

SKETCH

OF A

Quiet Buchan Parish

BY

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MINISTER OF NEW BYTH



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1899

AND

Dedicated

BY THE AUTHOR

TO

His Congregation

AND OTHER FRIENDS IN BUCHAN

WITH GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE

OF MUCH PEACE, AMITY, KINDLINESS, AND HAPPY LIFE

DURING A TEN YEARS' MINISTRY

AMONGST THEM.

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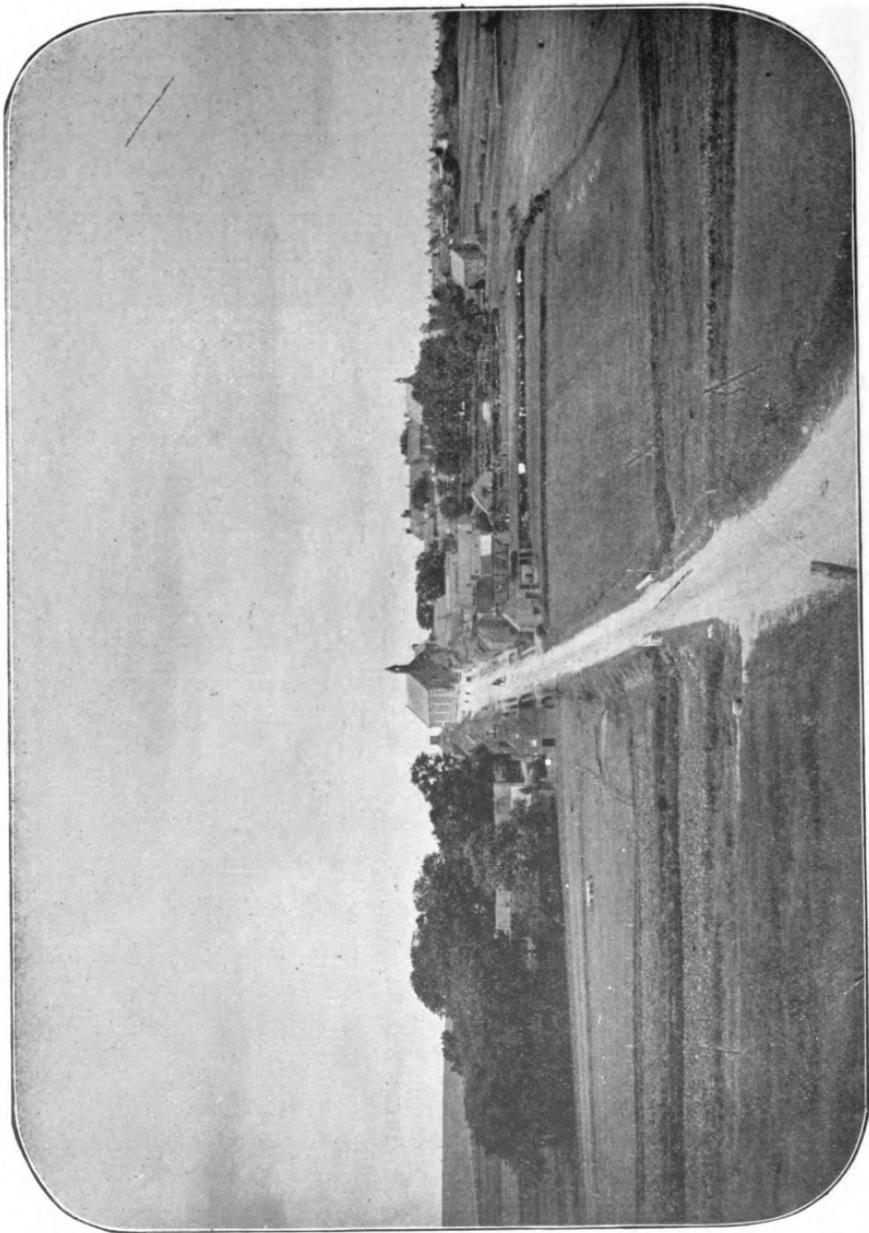
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I.

A Plea for Interest.



NEW BYTH, 1899.

A PLEA FOR INTEREST.



N "Pratt's Buchan"—a most interesting and exhaustive work in general,—the subject of our sketch receives this brief, graphic, and by no means enlivening notice, "the village of New Byth, built on the ridge of a hill in the vicinity of a bleak moss-bog, which supplies the villagers with fuel." (Edition 1870.)

No doubt when the new edition of this valuable work appears, there will be a more attractive picture given than that of a sombre village and a useful peat-bog; but as modesty is generally charming and presumption apt to provoke criticism, and as it would be presumptuous to be anything but modest after such a bald, dreary description, the best way is surely to

accept the commonplace, which, however, becomes interesting as we peer through the dull light and see our village and its surroundings as these appeared long years ago to the passing observer.

New Byth has certainly little to attract the antiquarian or to appeal to the general historian. No doubt there is that weird circle of stones on Auchnagorth suggesting Druidical times ; but we have no famous tokens of an interesting past like the "bloody-pots" of Gamrie, where the Danes got their deserts, no old church like theirs, garnished of old with the grinning skulls of Norse kings, no ancient castle ruin like that of "Kenidar," no once wide-known mineral waters like those of Peterhead, and later of Tarlair, no stream like the "Doveran"—our Idoch is only a tributary,—no wealth of wood like the Southern country ; and, as a consequence, we have little to tempt the ordinary observer to effort after romantic treatment. Robert Burns is said to have passed through our village. He did not linger here nor find

any known inspiration for his genius, having probably a previous prejudice in favour of banks and braes and bonny Doons. Dr Johnson and his Boswell certainly travelled this way in their famous tour, but these two geniuses were engaged in the fascinating speculation of stocking a Scottish University solely from the members of their London Club as they drove through the village in their post-chaise, and actually took no notice of the place. Byth House, built by a Deacon Forbes, is three centuries old, but cannot even claim a ghost to itself—the only ghost ever heard of being of modern production, benevolently manufactured, it is to be feared, by some kindly native to suit the wants of a curious visitor. Certainly there was a murder, or something very like it, over by the “black dams”—a pedlar with his wallet found in Maul’s Moss;—and the oldest house in Byth, where the present Post-Office stands, dating back to 1764, is said to have been the scene of a crime, where a woman poisoned her husband: but what are even such whispers of tragedy to the historic

interest of a battle-field? We accept the commonplace of the Buchan historian's verdict, without even taking refuge under the aphorism which speaks of the blessedness of having no history.

This more than century-old village, however, has a history and a charm of its own, even though these make no obtrusive claim on the world's notice. The bleak moss-bog near the village has receded before modern cultivation, but still the villagers find within a few miles the same kind of fuel that lighted up the hearths of a century ago. The peat itself we burn tells at least a two thousand year old tale in its fibres of branch inter-mixed. Quite simply it gives us a glimpse into the history of an old time when the country here was waving with oak and birch. The villagers find the trunks of such trees lying deep below the moss. A year or two ago antlered horns were dug up in the neighbourhood, suggesting a time when the elk found shelter in a Byth forest. The sand-stone of which the village is built lies in the stretch of

the "Old Red" which Hugh Miller found at Gamrie, and which he describes so graphically as let down like a key-stone to a lower tier when the great earth was riven with convulsion. Trees are lacking now, although the village has quite a number. Those at the foot of the Manse Garden, despite their fine proportions, were brought as saplings from Banff, and planted by the writer's revered old predecessor when he and they were young. Around Byth House there is, as there has been for long, a rich belt of wood, "beautiful as an oasis," according to Appendix in "Pratt's Buchan.;" but wood is not general. In the upper reaches of the parish, which Lord Rife—the grand-uncle of the present Duke—let out with kindly wisdom to needy tillers of the soil, much of the ground has been brought into cultivation; but still there are great stretches of heather to be seen, and the country, it must be admitted, appears bleak and bare to the onlooker.

Yes, but that is the mistake the onlooker makes, as a rule! He looks at the Hills of

Fishrie, *without going to the Hills of Fishrie to look.* O marvellous transformation! Here is a secret of the charm of Byth little recked of by supercilious onlookers. Why, the counties of Aberdeen and Banff actually appear in their best to charm our natives in their homely garb. It scarcely seems fair, but old Mother Nature is a generous dame and does not forget her less-favoured offspring. Here are we only a few hundred feet above sea level, and yet when the heavens are kind, they light up a great glorious stretch of country such as is rarely to be seen from such humble stand-point. Yonder, the hills of Caithness and the sea. Yonder is Mormond: there Lochnagar in the Aberdeenshire Highlands—a stretch of some sixty miles. Perhaps you may need old Francie Jamieson's telescope, but he will be quite willing to let you look through it. In any case the sight can be shown you from another part of the parish. Now, come a short distance to Upperbrae, and you will see quite a wonderful distance without any need of telescope. There is Bennachie,

•

mother-like, as her name implies, always ready to welcome the young rays of morning. There Culsalmond, there Foudland, then Tap o' Noth, Fourman Hill, Ben Rinnes, Balloch, Knock, Bin of Cullen, and Hill of Durn; all suggesting life—busy towns, quiet villages, or homely country life. There, is the smoke of a train between Portsoy and Tillynaught, which will not come much nearer to us as yet, the pride of that Railway being, as everybody knows, to be "little and good."

Do you see a huge stone down there, half-a-mile or so from you, at Mid Clachforbie? That is the "clach" which gives the district its name—doubtless a boulder left there in the ice-age.

But what a glorious stretch of country, with distant hills melting into the blue, and betimes enriched with golden cloud-drapery resting on the land!

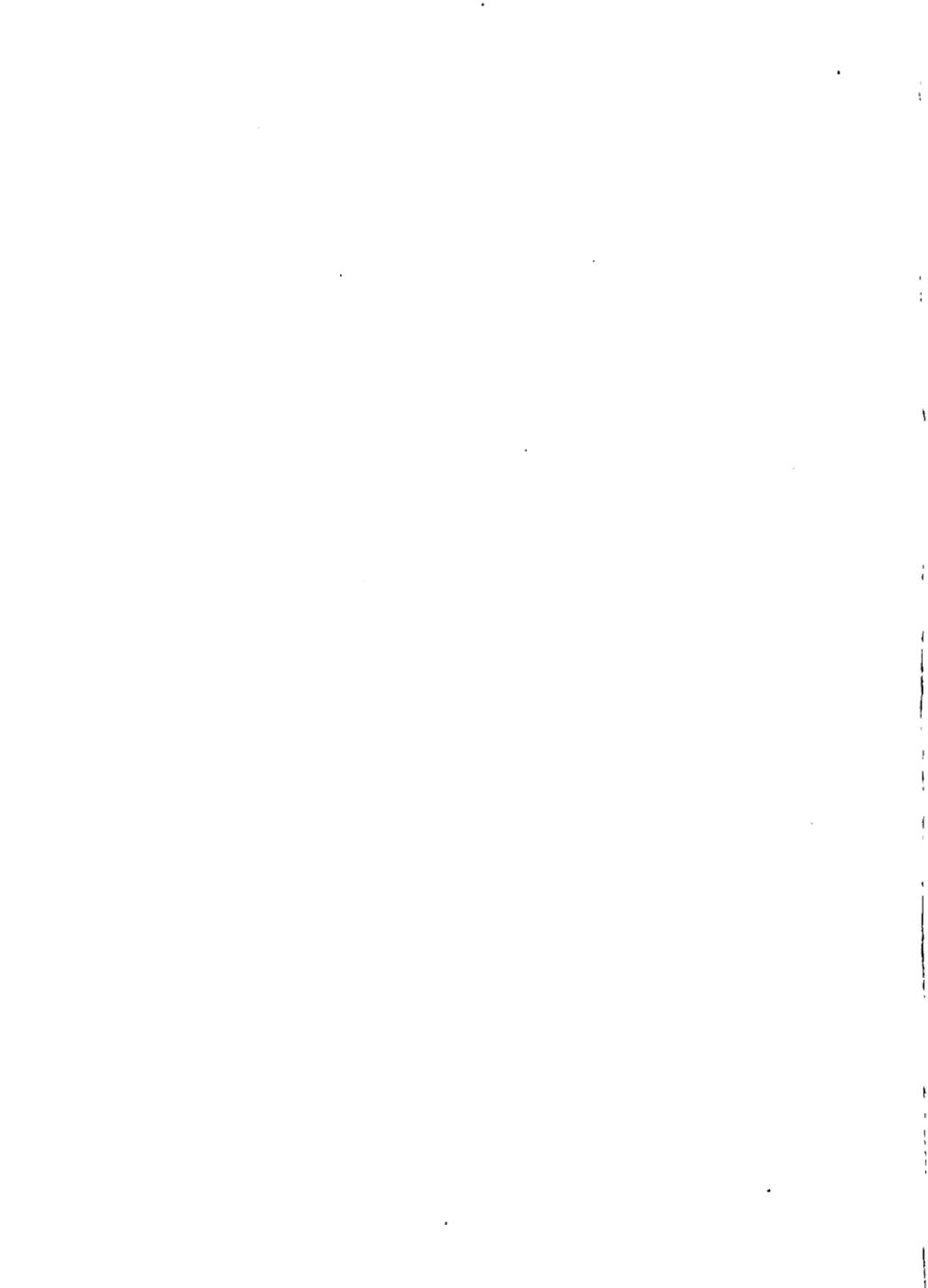
Nor is this all, although the writer almost trembles to think of his modest opening: but in all humility let it be said that the atmosphere of these hills on a fine summer day is a thing in

itself; and if Tennyson could describe the air of his favourite "Downs" as "worth sixpence a pint," then what of the air that comes fresh to us from the Moray Firth, or even from that Eastern coast where, as the afore-mentioned Boswell happily put it, "the neighbouring proprietor is the King of Denmark." They are the few who die young here.

With such claim to landscape and sky-scape, there is one important fact to be remembered, viz., that surroundings have invariably their influence on character. Highland mountains and glens, no doubt, tend to ghosts and mysteries; it is almost impossible to avoid the conclusion that circumstances have played their part in levelling out canny, Buchan broad-mindedness. One instance, dating back to the early life of the century, is typical of a prevailing spirit. "On the farm of Strathairy" [Strocherie?], says an old King-Edward record, "is a field called 'given ground,' which till lately (1794) it was thought sacrilege to break with spade or plough. It is now converted into a corn-field, *nor is any*

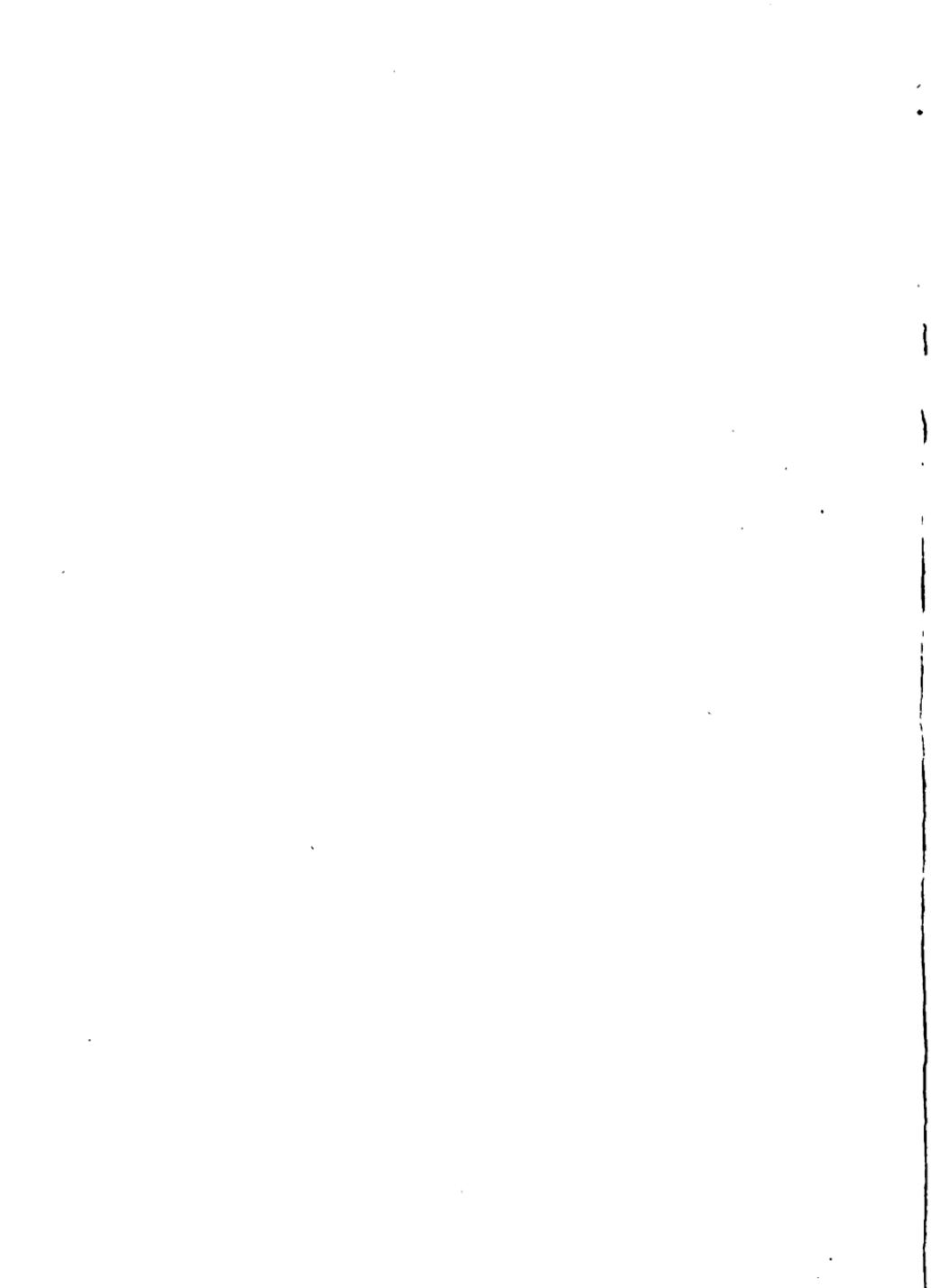
interruption given by the antient proprietors: this is mentioned as an instance among many others of the decline of superstition."

And this now leads us to a sketch of the life and circumstances of those who, a century ago, lived and died here near the bleak moss-bog that gave them fuel for their fires, and who had Scandinavian blood in their veins without perhaps suspecting it; for as the guttural of the Galilean betrayed Peter the disciple, so the old Norse reveals itself in the ordinary language of to-day on the lips of the inhabitants of this peaceful parish.



II.

A Century Ago.



A CENTURY AGO.



AN old record already referred to, probably written for the "Statistical Account," lightens up the early history of the parish of King-Edward, of which Byth formed a part.

Proprietors were few in those days, and the parish "was the property of Earl Fife, William Urquhart of Craigston, Adam Urquhart of Byth, Gordon of Iden, and John Russel and John Taylor, Balmaud," who, except Earl Fife and the proprietor of Iden, all resided in the parish.

On the Byth estate, we read, there were eighty-four acres of wood, consisting of various kinds of fir-trees, but chiefly Scotch fir. "Killing

storms" from the north, then as now, made the raising of trees a difficult matter—the outer belt being chiefly useful in sheltering a more prosperous inner.

The parish, as a whole, was accommodated with "two wauk-mills, two lint-mills, and ten for grinding corn." By arrangement, the heritors restricted each tenant to a certain mill, and received rent partly in victual.

New Byth was the only village in the parish, and began to be feued in 1764. At the beginning of the century it had 195 inhabitants, and enjoyed the advantage of a charity school. This school, by the way, was granted feu-duty free by the Laird of Byth. It was so overcrowded that another room had to be provided in the village. A John Urquhart was schoolmaster—the first of thirty-eight since then.

Turning to ecclesiastical matters, this ancient document has the following interesting item regarding Byth: "Distant from the Parish Church fully ten miles, a house formerly intended for a linen manufactory, and used as such, was last

year (1792) converted into a Chapel of Ease for the accommodation of the people." This was the beginning of the kirk's history—to be dealt with later. In 1793, the population of the parish, we read, was 1577, "of whom 60 are Secedars, 30 Non-Jurors, 15 Relief-Scedars, 8 Roman Catholics, and 4 Boreans." The Parish Kirk, while adding to the variety, presumably claimed the large majority remaining.

More interesting than the fine distinction between some of these sects is the state of the country at that time. In agriculture, black oats were giving place to white ; lime was being used on the land, and artificial grasses were being introduced. The live stock are enumerated, viz., 1792 black cattle, one-fourth of which were sold annually—a three-year-old bringing a price of £4. Of sheep there were 1334, and of horses 447. There is a quaint reference to the lack of hedges and dykes in those days—"The advantages of enclosure are better understood than experienced." Ploughing was accomplished in various ways—by oxen, by a pair of horses, and

even by two pairs of horses. The breed of horses was beginning to be improved, however, and fewer were being needed.

Oats, bere, and pease-meal, milk, potatoes, cabbages, and other vegetables, constituted the ordinary fare of the bulk of the people. Animal food seldom made an article of diet except on holidays. Tea was beginning to be known by the better class of farmers, and, says this old record, "instead of ale, with which our forefathers made merry, whisky-punch is now used at all social meetings." Alongside of this ingenuous statement should be placed the following—"The people are sober and industrious, submissive to the laws, and attached to their respective heritors. Though not in affluent circumstances, they all enjoy the necessaries, and some of them the comforts, of life, and are as well satisfied with their condition as can be expected." Most families, it is said, raised flax sufficient for their own use. The women were "principally employed in making linen and woollen cloth for family use and partly for sale,

spinning flax for thread and linen manufacturers, knitting stockings, and in the dairy." Peat, turf, and broom, formed the usual fuel for the hearth, but some even then were beginning to indulge in the luxury of English coals. The public roads, it may be noted, were made by statute labour, which the people, however, performed with reluctance, and often in a superficial manner. Such are a few of the leading facts culled from this interesting and apparently thoroughly reliable old document; and they give us what we want, viz., the setting of the life of that time. We see the natives of New Byth busy in their weaving-shops, working in the fields, or cutting peat for fuel. They had nine or ten miles to go to church, and the roads were bad. Carts, sometimes driven by oxen, but usually by horses, no doubt helped some on their way; but most would walk, and take near-cuts over the heather. A great idea, however, had now taken form in their minds, and their hearts were eager. It showed itself in turning that old weaving-shop into a kirk. The folks of Byth

actually aspired after a minister of their own. Their minister was coming, but not yet. They had to guarantee to support him, and they made laws for themselves. This is the first entry in the records of New Byth. It is their first "minute;" but we confine ourselves to extracts :

"We, the under subscribers, in consequence of several very full meetings of the people of New Byth and neighbourhood, respecting the establishment of a Chapel of Ease at New Byth, do heartily approve of and agree to every step taken thereanent, and by thir presents Bind and Oblige ourselves to give our aid and assistance in promoting and advancing a measure so laudable and useful to this part of the country, and that in the manner under-written :—

1st, We become bound to pay a proportion of ministers' stipend and other expenses annually suitable to our circumstances, provided there be any difficiency after the amount of the seat-rents, which are to be appropriated for that purpose, . . . and we further promise

to take seats in said Chapel at such a rate as shall be judged most proper. . . .

2nd. As there will be a house or manse wanted for the accommodation of a minister, together with office-houses, we oblige ourselves to contribute our proportion of the expenses. . . . Managers chosen by the people to forward and conduct the plan of the establishment, also to build, repair, fit out and erect or purchase such a tenement of houses . . . the managers only to have the application of the money. . . .

3rdly . . . if there be any difficiency we unanimously agree to bear an equal proportion of same. . . .

4thly. The foresaid managers are to continue in office during their residence in this corner, in consideration that they and the Elders are to become conjunctly bound. . . . But at the death or removal of any of these managers, their offices to be filled up by others at the nomination of the subscribers, and which successors are to relieve those who resign of all

obligation after their removal respecting this security, provided satisfaction be given concerning their former intromissions.

5thly. . . . All intimations to the congregation respecting such matters shall be made from the latren immediately after Divine Service.

6thly. Men in this place and neighbourhood of decent behaviour, twenty-one years of age and upwards are to have votes in the choice of a Pastor on the above terms. . . .

7thly. . . . the managers are obliged to show the subscribers annually at the setting of the seats a full statement of their proceedings for the year immediately past.

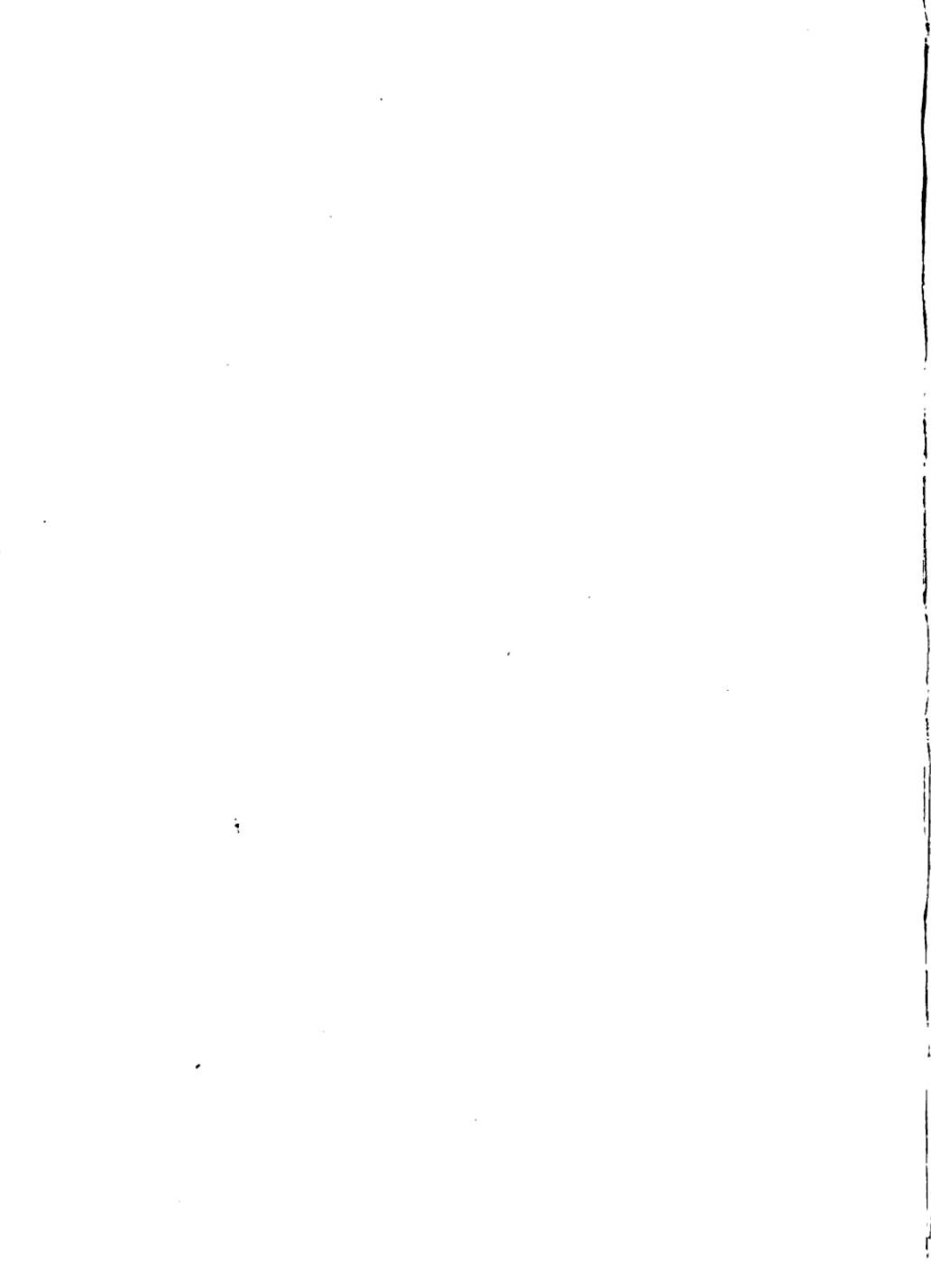
8thly. . . . All these terms and conditions we oblige ourselves to implement and fulfill as above, and agree to renew this obligation on stampt paper if found necessary at any after period, but we particularly declare that this security does not infer any burden or obligation on our heirs or successors. In witness whereof thir presents, wrote by John Urquhart, School-

master in New Byth, on this twentieth day of December seventeen hundred and ninety-two years, and subscribed as follows—the three preceding pages and the marginal notes on the second page being also subscribed by one of the managers and one of the other subscribers in case of imposition.”

Then follow the signatures.

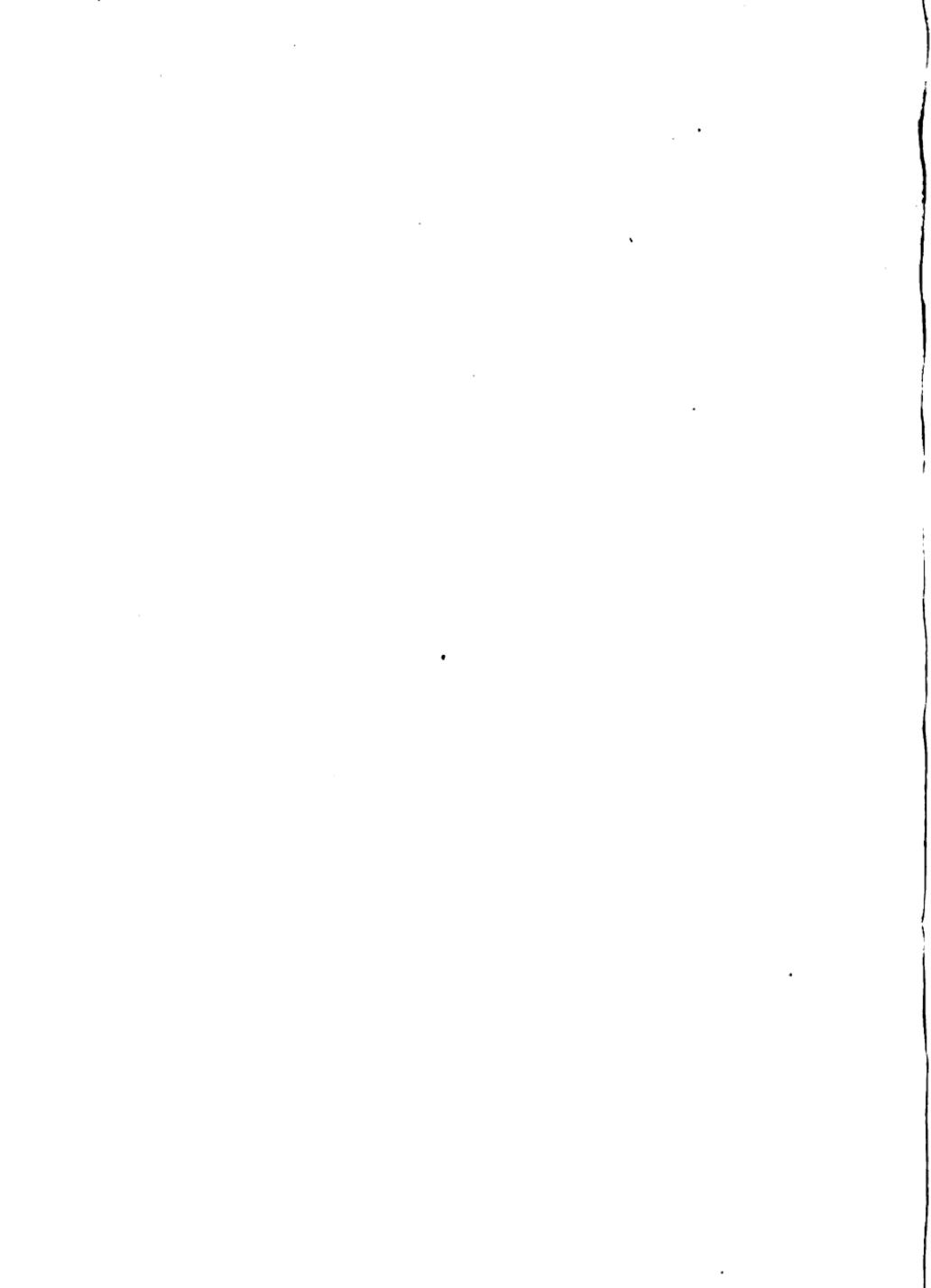
These extracts indicate sound practical sense, zeal, tempered by Scotch caution, but yet all enthusiastically signed by no less than one hundred and ten earnest men.

The signatures themselves are a study, evidently in some cases the beginning and end of literary effort, sometimes a shaky cross and a second attempt even at that ; here and there an exceptional business hand ; but, on the whole, they are good, honest, intelligent signatures testifying to a praiseworthy acquaintance with the pen—most of them no doubt telling of hands that were strong at spade or plough, but all suggesting godly earnest hearts hungering after holy things necessary for salvation.



III.

The Kirk.



THE KIRK.



THE history of the Church in New Byth begins practically on the 13th June 1792, when a deputation of the parishioners in the Byth end of the parish appeared before the Presbytery at Turriff craving them to establish a Chapel of Ease at New Byth. The deputation told, no doubt, that already they had purchased a weaver's shop for the purpose of turning it into a place of worship. They asked the Presbytery to grant their request, and to assist them in every way, and, moreover, to ask the Synod of Aberdeen to help them with collections in fitting up the house they had purchased into a place of worship. The Presbytery of Turriff cordially agreed to all their requests, and,

moreover, undertook that the members of the Presbytery should each take a Sunday service in Byth, so that expense might be saved the Byth people in employing probationers to preach to them.

What a happy omen, and what a fine illustration of true brotherliness on the part of the Turriff Presbytery in these early days! Happily that lamp has always been kept burning. That weaver's shop, it should be noticed, had a fine career. It graduated into a church with a steeple and bell. Broadside with its four windows to the street on the brae—two of these, however, in part, only apparently windows for aesthetic effect—it looked well. The writer has been told so by those who knew it. Two windows in each gable lighted the upper part. The pulpit was on the side next the brae, and the preacher saw three galleries round him, which with the area accommodated about 400 worshippers.

It is to be hoped, and indeed it may be taken for granted, that the ministers of the

Presbytery of Turriff, when they came to preach in Byth, had the best of all welcomes for their kindness—an eager and attentive congregation.

The year 1793, however, calls us.

In the year 1793 the Byth people found that their King-Edward minister Mr Duff, afterwards Dr Duff, had been working hard for them. He had opened communication with the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, and also with Adam Urquhart, Esquire, Laird of Byth. The result was that, in order that the Byth people might have a missionary minister to themselves, the S.P.C.K. agreed to pay £25 a year to his stipend on certain conditions. These conditions were that the Laird and the people bind themselves to provide other £25, and also a croft for the minister. A croft of $7\frac{1}{4}$ acres was marked off, sufficient, we read, to maintain one horse and two cows, the rent to be £5. There were a manse (in the old accounts there is a charge of 17s. 10d. for thatching it), a good barn, and other accommodation provided. The church and manse were situated close by

the street. The Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge claimed the right to elect the minister. They had a secretary, by name Dr Kemp, evidently a wise man, for the arrangement was made that the candidate should preach for two Sundays, and be elected if the people approved. Amongst the conditions the S.P.C.K. imposed were the following— If the minister failed to observe the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for one year, £3 were to be deducted from his salary. If he failed for three years, the whole £25 were to be withdrawn. The minister was likewise to visit from house to house, and to catechise, his diligence to be attested by the Presbytery before he should receive his salary. A district of King-Edward parish was assigned to his care, virtually the same as the present *quoad sacra* parish of New Byth.

We now come to the first minister of New Byth. His name was Mr James Rainy. He had been licensed by the Presbytery of Tain. He was ordained to New Byth on the 7th May

1794. It is noteworthy that the preacher on the occasion took as his text 1 Timothy vi. 11th, which is based on conclusions about vain doctrine generally, and on money specially being the root of all evil—"Flee these things and follow after righteousness," &c. With a possible salary of £50 a year, under very strict conditions, we can all readily understand the singular appropriateness of the text.

Mr Rainy seems to have laboured acceptably for a few years. His name disappears in 1799, five years after his ordination. An old minute of the managers speaks of his "removal." It says, "Since the removal of Mr Rainy." What that means it is difficult to know. The matter is rather a mystery. It is to be feared that his services had been dispensed with as inefficient. The next minister was ordained on the 5th March 1800. His name was Mr George Urquhart. He laboured in Byth till 27th August 1813, when he sent in his resignation. He was, therefore, thirteen years minister of New Byth. One can gather readily that he had been dissat-

isfied, and had quarrelled with the managers, for a minute of the Presbytery tells how he was exhorted by the Presbytery to settle things amicably with the managers. The fact is that the managers' accounts at that time show that they were getting more and more into debt. They even got the length of over £100 of debt. They could not pay the minister's salary when it was due, and had to take out a bill to clear their way and keep them going. Here and there amongst the old accounts are deductions, in one case even to the amount of 6s. 8d., on account of bad coppers in the collections, and one can only conclude that in these old days the people were so anxious to give that they preferred to give a bad copper than not give anything at all. The Rev. Mr Urquhart was not what is called "popular." He certainly could not make things pay, and there is little wonder that the managers found difficulty in paying him. The writer has been assured by an old elder who inherited the trustworthy tale, that the "difference" between the minister and the managers reached "a ter'l

height," so much so that when Mr Urquhart preached his farewell sermon, he opened the service with the 120th Psalm, no doubt giving out the second and final double verses with feeling :—

“ Woe's me that I in Mesech am
A sojourner so long ;
That I in tabernacles dwell
To Kedar that belong.
My soul with him that hateth peace,
Hath long a dweller been.
I am for peace ; but when I speak
For battle they are keen.”

At the same time it is easy to read that Mr Urquhart had good qualities and deserved much sympathy. The Presbytery on receiving his resignation accepted it, and “granted full liberty to the said Mr George Urquhart to accept any other charge or office wherever Providence may cast his lot.” The Presbytery likewise granted him his certificate, and out of sympathy for him, agreed to supply his pulpit for three months, so that he might draw his full salary. It is quite

safe to conclude that Mr Urquhart must have been a worthy man in many respects. Probably he was hard pushed for his living. He resigned on 27th August 1813. The Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge had evidently not been pleased, for they speak of his "unaccountable desertion."

The next minister was appointed on 27th November 1816, so that we have here three years of an interval in the ministry of New Byth. What was the cause of that? Well, it can be easily gathered. The people of New Byth were about £150 in debt, for which the managers were responsible. Instead of the S.P.C.K. appointing a minister, they wanted to choose one themselves, and the Presbytery backed them up in asking that a Mr James Chalmers, schoolmaster, New Pitsligo, should be appointed. The S.P.C.K., however, had now a new secretary — a Dr Campbell, evidently a rather imperious man—and they would hear of nothing else but the S.P.C.K. appointing the minister if they were to give their grant, and of

course they carried their point. They were willing, however, that the new minister should have £40 a year from them, provided the managers got out of debt and gave other £40. The managers did get out of debt in their own way. Over a score of them provided £5 a-piece on the chance of being gradually paid back from the collections. No wonder they wanted to pick a minister for themselves. The S.P.C.K., however, insisted on nominating a Mr Gilbert Brown. Some of the managers broke off in indignation, but, after meeting with Mr Gilbert Brown, and hearing him preach two Sabbaths, they all came back, and, moreover, signed the bond for getting clear of the debt.

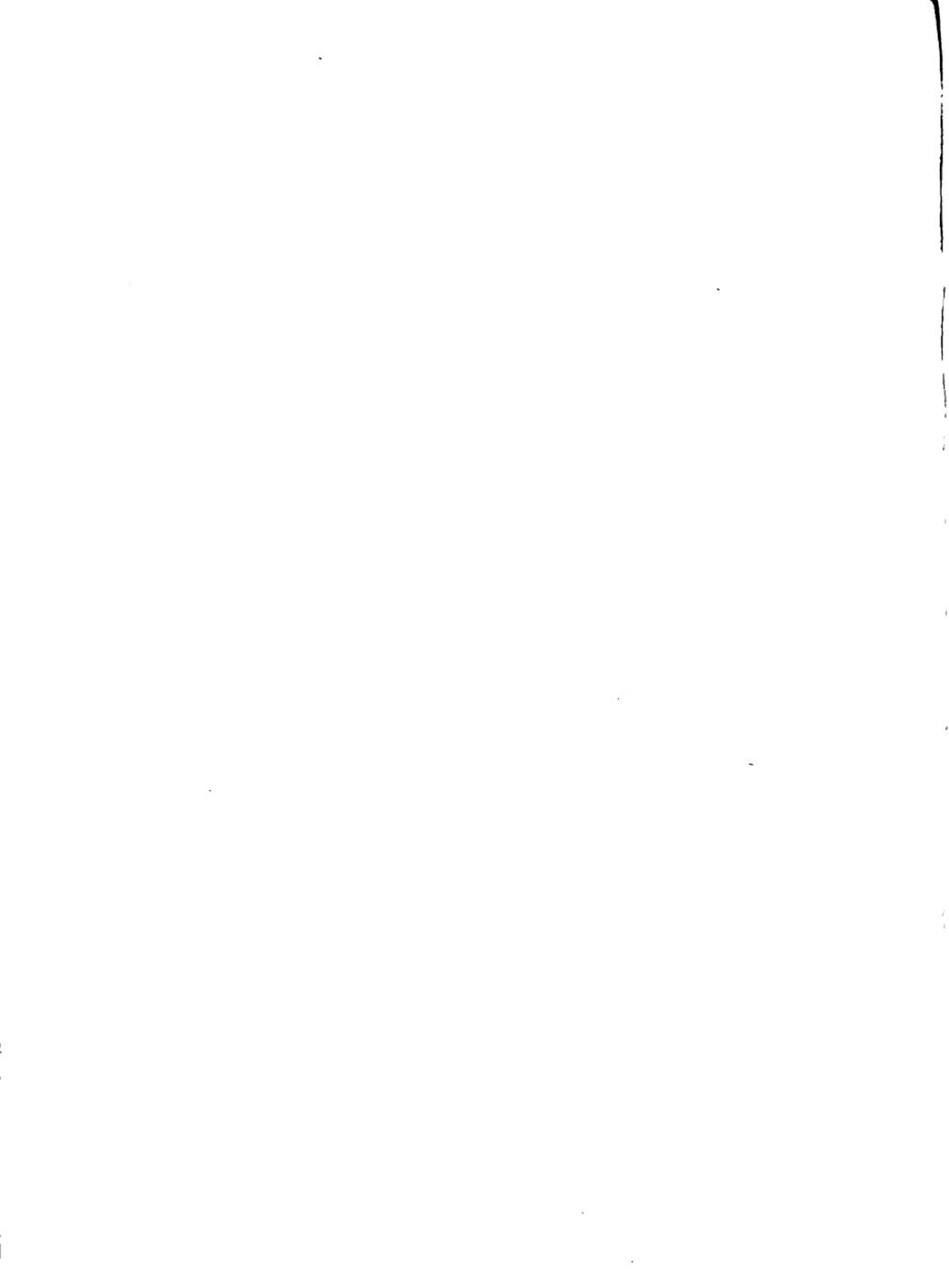
Mr Gilbert Brown was ordained on the 27th November 1816. It is pleasant reading the minutes of the managers from this point. Before this, it was always, "Upon investigating the church accounts the funds were found in a very backward state; besides the debt due, &c." Now, from Mr Brown's entry, we constantly read of debt being cleared off, and soon of

money being saved up, a balance always in the hands of the managers at their yearly meeting ; so much so that at last the managers cordially agreed to the proposed erection of a new Manse. It was in the year 1829 that the present Manse was erected. It cost originally, along with the outhouses, some £300. Who supplied the money ? The writer had difficulty in finding that out at first, and had come to the conclusion that the heritors must have done it, but no ! On searching more carefully amongst the old records, the fact emerged that it was the managers who supplied the money. They had over £70 in hand from the funds of the church. They borrowed £130 from a Friendly Society, which then existed in Byth, and they incurred more expense still. The debt was not finally cleared till 1845 ; that is, it took sixteen years to clear it off, but they did clear it off. The building of the present Manse in 1829 must, therefore, stand to the credit of the Rev. Gilbert Brown and the managers.

In the year 1843, there was the great Dis-

ruption, which issued in the founding of the "Free Church." The Rev. Mr Brown went out—left the Church of Scotland ; but the great bulk of his people, although they respected him, did not go. It was a sad time in the religious history of Scotland, that year of 1843.

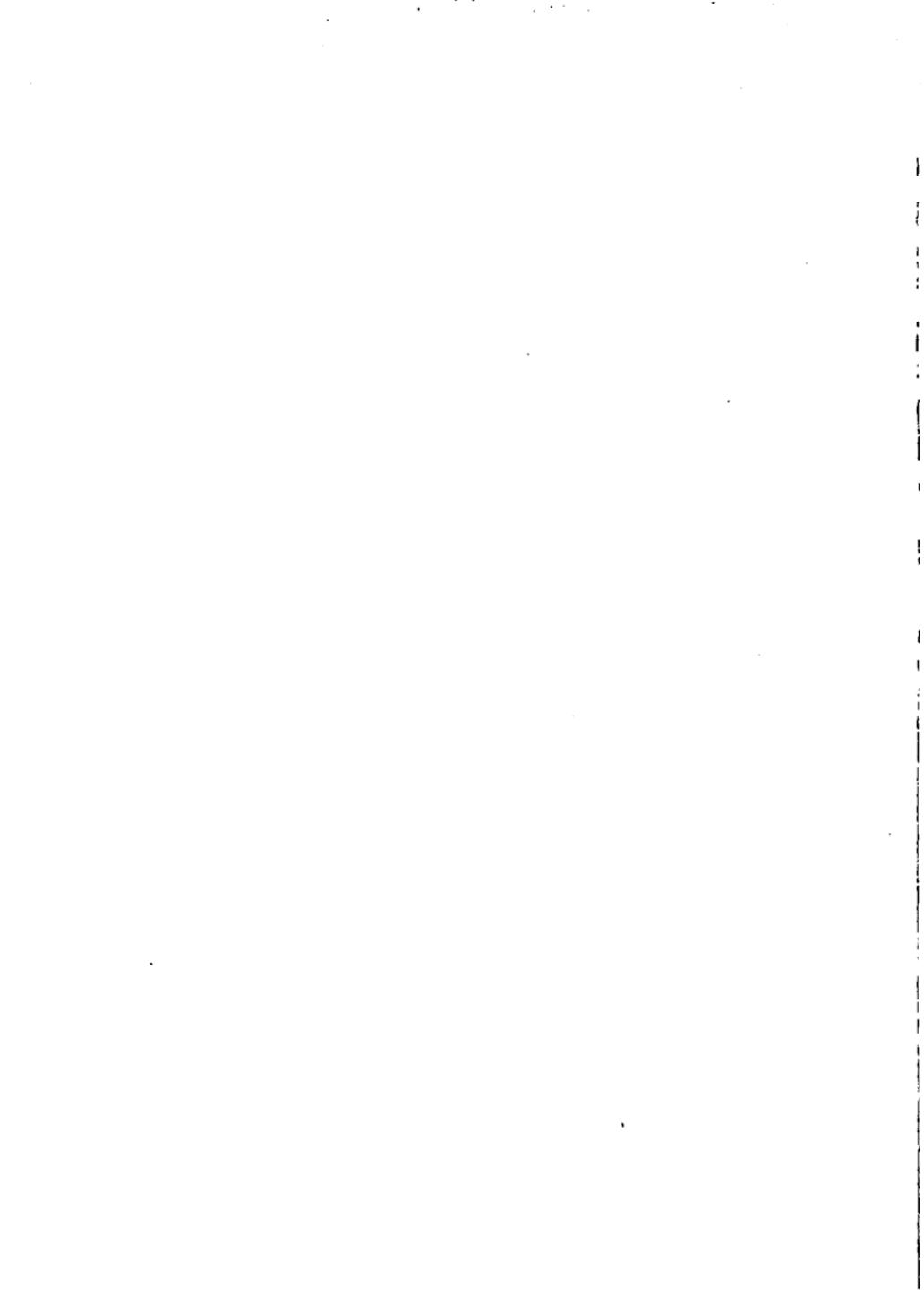
For the next three years we find the Presbytery standing loyally by the Byth people and helping them. Both the Presbytery and people wished a Mr George Strachan to come to be their minister. After long consideration, he declined the call.

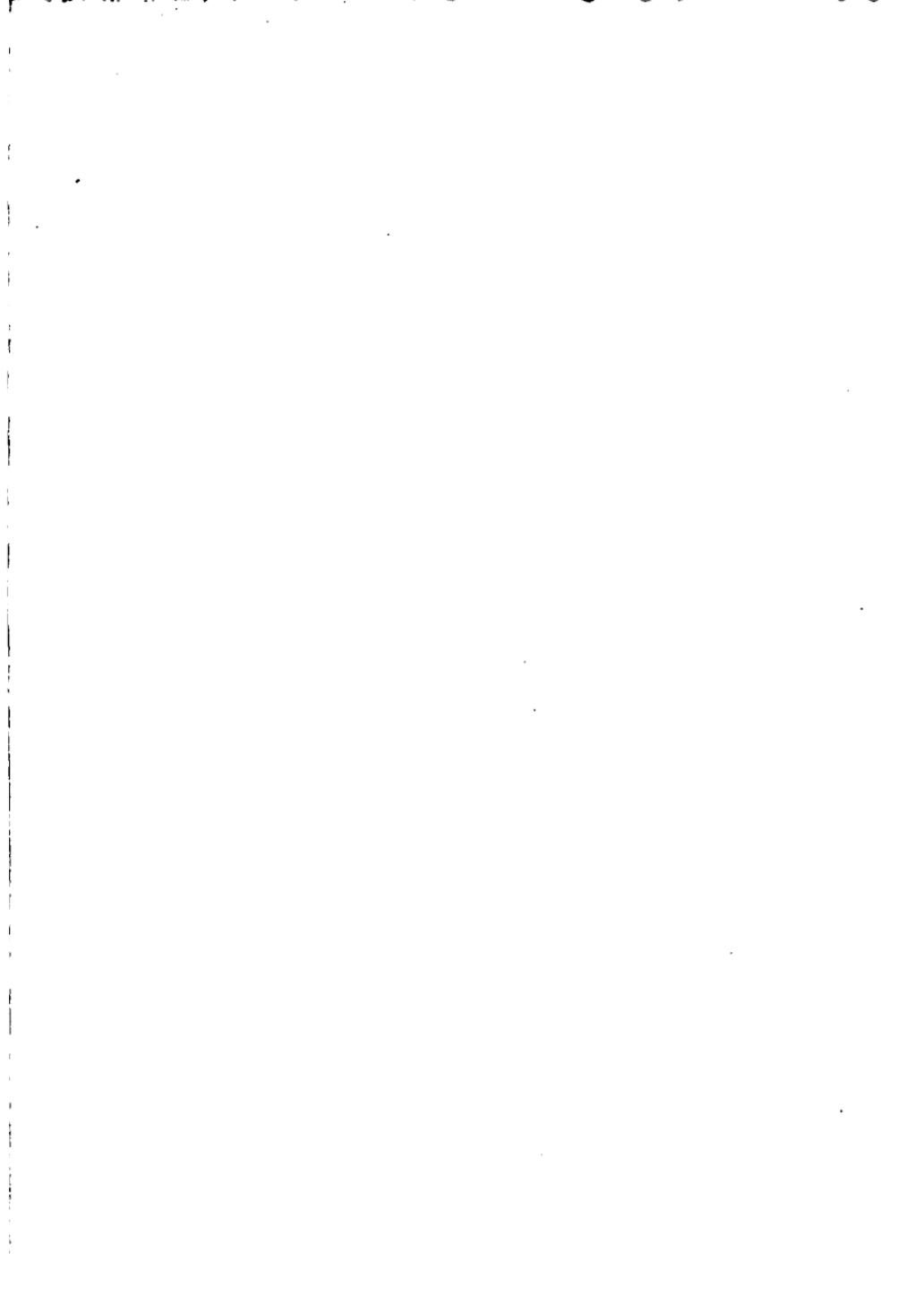


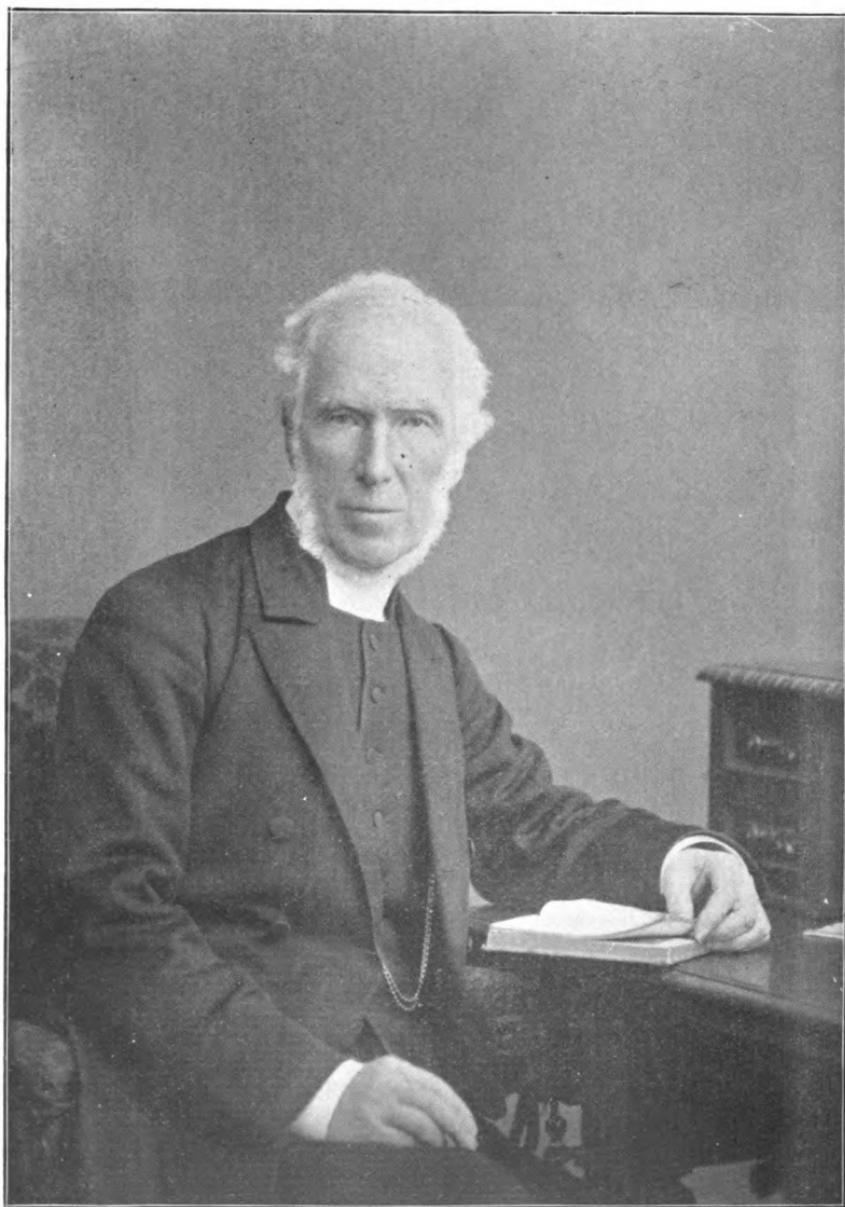
IV.

The Kirk (Continued).

THE REV. JOHN FALCONER, M.A.







THE LATE REV. JOHN FALCONER, M.A.

THE KIRK—*Continued.*

THE REV. JOHN FALCONER, M.A.



MEANTIME, a Mr John Falconer had come to supply pulpit-duty, and after seeing, hearing, and meeting with him, the people had only one wish, and that was that he should be their minister. There was no trouble this time, even with the S.P.C.K. The Rev. Mr Falconer was ordained to New Byth in 1846, and laboured here, with such acceptance, both in his ministerial and civil duties, that his life-history up to

his resignation in 1888—a period of forty-two years—is, to a very large extent, the leading history of the parish. Such a life surely demands more than a passing notice. Those whose privilege it was to know him, revered him and looked upon him as one of the very finest types of the Christian minister.

The Rev. John Falconer was born at Moyness, Nairn, in 1814. Sprung from a race of farmers, he, like many a farmer's son, turned his thoughts to the University, and in due time entered King's College, Aberdeen, where he graduated at the age of 20. He afterwards studied Divinity, and at the end of that course was appointed Murray Lecturer. Further University honour awaited him in his appointment to take the duties of the Chair of Mathematics for a session, during the absence of the Professor. It was, probably, when he was Tutor at Haddo House that he received, in 1846, the call to the ministry of Byth.

Our church here is a conspicuous monument to the memory of Mr Falconer, but he found his

first public work in connection with the erection of new school buildings. That was successfully accomplished at a cost of £776, with a grant in aid from the Government, and Mr Falconer's share in acquiring this great public boon is not a thing to be forgotten. Further important work, more intimately connected with his position as minister, awaited him.

One Communion Sunday, the old church was so over-crowded that the minister of King-Edward (the Rev. Mr Findlay) and Mr Cruickshank, the minister of Fyvie, who were assisting Mr Falconer, suggested the building of a new church, properly fitted to accommodate the worshippers. With such encouragement, Mr Falconer at once set himself to the great work. A vast amount of effort was required, but a day came on which the foundation-stone was to be laid.

That Twenty-second day of August 1851, when the foundation-stone was laid, was surely a great day in the history of our church here. The story is forty-seven years old now, and Mr

Falconer was then thirty-seven. The scene still lives. There is an interested crowd assembled—a Mr Thomas Philips to have the honour of laying the foundation-stone, but the principal part lay with the minister. An old record gives his very words:—"We are met together, my friends, to celebrate the commencement of the erection of a building which is designed for a most important purpose. The edifice, the ceremonial foundation-stone of which is about to be laid, is designed to be set apart for the service and honour of God, and to be subservient to the advancement of the interests of virtue and true religion. . . ."

The prayer with which Mr Falconer concluded his address to the people, directing their thoughts to the high God, is homely yet classic, tender and thoughtful, reverent and inspiring throughout, especially in such impassioned utterances as these:—

"We bless Thee, O Lord, that we are privileged to see commenced the erection of a

more commodious place of worship in this locality. Grant, gracious God, we beseech Thee, that within the walls of this edifice, the foundation-stone of which is about to be laid, and which is designed to be set apart for Thy service and honour, grant, we beseech Thee, that within its walls the sound of the Gospel may long be heard and may be effectual by the blessing of Thy Spirit for convincing and converting sinners, for affording comfort and consolation to the afflicted, for building up Thy saints on their most holy faith.

“O Thou Preserver of men, extend, we beseech Thee, Thy guardian care to the workmen whilst engaged in the erection of this edifice, so that no severe or fatal accident may befall any of them. . . .

“In this and in all our undertakings may we set Thee, the Lord, continually before us, persuaded that except Thou, the Lord, dost build the house, the builders will lose their pains. In Thee, O Lord, do we put our trust; in Thee is our hope. O may the beauty of Thee, the Lord

our God, be upon us, and do Thou establish the work of our hands upon us, yea, the work of our hands do Thou establish and prosper it. . . .”

The day's ceremony ended, the people would betake themselves homeward ; and no doubt on that night the earnest minister would pray anew for blessing on his people and on the new church that was to rise up from this foundation. And it rose up and a new generation is worshipping within its walls.

In 1851, the population of the village of New Byth was 402, while it was calculated that from the adjoining districts a population of 1294 was under the pastoral care of the minister at New Byth. The crofts of the Hills of Fishrie would afford a considerable number of these. To the kindly wisdom of James, Fourth Earl of Fife, these crofts owe their origin. About 1830, “it was considered in the interests of proprietors to add small crofts to large farms, and thus save the expense of building houses ; and the result was that many poor people were evicted from

their holdings, and had no home left them. Lord Fife had compassion on these poor people; and having large tracts of unoccupied land on his property, he gave them crofts on these." In the mass of correspondence carefully preserved by Mr Falconer, the writer finds prominent mention given to the "colony of hundreds" in the Hills of Fishrie, to whose spiritual wants the new church would minister. The same correspondence brings out very manful and persistent efforts on the part of people, managers, and minister. The church is seated for 550 worshippers, and cost £650. To that sum the district contributed £102 17s.; the Presbytery of Turriff, £97 7s. 10d.; and the Home Mission Committee, £200. The remaining debt—over £200—was cleared off in time. No doubt many friends outside the church assisted in accomplishing all this; but, none the less, the church here is one conspicuous monument to the faithful ministry of Mr Falconer. One would have thought that it was enough for a lifetime; but no! We come to the year 1867, when the

church, under Mr Falconer's ministry, was endowed, and a permanent stipend of £110 a year, together with the Manse, secured for the minister of New Byth. To accomplish this a sum of £2800 was required. The S.P.C.K., instead of granting £40 a year as they had hitherto been doing, capitalised the amount, and agreed to give £1000. The Endowment Committee granted another £1000, and the remaining £800 was raised locally and otherwise. Mr Falconer, in an old letter, assigns much of the credit of this to the ministers of King-Edward, Forglen, Fyvie, and Auchterless, but we all know how he and the people here did their part loyally. The Heritors of King-Edward, principally the Laird of Byth, Lord Fife, Sir Robert Abercromby of Forglen, Sir Henry Bridges of Bonnykelly, and J. C. Grant Duff, Esq. of Eden, it must also be said, contributed generously, both to the building of the Church, and to the Endowment Scheme.

It was thus that mainly through the instrumentality of Mr Falconer, parts of the civil parishes of King-Edward, New Deer, and

Aberdour were in 1868 erected into the *quoad sacra* parish of New Byth, and provided with all the requirements of a regular parish. And so up till 1888, when he retired, Mr Falconer continued to discharge the duties of a faithful and active ministry. Those who knew him loved him. His Christian character was transparent. He was a Nathanael. It was the writer's great privilege to learn to honour and cherish him, and to have from his own lips kind words as to their relationship, and at the last to see him in death with the same brave look of one who had lived life faithfully, and was ready when God's time came, to meet the call. Gentle, amiable, and kind, yet dignified and courtly, his life lent itself both to esteem and affection. He lies beside his beloved wife in the churchyard of King-Edward. There are two tokens in New Byth Church to their memory—one a chaste marble tablet in the wall of the church-porch which those who come to worship often glance at as they enter. It bears the following inscription:—

Erected
 by
 His congregation
 His relatives and friends
 in memory of
The REV. JOHN FALCONER, M.A.
 who died 13th May 1895, aged 81 years
 who for almost half a century was
 The faithful and much beloved
 Minister of New Byth
 A gentle, upright, manly Christian
 The Counsellor
 And friend of his people
 "He being dead yet speaketh"
 1895 A.D.

The other is inscribed on a silver plate on the Communion table, which the memorial fund likewise provided :—

Associated with his memorial tablet
 The memory of **ANNE MAY,**
 Wife of the Rev. John Falconer
 The worthy partner of his beautiful life,
 Who died 8th March 1882.

The present writer was ordained to the ministry of New Byth on 27th June 1889, and in the spirit

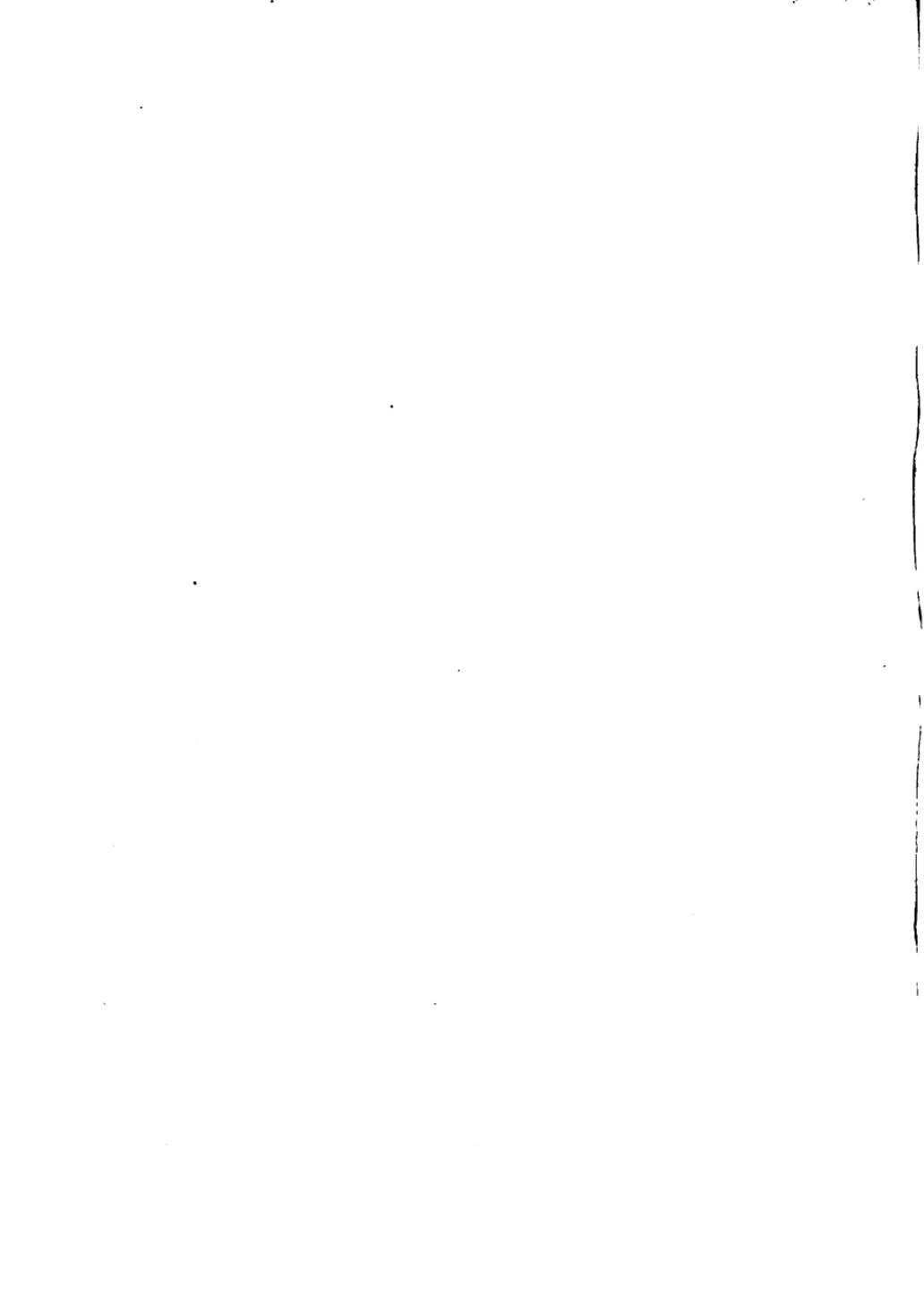
of the past, some further work for the Church has been done. By the kind assistance of generous friends, and by hearty enthusiastic work on the part of the people, the Church has, since that year, been heated and lighted, a vestry built, and the manse improved and considerably enlarged. To further strengthen the position of the Church and the ministry in New Byth is the work that lies immediately before us. The past of the Kirk here is surely an inspiration for the present and the future, and the people of New Byth have never yet been lacking in loyal support.

It may here be mentioned that since the year 1893 two bequests have been generously left for the poor of the parish—First, "The Trevelyan Bounty" (£500), bequeathed by Mrs Elizabeth Trevelyan of Tynholm, by settlement dated 7th February 1891. Mrs Trevelyan, sister-in-law to Sir George Trevelyan, famous both in politics and literature, was a native of New Byth, her maiden name being Elizabeth Mackie. Second, the "Moir and Lorimer

Fund" was, and is a joint bequest, first by Mrs Moir or Lorimer (£202), and later augmented to £589 6s. by the will of her husband, George Moir, some time of Banff and Turriff, who died at Detroit, Michigan, 5th March 1894. Mr Moir's father was at one time a blacksmith in New Byth. The Trevelyan Bounty is left for investment for the poor of the parish to the minister of New Byth. The Moir and Lorimer Fund, to the management of the minister and Kirk-Session, for behoof of the poor of the village. The yearly interest of these two bequests affords much needed and welcome assistance to the recipients.

v.

The House of Arqhart.



THE HOUSE OF URQUHART.



HIS sketch of New Byth would be incomplete without some reference to the name that for generations has been known and associated with the history of the parish, as that of its Superior or leading proprietor, more especially as recent times have witnessed, in circumstances of peculiar historic interest, the close of a chapter in the record of the ancient name, and the beginning of a new.

The House of Urquhart, as is well known here, represents three of the oldest families in Aberdeenshire—the Meldrums, the Setons, and the Urquharts. Dr Temple, of Forgue, a spe-

cialist in this department of research, refers in his well-known work, "The Thanage of Fermartyn," to the estate of Meldrum and its proprietor, then the second B. C. Urquhart, Esq. of Meldrum and Byth, in these words. . . .

"This property has been in the uninterrupted possession of the present family since at least 1236. Twice has this family terminated in an heiress, and a new name acquired: first when the heiress married a Seton and brought the property to that family, and secondly when the heiress terminating in a Seton brought it to the family of Urquhart, a name no less renowned in the history of the country." With the death of the late Major B. C. Urquhart of Meldrum and Byth, the last male heir in direct line, and the 26th Laird of Meldrum, the old name again changes, certainly into an equally honoured name, but with the pathos of the historical fact that thrice has this old family "terminated in an heiress and a new name acquired."

As this sketch essentially deals with the past rather than with the present, and as the family

name has now merged into that of another, an outline of the history of the House of Urquhart seems naturally to be called for, while it will be found to have some of the elements of the romance of Scottish history, and at the same time afford an added light and interest to the life and death of the last male heir of the Urquharts in direct line, our late gallant young Laird, who fell in brave death at the head of his men at the Battle of the Atbara, 8th April 1898.

The late Major Urquhart sprang from a race whose characteristics throughout centuries have revealed themselves frequently in the daring military spirit and the high intelligence which particularly distinguished his own character.

Taking first the family name Meldrum, we find a Sir William de Melgdrum taking part with Baliol, the rival of the Bruce. He died about 1306. The founder of the race had been knighted by Alexander II. Then a Sir Philip de Melgdrum is distinguished for gallant behaviour at the battle of Homildon Hill, and dies

fighting valiantly in defence of king and country at Durham in 1346. Then a William de Melgdrum appears as one of the hostages to England for the ransom of James I. of Scotland in 1431.

After him the family name changes to Seton—his daughter Elizabeth heiring him, and marrying William, a younger son of Sir Alexander Seton, Lord Gordon, and brother of Alexander, first Earl of Huntly. This William Seton was slain at the battle of Brechin in 1452. A more peaceful history follows. The last Seton of Meldrum dying without issue, left the estate to his niece, again an Elizabeth.

With this lady's marriage the family enters for the second time into a new name, Elizabeth marrying in 1610 John Urquhart of Craigston, commonly called the Tutor of Cromarty.

The antiquity of this new name Urquhart is very great, dating back three years earlier than that of the first of the Meldrums, viz., to 1233. In steady succession they appear from that date as the Urchards, and later the Urquharts of

Cromarty. A certain Thomas Urquhart is said to have lost seven sons at the battle of Pinkie in 1547. John Urquhart of Craigston was tutor to the direct heir of the Urquharts of Cromarty, his grand-nephew, the famous Sir Thomas Urquhart, but was himself "renowned all over Britain for his deep reach of natural art." His grand-nephew, Sir Thomas, is known as the eccentric genealogist who traced the lineage of the Urquharts back to Biblical times, but best known as the author of an ingenious book called "The Jewel," which was published in 1652. The Tutor of Cromarty, John Urquhart, died at his castle of Craigston in 1631, aged 84 years, and was buried within his own aisle in the old church of King-Edward.

Following the direct line of his successors, we find an Adam Urquhart of Meldrum who was a Lieutenant in the Horse Guards in the time of Charles II. His first and second sons, John and James, both inherit estates and found lines of succession: the first forming the Meldrum family of Urquharts, the second the Byth

family, but both to be united again in one line. To take the line of the first son, John, we find that a William of Meldrum succeeded in 1749, and also became representative of the Urquharts of Cromarty, finally to be succeeded by a James, who was served heir to the Meldrum estate in 1793, and also to the Byth estate in 1819. To take the line of the second son James, he was succeeded by a James served heir in 1731, and whose brother and sisters, viz., Captain Adam, Mary and Elizabeth, heired the Byth estate after him, leaving no issue. The Meldrum James of 1793 became also, on the death of Elizabeth, heir to Byth, so that the estates of Meldrum and Byth became united in the early part of this century, 1819. In the succession which fell to the Meldrum side, we find a George who married Bridget, only daughter of Beauchamp Colclough of Bohermore, county of Galway, a Lieutenant-Colonel in command of the 66th Regiment. Their son was the first of three of the name Beauchamp Colclough Urquhart. The second of the name was a lieu-

tenant in the Indian army, and well known up till his death in 1896 as our respected laird for many years. The third was the late Major Urquhart who was killed at the Atbara.

Without having followed out in detail the long genealogy of the House of Urquhart, it will be seen that the leading characteristics of this old family throughout a period of seven centuries have been singularly constant. In the last male heir of the ancient name, these revealed themselves in an exceptional degree. Mr Urquhart was born on the 20th July 1860. At an early age he quitted Meldrum House to study for the army. Making rapid progress, he in 1880, at the age of 20, joined the 79th or Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders. In 1882, he was sent with his regiment out to Egypt, and saw active service in the troubles there. He was present and took an honourable part with his regiment in the memorable battle of Tel-el-Kebir. In the following years, 1884-5-6, he saw further service. He was gazetted Captain in 1885. On his return to this country, regimental duty claimed

him, but a visit to his home at Meldrum in November 1888, when he was entertained to a complimentary dinner by the tenantry and other friends, alike served to bring out the kindly feeling which all who knew him had for his amiable and high character, and also revealed in him the effective speaker and the kindly young laird. A chaste "In Memoriam" volume, the thoughtful gift to each of the tenantry by his sister, Mrs Duff of Hatton, and prepared for private circulation, with loving care, will be cherished long as embodying these and many other incidents and tokens in his honoured career. After being aide-de-camp for a number of years to His Excellency the Earl of Aberdeen, Captain Urquhart returned home on the death of his father in 1896. In January 1897, he joined the Staff College, and remained there for a year, but on his regiment being ordered on active service to Egypt, he applied for leave and joined it immediately before the Battle of the Atbara. That battle is recent history. The news of the magnificent victory over the fierce,

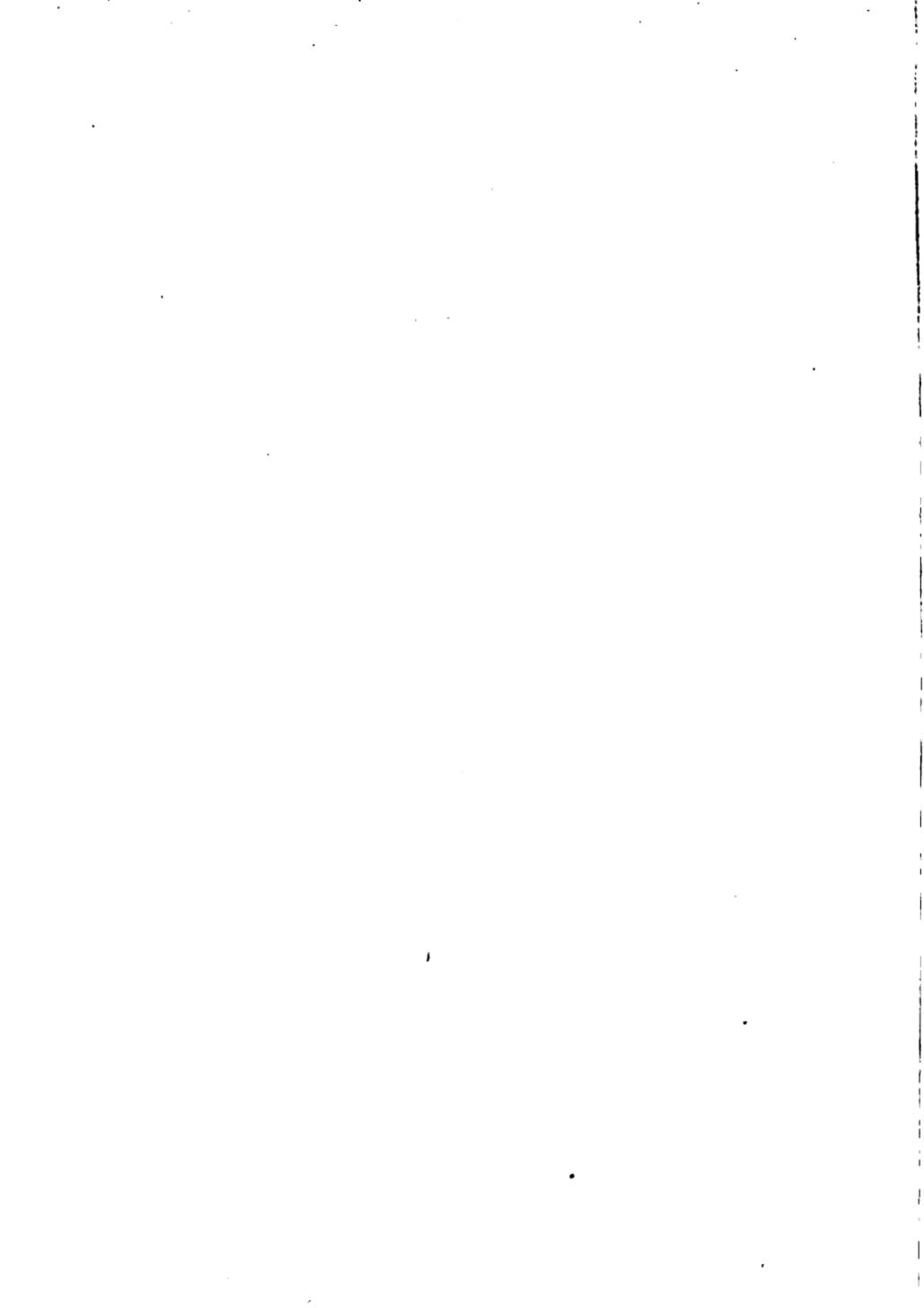
pitiless, and stubborn Dervishes was hailed throughout this country with general acclamation, but there were some in whose hearts the sense of triumph was mingled with sickening dismay. Still, it was a soldier's death, and the name, Major Urquhart, and the heroic nature of his death, rang round the world. Charging at the head of his men, in the fore-front of brave battle, with all the martial spirit of his race kindled within him, the fatal bullet found him. To his devoted men who lingered to help him, his lofty valour and utter self-forgetfulness revealed themselves in the ever memorable words, "Never mind me, lads! Go on!" History tells us how the spirit of the past here and there concentrates in one, reveals itself in genius or in supreme power of soul—here surely was such an one.

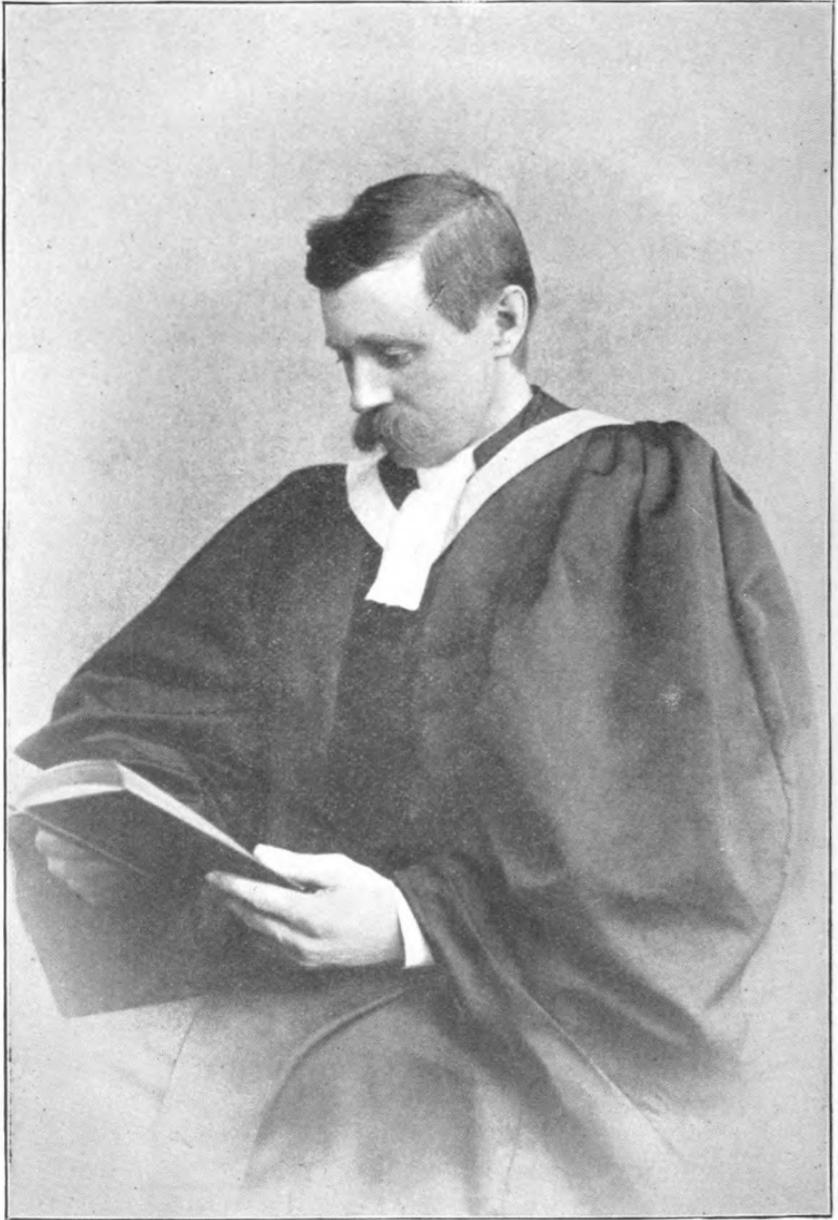
"Never mind me, lads! Go on!" Noble triumph of spirit over body—fine incarnation of British valour—"priceless legacy," not only to a family, but a nation; and yet withal entwined with memories of gifted, modest, beneficent

worth, and homely, affectionate, and manliest characteristics—pride of Northern hearts—acclaimed hero by a heroic nation! We lay on that lonely desert grave in the Soudan the tribute of our profound and respectful admiration.

VI.

Homely History.





REV. THOMAS M'WILLIAM, M.A., 1898.

(ORDAINED TO NEW BYTH. 1889.)

HOMELY HISTORY.



BYTH HOUSE was built in 1593 by a Deacon Forbes, and has the happy motto over an old portal, "Velcum Friendis." Around its entrance hall there is some extremely interesting old tapestry—two of the most striking representations being, in one case the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon, in the other a delineation of the famous incident recorded in the last chapter of the Book of Judges, when four hundred virgins of Jabesh Gilead were seized by the men of Israel, to be allotted afterwards to the depleted tribe of Benjamin. There is earlier notice than that of 1593 of the lands of Byth. In 1588, they

belonged to a George Baird of Auchmedden. The family of Forbes next inherited them ; but after some vicissitudes the property again came into possession of the Bairds, who, however, did not retain it long—a James Baird of Auchmedden in 1681 disposing it to a “ James Leslie of Byth, then designed of Chapeltowne ”—a John Leslie next in 1711 disposing it to a James Urquhart. There is, by the way, a Newbyth down in Haddington which in the Baird family perpetuates the old family connection with these parts. The James Urquhart who, after John Leslie, came into the Byth estate is the James first referred to as “ James of Byth.” He married Jean, daughter of Patrick Porterfield of Comiston, by whom he had a numerous issue, but only two sons and two daughters survived—I. James, II. Captain Adam, 1 Mary, 2 Elizabeth. All these inherited in turn the Byth estate. The old King-Edward record refers to the second James as coming into the management of the estate in 1731. By feuing and dividing it into small portions, he greatly in-

creased the value of it. He was generous as well—making a gift of the original schoolhouse, feu-duty free.

Tradition says: but in quoting tradition, the writer would take this opportunity of acknowledging much interesting information obtained from many of the old residenters, whose names he would like to mention. One name may be permitted, that of Mr Ebenezer Gibb, chemist, New Byth, who mingles the dispensing of his drugs, happily, with wide and varied information, and a kindly turn for old-world stories; and who readily placed his notes of the past at the writer's service.

We continue our narrative. Tradition says that the '45 so stirred the family blood in this second James Urquhart of Byth that he, along with a number of his men "rose" and marched to Meldrum to join his cousin, who, however, owing to an accident, was unable to proceed. Without his cousin's presence along with him in the dangerous enterprise, the Laird of Byth happily thought better of the matter, hastened home,

and was in time to avoid suspicion in high quarters. A servant told Mrs Mary Duncan of Upper Tillymauld that the Laird and his men had just passed the farm on their way homeward. "I would gie the best coo in my byre if I thocht that was true," said Mrs Mary; and happily it was true, although the good woman probably did not feel bound to part with her best cow. These were troublous times, when the nation was divided in sympathy as to the reigning House.

Captain Adam, who succeeded, is the Adam Urquhart who proved such a good friend to the people of New Byth when they founded their Church. Without his generous help, they would have found it much harder to succeed.

Of the sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, who survived their brothers, and lived to a good old age, it is said to this day that they did "a hantle o' gweed."

Of the first Beauchamp Colclough Urquhart, there is an interesting glimpse. It was the celebration of the coronation of William IV.

(1830). Proclamation of the new King was to be made at the Church door. The new Laird drove to it in his carriage. It was his first visit to the village, and the enthusiastic people unharnessed his horses, attached ropes, and dragged the carriage to the Church door. In doing so, they were "up to the knees in mud," it is said. The good Laird took note of the fact; and the street was put by him into such substantial condition that even the modern traction-engine, over-weighted as it is, has as yet failed to bring it to its original condition. Many other improvements on the house and on the estate were made by this Laird; but it is to be feared, with the lavish generosity that leaves a burden. The second Beauchamp Colclough Urquhart is a familiar name as well known as it is respected, and still cherished in kindly remembrance by many within this parish. With the mention that his family have ever been honoured and worthy of honour, we pause as we merge on the history of to-day.

In concluding this Sketch of Byth, the

writer does not consider it necessary to enlarge on modern Byth, with its finely-equipped schools throughout the parish, with its vanishing moss-bogs and improved methods of field culture ; or, on the village itself with its sanitary improvements, its water system in place of the old wells, and such like. Within recent years, a cemetery has been provided for the Byth end of King-Edward parish, and in time will have a history of its own. A new road to Cuminestown has done away with the difficulty of approach and egress by the Willan Brae. Moreover, the telegraph is assured by the Parish Council, and, unless the unexpected happen, will shortly be erected and in use. With the railway, as has been said, our village would compare favourably with many another in Aberdeenshire.

A few facts of general interest should here be noted. A Roman Catholic Chapel, once in the village, has many years ago been converted to ordinary use. The old Free Church, which the Rev. Mr Brown founded at the Disruption, has been replaced in recent years (1894) by a

handsome structure, which, although only a mission-station, and served by probationers whose term of office is limited to three years, ministers to the wants of our Free Church brethren, and in itself adds considerably to the amenity of the village.

Of earlier date is the Millseat Congregational Church at Crudie, known in its first days as "the Heather Kirk"—its roof being thatched with heather—but since re-built in great part, and now a comfortable church with an adjoining church hall lately added to it. Founded in 1830, it has experienced a ministry of four: first, the Rev. Mr Morrison; second, the Rev. Mr Saunders; third, the Rev. Mr Francis, now ministering in a charge in St Petersburg; and fourth, the Rev. William Murray, ordained to it in 1890.

The writer is glad to be able to claim many good friends and acquaintances in both churches, the spirit of narrow sectarianism being happily conspicuous by its absence in this parish, and the more Christian spirit of general

brotherhood prevailing as it surely ought to do in every parish. The population of the village, though composed no doubt more of aged, infirm, and poor folks than of the tradespeople of old days, is much the same that it was fifty years ago. The total population of the parish in 1891 was 1847, a decrease from the previous decade. The people are still like those of a hundred years ago, "sober and industrious, submissive to the laws, and attached to their respective heritors." And the further words of the old document apply now as much as ever, "though not in affluent circumstances, they all enjoy the necessaries, and some of them the comforts of life, and are as well satisfied with their condition as can be expected."

The Communion Roll numbers 630—greater than ever it was in the old days. The Church agencies might be spoken of, but the writer must pause at these.

It is the past that claims our thought. It is the past that has the glamour over it—the brave old days of a century ago, when the

weavers left their looms at night, and discussed with each other the possibility of having a church of their own, or truded over the long miles to the kirk or graveyard of old King-Edward, as their purpose might be.

And the quaint old humour of these days is like the heather of to-day to the bee, as the heather has always been. We see for instance that old woman who, a hundred years ago, had got a packet of a curious thing called "tea," and who waited anxiously for Sunday to see a friend who would be sure to be able to tell her. "Tell me," she said, "about this tea; for I have tried it as brose and it disna' sup weel, and I've tried it as kail, and that was waur."

And, O Shade of Barrie, with that charming tale, "The courtin' o' Tnowhead's Bell." Did the author come to Byth and get the idea, for it all happened in this way. William Leslie and his father were building a house for Tam Scott (everybody knows Tam Scott's knowe—his house would be near), and somebody came in about and said that Geordie Bell was awa' doon

the howe to busk (court) Annie Smith. "Gin I had somewhere to put her," said young William Leslie, "he sudna hae her." "Hoot awa, laddie," says the old man, "we're nae ill aff for hooses."

Off with the apron! On hot-foot, William! We all know that you ran and won, that Annie accepted you, and that you did not leave the house till you had arranged the marriage. But where did Geordie Bell go? "Out to have a look at the pig," says Mr Barrie.

The old kirk is said to have been more picturesque than the new. It had Gothic windows—two upper parts still to be seen in a neat croft on the hills. It was too small for Communion Sunday—that great day in the year. The Saturday preceding it was not without interest to the boys of the village, who all gathered to watch the lifting of the seats on the chance of pouncing on stray coppers. The gallery was approached by an outside stair, down the copings of which the boys used to slide with brave glee, till exasperated managers

at last put on copings never meant for boys to slide on.

And, moreover, did not the village folks turn out in winter and toboggan down the Willan Brae, when the peats could not be dug, and the looms might have a rest? There are still two looms working in Byth.

And were there not three famous markets in these days? *But what of these old stories about smuggling?* Honest! The folks were honest; but everybody knows that it requires a vast amount of education to have a conscience for a Corporation or a Government. Throughout broad Scotland in these days there were many curious tales of outwitting the gauger. Here, there were long journeys to Banff with pannikins that fitted closely to the body, and looked quite natural under an overcoat. Did not a floor in Byth give way the other day, and reveal an old tale—such a safe place for hiding the distilled stuff? Well, it is all past now, and well past. The lawful distillery itself is a storehouse now for grain, and the folks are as sober

and thrifty as in any village in Scotland. We are not inclined to judge hardly of the old race of Byth with their mental as well as their material "cruisies" in many things only for guidance. Whatever their failings, they had "the root of the matter" in them. With more opportunities and greater privileges, we have the more responsibility. We cast a kindly glance back on the past, and see a most worthy line of spiritual shepherds eager for the welfare of their flocks. We see honest, reverent faces listening to the word that saves, or bent in humble prayer, or, anon, lifting up the voice of praise, and we think of the union of the past with the present, of the living with the dead, and pray that we all may be united in that blessed communion unto life everlasting, which is promised to all those who, in their day and generation, faithfully seek to serve the Lord.

ADDENDUM.

SINCE writing the foregoing, a well-merited tribute of respect has been paid to our proprietrix, Mrs Duff, Hatton Castle, in the form of the presentation of a beautifully Illuminated Address, the text of which is added as being likely to be of interest not only to the numerous subscribers, but to many other friends.

PRESENTATION ADDRESS.

TO MRS DUFF, HATTON CASTLE.

Madam,

WE, the undersigned, representative of the tenants, feuars, and others on your estate of New Byth desire, one and all of us, to place on some permanent record such as this, we trust may be, our grateful thanks for your thoughtful and much appreciated kindness in presenting us individually with a chaste and beautiful copy of the book "In Memoriam" of the late Major Beauchamp Colclough Urquhart of the 79th or Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, your beloved brother, and our much respected and deeply lamented Laird.

In offering you this humble tribute of our respect, we would take this opportunity of recording our heart-felt admiration for the noble and high qualities of the late Major Urquhart's

character, which have not only endeared his memory in homely annals, but have won for him a name and a place in the temple of Fame, qualities in which fearless, heroic devotion to duty found full, perfect, and final expression at the moment of death at the Battle of the Atbara, in the ever-memorable words, "Never mind me, lads! Go on!"—words of inspiration and of world-wide influence, cherished nationally, a special heritage to us, and fit close to a too brief but noble and honoured career.

While eager with sincerest condolence to lighten by sharing your heart-wrung grief for his loss, we desire also to record respectfully our esteem and affection for your family, for yourself especially, whose early years spent here afford memories amongst us fragrant of all that is amiable and kind, for yourself as a constant friend even to the poorest amongst us, and cherished as such, for yourself as our proprietrix, wedded to one who, as a proprietor and county gentleman, occupies an altogether unique place in the general esteem, widely honoured alike for able and upright worth, and for yourself also as mother of sons who, under the blessing of God, will bring fresh honour to an honoured house.

FOR YOU AND YOURS we desire rich blessing and wealth of happiness in the years to come.

Signed on behalf of 115 tenants, feuars, and others herein
represented,

DAVID CASSIE, Oldest Farmer.

JAMES MELDRUM, Oldest Feuar.

THOMAS M'WILLIAM, Parish Minister.

NEW BYTH, 29th March 1899.