south have all the same lateral number- as 317, 417 517. A tenter has charge of each of the five sections or rooms in the weaving shed. It is a bright, pretty scene; the moving looms, the polished machinery, the pure light, which falls from above, the bright-faced girls busy about their work. But the din and clatter are deafening. The wonder is that all these girls retain their sense of hearing. One girl, in some cases, attends to as many as four looms. Cloth is woven from 30 to 108 inches in width. After the cloth is woven it is examined carefully to see if there are any defects in it or stains of oil, and marked as to where it was examined, number of loom, date, weight of cloth and examiner's initials. Then it is folded by machinery and taken into the wareroom or cloth receiving room.

One might be tempted to think that after all those processes, the tortured cotton had reached the end of its sufferings, and would forthwith be launched upon the world to benefit and bless it. But its day of tribulation is not yet over. From the weaving-mill the cotton is taken to the bleachwork, and there is passed through many different processes. First of all there is the singeing, which is a fearsome looking thing. Many miles of the cloth sewn together are passed over a red-hot cylinder, to singe off any roughness on its surface, and then dipped into a trough of water to extinguish any possible sparks. Then it is boiled in great pots or vats, preparatory to bleaching. These pots are 10 feet in depth. Then it is placed in a bath of chemicals called technically the chemic, and from that into the sour. Then the cloth is thoroughly rinsed and washed, squeezed, examined, blued, and dried. The cloth is then damped by machinery- a kind of circular brush arrangement- and beetled. The damping and beetling give the calico a beautiful gloss. The beetle is a series of wooden mallets which beats upon the cloth as it revolves round a cylinder. It is not unlike the mechanism of a carillon, but the result is very different. The beetles come down with a terrific noise. It is impossible to hear anyone speak in this department, shout as he may. The workers wear cotton in their ears for protection. Curiously enough, people who are almost deaf hear in the din of this room better than almost anywhere. This can be explained only by the vibration of the air striking so constantly upon the insensitive drum of the ear and rousing it to action. The cloth is then calendered and doubled and taken to the lapping department, where it is examined, assorted, and cut into lengths to suit its various destinations, and finally taken to another department and packed. An interesting room is that in which the finished sheets are hemmed ready for use. Pillow-cases are also made in the sewing-room. It is a bright, pretty place, well lighted, with flowers in the windows, and the familiar whirr of the sewing-machines striking upon the ear. The bleachwork and the manager's house are lighted by electricity. A water-wheel of moderate size and several engines supply the motive power of the works.

The precautions against fire in the cotton mill are upon the Grinnel sprinkler system. A tank at the top of a high tower supplies the water through overhead pipes to every room of the establishment. When the room reaches the temperature of 150 degrees it melts the solder at the mouth of the pipe. The water spouts out at a great pressure through a rose to a radius of ten feet, and also sets a bell ringing outside. In large rooms a sprinkler is placed for each ten feet of space. There has never been a disastrous fire in the mill, although only a short time ago there was a small fire, which might have spread indefinitely, had it not been promptly extinguished by the action of the sprinkler. Besides the employees proper of the mill and bleachwork, each of those places has a staff of engineers, joiners, blacksmiths, moulders, masons, tinsmiths, painters, and packing-case makers.

The head office of the firm of James Finlay & Co. is in Glasgow, and it is one of the three or four firms appearing in the first and latest Post Office Directories of that city. Conspicuous ability has all

along been characteristic of its members, from Kirkman Finlay- the founder-who was Lord Provost of Glasgow, and later, one of its Members in the Imperial Parliament. He was one of the great cotton lords of the West of Scotland and his monument fittingly stands near the Royal Infirmary. Sir John Muir, Bart., of Deanston, is the present head, and he too has been Lord Provost of Glasgow. One of the partners- A. M. Brown, Esq., of Gryffe Castle, Renfrewshire, gifted the sum of three thousand pounds to the village for the erection of a much needed Institute. A Public Library has been a feature of the village life for three-quarters of a century, and for fifty years James Finlay & Co. have housed, heated and lighted it for the nominal sum of five shillings yearly. There is also a capital Public Hall in the village, built by the trustees of the late John Wilson, baker, Catrine, who by his will left money for the purpose, and the poor are greatly helped by invested funds from the said John Wilson's estate, and from that of the late Elizabeth Murray, merchant, Catrine.

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Catrine Churches

Catrine is well supplied with churches: there are no less than four in the village. The parish church is built on the slope of the hill behind the village street, but instead of occupying a most prominent site as was doubtless anticipated, the houses shut it out almost entirely from view except in one or two places where there is a break in the line of street, and a path leads up the hill. It is rather a handsome edifice, recently crowned with a belfry in which a new bell was hung, a special memorial of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee. On the steep slope in front lies the village churchyard, with straggling tombstones. The situation is a fine one, but it is rather a neglected spot, with long, rank grass waving over many a nameless grave. The church itself is more than a hundred years old. It was built as a chapel-of-ease a few years after the cotton-mills were erected. The parish church of Sorn was too far off for the villagers of Catrine to attend regularly, and even had they gone, the accommodation was inadequate. In the year 1792 a subscription-list for building a chapel-of-ease was set a-going. Promises which amounted to a large sum were easily obtained, but when the time came to implement those promises it was a different matter and only the sum of £80 was subscribed. Mr. Alexander of Ballochmyle came to the rescue and advanced £750 on the security on the seat rents, but he did not receive a farthing of either principal or interest for many years.

The church building is 80 feet long by 522.1 wide over the walls. The galleries were not built at first but a projection was left in front for the stairs to the galleries when they should be added. The first minister, the Rev. Robert Steven, was ordained in 1792. The living was only £60 a year, without manse or glebe, and the young minister complained of its insufficiency. In 1829 the chapel was purchased from Claud Alexander, Esq., of Ballochmyle, for £400, by the feuars of Catrine, who by their feu-rights are bound to maintain a chapel in connection with the Establishment, as well as a churchyard. In 1840 the galleries were added to the church. Thirty-five years ago there was no wooden flooring, only a bar under each seat for the feet to rest on, and the whole place had an earthy smell. The roof was leaking very badly also, and some parishioners, perhaps as much for a protest as for any great need, sat in church while it rained, with their umbrellas above their heads. In 1871 Catrine was erected into a parish quoad sacra, and the church was endowed. In 1874 the church was thoroughly repaired and renovated, the old pulpit was done away with and a platform for the minister took its place, new seats of pitch pine took the place of the old, plain unvarnished pews, and an organ was introduced. The church has recently once more undergone extensive repairs and alterations- heating, lighting, painting, and timber ceiling. A belfry was built above the principal entrance, and the sweet, mellow-toned bell is heard through the silence of the Sunday mornings calling the people to worship; and family groups, with sedate step, climb the kirk-brae, or young people lightly clamber up the long flight of steps to the open kirk-door. On the bell is a Latin inscription of which the following is a translation:-" Claud Alexander, gilded knight, together with the congregation, dedicated this bell placed in Catrine Parish Church, to the greater glory of God. J. C. Wilson and Co., Glasgow, founded it, 1897. 'Oh men, I call to you, and my voice is to the sons of men.' " It was first rung by Master Wilfrid Alexander, grandson of Major-General Sir Claud and Lady Alexander. On the outside of the church, above the principal entrance, there was a man's face carved in stone; whom it was meant to represent no one knows- saint or martyr, or distinguished parishioner. But the village children had no difficulty with the matter, and successive generations of strong lunged bairns shouted the following lines at the stoney, immobile features :

Hosey, Hosey, peep, peep, peep,
Here's the man Wi' the cloven feet,
Here's his head but where's his feet?
Hosey, Hosey, peep, peep, peep

Many of Catrine's sons in far-off climes will be sorry to hear that "Hosey" has been now replaced by the Church of Scotland's Burning Bush.

When the cotton mills were built at Catrine they attracted a considerable working population at once, and although the general character of the people was of a high standard, it was not to be expected that so large a concourse, drawn from far and wide, should see eye to eye in all matters of church and state. Indeed, the diversity in point of religious worship displayed itself at once, and while some clung to the Established Church of the country, others thought little of walking many miles every Sunday to a church of the same dissenting denomination as that to which they had formerly belonged. Few people are so enthusiastic nowadays. Whether our views are more widely tolerant, or simply whether we are more indifferent, is a subject on which it is not safe to dogmatise lightly; but the fact remains. Old-fashioned people would not even sit under a minister for whom they had no personal liking, or who they thought was not quite sound in the faith, even if he belonged to the same denomination and was the only representative minister within miles. Within the last few years we saw an elderly woman, with a determined visage and kilned skirts, on a bitterly cold, snowy day, returning to one village from another to which she walked every Sunday to hear the minister of her choice while a church of the same denomination was within a few yards of her own dwelling! But what is the exception nowadays, was quite common two or three generations ago, and the dissenters of Catrine set out on Sunday mornings to Auchinleck, or Cumnock, or Mauchline. But old people and young children could not undertake such a journey, and in process of time the expediency of having churches nearer home occurred to many a one. A contingent set out for Mauchline every Sunday to the United Secession Church there, and as the number was considerable sixty or seventy years ago, the proposal to build a church in Catrine was often mooted. The United Secession minister of Mauchline, Mr. Walker, was an old man and nothing was done during his lifetime, but at his death, sixty years ago, thirty-three members of his church from Catrine were disjoined and formed the nucleus of a church in their own village. Then they proceeded to build, and soon an imposing edifice of red sandstone was erected at the turn of the Village Street on the road leading from Mauchline. For the time in which it was built it was really a handsome church, with tall, narrow, ecclesiastical windows and buttressed front, and from its position at the corner it was necessary to have it faced on three sides. Close by, a pretty manse was afterwards added. To this day there are few better country churches than that of Catrine U.P., and that fact is all the more creditable to its founders and architect, for the era to which it belongs is of the square, barnlike, two-rows-of-windows type. At first the exterior was the best of it, for the flooring was remarkable only for its absence, and a spar in front of each seat kept the feet of the worshippers from touching the bare ground. The pulpit was of the corkscrew description, with the precentor's desk directly under it. Now, needless to say, the church is floored; the seats are of varnished pine, the pulpit has given place to a modern platform, and an American organ is used in the church service. The precentor is not done away with, however, and he still sits in state beneath the minister, but now on a carved oak chair of a decidedly cathedral like aspect. Indeed, the chair was a gift, and a copy of an ancient cathedral chair, with the Latin mottoes carved upon the back:- "Sit laus deo:" "In pacem domine." The present minister, Rev. J. M. Copland, is the fourth minister of the church and has occupied its pulpit for the last thirty years. He is a man of note in the village, and his word has considerable power. He is a much-esteemed member of the Presbytery of Kilmarnock and Ayr, in which he has the honourable position of Presbytery clerk.

The Free Church and manse stand close beside those of the United Presbyterian. They are both far above the average country churches and manses, and form an exceedingly good commencement of a most picturesque village. The church was built in 1845, and the present minister is the Rev. Aeneas Gordon. The manse was erected in 1851.

There is another little church, built in one of the lanes leading up to the Established Church. It is a very small, red-brick erection, and belonged to the Evangelical Union (now the Congregational Union). The present minister is the Rev. James Hamilton.

The School Board of Catrine consists of seven members. There is a handsome school, with schoolhouse adjoining. The headmasters are thoroughly qualified (one of whom is also registrar), and there is an efficient staff of assistants. In these days there is no need of a school upheld by the Company.

There are few antiquities in or near Catrine. The name Catrine was not new when the village was built, but belonged to the land. It is said to have been derived from cateran, a robber, or sornor, or cattle-lifter- a name which speaks of the character of the inhabitants of the district, and gives a whole history in itself. In pre-Reformation days a chapel, dedicated to Saint Cuthbert, was built on the banks of the Ayr, on a piece of ground called St. Cuthbert's Holm to this day. The chapel belonged to the priory of Mauchline, which, in turn, belonged to the abbacy of Melrose. More than a hundred years ago several urns were found in St. Cuthbert's Holm, urns of a very rude description and full of calcined human bones. When the bones were exposed to the air they crumbled into dust. Probably they were the remains of a period prior to the introduction of Christianity while the practice of burning the dead was still in existence. Possibly the chapel of St. Cuthbert was built on a spot rendered sacred to the people by an earlier kind of worship. Many Christian churches were purposely erected on such places.

Dr Matthew Stewart, Professor of Mathematics in the University of Edinburgh, and of European fame for his high attainments in geometrical science, was a frequent visitor to Catrine. He was not a native of the place, but Catrine House belonged to him, and he paid many and protracted visits to his country residence. His son, Professor Dugald Stewart, succeeded to his father's property in Catrine and to his love of the spot. Burns experienced great kindness at their hands, and writes of them thus in " The Vision "

With deep-struck, reverential awe
The learned sire and son I saw,
To Nature's God and Nature's law
They gave their lore
This, all its source and end to draw,
That, to adore.

Burns frequently dined at Catrine House, and it was there he met and dined with Lord Daer. Burns wrote of the occasion

Sae far I've spraucheled up the brae,
I've dinnere'd wi' a lord.

Lieut.-Colonel Matthew Stewart, son of Professor Dugald Stewart, succeeded his father as heritor in the parish, and built a new house on his property in a very commanding situation, and laid off the grounds with much taste. The old house still remains, with the date 1682 over one of its doors. It is now used as a farmhouse, although still rather distinguished looking, with its many pointed roof and deep-set windows. The old dining room, in which Burns, democrat though he was, felt a thrill of exaltation in breaking bread with a real live member of the aristocracy, is still shown. It is not a very large room, but comfortable looking and well lighted. Burns in one of his songs again mentions Catrine:-

Catrine woods were yellow seen
The flowers decayed on Catrine lea.

List Of Ministers

The Rev. Robert Steven was ordained as Established minister in Catrine on 12th September 1792. He laboured till 1798, and was succeeded by a Mr Harley. From the leaving of Mr Harley in 1804, till 1815, there was no settled minister. In 1815 Rev. James Currie was unanimously elected and ordained. Rev. Wm. Hutcheson succeeded Mr Currie, and was ordained, 28th December 1836. Mr Hutcheson " went out " in 1843. The seceders kept possession of the chapel till interdicted, 19th February, 1844. For a time services were carried on by the assistant of Rev. John Rankine, Sorn. Rev. Wm. M'Robie was next ordained in 1851, and Rev. James Bell Biggar was ordained in 1855. In 1870 Catrine was erected a Quoad Sacra Parish, with Rev. Pearson M'Adam Muir, now minister of

Glasgow Cathedral (D.D., University, Glasgow), eminent as a preacher, and author of a Church History. At Catrine Dr. Muir was succeeded by Rev. Thomas Philip, M.A., who died 1876. The vacancy was filled by Rev. James Buchanan, B.Sc., translated to Eaglesham in 1881. The next minister was Rev. James Gilmour Baillie, who was ordained, 9th March, 1882, and died in 1893. Rev. Hugh Callan, M.A., was ordained, November, 1893. Mr Callan is author of several works, chiefly on travel,- a little handbook on "Jerusalem," "Through Europe on Foot and Wheel," and "From the Clyde to the Jordan."

The first minister of the Secession (now U.P.) Church was Rev. John Young, who was ordained in 1838 and left in 1843. He was succeeded in the same year by Rev. J. K. Millar, who left in 1846. In 1849 the Rev. Thomas Bowman was ordained, whose ministry continued till his removal in 1866. The present minister, Rev. James M. Copland, M.A., was ordained in 1857.

The first minister of the Free Church was Rev. J. M'Gowan, who was ordained in 1844 and died in 1874. He was succeeded by the present minister, Rev. E. Gordon, M.A., in 1875.

Catrine E.U. Church was one of the earliest formed of that denomination. Rev. R. Hunter was ordained in 1845 and left in 1857; Rev. J. Reid, ordained in 1858 and left in 1860; Rev. James Foote, ordained in 1863 and left in 1867; Rev. D. Greenhill, ordained in 1869 and left in 1874; Rev. J. Craig, ordained in 1875 and died in 1884; Rev. R. Russell, ordained in 1884 and left in 1891; and Rev. James Hamilton (the present minister), ordained in 1894.