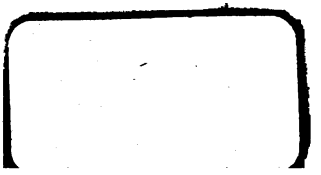


SHETLAND:

DESCRIPTIVE AND HISTORICAL;

AND

Topographical Description of that Country.

BY

ROBERT COWIE, M.A., M.D.

THIRD EDITION.

WITH MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

ABERDEEN:
LEWIS SMITH & SON, M'COMBIE'S COURT.
EDINBURGH AND GLASGOW:
JOHN MENZIES & CO.

1879.

ABERDEEN:
PRINTED BY G. & W. FRASER,
76 BROAD STREET.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

THIS edition of "SHETLAND AND ITS INHABITANTS" is intended to be a Complete Guide to the Tourist visiting these interesting Islands, and has been carefully revised and corrected to the present date.

The Medical Thesis and other information contained in the first part of the two former editions has not been republished in the present work, being considered unnecessary, and of little interest to the majority of readers.

ABERDEEN, *Nov.*, 1879.

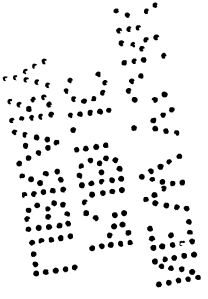


TABLE OF CONTENTS.

CHAPTER VI.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHAPTER IX.

CHAPTER X.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHAPTER XIX.

CHAPTER XX.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHAPTER XXII.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHAPTER XXV.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

CHAPTER XL.

CHAPTER XLI.

CHAPTER XLII.

SHETLAND AND ITS INHABITANTS.

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL ACCOUNT.

THE group of Islands constituting the County of Shetland or Zetland extends from lat. 59° 51′ to 60° 50′ north, and between long. 0° 40′ and 1° 50′ west. On their western coast they are washed by the Atlantic Ocean, and on the eastern by the North Sea; and they may thus be said to form, in their own latitude, a boundary line between these two seas. Shetland lies north-east from the extreme north of the mainland of Scotland, north-east from Orkney, south-east from Faroe, and west from Bergen, in Norway. The islands which constitute this, the most northerly county in Scotland, are upwards of a hundred in number, and vary by numerous and irregular gradations in size, from the Mainland, seventy-two miles in length and thirty at its greatest breadth, to various detached rocks, scarcely large enough to afford a temporary resting-place for a few seafowl. In shape they are very irregular; and being much intersected by *voes*, or arms of the sea, as well as separated from each other by different distances, appear to form the skeleton of a former country or continent. The extent of sea coast is thus immense, in proportion to the superficial area of the country,

which is estimated by Captain Thomas at 356,000 acres. So much is the land indented by these arms of the sea, that at no point is it possible to be farther from the sea than three miles. The general appearance of the country is hilly, but none of the hills rise to a great height. The coast line facing the ocean may be said to consist of a series of bold headlands and cliffs, the shores more gradually sloping towards the sea only where the placid water of voes and *sounds* renders them useful to man. The geological formation of the islands is primary, overlaid in many places along the east side by rocks of the transition period, which in their turn, in a few instances, are covered by, or give place to, some of the lower divisions of the secondary. The soil of the interior of most of the larger islands is made up almost entirely of deep beds of peat moss. Owing to the irregularity of the ground and the moist nature of the climate, the inland parts of the surface are studded with numerous fresh-water lakes, of all sizes, which send burns or small streams down through the ravines, by courses more or less circuitous, to the sea. By the action of small water-courses these large tracts of peat moss are frequently marked by deep clefts, which give the heath-clad interior a sombre and bleak aspect. As might be expected from its situation and geological formation, the Flora of Shetland is of what may be termed the Scandinavian type. The climate also gives the flora a western character, allying it with that of the Hebrides and the west of Scotland. The shores of these islands abound with algæ and marine fauna ; and seafowl of every wing nestle in their cliffs, and feed on their waters. Their seas teem with fish of every kind, which constitutes the great staple of the inhabitants. The land birds and quadrupeds are much the same as those of the north of Scotland. The climate, although rainy, is mild, equable, and very healthy, as I hope to be able to show.

If the inland landscapes are comparatively tame and monotonous, the rock scenery of the coast is always interesting, and often truly grand and magnificent. Here you have the lofty mural precipice rearing its mighty head a thousand feet above the angry waves, till it is capped with clouds; there the solitary islet rising precipitately out of the troubled waters, and pointing with sharp-peaked columns to the skies; now you behold a huge rock pierced by a triumphal arch, through which any Roman conqueror's galley could have passed; and anon the flat green isle, feeding on its fertile breast flocks of timid lambs; here, as far as the eye can reach, is to be seen the mighty iron-bound cliffs, whose stout buttresses bid defiance to the fiercest waves of the stormy Atlantic; and there, like a blue cloud on the verge of the horizon, is the lonely and lofty isle, which Agricola saw from the Orcadian shore when he exclaimed, "Despecta est et Thule." Here the rocky coast sends out a long arm to do battle with ocean on the day of his fiercest wrath, and there it is pierced by the cavern, through which you can penetrate into the very bowels of mother Earth. Ascend one of our everlasting hills, and you behold Oceanus again invading Terra with his long sea-arm, which meanders far into the land, between yon two ridges of hills. On the peaceful shore of this inland sea stand the humble cottages of the hardy fishermen, surrounded by fields of waving corn, flourishing even beneath this hyperborean sky. Perhaps you stand on the ruins of a watch-tower, whence the ancient Picts or Norsemen gave warning of the approach of their enemies. Look to the land, and you behold hills beyond hills, the brown sward of each dappled over with the small species of sheep peculiar to the country, or the better known Shetland pony, browsing on the coarse grass, or the more tender shoots of the young heather. Yonder runs the rippling rill, where the young child loves

to play. Look from the land, and there are the green isles or dark rocks, gently sleeping on the bosom of the deep blue sea. Its gentle waves are here and there speckled by the white sail of the fishermen, as they go to and from the scene of their labours and trials. Overhead is the summer's sun, pouring down his bright and cheering, but not scorching and enervating rays, to gladden all nature around. Sounds there are none, save the distant bleating of the sheep, the lowing of the cattle, the neighing of the ponies as they career through their native hills, or the cackling of the seagull; or if perchance, you walk along the strand after the breeze has given place to the calm, your ears aid you in fully appreciating the notable line of Homer, "*βη δ'ακεων παρα θινα πολυφλοισβοιο θαλασσης.*" Stand on the same hill on a stormy December day, and the scene is greatly changed. There are the wild waves tossing their white crested heads mountains high, and rushing on with the speed of a racehorse, till, dashing with the force of their mighty artillery against the lofty cliffs, they heave their white foam high into the air and far over the hills. Such a scene is conceived by the poet when he says, "And Thule bellows to her utmost isles." Woe to the hapless mariner who has such a coast for his lee-shore. Many an unfortunate bark has perished on these shores; and even the lighthouses now established have not put an end to the wrecks.

The population of Shetland, according to the census of 1871, was 31,605—18,525 females, and 13,080 males. This population occupies twenty-eight islands, several of the smaller islands containing only two, and one or two only one family. Several of these isles, the most of which are very fertile, were formerly inhabited, but have within the last few years been laid down to grazing farms, such as Mousa, Balta, Samphray, Bigga, Vemintry, Papa Little.

The islands are divided into thirty parishes, which constitute twelve unions of parishes or ministries. They are as follow :—

Ministries.	Parishes.
Unst.	Unst.
Fetlar.	Fetlar and North Yell.
Mid Yell.	Mid and South Yell.
Northmavine.	Northmavine.
Delting.	North and South Delting.
Walls.	Walls, Sandness, Papa, and Foula.
Sandsting.	Sandsting and Aithsting.
Tingwall.	Tingwall, Whiteness, and Weisdale.
Nesting.	Nesting, Lunnasting, Whalsay, and Skerries.
Lerwick.	Lerwick and Gulberwick.
Bressay.	Bressay, Burra, and Quarff.
Dunrossness.	Dunrossness, Sandwick, Coningsburgh, and Fair Isle.

The following is a list of the Islands. Those in the first column are by far the most important, and are arranged as nearly as possible according to size. The rest are arranged according to situation, beginning at the north on each side of the country. Those marked (*b*) are about the same size, and may be classed next to those last mentioned in the first column. Those uninhabited are enclosed within brackets thus ( ); and those forming groups are classed together thus {.

	On East Side.	On West Side.
1 Mainland.	(Balta) (*b*).	(Eagelshay).
Yell.	(Hunie).	30 { (Papa Little).
Unst.	15 Uyea (*b*).	{ (Linga).
Fetlar.	(Haaf Grunie)	(Vemintry) (*b*).
5 Bressay.	(Sound Grunie).	Vaila (*b*).
Whalsay.	(Linga).	35 (North Havera).
Fair Isle.	(Uri Linga).	{ (Hoy).
Foula.	20 (Hascussay) (*b*).	{ (Flotta).
Muckle Roe.	(Bigga).	{ (Gruna).

	On East Side.	On West Side.
10 Burra Isles (2).	(Samphray).	Hildesay.
Papa Stour.	(Brother Isle).	Linga.
	Little Roe).	(Langa).
	25 (Linga), opposite Whalsay.	Oxna.
	Skerries (*b*).	Papa.
	Noss (*b*).	Trondra (*b*).
	(Mousa) (*b*).	Havera (great).
		45 Havera (little).
		(St. Ninians).
		47 (Colsay).

And about fifty very small isles or holms.

CHAPTER I.

FAIR ISLE.

Naval Action—Shipwreck of an Admiral of Spanish Armada—His return to Spain, &c.—Fishings, &c.—Fair Isle skiffs—Beacons in ancient times—Earls Paul and Ronald—Parochial statistics.

THE voyager in the North Seas, having passed the Orcades, naturally falls into the sombre mood of the poet, who describes the land whence he is bound as "the naked, melancholy isles of farthest Thule." Fair Isle, the first island of the archipelago, rather serves to maintain those sentiments of gloom and solicitude; for, although there are spots in it, which, basking in the summer sun, look blythe and bonnie enough, yet its very name is associated with storm and shipwreck and desolation. Off its shores was fought, in 1703, a naval action between the French and the Dutch. The former mustered six ships of war, and the latter four. Victory declared itself for the stronger fleet. The Dutch admiral's ship was sunk, and the remaining three contrived to escape.

But the Fair Isle is associated with an event of far greater national importance. It was here Admiral Juan Gomez di Medina, after the "Invincible" Armada had been dispersed by the combined artillery of the skies and the English fleet, was wrecked in 1588, when endeavouring to return to Spain, by sailing round the west of the British Isles. Their galleon was driven into a creek on the east side of the island, and Juan Gomez, with two hundred men, effected a landing in the boats with considerable difficulty. During his stay in Fair Isle, the Spanish commander behaved most

chivalrously, and ordered his men to pay handsomely for all the provisions they required from the natives. But the Spaniards tarried too long at the scene of their shipwreck, apparently from apprehensions lest they should not be well received in Shetland, which was under the sway of the Protestant King of Scotland, who stood in the most friendly relations to Queen Elizabeth. The dastardly way in which the barbarous Fair Islanders requited the generosity of their distinguished visitor, when his men began to suffer from famine, is illustrative of the low state of morals at that period. All the meagre stock of provisions failing, famine raged, and it became necessary, at whatever hazard, the Spaniards should leave the Isle. A boat was, therefore, despatched to Andrew Umphray, of Berrie, who is said at that time to have farmed the Fair Isle, requesting his speedy assistance. This gentleman forthwith despatched a vessel, which soon carried the foreigners away from the scene of their sufferings. Attired in the splendid costume of a Spanish nobleman of that period, the admiral landed at Quendale, where he was hospitably received by Malcolm Sinclair, laird of the place. In order to ascertain if his haughty mien and gorgeous dress had sufficiently impressed the simple islanders amongst whom he was thrown, the vain Spaniard is said to have caused the interpreter to inquire if his new host had ever seen a person of his rank before? Whereupon the sturdy Scottish Protestant replied, "Farcie in that face;* I have seen many prettier men hanging on the Borough Muir."† Juan Gomez di Medina is said to have remained for some time the guest of Malcolm Sinclair, while his followers encamped in the neighbourhood of Quendale. Meantime Andrew Umphray was preparing a vessel, which conveyed the

* *Farcie* in Scotch signifies unrighteous.

† The Borough Muir was the ancient place of execution in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh.

party safely to Dunkirk, in France, calling, however, at Anstruther, in Fifeshire, on its way southwards.

James Melville (nephew of the more celebrated Andrew Melville) was, at that time, minister of Anstruther. In his well-known Diary he gives a very interesting account of the arrival of the Spanish admiral, and his shipwrecked officers and crew, at that port. Juan Gomez he describes as "a very reverend man, of big stature, and grave and stout countenance, grey-haired, and very humble-like, who,"—at this interview with Melville—"after much and very low courtesy, bowing down with his face near the ground, and touching my shoe with his hand, began his harangue in the Spanish tongue." His demeanour at Anstruther was certainly very different from that which he is said to have displayed at Quendale. The respective distances of the two places from the seat of government may be sufficient to account for such a marked change.

It has for a very long period been almost universally affirmed that the Spanish commander shipwrecked on the Fair Isle was no less a personage than the Duke of Medina Sidonia, commander-in-chief of the whole Armada. But there is abundant documentary evidence, both in the British Museum and elsewhere, to show that this is a mistake. The name of the commander-in-chief was Alfonso Perez de Guzman, Duke of Medina Sidonia, that of the officer wrecked on the Fair Isle, Juan Gomez di Medina, admiral of a divison numbering about twenty ships. The Duke's ship was the *Santa Trinidada;* that of Gomez the *Gran Grifon.*

The family of Andrew Umphray has ever since been represented amongst the Shetland gentry; and his worthy namesake is proprietor of Reawick at the present day.

Fair Isle, which lies about midway between Orkney and Shetland, being about twenty-five miles distant from the nearest point of each archipelago, is about two miles in length, and one in breadth. The island

is chiefly valuable as a fishing station. It is formed of sandstone, through a precipice of which rock runs a vein of copper. It has a small harbour in the south end, and another in the north, the latter being by far the most secure. The fish caught in greatest abundance is the saith or coal-fish, which frequents the tideways around the island. Their capture is conducted by hand-lines, from light and narrow skiffs, each carrying three men. Nothing is more astonishing to the stranger than the dexterity with which the natives handle their canoe-like skiffs, as they dash through the tempestuous sea surrounding their rock-girt home. Each wave seems destined to swallow her up, but after bending in the yielding boards, it recedes, leaving the gallant little bark to speed on its way. In such craft, the daring islanders frequently follow ships for many miles over the sea, for purposes of barter. Eggs, fish, milk, hosiery, and other products of the island, are exchanged for groceries and spirits, to the mutual accommodation of both parties. In the halcyon days of the contraband trade, no doubt many a valuable cargo was landed on the Fair Isle. Again, in times much more remote, its position rendered it most important as a signalling station. A beacon kindled on one of its heights, and speedily followed by answering fires on every ward hill, soon told the Scandinavians of Shetland on the north, and those of Orkney on the south, that a fleet of hostile longships was approaching their shores.

In the dark days of the twelfth century, when Earl Paul held sway in Orkney and Zetland, his rival, Earl Ronald, was bold enough to invade his dominions. His formidable fleet was seen from the Fair Isle. Eric, the signalman, hastened to kindle his warning beacon; but the faggots had been deluged with water, by a treacherous assistant. No watchfire therefore illuminated the dark peaks of Fair Isle; and Earl Ronald was not again observed till he landed in Westray, Orkney; soon after which he succeeded in wresting the islands

from his rival. Thus it would appear signal fires were not always to be depended upon, nor were watchmen above corruption.

The famed Fair Isle hosiery need not here be referred to. The island affords very good pasturage, but frequently the crops have been destroyed by sea blasts. The population in 1861 was 380; but, in 1863, after a season of great destitution, upwards of one hundred of the islanders emigrated to America. In 1871 the Fair Isle contained 226 inhabitants. A day school, as well as public worship on the Sabbath, were long conducted by a teacher employed by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, but recently an ordained missionary has been appointed to fulfil this double function, by the Church of Scotland. In 1700, the island was united parochially to the ministry of Dunrossness. In 1794, Fair Isle, Foula, and Skerries were united, and a clergyman appointed to that scattered ministry. The arrangement, however, was found inconvenient, and shortly afterwards departed from, Fair Isle being again joined to Dunrossness. The zealous Wesleyans have adherents even in this lonely isle. Their minister at Dunrossness generally pays them a visit every summer. Clergymen or preachers of any denomination are heartily welcomed by the hospitable islanders, who listen most eagerly to their ministrations, and generally exert their utmost ingenuity in endeavouring to detain their reverend visitors as long as possible. Fair Isle was long the property of Sinclair of Quendale, from which family it passed—as tradition says, at a game of brag—to Stewart of Brough, Orkney. In 1866 it was sold, by the representative of that family, to John Bruce, Esq. of Sumburgh, Shetland—part of whose estate it now constitutes. But it is now high time to leave the Fair Isle and all its interesting associations.

CHAPTER II.

Sumburgh Roost—Fitful Head—Quendale—Iron Mines—Quendale Bay—Fishing Stations—Fisheries—Sumburgh Lighthouse—Jarlshoff—The Hall—Lord Robert Stewart's House—Battle on Sumburgh Links—Gruitness—Voe—Accommodation.

ADVANCING northwards, and beginning to encounter the strong currents and heavy billows of the "Roost," we feel ourselves approaching classic ground. The scenes of the "Pirate" appear in view. On our left is the lofty precipice which gave title to "Norna of the Fitful Head," and, on the right the less towering, but still stately cliff of Sumburgh Head, with a lighthouse perched upon its summit. Between these bold headlands is the capacious bay of Quendale, opening towards the south. Some of its associations have been already dwelt on. Others may be mentioned of even a more desolate character. At the head of the bay, two centuries ago, was the snug little estate of Sinclair of Brow, worth, even at that time, £200 a-year. It was soon afterwards blown over with sand, and nothing now remains to mark its site but a sandy desert, and "some small patches called outsets or pendicles." The well-cultivated farm of Quendale, and the bustling fishing station of Garthsness, on the west, contrast favourably with the sand and solitude of its northern and eastern shores. On the farm is a large corn mill and the manor house, now unoccupied, as the proprietor, Andrew J. Grierson, Esq. of Quendale, does not reside on his estate. The summit of Fitful commands an extensive view of the islets, rocks, headlands, hills, sounds, and bays of the west coast. It is composed of clay slate, the lustre of which is somewhat pearly, when exposed to a bright sunshine, and hence the Norsemen

called it Fitful, or the White Mountain. A large vein of iron mica runs through the Fitful Head. It has never been wrought; but a bed of iron pyrites, at the extremity of Garthsness, was carefully explored, and its contents subjected to every form of chemical process, some eighty years ago, by a Dousterswivel from London, who hoped to obtain large quantities of copper. Not existing in it, this metal could not be extracted from the ore, and the labours of the alchemist ended in the chief product they evolved—smoke.

Three unimportant grazing isles partially close in the mouth of Quendale Bay. Although lying about midway between the towering headlands of Fitful and Sumburgh, it is properly bounded, on the west by Garthsness, and on the east by Scatness. Both promontories, as if in contrast to their lofty neighbours, are low-lying, fertile, and useful to man. Scatness, which stretches farthest into the sea, is peopled almost to its very end. The shores of the West Voe, which lies between it and Sumburgh Head, are valuable for fishing stations; and thither men from many parts of Dunrossness resort in the summer season.

Saith or *grey* fish has hitherto been almost the only product of the fisheries here, and at Garthsness, on Quendale Bay. The boats used were small bow-built "Ness yawls," manned by three men each, and propelled chiefly by oars. But, within the last few years, many *white* fish (ling, torsk, and cod) have been landed at both places; and it has been found necessary, to a great extent, to supplant the yawls by ordinary six-oared sailing boats. The fishermen are thus enabled to venture out farther from land, where they have a better prospect of obtaining white fish, which are much more valuable than the grey.

The stately Pharos, which tops the giddy heights of Sumburgh, and lights up the dark waters of its tempestuous Roost, was erected by the Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses, in 1820, under the superin-

tendence of Mr. Robert Stephenson, the builder of the Bell Rock tower. This is the first lighthouse the shores of Shetland ever saw. It stands 300 feet above the sea, and can be seen, in clear weather, at a distance of at least twenty-five miles. In thick weather the light was sometimes imperfectly seen by ships, owing to its height above the sea level, a defect which has probably been remedied by the recent substitution for the dioptric of a more powerful catoptric illuminating apparatus.

The lofty head of Sumburgh, while terminating in an abrupt precipice towards the sea, slopes away gradually, on the other side, towards a low neck of land, on which stand the ruins of Jarlshoff, and very near them The Hall, the castellated residence of John Bruce, Esq., younger, of Sumburgh. This building, which has recently been erected, is by far the prettiest mansion in Shetland. It commands an extensive view, extending to Mousa on the north-east, and Fair Isle on the south-west. Lord Robert Stewart had a residence near Sumburgh, the ruins of which are still to be traced. On the links of Sumburgh was fought, at a date not ascertained, a battle between the men of Dunrossness, under one of the Sinclairs of Brow, and a party of Highlanders from the island of Lewis. The battle was sanguinary. The Lewis men were completely routed, and none of them is said to have returned home to tell the tale. Previous to this affray, the Highlanders, pursuing an ancient feud against the Scandinavians, were in the habit of visiting Shetland every summer, and returning home after they had obtained a sufficiency of cattle or other plunder to repay the voyage.

The low sandy tract of ground, which connects Sumburgh with the rest of the mainland, is indented, on the east, by a small inlet called Gruitness Voe. This is a place of commerce, but good anchorage is to be obtained only with certain directions of the wind.

It would appear that merchandise is nothing new here, nor good cheer either; for Sir Robert Sibbald, writing in 1711, tells us that, "On the south-east side of this *Voe*, and near about the middle of it, is Gratness, or Greedy-Ness, where the *Dundee* merchants have their booths, as also some taverners, who in the summer time have their residence there, for selling of ale, beer, and brandie to these merchants, and their customers, who resort thither."

About three miles north from Gruitness is the rocky creek of Voe, where the sub-marine telegraph cable lands, and a haaf-fishing is carried on. The head of this inlet, which is scarcely a mile long, forms a very convenient central point for the tourist, who, having taken up his quarters at the comfortable little inn at Boddam, may easily make excursions to all parts of Dunrossness. If a lover of aquatic sports, he may readily gratify his tastes, either on the five large lochs of Brow and Spiggie, or on the open sea; while the presence of four churches and a good school in the neighbourhood, and of a telegraph, a well-made road, and two shops, at the door of his hostelry, is sufficient to remind the stranger that the Ultima Thule of his sojourn is by no means a barbarous country.

CHAPTER III.

DUNROSSNESS TO LERWICK.

Levenwick—The Moull—Channerwick—Sandwick—Pictish Burgh or Castle of Mousa—Legend regarding Dame Margareta and Earl Erlend—Sand Lodge—Copper Mine—Coningsburgh—Its people — Scenery — Aith's Voe — Helliness — Fladabister—Quarff—Brendister—Gulberwick—Shipwreck of Earls Ronald and Harold, &c.—Bressay Lighthouse—The Knab—Paul Jones repulsed.

LEAVING Voe and proceeding northwards along a rocky and rather uninteresting coast for four miles, we pass the northern boundary of Dunrossness, and find ourselves approaching the shores of Sandwick. From this point of view they are highly picturesque. The fine stretch of water lying between the extensive promontory of Noness and the less prominent head of Levenwick runs for about two miles into the land, and divides itself into four separate bays or creeks. All these have their own peculiar features of quiet beauty, both of landscape and seascape—to use a newly-coined word—and it is pleasant, on a fine summer day, to view the quaint Shetland hamlets, as they gleam out of the sunshine, and look down upon the placid haven, where the fishermen, in their six-oared boats, are bringing to land the products of the deep. The most southerly is the pretty semicircular bay of Levenwick, with its sandy shore and amphitheatre of cultivated fields in the rear. This is the safest roadstead south of Lerwick. In the good old times it was a favourite resort of the Dutch ; and often a large fleet of their fishing-busses graced its sheltered waters, while their astute crews carried on a brisk barter trade with the natives. To this day, the few Hollanders who still visit the Shet-

land coast, true to the traditions of their fathers, occasionally cast anchor for a few hours in the bay of Levenwick. On a rock overhanging the sea, in the southern part of this district, are the ruins of two Pictish burghs.*

Separating Levenwick from Channerwick, the next creek is the Moull, a lofty cape, precipitous from mountain top to water's edge. Near the summit of its giddy cliffs passes the county road, over which it certainly requires some nerve to travel in any other way than on foot. At Channerwick an extensive *air* of boulders and pebbles marks the division between the picturesque glen above, and the quiet inlet below. Along the sides of this pretty strath are evident marks of glacial action.

Along the western side of the great promontory of Noness, lies the bay of Sandwick, with the parish kirk at its head. In former times ships are said to have come to grief, through mistaking this inlet for the entrance to Bressay Sound.

Doubling the precipitous headland in which Noness abruptly terminates, and encountering the strong currents that generally sweep round it, we suddenly find ourselves in Mousa Sound. On the right is the low-lying and comparatively flat pastoral island of Mousa, upwards of a mile in length. Formerly inhabited, it is now used only as a grazing isle; but yet it lays claim to national importance, as being the site of the most perfect Pictish castle or burgh extant. The tower is circular in form, about fifty feet in diameter, and attains a height of forty-two feet. It is built of a sort of slatey stones, of considerable and pretty uniform size, well laid together without the aid of cement. No wood appears to have been used in the construction of this remarkable

* Sir Robert Sibbald (1711), p. 41. Only one of these ruins seems now to remain. Its recent excavation is described in a communication to the Society of Antiquaries, by Mr. Gilbert Goudie, F.S.A. Scot. (1871).

building. In elevation it resembles a dice-box, bulging out slightly for a little way above the base, then becoming narrow again, and finally expanding towards the top, which peculiarity of construction was evidently intended to prevent an enemy scaling the walls. It consists of two concentric walls, each being about five feet in thickness, with an intervening space of the same width. This space contained all the barrack accommodation the hardy warriors of old allowed themselves. Through it a staircase winds, in a screw-like direction, from base to summit of the building, on its way up communicating with a series of small chambers, placed one above another, the roof of the lower serving as the floor of the higher. These are lighted and ventilated by small apertures, arranged in tiers, and looking into the open courtyard in the interior of the building which appears never to have been roofed over. A low doorway, fifteen feet in length, which pierces the two walls of the building, conducts the visitors (who must walk on hands and knees), from the interior into the courtyard. In a time of siege this passage could be readily obstructed by stones. The courtyard is about twenty-one feet in diameter. The doorway leading to the staircase is a little above the floor of this area.*

Before quitting Mousa it may not be uninteresting to relate one of the legends which hang round its venerable Castle, and prove the great antiquity of that wonderful erection. The story is given by Torfœus, but it cannot be better told than in the eloquent words of Dr. Hibbert, which I shall take the liberty of transcribing. "In the fourteenth century, when, by

* About twenty years ago this building, which was literally mouldering into dust, was somewhat restored at the expense of the Society of Scottish Antiquaries. Gifford Laurenson, the very intelligent Shetland mason, who had charge of the work, built a miniature of the Burgh in small slatey stones, which now graces the Society's Museum in Edinburgh.

the rights of udal succession, there were joint Earls of Orkney, Dame Margareta, the widowed mother of one of them, listened to the lawless importunity of the gay Brunnius. Harold, her son, became impatient of the family disgrace, and banished from the islands his mother's paramour, as well as the illegitimate offspring that were the fruits of the connection. But, in the course of a short time, Dame Margareta's beauties attracted the notice of a more honourable suitor, who was no other than Harold's partner in the Earldom of Orkney and Shetland. Erlend proffered love to the Dame, which she returned; but as her son, from some cause, was averse to the nuptials, the parties entered into a tender engagement without his consent, and afterwards fled from his fury with all speed into Mousa. Then must Harold needs follow them, his hostile barque sailing in pursuit as fast as if all the winds of heaven had driven them; and then, anon, fled the Dame Margareta and Erlend into the fort, within the dark recesses of which they nestled like two pigeons in a dove-cot. The Burgh was beset with troops, but so impregnable was its construction, that the assaulter found he had no chance of reducing it but by cutting of all supplies of food, and by this means waiting the result of a tedious siege. And now turn we to the gentle pair in the fortress, that we may speak of what pain they must there endure, what cold, what hunger, and what thirst. In such a dog-hole 'a conjuror's circle gives content above it; a hawk's mew is a princely palace to it.' But Harold had powerful foes in other places wherewith to contend, and on this account, he gave heed to the advice of his friends, that Erlend should be retained as a friend and not as an enemy, and that he ought not to despise the new family alliance. A reconciliation took place, and then with great joy returned the parties to their several pursuits, well satisfied with each other. Such is the story chronicled by Torfœus concerning the

siege of Moseyaburgum and the loves of Dame Margareta and Erlend, her last leman." * At Burrland, on that point of the mainland which is immediately opposite Mousa Castle, and separated from it by a sound half a mile wide, stand the foundations of a similar Burgh, long since demolished. Proceeding northwards about a mile along the coast, we come to the spacious manor of Sand Lodge, the residence of John Bruce, Esq., of Sumburgh. In its immediate vicinity two objects of interest present themselves. One, a strongly built pier of considerable length, erected a few years ago by the British Fishery Society, at the very exposed beach of Sands Air, from which a white and herring fishery of some importance is carried on; the other, a valuable and extensive copper mine. In 1798, some English gentlemen opened this mine. They worked it for rather more than four years. In 1802, on the death of the resident and managing partner, the working ceased. There is evidence in existence to show that the parties then interested were quite pleased with their prospects, yet for more than 70 years the experiment, commenced in 1798, remained unresumed till, in 1872, the venerable proprietor, Mr. Bruce of Sumburgh, leased the mine and all the minerals on his property to Mr. Walker of Aberdeen. In other parts of Shetland, Mr. Walker has done much for the material advancement of the country. Fully £20,000 has been laid out in the development of this mine, an account of which we have pleasure in quoting from "Six days out of Harness," a pleasant record of a last summer's ramble in Shetland.

The Sandlodge mines are upon a very extensive vein of copper in a lime formation, close on the seashore, opposite

* A similar but much earlier incident is related by the Icelandic chroniclers. According to the Saga of Egil! Skalagrimson, Bjorn Brynjulfson, fleeing from Norway, about the year 900 A.D., with Thora Roald's daughter, landed on Mousa, spent the winter in the castle, where he celebrated his marriage with Thora, and afterwards sailed to Iceland.

Mousa Isle. The vein can be traced for many miles. At the point where presently worked, a "*Horn*" of Sandstone intervenes and causes meanwhile two workings in the east and west pit. The latter is upon the back of the vein, and consists of a fine hæmatite, interspersed with copper. Many thousand tons of hæmatite have been already taken out, and very many more remain. 10, 11, 16, 22, and 29-fathom levels have been driven in the west pit amongst good ore. The east pit has been intersected at 40 fathoms by an upright shaft, and therein strikes a large vein of copper, which is being stooped out at 5s. a ton; width, 6 feet; quality, 5% copper. This vein is being sunk upon the hanging wall, and should join the west pit branch at 60 fathoms. A set of 8-in. pumps keeps the west pit dry, and a set of 4-in. the east. A cross cut is being driven from east to west pits, which, when accomplished, will open up some 13 fathoms more of the hæmatite, and allow all the pumping, hauling, &c., to be overtaken by east shaft, at which there is a 40 horse-power pumping and hoisting engine with double boilers commanding the work. A similar engine works a "Blake's" stone crusher.

The routine of the works is, that west pit supplies hæmatite and peroxide of iron for exporting, also a gossan, with 3% to 5% copper for smelting. The east pit sends up a regular supply of the hard copper ore, which is raised to upper platform, weighed, passed through crusher, and put into heap for furnace. Two reverberating furnaces are kept at work, capable of smelting each 40 to 50 tons of ore per week. These were erected last year, under iron shed, and upon newest principles. The houses at mine consist of large brick-built engine-house (iron roof), smaller engine-house (wooden), iron smelting sheds, extra large coalshed (brick, iron roof now erecting), smiddy, joiners' shop, office and store, and iron store. There is also a row of stone-built cottages, 120 feet by 28, for workmen. There is also a manager's house, with stables, coach-house, &c. There is a shipping shoot and landing-stage, with double line of rails, from works—one steam and one hand crane commanding same.

This eastern district of Sandwick contains many good cottages and crofts, and is probably better provided with roads than any other rural district in Shetland.

Pursuing the coast northwards, and marking the trunk road, as it passes over the picturesque undulations of "the cliffs," we obtain from their elevated shoulders a bird's-eye view of the flat and fertile plain of Conningsburgh, with the neat church and manse in

the foreground. A few hundred yards west of the highway, as it passes through this populous district, numerous heaps and mounds mark the site of an archaic village, hitherto unexplored by the antiquary.

Sandwick and Conningsburgh belong to the ministry of Dunrossness, but together form the *quoad sacra* parish of Sandwick, which contained in 1871 a population of 2325.

The Conningsburghers present both physical and mental peculiarities, which entitle them to be considered a distinct tribe from the rest of the Shetlanders. Having harsher features, larger muscles, and a broader "build" than their countrymen, they are said more to resemble Saxons than Scandinavians. Tradition assigns to them a large proportion of Spanish blood. It may be difficult to recognise in him Iberian features, but there is no doubt the modern Conningsburgher has much of the excitable nature of the Spaniard.

Nor is this district a field for the ethnologist and the archæologist alone. The sportsman, tired of sea-fowl, can here expend his skill on rabbits, and the angler has his choice of trout from the stream or the sea; while the lover of nature will find much variety of enjoyment whether he rambles among the picturesque slopes of "the cliffs"— adorned in the proper season by a beautiful display of blue and yellow wild flowers—paces the fine white sands of Mail, or wanders along the shores of Aith's Voe. This narrow inlet, which separates the plain of Conningsburgh from the promontory to the eastward, affords good anchorage in its lower reaches; but the middle of its entrance is obstructed by a reef, and the ebb tide leaves more than half of it dry land.

We now again betake ourselves to the sea, and steer towards the rising sun, until we reach the point of Helliness, opposite the north end of Mousa. In ancient times it must have been graced by some religious edifice, greatly in repute for its sanctity, for Helliness is equivalent to Holy Ness. Near the

termination of this sacred promontory are the productive farm and snug residence of Francis Heddell, Esq., of Uresland. At the root of this ness, and on the north, is Ocraquay, a well-sheltered little harbour. And beyond it Fladabister—still the seat of some of the good old udallers—with its rich vein of lime-stone, giving fertility to the soil, and employment to the people, who prepare and export it for building purposes. The smoke of the limekilns is visible far and near.

Advancing northwards from Helliness, we seem to be entering a bay of no small dimensions, terminated on the east by the bold head of Noss, and ending on the west as the land stretches from Quarff southwards. At the head of this apparent bay the land is lowest, and at this point are to be descried some of the houses which crown the hill over the good town of Lerwick. As we progress in the same direction, the green valley of Quarff, cutting directly across a range of high hills, opens itself to view on the left, displaying some well-tilled fields, and no less than two churches. Along this smooth valley, two miles in length, boats (and sometimes pretty large ones) are frequently dragged from one side of Shetland to the other. Beyond Quarff we pass the somewhat high, but not prominent head of Brendister, topped by the ruins of a Pictish burgh which still contain some curious chambers, and open upon the exposed bay of Gulberwick, with its sandy shore bordering a deep valley of basin-like shape, well covered by cottages and corn fields. Gulberwick, like its neighbouring village of Sound, boasts of considerable antiquity. It was here that Ronald and Harold, joint Earls of Orkney, after being shipwrecked, and losing much treasure with their gallant barques, were hospitably entertained by the substantial udallers. Despite this mishap, their lordships made themselves very comfortable. These were days of poetry as well as romance. Ronald beguiled the weary hours in composing stanzas, and soon foregathered with two native bards, Oddi Glumson the Little, and Armodr.

Such favour did the poets find in the Earl's eyes that he attached them to his court, and took them with him to the Holy Land. At a public feast he was so proud of Armodr's poems that he presented him with a gold-mounted spear.*

Passing the low Ness of Tribister, which bounds Gulberwick Bay on the north, and the bolder Ness of Sound, beyond that again, we for a moment direct our attention to Kirkabister, on the opposite shore of Bressay, where a neat little lighthouse, erected in 1858, guards the entrance to Lerwick harbour. It has been of signal service to commerce; for, before it was built, ships sometimes mistook the Sound of Noss for that of Bressay, to their almost certain destruction. We now find that we are getting into "the narrows," and that what appeared to be the head of a bay is the opening into a sound. Sailing through the "Haddock Sand"—the harvest field to the Lerwick fishermen—we pass, on the left, a prominent point called the Knab, that immediately succeeding to the Ness of Sound. This marks the entrance to Bressay Sound, which it could easily command, in the military sense of the term. A curious instance of the strategical importance of the Knab occurred in the career of the famous Paul Jones. In 1778, when the bold privateer kept all the British coast in terror, he sailed northwards and was about to pay Lerwick a visit. On reaching the "Haddock Sand," he beheld the Knab, its summit crowned with people, many of whom were bedecked in scarlet. Taking this for the King's livery, Jones (whose telescope was probably not very powerful), concluded the town was strongly garrisoned, and that discretion was the better part of valour. Therefore he "up helm and off," as the sailors say. The soldiers, who thus repulsed the most daring of naval commanders, were the fair damsels of Sound clad in petticoats of red wadmal.

* Orkneyinga Saga, p. 130.

CHAPTER IV.

LERWICK.

The Harbour—The Town—Its Situation—Arrangement of the Streets, &c.—Shops, &c.—Public Buildings—Docks—New Town—Villas, &c.—Loch of Clickhemin—Sound.

PASSING the Knab we describe a slight circuit, and find ourselves in the Sound of Bressay, or in more modern language, harbour of Lerwick. This spacious and commodious harbour, one of the finest in the kingdom, is nearly three miles long, and from a mile to a mile and a half in breadth. Sheltered on the one side by the mainland, and on the other by Bressay, it is completely landlocked. It has thus two entries, a south and a north, the former being the larger and safer. A small holm and some shallows, situated north from the town of Lerwick, divide it into two unequal portions, the southern again being of greatest practical utility. At almost any spot good anchorage is to be obtained. Many a goodly ship, and many a noble fleet, have its placid waters borne, from the days of the piratical Norseman, down to our own times when the stately ironclad, "La Reine Blanche," took shelter, while the fair lilies of France were being trodden in the dust by the black eagle of Prussia. It was in this Bredeyiar Sound, as the Norwegians termed it, that the numerous fleet under Haco, King of Norway, lay for several days, when that monarch was on his fatal expedition against Scotland. In 1653 it harboured an English fleet of ninety-four ships under Admirals Deans and Monk, and two years afterwards another fleet of ninety-two sail, commanded by the Earl of Sandwick. The immense

Batavian fleets, of many hundred vessels, that have often graced its waters, will be referred to hereafter.

Even Bressay Sound can tell its rumours of wars, though happily they are of rather ancient date. In the summer of 1640 four Dutch men-of-war were quietly awaiting the return of the East Indian fleet in this harbour, when they were suddenly surprised by a formidable flotilla of ten Spaniards. A deadly conflict ensued. After a brave resistance, the weaker side was forced to succumb. Two of the unfortunate Dutchmen were sunk on the Lerwick side of the Sound; a third escaping through the north entrance, was run ashore and blown up by her crew, somewhere about the south coast of Nesting, while the fourth was captured by the enemy. The destruction by fire of large fleets of Dutch fishing-busses which this harbour witnessed twice during last century will be mentioned hereafter.

We now come to Lerwick, the most northerly town in the British Isles. It is built on the mainland of Shetland, along the eastern shore of Bressay Sound. The site has exactly the form of an amphitheatre, and thus offers great natural advantages. Unfortunately the architects who designed the metropolis of Thule have not availed themselves of these, for nothing can exceed the irregularity with which the buildings are arranged. In many instances they forcibly remind us of Gray's description of Kendal. "They seem as if they had been dancing a country-dance, and were out. They stand back to back, corner to corner, some up hill, some down." There is, nevertheless, a method in this seeming confusion, for the houses are arranged with reference to the main street, a narrow thoroughfare which follows the sinuosities of the harbour, and the Hillhead, a broad and regular road, which, as its name implies, runs along the top of the hill, on whose eastern slope the town is built. Loosely speaking, the shore at Commercial Street may be said to form the arc of a smaller, and the Hillhead or High Street that

of a larger, concentric circle. Connecting these two arcs, in a radius-like manner, numerous lanes, more or less steep, ascend the hill. Along these streets and lanes, which vary much in width, the houses and other buildings are placed at irregular intervals. The main street and principal lanes are well paved all over with flagstones, these thoroughfares being too narrow to admit of a causeway in the middle for carts and horses. Indeed, when Lerwick was first built, vehicles were unknown in the island, and even Shetland ponies seldom passed through the town. Many of the houses have their gables towards the street, and those on the lower side of Commercial Street, are either built on the seashore, or actually in the sea. Thus, if the Crown asserts its still disputed right to all property below high-water mark, Her Majesty will soon confiscate a large portion of the most northerly town in her dominions. From various points along the seashore, piers and jetties, of different lengths, project into the harbour. Only one of these, Victoria Wharf, situated in the middle of the town, is long enough to admit of vessels coming alongside for the purpose of loading and unloading. As Victoria Wharf can only admit vessels of comparatively small tonnage and light draught of water, it is to be hoped arrangements may soon be made for the construction of a pier, alongside of which vessels, of every size, trading to the port may lie.

Lerwick is a comparatively modern town, as shown by some of the old charters which describe the peninsula on which it is built as "the East Ness of Sound, now called Lerwick." It appears to have been built about the beginning of the seventeenth century, and evidently owes its origin to Bressay Sound. At that time this spacious bay was annually visited by not less than two thousand Dutch busses. The circumstance that it was originally built as a trading post for the Dutch fishing-vessels, during their rendezvous in

the Sound, together with the nature of the site, accounts for its peculiar construction. It is said by travellers very much to resemble some of the smaller seaport towns of the Netherlands. The houses were built on the seashore, with their back doors opening towards the harbour, evidently for the convenience of the Dutchmen, who could thus easily land the contraband portion of their cargoes without much fear of interruption from revenue officers. Most of the old houses were provided with very ingenious places of concealment for smuggled goods; and some of those which had unfortunately been built on the upper side of the street had this disadvantage compensated for by means of a subterranean passage, connecting them with the seashore. No feature of this unique little town is more striking to the traveller than the number of shops which line the main street. Nearly every building in this thoroughfare contains such a place of business. Many of them are very handsome, and would do credit to any city. The wares offered for sale present every variety, "from a needle to an anchor." Formerly nearly everything could be bought at the same shop, but now each merchant adheres pretty closely to his own department of trade. To the tourist the most attractive place of business is that of the hosier, whose shop presents a tempting display of the far-famed Shetland goods, of every size, shape, pattern, and shade. The knitting of these articles forms the employment of the female portion of the population, which, as in the other parts of Shetland, is greatly in excess of the male.

The best view of Lerwick is obtained from the harbour, from which it presents a highly picturesque appearance, particularly by moonlight. Overhanging the town, on the north, we have Fort Charlotte, which very much resembles the Castle of Edinburgh on a smaller scale; and, flanking it, on the south, stand the Educational Institute and Widows' Asylum, two hand-

some buildings, for both of which we are indebted to the munificence of a distinguished Lerwegian, the late Arthur Anderson, Esq., chairman of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company.

The public buildings consist chiefly of the churches, all of which crown the heights over the town. If the Lerwegians are not religious, it is not for want of churches. They are supplied with no less than seven, viz., Established, Free, Episcopalian, United Presbyterian, Congregational, Wesleyan Methodist, and Baptist. The Parish Church is a substantial building, with a Doric front of hewn stone, presenting, externally, rather a ponderous appearance, owing to its flat roof, and the want of spire. Internally, however, it is as comfortable and commodious as could be desired. It has lately been provided with an organ. The Free Church is a neat modern erection, with an elegant Gothic front, and is well fitted up internally. St. Magnus' Episcopal Church, situated to the south of its last-mentioned rivals, is a handsome building in the Early English Gothic style. Inside it is tastefully decorated. The Wesleyans, finding their former place of worship too small, have just erected a new chapel, as a memorial of Dr. Adam Clark, the founder of Methodism in Shetland. The site is a commanding one, and the erection, both as regards size and architectural features, is such as to reflect credit on all concerned. The other churches are plain buildings, and have no architectural features entitling them to further notice. The parish school, an excellent building, lately erected, lies on the western slope of the hill, a short distance from the town. Situated along the main street the only public buildings are the Tolbooth, a plain old-fashioned house, and the Commercial and Union Banks, elegant erections placed in the very centre of the town, which they serve greatly to ornament. Several large and handsome houses have been built within the last few years towards the south of

the town, which has become decidedly the "west end." Two sets of spacious docks, with quays, small harbours, shipbuilding yards, cooperages, forges, sail-lofts, extensive stores, &c., are situated at Freefield and Garthspool, which together form a small village, nearly half-a-mile to the north of the town. The docks at Freefield, which are the more extensive, were constructed, at great expense, by the late William Hay, Esq., and those at Garthspool by the late William Mowat, Esq., of Garth. Both of these were gentlemen of great enterprise and ability, of whom their country, on which they have left their mark in many ways, may well be proud. Freefield is used as the dockyard of the well-known firm of Messrs. Hay & Co., and Garthspool as that of its present proprietor, Joseph Leask, Esq., who has very much improved it.

New Town.—Separated from the Hillhead by a ravine, and facing the Borough Road (so called from its forming the boundary of the borough), stands the U.P. Manse, a large "land" of houses, similar to those so common in Edinburgh, and a few neat villas and cottages, all of which have been erected since 1865, and have received the name of the New Town. It is built on feus from the town parks. These feus became necessary in consequence of over-crowding and insufficient house accommodation in the Old Town, and were obtained after rather a hot war of words, waged in the *Shetland Advertiser* newspaper, whose existence extended from January 1862 to March 1863. Several gentlemen's residences are situated in the neighbourhood of the town, each of which presents its own features of interest, whether from situation, architecture, or surroundings.

The view from the summit and western slope of the eminence on which Lerwick is built is bounded by a range of hills, which, rising in the low Ness of Trebister (beyond that of Sound, just mentioned), after attaining some height takes a crescentic course, and, on approach-

ing the sea to the north of Freefield, slopes gradually away, so as to admit of the north road passing round the base. This range is very much concentric, with the arcs of a greater and lesser circle, already mentioned, as described by the shore and hillhead. The Loch of Clickhemin is a fine sheet of water a mile to the west of the town. On the west it is overhung by the high hill just mentioned. On the north and south its banks are low, and on the east it is separated from the sea merely by a beach, called the Air of Clickhemin, over which the south highway road runs. Upon a small island in the midst of this lake are placed the ruins of a Pictish Castle or Burgh, in a much better state of preservation than most buildings of this kind in Shetland. The island communicates with the shore, by means of a causeway of large stepping-stones. As the construction of this burgh is very similar to others of the same class we need not discuss it here. In a south-westerly direction, and at a distance of a mile and a half from Lerwick, is situated, at the foot of the same hill, the ancient country village or *toun* of Sound. The inhabitants are very primitive in their habits, and at the same time scrupulously honest and moral. Most of them pique themselves on inhabiting the exact spot of ground held by their ancestors for centuries, and look down upon the Lerwegians, exclaiming—

> "Sound was Sound when Lerwick was none,
> And Sound will be Sound when Lerwick is done."

They are generally averse to all changes and improvements, and, in matters of rural and domestic economy, are very much in the condition of their remote forefathers. They subsist chiefly by supplying Lerwick with milk and peats. Lately, however, a fish-curing station has been opened in the neighbourhood, which affords some of them profitable employment. Sound is the property of Sir Arthur Nicolson, Baronet, one of whose seats, Grimista, lies on the northern shore of Bressay Sound, about a mile from the town.

CHAPTER V.

LERWICK—*(continued).*

Some of its Industries and Social Customs — Trade — Faroe Fishing—Markets for Fish, &c.—Fish Tithes to Minister of North Leith — Absence of Manufactures, and Scarcity of Employment—Society—Means of Communication with other places—Lerwick at different seasons—Winter—Royal Naval Reserve—Christmas Morning Amusements—Spring—Greenland Ships—Whale and Seal Fishery—Whalers "frozen up" in Arctic Regions all Winter, &c.

THE trade of this port is very considerable, a large proportion of the produce of the islands passing through it on its way to market. In like manner, the most of supplies from the southern markets arrive at Lerwick, thence to be distributed over the country. By far the most important export is salt fish. In addition to this, the principal articles exported are fish oils, cattle, ponies, sheep, poultry, eggs, butter, cured beef, hosiery goods, wool, kelp, and chromate of iron. To these have been recently added, since the re-opening of the Sand Lodge mines, copper and iron ore; and, since the great rise in price of coals, cargoes of peats from the moors of Yell and Nesting. The imports, as can easily be imagined, consist chiefly of groceries, articles of clothing, fishing materials, and agricultural implements. Lerwick registers ninety vessels, whose aggregate tonnage amounts to four thousand and seventy-nine tons. All these vessels, with one exception, are below one hundred tons. The great majority of them are employed in fishing. The cod fishery on the coast of Faroe, alone, occupies a fleet of upwards of sixty smacks and schooners, nearly all of which are constructed on the most improved principles, both as regards sea-going

and sailing qualities. This fishing has of late years become a most important branch of trade, and appears still to be on the increase. Each smack has a crew of about fourteen men: thus the Faroe fishing gives employment to about nine hundred Shetland seamen, besides a large number of men, boys, and women, who find a profitable occupation in curing the fish at home. The fishing commences about the beginning of April, and continues until the middle of August, during which time the vessels generally make three voyages to Faroe. The fishing ground is either "on the coast," *i.e.*, in the bays, and the sounds separating the islands, or "on the bank," a resort for cod, about sixty miles west from the south of Faroe. This bank is about forty-five miles long, by thirty broad. The fish are caught on "hand-lines," of two hooks each, baited with shell-fish of different kinds. The *buckies*, as the sort of shell-fish used are generally termed, are dredged before the smacks leave Shetland, and preserved alive in small perforated boxes, hung alongside, or otherwise exposed to sea-water. Mussels and *yeogs*—shelled, salted, and packed in casks—are also used as bait. Some of the smacks are provided with wells, which is found to be an excellent arrangement for keeping the *buckies* alive and healthy, as well as for occasionally taking live cod to market. However, hitherto it has generally been only on rare occasions, as at the end of a season, when there are other reasons for sending a welled smack to a southern port, that live cod are sold. Therefore the ordinary practice is to gut, split, and wash the cod, as they are caught, and place them in the hold, amongst salt. They are farther cleaned, scrubbed, pressed, and ultimately dried on the beaches, after the smacks return home. The fishing is said by the men themselves to be very wet, cold, and dirty work. When the fish are abundant, all hands are called and set to the lines, when a very exciting scene ensues.

On the termination of the Faroe fishing, in August,

some of the larger smacks generally proceed to Iceland, and prosecute the cod fishing on that coast, returning in the end of September or beginning of October. When the Faroe fishing proves a failure, as in the summer of 1871, the shallows around Rockhall sometimes yield a good harvest to those who are bold enough to venture there. Like everything else, the Faroe fishing is evidently destined to undergo great changes. The advantages of welled over dry-bottomed smacks, both for the purpose of preserving bait and carrying live fish to market, are so obvious that the one must speedily supersede the other. Live Faroe cod have frequently fetched a guinea each in the London market, and three shillings may be reckoned a fair average. The Danish Government have recently seen fit to prohibit foreign vessels either from fishing or purchasing bait at Faroe, and hence the importance of Shetland smacks being able to carry it alive from home. This enterprise has suffered a heavy loss by the recent removal of the leading skipper, Mr. William Duncan, of Burra Isle, to whose remarkable courage, energy, and perseverance, it owes so much. Mr. Duncan died in January, 1872, of small-pox, at the early age of thirty-two, deeply regretted by all his countrymen.

The best market is that of Spain, to which Shetland annually sends great quantities of salt cod, to be consumed during Lent. Thus Popery, whatever mischief it may have wrought spiritually in ancient times, confers, at the present day, no small temporal benefits on the Shetlanders. But, while the Church of Rome (indirectly, no doubt) encourages Shetland industry, the Church of Scotland, very directly, discourages it, for, by a strange anomaly, every ton of salt fish landed at that port has to pay a tithe, which goes to make up the handsome stipend of the richly beneficed minister of North Leith. A considerable revenue must be derived from this source, for large quantities of fish are sent to Leith every year.

Except the knitting of hosiery by the hand, there is no kind of manufacture in Lerwick. Consequently the female population is inadequately supplied with work, but more so the male. The unskilled working men, continuously resident in Lerwick, are employed as boatmen and porters in attendance on vessels visiting the harbour, as fishermen, or day-labourers. None of these sources of employment is constant, and therefore much idleness, and consequent poverty and misery, exist, particularly amongst those families who have come fresh from the country.

Society in Lerwick is at least as good as may be found in any country town of the same size in Scotland. It has been very much improved during the last few years by several of the chief proprietors, who were formerly either absentees or resident in the country, taking up their abode there.

Lerwick is distant two hundred and eighty miles from Leith, and one hundred and eighty miles from Aberdeen. Communication is carried on with Granton (near Edinburgh), Aberdeen, Wick, and Kirkwall, bi-weekly in summer, and weekly during winter and spring, by means of smart and commodious steam-ships belonging to the North of Scotland and Orkney and Shetland Steam Navigation Company, which also carry H.M.'s mails. Communication with the North Isles, and the northern portions of the mainland, is also carried on by means of a steamer and several sailing smacks.

From a social point of view Lerwick presents very different aspects at different seasons. Here, as everywhere else, winter is the most social season of the year. After braving the "dangers of the deep," the Shetland sailors, like their Scandinavian ancestors, always endeavour to spend the winter at home. This propensity has of late years been greatly favoured by the establishment of the Royal Naval Reserve. This force has been singularly successful at Lerwick. It was com-

menced there in 1860, and has grown by rapid strides until, in the beginning of 1879, it mustered upwards of 1000 men. Each Royal Naval Reserve man is bound, by the regulations, to undergo a month's drill in the year. Drill is carried on by Gunnery Instructors and Seamen Gunners from H.M.S. "Excellent" at Portsmouth, under the superintendence of the Chief Officer of Coast Guard during November, December, and January. Generally 250 men are on drill daily. The Shetland Naval Reserve is a body of men of which any country might be proud. Universal testimony has been borne, by those competent to judge, as to their efficiency as sailors, smartness at drill, general intelligence, and good conduct. These gallant fellows are attired in a simple but neat uniform of service cap and guernsey shirt. By their commanding presence they lend a pleasant variety, and by their sailor gambols an air of warmth and cheerfulness, to the groups of sailors and fishermen, with their female friends in every variety of attire, who frequently throng the streets of "Zetland's capital" in the gloomy season of winter. Each reserve man receives £10 a year. Thus the force brings at present about £4000 per annum into Shetland.

The Christmas season, which has always been held with more than ordinary merriment in Scandinavia, is still kept in the good old Norse fashion by the Lerwegians. With the outset of winter, the ingenuous youths of Lerwick commence preparations for Yule, taking care to observe the strictest secrecy. On Christmas Eve, the 4th January—for the old style is still observed—the children go *a guizing*, that is to say, disguising themselves in the most fantastic and gaudy costumes, they parade the streets, and infest the houses and shops, begging for the wherewithal to carry on their Christmas amusements. One o'clock on Yule morning having struck, the young men turn out in large numbers, dressed in the coarsest of garments, and, at the double quick march, drag huge tar barrels

through the town, shouting and cheering as they go, or blowing loud blasts with their "louder horns." The tar barrel simply consists of several—say from four to eight—tubs filled with tar and chips, placed on a platform of wood. It is dragged by means of a chain, to which scores of jubilant youths readily yoke themselves. They have recently been described by the burgh officer of Lerwick as "fiery chariots, the effect of which is truly grand and terrific." In a Christmas morning the dark streets of Lerwick are generally lighted up by the bright glare, and its atmosphere blackened by the dense smoke, of six or eight tar barrels in succession. On the appearance of daybreak, at six A.M., the morning revellers put off their coarse garments—well begrimed by this time—and in their turn become guizards. They assume every imaginable form of costume—those of soldiers, sailors, Highlanders, Spanish Chevaliers, &c. Thus disguised, they either go in pairs, as man and wife, or in larger groups, and proceed to call on their friends, to wish them the compliments of the season. Formerly, these adolescent guizards used to seat themselves in crates, and accompanied by fiddlers, were dragged through the town. The crate, however, has for some years fallen into disuse. After the revels of the morning, they generally grow pretty languid ere evening arrives. Old New-Year's Day (12th January), is kept similarly to Christmas, but the rejoicings it calls forth are usually on a smaller scale.

In spring, the most noticeable event to the Lerwegians is the arrival of the Greenland ships. These vessels rendezvous in the harbour for ten or twelve days, from the end of February or beginning of March, for the purpose of completing their crews with Shetlanders, who are generally reckoned more skilful at sealing than Scotch or English men.

The "Greenland time" has always been marked by an increase both of business and hilarity. Thus writing from Lerwick in 1814, Sir Walter Scott says—

> "Here too the Greenland tar, a fiercer guest,
> Claims a brief hour of riot, not of rest;
> Proves each wild frolic that in wine has birth,
> And wakes the land with brawls and boisterous mirth."

This fleet consists of ships or barques of from two hundred and fifty to four hundred tons, most of them being fitted with a powerful auxiliary screw. They belong to various ports, chiefly Dundee and Peterhead. Their number is now from fifteen to twenty, but formerly it was much larger. Each ship employs from twenty to thirty Shetlandmen. During their stay in Bressay Sound, large numbers of men and lads flock to the town from all parts of Shetland, each eager to obtain a berth. Since the number of ships prosecuting the trade was reduced, berths have become more difficult to be obtained, and, consequently, the masters have been able to "pick" their crews. It is no uncommon sight to see young men walking over the shoulders of the less favoured components of a crowd, in order to make their way to the office where a Greenland skipper is "feeing" his crew. The fleet leaves Lerwick about the 10th of March, for the sealing ground around Jan Mayen, which it reaches in a week or ten days. The destruction of the young seals commences in the first, and terminates in the third week of April, when the young animals take the water, and cannot be safely pursued. After this a few old seals may be shot, but the fishing may be held as finished. The capture of the young seals, which is the main object of this trade, is easily effected. Having descried a pack of them, the captain directs his ship to it with all possible speed. Men are landed on the ice in different directions, and then commences the butcher-like work of clubbing down the innocent creatures, who all the while lie still, looking at their destroyers. The seal fishing being finished, the vessels, if successful, return home to discharge their cargoes of blubber and skins; if unsuccessful, they proceed to the whale fishing at North Greenland or Davis Straits.

A sealing voyage generally occupies about six weeks. Each man employed receives about £2 10s. a month, and 2s. 6d. for each ton of blubber brought home. Thus, should the vessel obtain, say one hundred tons, a very common occurrence, he will make £16 by his six weeks' work. The value to the owners of one hundred tons will be about £4500, less, say £1500 of expenses, leaving a clear profit of £3000. The trade, however, is carried on at a great outlay; therefore in the event of a bad fishing, the losses are heavy.

Having been successful at the seal fishing, and safely landed their precious cargoes at Dundee, or Peterhead, these ships commonly proceed to the whaling at Davis Straits, generally calling at Shetland for a portion of their crews. However, they require a much less number of men for the whale than for the seal fishing. From such a voyage the vessels generally return in the month of October. A whaling voyage is greatly preferred by the sailors to a sealing, for they enjoy better weather in the summer than in the spring, and the destruction of their prey is conducted by means of harpoons thrown from boats, which involves much less exposure than killing seals on the pack of ice.

It not unfrequently happens that a whaler is frozen up at Davis Straits all winter, when the utmost privations are endured. Thus, the s.s. *Diana*, of Hull, arrived at Lerwick in the beginning of April, 1867, after being ice-bound since the previous November, with fourteen of the crew dead, and all the survivors suffering severely from scurvy, starvation, and the severities of an Arctic winter, for which they were unprepared. In some rare instances whalers have been frozen up, and never again heard of. A famous whaler in her day, called the *William Torr*, with all hands, was thus detained in 1838, and no trace of their fate ever came to light, until a cask of blubber was drifted into Whalfirth Voe, Shetland, in 1848, after occupying ten years in its voyage across the

North Atlantic. Of late years, some ships have intentionally wintered in the Arctic regions, chiefly in Cumberland Gulf, for the purpose of pursuing the whale fishing. During the great French wars, when our country, in order to maintain her *prestige* on the seas, and keep Napoleon from our shores, required more seamen than she could get by fair means, the return of the Greenland ships was a harvest time for the press-gang. This iniquitous institution had, in its day, the effect of deterring many Shetlanders from going to Greenland.

The fitting out of the Faroe fishing-smacks in the end of March or beginning of April, beyond occupying the attention of owners and crews, excites little public interest. During the last few years, the spring white fishing has been very successfully carried on, boats from the Islands, as well as the mainland engaging in it.

CHAPTER VI.

LERWICK—*(continued).*

Summer Season — The Dutch Fishery on the Shetland Coast — Its Ancient Magnitude and Importance—The "Hollander's Knowe"—The Dutchmen on Shore, and some of their Amusements—Their "Busses"—Boat-Sailing off Lerwick—Fishing of Herring on Lines—Mackerel Fishing in Autumn—History of Lerwick—Progress of its Population—Fort Charlotte—Rifle Corps—Anderson Institute—Widows' Asylum—Parish School—Episcopal School—Municipal Affairs—Water-Works—Over-crowding—Small Lodging-Houses—Fever Hospital—Courts, Civil and Ecclesiastical—Markets—Want of Public Places of Amusement—Scenery—Cemetery.

SUMMER, which comes late in this northern latitude, brings with it not only bright skies, smooth seas, green fields, and good fishings, but numerous visitors. Amongst distinguished strangers, by no means the most unwelcome in the Zetland capital are the Dutch fishermen. "The herring-fishery of Shetland, carried on by the Dutch, was in ancient times an undertaking of the greatest national importance." * "It seems generally agreed among authors that it yielded them, for a long course of years, £3,000,000 sterling yearly. It would, however, be no difficult thing to prove, to the satisfaction of the candid as well as critical inquirer, that while it continued to flourish in their hands, they drew from their fishery, out of the ocean washing the coast of Shetland to the amount of £200,000,000 sterling. In the year 1633 there were so many as fifteen hundred Dutch herring-busses, each of eighty tons burden, employed on this coast, with twenty armed ships, carrying

* Dr Hibbert's "Zetland," p. 499.

thirty guns each, and a fleet of dogger boats to the number of four hundred, each sixty tons burden." * This information is derived from Captain Smith, who was sent to Shetland, in the year just mentioned, expressly to report on the Dutch fishery. Impressed with the vastness of the enterprise, the gallant captain was unable to conceal his astonishment at his countrymen, who could look on

> "Shamefully passive, while Batavian fleets
> Defraud us of the glittering finny swarms
> That heave our firths, and crowd upon our shores."

With true sailor-like frankness, writing long before "Free Trade" had a being, he says, "If the King would send out such a fleet of vessels for the fishing trade, being in our own seas, and on our own grounds, and all strangers were discharged from fishing in those seas, that the subjects of the three kingdoms only may have it, it would make our king rich and glorious, and the three kingdoms happy; not one would want bread, and God would be praised, and the king loved." The king here referred to is the hapless Charles I. If that could have made him rich, glorious, and loved, what a pity both for his own sake and that of his subjects, he did not fish herrings. But his "divine right" gave the "blessed martyr" "other fish to fry." "Not many years had elapsed, in the same century, before the number of busses that visited Shetland amounted to two thousand two hundred. Owing, however, to wars and other causes, a diminution took place, and for several years following, no more appeared than three hundred or four hundred." † In 1703, the French fleet, following up its victory off the Fair Isle, sailed into Bressay Sound, and burned four hundred busses, leaving one hundred to convey home the crews of those destroyed. Again in the year

* Neill's Tour, p. 216. † Hibbert's "Zetland," p. 499.

1772, the French burned one hundred and fifty of these vessels in Bressay Sound. In the year 1774, "the number of Dutch vessels only amounted to two hundred; but there were as many, at the same time belonging to the Danes, the Prussians, the French, and the Flemings; the English had also two vessels, and the Scotch one." * In the end of the last, and beginning of the present century, this great enterprise was much crippled by the wars consequent on the French Revolution, and from that shock it has never recovered. During the present century, the number of Dutch vessels fishing on the Shetland coast has generally been from thirty to sixty.

As already mentioned, the annual visit of the Dutchmen was the occasion for extensive commercial intercourse between them and the Shetlanders. Large quantities of native hosiery, stockings, gloves, night-caps, rugs, &c., were either sold for money, or bartered for groceries. A great annual fair was held in the end of June, on a hillock three miles from Lerwick, still called the "Hollanders' Knowe." None of the busses were provided with boats, and therefore the men of Lerwick and neighbourhood found extensive and lucrative employment, in conveying these Dutch visitors to and from their vessels. Although it is no longer possible to cross Bressay Sound on a bridge of busses, as it is said to have been in the good days of yore, when two thousand of such craft graced the harbour, the arrival of these picturesque vessels, and their equally picturesque crews, still lends an agreeable variety to Lerwick life, in the end of June each year. While their ships are in port, the Hollanders spend much of their time on "de wall," as they term the shore. In face and form they are all very much alike; the former being of the Teutonic cast, and the latter, of course, of the "Dutch build." As to dress, however, they present consider-

* Hibbert's "Zetland," p. 499.

able variety. The more respectable looking wear the striped cotton *blouse*, with cloth cap and trousers, and leather shoes, which is so common amongst the peasantry of France and the Netherlands. The majority have their feet incased in sabots, "clogs," or "clumpers" of wood, whose shape very much resembles their ships in miniature. These clog-shod Dutchmen have their heads protected by sou'-westers, or more sombre-looking cloth caps, their bodies by blouses of striped cotton or canvas, and their "understandings" by long stockings, surmounted sometimes by knickerbockers; at others, by genuine petticoats—all of canvas. Thus attired it is very amusing to see them walking up and down the street, with long pipes in their mouths, and their hands in their pockets. As a recent writer has very justly remarked, they are a very "quiet, peaceable, decent sort of people." They can both take and give "de schnapps," but they almost never get the worse of drink. Nevertheless they are by no means devoid of frolic. In their season, it is no rare sight to see a group of honest Netherlanders parading the street, with their hands round each other's necks, singing the praises of "de Vaterland," to the accompaniment of a concertina. When a sufficiently open space is reached, the vocalists stop, and dance to their music with a grace which may be imagined from the nature of their shoes.

During their sojourn in Lerwick, one day has been set apart, from time immemorial, for a very favourite pastime with the Dutchmen, viz., exercise on horseback. It is to be regretted that, of late years, this holiday has not been taken advantage of. Most amusing scenes are to be witnessed between the Hillhead and the Knab on this "Dutchman's riding day." They have lately been very felicitously described by an abler pen than mine, and this description I shall take the liberty of transcribing.

"On that day," says Dr. Kerr, "dozens of those who have horses assemble, steeds in hand, on a piece of ground above the town, and thither, too, betake themselves the horsey portion of the Dutchmen for twopence worth of equestrianism, which consists of a gallop out for half a mile or so and back again. For the most part women and boys are in charge of the steeds, with every conceivable kind of halter, from the decent leather to the old and apparently rotten rope; some with saddles and stirrups, some with saddles without stirrups, some with an unambitious piece of coarse cloth or straw mat. Here a great tall fellow goes up to a very little pony, pays his twopence—it is always prepaid—and prepares to mount. But how is he to get the sabot, with a point like the prow of his own buss, into the stirrups? It evidently can't be done. Off go the sabots—a shake is all that is necessary—and he gets into the saddle. At first he grasps only the bridle, but as the pace quickens—and it soon does that, for he means to have his twopence-worth—you see his hand slip round to the back part of the saddle and take a firm hold. This is all very well, but the saddle itself is shaky, and the pony's back short; so he must have more leverage by grasping the tail. There, now he's all right; but the motion is neither graceful nor easy, and his hat flies off. This was expected, for the woman or boy in charge follows behind for the double purpose of increasing the pace by whipping, and picking up anything that may be shaken loose. And now that he gets toward the end of his ride, heel, bridle, and lash are pressed into service. One hand is required to hold on either by saddle or tail, the other is needed for the lash. How, then, can he dispose of the bridle? In his teeth of course, and there he holds it. On he comes full swing. The road is very rough and downhill now. His legs are well extended, and he is making no prehensile use of his knees. This can't last

long. Hallo! there he's off rolling, with little harm done." * At least one Dutchman's ride did not terminate so innocently, for tradition tells us that a skipper, once upon a time, galloped too fast and too far, till both horse and rider went over a precipice, at the Knab, and were dashed to pieces. The place is called the "Dutchman's Leap" to this day.

These fishermen keep both themselves and their ships scrupulously clean. "Each buss is provided with seventy nets, each eighteen fathoms long, and has a crew of fourteen men. There are rollers at the sides of the ship and of the hold, for the convenience of pulling in the nets; and the masts are jointed near the deck, so that they may be lowered for the purpose of lying-to, for the purpose of hauling in the nets. The crews set to work, and clean and barrel the herring as fast as they are taken out of the nets; and as soon as the whole fleet has barrelled as much as makes a ship's cargo, a yagger is immediately despatched home, and returns empty for another load. By this expeditious process the herrings arrive at the Dutch ports fresher and in better condition than the best brand herrings of our Scotch fisheries." † Clumsy as they appear, the Dutch busses are very comfortable and commodious, excellent sea-boats, and not bad sailers. Their appearance is old-fashioned enough to suggest the idea of an old Roman galley. Those who admire the antique and the picturesque will rather regret that our old rivals in the empire of the seas are condescending to "take a wrinkle from us." During the last few years, many smart-looking smacks, similar to those of Grimsby and Hull, have appeared amongst the Dutch herring fleet.

Boat sailing is a very favourite pastime with the Lerwegian youths, who handle their little vessels most

* "Shetland and the Shetlanders," by John Kerr, H.M. Inspector of Schools, in *Good Words*, February, 1866.

† Benjie's "Tour in Shetland," p. 10.

dexterously. On a fine summer afternoon, the harbour presents a very lively appearance, when graced by numerous smart little craft, with large white sails, neat rigging, and gaudily-painted hulls. The boats are all native built, and vary from ten to fifteen feet of keel. Their rig is either that of the sloop or the lugger. They bear a great spread of canvas for their size, are good sea boats, sail swiftly, and lie remarkably near the wind.

As already mentioned, the herring fishing, as an industry, does not commence before the middle of August. In the months of May and June, however, shoals of herrings frequently enter the bays, when they are easily captured by means of *dandy* lines. These consist of bare white hooks, suspended by pieces of whalebone, which are kept in their proper place by a lead, and attached to a line. The lines are constantly wrought up and down through the water. The capture of herrings in this way, often pursued by the regular fisherman, affords excellent sport to *amateurs*, who greatly enjoy the excitement it involves. The fishing has been very successful for the last few years, curers and boats coming from Orkney and Caithness to engage in it. On being taken out of the water, the fish present a beautiful, sparkling, silvery appearance. Lerwick also affords facilities for the fishing of mackerel in August and September. It is conducted by means of flies from boats, kept constantly in motion, either by sails or oars. They move in shoals, and for this reason, as many as from twelve to twenty are often caught on the same line at a time. The capture of mackerel is excellent sport, combining as it does fishing and boat-sailing.

History.—As already mentioned, Lerwick appears to have been founded as a trading post with the Dutch early in the seventeenth century. During that century, and the beginning of the next, it seems to have enjoyed considerable prosperity, owing to the arrival of large

numbers of busses in the summer time. Thus, in 1701, it contained between two and three hundred families, but towards the middle and end of the last century, it gradually declined. Mr. Low, who visited Lerwick in 1778, tells us its inhabitants at that time only consisted of one hundred and forty families. Since the commencement of the present century, the town has been pretty steadily on the increase, and, although all along there has been an insufficiency of employment for the inhabitants, its prosperity does not seem to have been quite so dependent on the visits of foreign vessels as in the earlier years of its history. The following table will illustrate the increase of its population during the present century :—

Population in

1800	*1300*	1831	2750
1811	*1500*	1841	*2850*
1821	2224	1861	3061

The population of Lerwick in 1800, 1811, 1841, is placed in different type, because it is merely estimated from that of the whole parish—town and landward portions combined. In the other years of the census, the populations of town and landward districts were taken separately.

The erection of the New Town is a substantial proof of the increase of population. Many of the new inhabitants are decayed crofters from the country districts. Others have abandoned their farms and removed to Lerwick, rather than submit to the new regulations now enjoined on certain estates.

Fort Charlotte.—This fortress was originally built by Oliver Cromwell, who evidently found some difficulty in holding the islands against the Earl of Morton, a great favourite and staunch partisan of the unfortunate Charles I. It was repaired by Charles II., in 1665, at a cost of £28,000. In the Dutch war of that period, Lerwick mounted from twenty to thirty cannon, and was garrisoned, for three years, by three

hundred men, under the command of Colonel William Sinclair, a native of the county. It is probable some of these guns were mounted in the old Battery, a fortification, now ruinous, situated near the Knab, on an eminence which overhangs the south end of the town, and that the three hundred men were divided between there and Fort Charlotte. After this time, the garrison was withdrawn, and the citadel fell into disrepair. In the beginning of last century, Lerwick was visited by a Dutch frigate, which burnt the fort and several houses in the town. In 1781, the citadel was completely repaired, and named after the Queen of George III., Fort Charlotte—containing accommodation for two or three companies. It was mounted with twelve guns, and during the great wars of 1802-15, was garrisoned by a veteran batallion. On the establishment of a permanent peace in the last-mentioned year, the troops were withdrawn, and the buildings in the fort have since been used for various useful public purposes. For a number of years Fort Charlotte served as a Court House, Prison, Armoury for Rifle Corps, Coast Guard Station, and Drill Station for R. N. Reserve. In 1878, it was transferred from the War Department to the Lords' Commissioners of the Admiralty, and is now used entirely as Drill Station for the Royal Naval Reserve. Officers and Instructors occupy quarters in the fort. The twelve cannon, after doing duty as military ornaments (for they never fired a shot at an enemy) for nearly eighty years, became useless, and were removed about 1855. Fort Charlotte was thus deprived of guns, until 1860, when a marine battery was erected on the ramparts for the use of the Naval Reserve, and mounted with two smooth-bore 32-pounders. This battery has recently been enlarged, and mounted with two $6\frac{1}{2}$ ton rifled guns. It is beautifully fitted up so as to represent the "tween decks" of an ironclad. Target practice takes place at a new two gun battery at Freefield,

three hundred yards north of the fort, where the Reserve men command a much more extensive range. Since 1st January, Shetland and Orkney have been formed into a Coast Guard Division. Two cruisers, one steam, and another sailing, are attached to the division for Reserve purposes; and protection of life and property division under the command of Commander, R. N.

Rifle Corps. — The 1st Zetland Rifle Volunteer Corps, which has its head-quarters in Seamen's Home and Institute, Commercial Street, first organised in 1860, and was greatly indebted for its early success to the zeal and energy of the first commanding officer, Robert Bell, Esq., of Lunna, then Sheriff-Substitute of the county. Lieutenant Bell, on leaving the county in 1865, was succeeded by Arthur J. Hay, Esq., under whom the corps continued to flourish, until it soon became a company, and the commanding officer received the commission of captain. Whatever be its military advantages, the Rifle Corps has been eminently useful in promoting the physical education, and, through that, the moral purity of the young men attached to it. A Seamen's Home and Institute was opened in 1875, but as yet the class which was sought to be benefited by it has taken little advantage of it.

The Anderson Institute was erected and founded in 1862, by Arthur Anderson, Esq., who represented his native county in Parliament from 1847 to 1852. Over the principal entrance is placed a sculpture in honour of the late Thomas Bolt., Esq., of Cruster, Bressay, which represents an incident from which the founder dated his success in life. Mr. Bolt, attired according to the fashion of the day, in taking leave of his clerk, Arthur Anderson, then about to enter the navy, is represented as imparting to him the sage advice of "Do weel and persevere." This worthy gentleman, whose memory is thus deservedly honoured, was the last of a Shetland family held in high esteem for many

generations. In the hall, which is a small but lofty apartment, with a handsome Gothic roof, are hung beautiful oil paintings of Mr. and Mrs. Anderson, which were presented to that gentleman by the community of Shetland in 1866. Besides the hall, the building contains three large and commodious class-rooms, and ample accommodation for the principal and his boarders. The Institute consists of an upper school or academy, and an elementary school, both of which are well attended. It is presided over by a principal, who is assisted by two male, and three or four female teachers. For the first four or five years of its history the Institute did not come up to the expectations formed of it, but since the appointment of the late principal in 1867, it has been judiciously managed, and the excellent nature of its tuition has been shown by the high places taken by the pupils at the University Middle Class Examinations.

The Widows' Asylum, situated on a prominent site exactly at the south end of the town, was erected and founded in 1865 by Mr. Anderson, in compliance with a dying request of his excellent spouse. It is intended for the benefit of Shetland widows, those of sailors and fishermen who have perished at sea having the preference. It consists of forty-two apartments, which give accommodation to about twenty-one widows and their families, under the inspection of a matron. In connection with the Asylum is a pension fund, also provided by the generous founder, the benefits of which extend in equal proportion to each parish in Shetland. The recipients of this fund are widows who do not reside in the Asylum.

The first Public School, is also in a highly efficient state, and well attended. The master is assisted by two or more pupil teachers. The principal class-room of this handsome building, the erection of which is highly creditable to the public spirit of the heritors—is the largest and most commodious hall in the town,

and the use of it has frequently been granted for concerts, lectures, &c.

The Episcopal School, situated alongside the church, is largely attended by children of the lower orders, amongst whom it has done much good. There are one or two private schools in the town.

Municipal Affairs.—In the olden time, Lerwick, like other parishes in Shetland, was governed by a Bailie. By the abolition of the office, great inconvenience appears to have been occasioned. It was only in 1817 that Lerwick obtained a charter, and was erected into a Borough of Barony, under the government of two Bailies and nine Councillors, who are elected by the burgesses triennially. Under the charter, and older Police Acts, the powers of the Town Council and Police Commissioners were very limited. In 1867, however, the "Lindsay Act" was adopted in the Borough, and the hitherto separate bodies of Town Council and Commissioners of Police amalgamated, whereupon the Town Council immediately set about the much required sanitary improvements of carrying out a regular system of drainage, and bringing a proper supply of water into the town. The water is brought through pipes from the "Sandy Loch," which stands on high ground, two miles west of Lerwick. However unable the town may be at present to bear the heavy expenses incident on these improvements, there is no doubt it will be greatly benefited by them.

Overcrowding exists in Lerwick to a greater extent than in probably any town of its size. Among the lower orders the dwelling of each family consists of one room, generally from ten to twelve feet square, and seldom more than seven feet high, which serves all purposes, diurnal and nocturnal. Frequently, however, in addition to a family of from five to ten individuals, two or three lodgers sojourn in their already crowded abode. Tenements of the same class constitute the ordinary lodging-houses for sailors, and the

peasantry from the country districts. "Mine host," in this instance, is generally an elderly female without a family, or with a very small one. These one-roomed lodging-houses are generally much more overcrowded than the ordinary family dwellings. Very often they accommodate a dozen lodgers of both sexes, and in one instance, I have heard of twenty-two human beings passing the night in such a "Black Hole." Lodging houses must now be licenced, and overcrowding is prevented by the authorities. The good health which commonly prevails, despite such untoward hygienic circumstances, seems only explicable on the principle laid down by a late esteemed member of the medical faculty, long resident in the town, who used to remark that in Lerwick "the Stoney Hill is the poor folk's doctor." * As might be expected, typhus occasionally visits the dingy lanes of Lerwick. The small Fever Hospital near the Knab, which accommodates fourteen patients, has been of signal service to the town on these unhappy occasions. It is a good specimen of a cottage hospital, built long before the immense hygienic merit of such erections was known.

Courts.—Being the county town, Lerwick is the seat of the Sheriff, Commissary, and Justice of Peace Courts. Here also the Commissioners of Supply and Road Trustees meet at certain statutory times. The Bailies sit for the trial of petty offences in the borough, as occasion requires. The Provincial Synod of Shetland also holds its annual meeting here, and the Presbytery of Lerwick, and the Free Church Presbytery of Shetland, assemble more frequently. The assemblages of county gentry and "country parsons" thus occasioned, lend an agreeable variety to the social circle of

* The gentleman referred to is the late Mr. William Spence, Staff Surgeon in the Army. The Stoney Hill, about two miles from the town, is the place from which the Lerwick people bring their peats, generally in *cassies*. This process implies a considerable amount of daily exercise in the purest of air.

the Zetland metropolis. Some of these Courts excite considerable interest. The annual meeting of the Synod of Shetland, hitherto held at the same time as the county meetings, in the end of April, has for some years been the scene of very animated debates, attracting large audiences.

Markets.—The town is very well supplied with fresh meat by the butchers. Many families continue to supplement their supplies by killing cattle about Martinmas, and salting them down for winter use. Fish can generally be obtained in abundance during the summer months, but is often scarce in winter. The country districts amply supply the town with potatoes, while the gardens of Lerwick, or the green-grocers' shops, furnish a good stock of fresh vegetables. Poultry is generally scarce, but the article of food whose supply is most deficient is the very important one of milk. From this deficiency it is to be feared, the health of the younger members of the community frequently suffers.

There are no public places of amusement and instruction. This want should be particularly felt in the winter time, when there are so many sailors at home. The poor fellows, being forced by discomfort out of their humble lodgings, generally spend the long and dark evenings in the streets, where they are exposed to drink and other allurements. A comfortable reading-room, it was thought, would conduce greatly to the physical comfort, as well as the moral and intellectual welfare of these men. Such an institution, conducted on the most approved principles, has lately been tried, but, to the shame of Shetland seamen, be it said, it has had to be abolished because scarcely one of the class it was designed to benefit ever entered it. The Shetland Literary and Scientific Society, in its early years, provided a course of lectures during the winter, but these have been discontinued for the last four or five seasons, and both the society and its library and museum have, unfortunately, become objects of little regard.

Some fine walks may be had in the vicinity of Lerwick. A fine specimen of a Shetland rocky coast—with most varieties of cliff, *Stack*, headland, and beach—may be viewed on a ramble along the shore, from the Slates, with its well-formed natural pier, towards the Knab. From the top of that promontory—not its extreme point, which only a sure-footed cragsman can reach—a very extensive and interesting prospect of almost every variety of Shetland scenery amply rewards the pedestrian. In ominous proximity to the hospital, on the steep slope overhanging the freestone quarries, and overlooking Bressay Sound, is the Cemetery, recently formed, and beautifully laid out in terraces and walks. This district was not always a resting-place for the dead, for immediately above it was the Dutchmen's "Rid Berg," and on the height over that again, the old battery, a fortification long since disused.

CHAPTER VII.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION WITH OTHER PLACES.

Little Intercourse with Mainland of Scotland for a long period—Illustrations of this—Sloops running to Leith—Wreck of the *Doris* — Smuggling Trade with Holland — Schooners to Leith — Steamers — Introduction of Penny Postage — Great Increase of Letters, &c., since—Trade between West Side of Shetland and Leith—Between North Isles and Lerwick—Steamer—Story — Iceland Mail Steamer — Shetland Telegraph.

BEFORE proceeding further with a topographical account of parishes or districts, let us consider some matters affecting the whole county. Writing, as I now attempt to do, a few years after what every enlightened man must regard as the most important event which has occurred in the history of Shetland for many years, viz., the opening of telegraphic communication with the mainland of Scotland, it is difficult to believe that the Ultima Thule was as much out of the world, and as difficult of access, within the memory of many still living, as it was in the days of the ancient Romans. For many centuries after the Islands were annexed to Scotland, in 1468, Shetland enjoyed little intercourse with that country, the most of its trade being carried on with Hamburg, Bremen, and other continental ports. No doubt the annual resort of numerous vessels from these parts to the Shetland coast, for the purpose of prosecuting the fishing, was the cause of this commercial intercourse. Communication with the rest of the world, seems, in these olden times, to have been very irregular; and many months must frequently have passed, particularly in the winter time, without the arrival of a

vessel. For instance, tradition tells us that the Revolution of 1688, which occurred in November, was not known of in Shetland till the month of May following, when a Scotch skipper, happening to be at Lerwick over the Sunday, went to the kirk, where he was surprised to hear the worthy parson praying for "guid King Jamie." After the conclusion of the service the captain remarked to some of his fellow-worshippers that, surely the minister must be a very ignorant man, when he was praying for a king who had been deposed six months ago. This remark was newsed abroad; whereupon the loyal authorities of Lerwick immediately had the revolutionary skipper arrested, on a charge of high treason. Fortunately for him, however, official intelligence of the Revolution soon reached the island. Again tradition furnishes us with an apt illustration of the extremely indirect communication that existed between Shetland and the mother country in the good days of yore. The Rev. Mr. Gray of Nesting, a man evidently of some mark in his day, which was in the beginning of last century, is said to have held the high office of Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. This must be a mistake, for we do not find his name in the list of Moderators. However, he was a member of that venerable house, and his mode of travelling to Edinburgh to attend its meetings is described. The rev. gentleman came from Nesting to Lerwick in a boat, whence he went to Hamburg in a smack, and from there to London by another smack. From London he accomplished his journey to Edinburgh by coach. During last century, the Shetland clergy, who attended the meetings of the General Assembly, which they surely did not do very often, were in the habit of leaving their parishes in August or September, residing all winter somewhere on the mainland of Scotland, and only returning to their northern homes in June following, after the Assembly had been dis-

solved. Some of the old Session records contain notices of these rev. gentlemen, intimating their intended departure, and commending the care of the flock to the elders until their return.

After the Dutch and Flemings withdrew their booths from Shetland, and ceased to employ the natives to fish for them, in the beginning of last century, intercourse between the Islands and the mainland of Scotland became more frequent, although it still continued very irregular. Much of this irregularity was due to the antiquated "build" of the vessels which could scarcely make a voyage, unless with a favourable wind. Hence the old records afford numerous instances of craft bound from Scotch ports to Shetland being driven to Norway; a fate, it is almost unnecessary to add, never shared by the clippers of the present day. Trade between Lerwick and Leith was carried on by means of sloops, which made not more than seven voyages in the year. After discharging the chief portion of their cargoes at Lerwick, those smacks generally called at the principal ports in the North Isles, returning to Lerwick on their way south. They generally carried "ship letter mails," and their periods of arrival were most irregular. Thus Mr. Neill, writing in 1804, tells us that "sometimes the letters for two or three months arrive at one and the same moment."* Despite the miserable character of their accommodation, they were frequently crowded by passengers of all classes. In February, 1813, the sloop *Doris*, while on her voyage from Leith to Lerwick, with a heavy cargo, and many passengers, was overtaken by a severe gale off the Aberdeenshire coast, when all on board perished. The passengers included a representative of nearly every leading family in the Islands, so that the wreck of the *Doris* is still remembered as one of the most melancholy

* Neill's "Tour in Orkney and Shetland," p. 94.

events in the annals of Shetland. But although the foreigners had withdrawn their booths from Shetland, the natives still cherished a warm affection for their continental friends, and continued to return the many visits the Dutch had paid them in bygone ages. The trade was contraband, and therefore the voyages were made with all possible secrecy. The ordinary practice was for a vessel (probably not larger than a sloop), after clearing at the Custom-house at Lerwick, for Norway, to proceed direct to Holland, where she loaded gin and tobacco, which were quietly landed at Unst, Foula, or some remote part of Shetland. The smuggler then made all haste for his acknowledged destination, loaded timber, and, returning to Lerwick, reported himself as having been at Norway all the time. The disaster of the *Doris* was ascribed as much to the narrow build and over-laden condition of the smack, as to the violence of the storm; and it had the good effect of bringing a larger and better class of vessels into the trade; for we find the old-fashioned sloops were soon superseded by more modern schooners. One schooner succeeded another in the Lerwick and Leith trade, each generation of craft being an improvement on that which went before it, until the *Magnus Troil*, built in 1830, expressly for the trade, and named after the hero of the "Pirate," was considered the climax of all schooner-like perfection. However, she was in turn superseded by the *Matchless*, built in 1847, and so named from having attained to a perfection which could not be surpassed. This gallant clipper still plies between Lerwick and Leith, bringing good cargoes to the merchants, and as good dividends to the owners, but she seems destined to be the last sailing passenger ship in the trade. In 1832, the first steamer appeared on the Shetland coast, and occasioned some alarm amongst the unsophisticated peasantry, who supposed it to be a ship on fire. In 1836, the paddle steamer *Sovereign*, belonging to the Aberdeen, Leith,

and Clyde Shipping Company, commenced to ply between Granton and Lerwick, calling at the intermediate ports of Aberdeen, Wick, and Kirkwall. She arrived at Lerwick every alternate Wednesday morning, carrying merely passengers, ship letter mails, and light goods; and, after lying about three hours, returned the same forenoon. In 1838, the Government, at the suggestion of Mr. Dundas, M.P. for the county, entered into a contract with this company, who undertook to carry a mail, per steamer, to Shetland every week, from April to October, and, during winter, by means of a sailing vessel, from Aberdeen, as often as weather would permit. Since then, regular steam communication has continued, and the vessels have gradually improved with the advance of the age. An immense impetus was given to postal communication by the introduction, in 1840, of the penny post. Since then, the number of letters passing to and from Shetland has enormously increased; as the following valuable statistics kindly furnished me by the Surveyor of the General Post Office, Edinburgh, and the Postmaster, Lerwick, abundantly prove: —

SHETLAND.

Average number of letters and papers from the south delivered there for a week.

In year	1841	average	letters, &c.,	per week	1296
,,	1846	,,	,,	,,	1585
,,	1864	,,	,,	,,	4216
,,	1872	,,	,,	,,	7455
,,	1873	on one counting	week	.....	8315
,,	1874	,,	,,		9347

The increase of epistolary correspondence between 1841 and 1874—little more than a generation—has thus been upwards of sevenfold. During ten years, from 1864 to 1874, it has been considerably more than doubled; and it is evidently advancing with increasing ratio every year. In considering these statistics, it

must be remembered that a newspaper agency was only established at Lerwick in 1864, previous to which year all newspapers received in Shetland came by post. Since then most of them have come by other means, their number being much increased. Money-orders also show a great increase, but not so striking as letters.

MONEY-ORDERS.

Year 1846.			Year 1872.		
No.	Amount.		No.	Amount.	
Issued 593	£1385 14 8		Issued 2151	£4141 8 5	
Paid 2060	4795 16 9		Paid 4144	9425 7 1	
Total 2653	£6181 11 5		Total 6295	£13,566 15 6	

In 1858, the steamer (a screw) commenced to run all winter, as well as summer; and in 1866, a bi-weekly boat was added for the summer months. With these facilities for travelling, the number of tourists and business men visiting Shetland has greatly increased. For the last twenty years or more, a smart schooner has plied between Leith and the various small ports on the west side of Shetland. The pretty little clipper, *Queen of the Isles*, at present in that trade, makes a voyage once a month—this great amount of time being consumed by calling at so many different creeks.

Until 1839, there was no regular communication between Lerwick and the North Isles of Shetland. A traveller bound for that quarter had either to hire a six-oared boat, at great expense; go overland, crossing the ferries, a most arduous mode of travelling in the absence of roads; or, if he was gifted with great patience, wait until one of the Leith traders happened to be going north—no very frequent event. In that year the *Janet*, a small sloop of about thirty tons, commenced to ply between Lerwick and Unst. She was soon followed by better vessels of the same class, which went on improving, every decade, until 1868, when the screw-steamer *Chieftain's Bride*, of sixty-four

tons, was purchased by a local company, and put on the North Isles and Yell Sound passage. The *peerie* steamer—as the natives call her, in contradistinction to the larger one trading to the south—makes two, and at certain seasons, three voyages to the north each week, landing and taking on board passengers and goods at numerous ports of call. It is only those who have experienced the discomforts, uncertainty, overcrowding, and detention—often extending over nights and days—to which voyagers in the old packets were subjected, who can fully appreciate the advantages of this little steamer. She is rapidly developing the resources of the country, and will, it is to be hoped, in due time yield a fair return to the owners. A short time since a superior vessel, the s.s. *Earl of Zetland*, has been put on that passage, in place of the *Chieftain's Bride*, which was found insufficient.

It will appear almost incredible that, so recently as 1847, no steam-vessel had been seen in the north isles of Shetland. In the summer of that year, the late Mr. Arthur Anderson, then a candidate for the representation of the county, entered a certain voe in Yell in his steam-yacht. Some noise was occasioned by blowing off steam. Two unsophisticated islanders, who were engaged picking limpets on the seashore, surveyed the *fire-ship* in blank astonishment. At length, the more strong-minded of the two handed his snuff-horn to his terrified companion, with the exhortation, "O Jamie, Jamie, tak' doo a snuff, for doo 'l snuff nae mair wi' me till we snuff together in glory." He had concluded the great day of wrath had come, and that on board the steamer was the angel blowing the last trumpet!

In the spring of 1870 the Iceland and Faroe Mail Steamer, plying between Copenhagen and those islands, commenced to call at Lerwick. This vessel calls three times a year, both on her way to and from Iceland, viz., in April, May, June, and again in September. This may in time develop a trade with these countries.

But of means of communication with other places, the greatest of all is that most recently introduced, viz., the telegraph. For this great boon we are undoubtedly indebted to Mr. George H. B. Hay, the senior resident representative of a family which has for generations been honourably associated with the commercial and landed interests of Shetland. At the suggestion of Mr. Hay, Mr. Holmes of London, in 1869, started the Orkney and Shetland Telegraph Company with a capital of £20,000. Before commencing operations the company required a guarantee of £1000 a-year for three years. To meet this a subscription was opened, and headed by the Earl of Zetland with £150 per annum, and, on his return from London, Mr. Hay held meetings of the principal inhabitants of Kirkwall and Lerwick, in both of which towns, particularly the latter, the Earl's noble example was so readily followed that, in a very short time, twice the amount of guarantee required was subscribed. The cable was laid from Wick to Dunrossness, Shetland, through Orkney, in the autumn of 1869; but unfortunately that portion crossing the Pentland Firth was injured, and the shore end at Sanday sunk, so that attemps to complete the line could not again be made until the following summer. The good ship *Hayle*, of Aberdeen, successfully accomplished the work, and, on the 8th September, 1870, telegraphic communication was opened between the benighted isles of Ultima Thule and the rest of the world. Its results in promoting the peace and prosperity of the future no one can calculate, but it is matter of regret that the first messages it flashed along the depths of ocean told the horrors of the great Franco-Prussian War. From Dunrossness the wires are carried on poles to Lerwick, whence there is a branch across to Scalloway. In the autumn of 1871, the line was extended, through the mainland and Yell, to Unst, the

most northerly of the group.* In 1876, the line was taken over from the Orkney and Shetland Telegraph Company by Government.

* Since the Shetland telegraph cable was laid, it has four times given way across Eday Sound, Orkney, and on two of these occasions has remained for several months unrepaired. These numerous accidents to the cable have proved most inconvenient to the Shetland community. It is evident the telegraph to these islands, if it is ever to be efficient, must take a different route from the present.

CHAPTER VIII.

ROADS.

None till End of Last Century—Those constructed by Highland Destitution Board — "Zetland Roads Act, 1864" — Good Results of Roads—Illustrative Stories.

UNTIL the end of last century, Shetland was altogether unprovided with roads, and some of the extreme old Tories argued none were required, as the sea was the natural highway. While this state of matters lasted, many an arduous and dangerous journey on foot must have been undergone, for ponies were only available in the dry weather of summer, and other conveyances were out of the question. Not unfrequently valuable lives were lost on the hills. After Fort Charlotte was repaired, in 1781, the Government constructed several short lines in the neighbourhood of Lerwick, for the use of the troops. The best road thus made was from the Fort to the Knab; and it was intended for the transport of cannon, in the event of an enemy's fleet entering the harbour. Shortly after this a road from Lerwick to Tingwall, running direct, "as the crow flies," up hill, down dale, was constructed, at their own expense, by two gentlemen resident in that parish, Mr. Scott of Scotshall, Sheriff-Substitute, and Mr. Robert Ross of Sound.

The old adage, that "it is an ill wind that blows no man good," was strikingly exemplified by the Shetland destitution in the years 1846-7-8-9, occasioned by the failure of the potato crop; for the Edinburgh Section of the Board for the Relief of Highland Destitution, after due inquiry into the circumstances of the sufferers, resolved to aid them with both meal and money, on

condition that they would, in return, enter on some kind of work. Road-making was chosen, as being the most required public improvement, and that most likely to prove of lasting benefit to the country. The terms on which the Destitution Board agreed to construct these lines were, that they would furnish two-thirds of the money required, on condition of the proprietors providing the other third. The affairs of the Board in Shetland were admirably managed by the local Inspector, Captain (afterwards Admiral) Craigie, to whom the county owes a lasting debt of gratitude, not only for the tact he displayed in inducing many proprietors to enter into the scheme for constructing main trunk lines likely to benefit the whole country, in opposition to small side-roads for the benefit of particular districts and individuals, but for his kindness in persuading the Board to make a much larger grant to Shetland than they had originally contemplated. The noble projectors of the Destitution Board were generously seconded by Government, who sent down Captain Webb, an able engineer officer, and a party of sappers and miners. Various proprietors, especially Mr. Gifford of Busta, Mr. Bell of Lunna, Mr. Bruce of Sumburgh, Mr. Cheyne of Tangwick, and Mr. Black of Kergord, co-operated with Captain Craigie; and in the course of three years, from 1849 onwards, one hundred and twenty miles of trunk road were surveyed by Captain Webb, R.E., and constructed under his own personal superintendence, and that of his sappers and miners. These lines connect Lerwick with Dunrossness on the south, Scalloway, Walls, and Hillswick on the west, and Mossbank and Lunna on the north, while another runs through the length of Yell, from Cullivoe to Burravoe; and considering the economy with which they were necessarily constructed, and the want, until lately, of any adequate means of maintaining them, the roads have stood the test of time remarkably well.

In 1864, the "Zetland Roads Act" was passed through Parliament by the late member for the county. It gives extensive borrowing powers to the Road Trustees, and by this means the existing roads have been pretty efficiently repaired, especially those in the neighbourhood of Lerwick, and considerable progress made in the construction of new ones. New roads have been, or are being, made in the parishes of Dunrossness and Sandwick, and lines of great importance from Effirth to Sand and Reawick, in Sandsting from Mossbank to Brae, in Delting, from Ollaberry to Hillswick, in Northmavine, and from Uyea Sound to Balta Sound, in Unst.

The construction of roads very speedily led to the introduction of larger animals of the horse tribe than those peculiar to Shetland, while carts increased both in number and size; and gigs and other wheeled vehicles, hitherto unknown, became numerous. About the time when the present century was entering on its second quarter, an invalid, residing in rather a remote parish, had daily carriage exercise prescribed for her; but how was that to be had without a road? Her ingenious husband at once solved the difficulty, by substituting a wheelbarrow; a contrivance, let us hope, as beneficial to his fair partner as it was amusing to her neighbours.

The erection of inns generally follows the opening up of roads nearly as quickly as vehicles. As yet, however, it has not been so in Shetland. The Aberdeen steamer and the Highland destitution together have greatly raised the price of all country produce. A story may perhaps best illustrate this. A good many years ago, an English tourist was, in the words of a local poet, for a short time

> "Doomed to dwell
> Amongst the hills and the peat bogs of Yell."

Having passed the night at a little wayside inn, the servant asked him next morning what he would have

for breakfast. The meagre bill of fare having been quoted, the traveller replied, "I'll have eggs." "How many?" inquired the waiter. "Oh," said the traveller, "say sixpence worth." The maid disappeared, and after some delay, re-entered the room, carrying a huge tray well piled with eggs. Depositing her burden on the table, she said, "I'm sorry, sir, we have not a pan large enough to boil the whole, but the rest will soon be ready." This was the first instalment of four dozen; for the eggs were then three halfpence a dozen.

CHAPTER IX.

AGRICULTURE.

Its Primitive Character—Grain derived at one time from Orkney—An Orkney Farmer's Voyage to Shetland—Oats and Bere—Cabbage—Potatoes—Turnips—Rye-Grass—White Oats—Products of the Garden—Soil—The Shetlander's Croft—Manure Farm Implements—The Shetland Mill—Seedtime—Causes of Destitution—Cattle—Poultry—Pigs—Dogs.

AS already stated, the ancient Norse inhabitants of these islands, at first pirates, in course of time became shepherds, but they never appear to have excelled in agriculture. Their mode of husbandry was of the most primitive description; but rude as it was, their descendants continued to pursue it for many generations without any attempt at improvement. Many causes conspired in the different ages to retard progress, such as the piratical character of the early inhabitants, the oppression to which their successors were subjected by the donatories and farmers of the crown lands during their long reign, and then, in later times, the smuggling trade; while at all times the remote position of the islands, their distance from markets, the ignorance of the people, the uncertain tenure by which they held their farms, and the absence of agricultural models from which they might learn, have contributed to the same result.

Mr. Mackaile, who visited Orkney in 1614, informs us that country sent annually large supplies of grain to Shetland, "in which islands there groweth not so much every year as would maintain the inhabitants three months." * A very small area of land must have been

* Matthew Mackaile's (Apothecary), Aberdeen, "Short Relation of the Most Considerable Things in Orkney," M.S., Adv. Lib. Edinburgh, quoted in Barry's History of Orkney.

under cultivation, for the population at that time was probably about half its present number. A trade of some extent appears to have existed at this period between the sister groups of islands. While Orkney sent meal to Shetland, it got wool in return. This commerce was carried on by open boats, and the "folk lore" of Shetland, whose people have always been rather jealous of their next-door neighbours, has preserved the story of a timid Orkney farmer, of no great nautical knowledge, who, on setting out on his northern voyage felt solicitous as to how he would find his way back again, when he ingeniously fell upon the expedient of strewing *sids* as he went, thus to form a path across the trackless sea, and guide his return. Having safely landed his cargo, and shipped his wool, and turned his prow towards his native land, the worthy Orcadian was astonished to find his pathway across the dark waters vanished and gone; and we have not since heard of a renewed attempt at oceanic road-making.

Writing of agriculture in Shetland in 1806, Sir Alexander Seton (no mean authority on such matters), says—"It seems to be evident that no attempt at improvement has been made since the departure of the Norwegians. On the contrary, it is probable, from the ingenious and industrious character possessed by the present inhabitants of Norway, that things have been rather retrograde in Shetland." In early times, Shetland husbandry seems to have been restricted to the production of grey and black oats, and bere or bigg. The straw of these cereals, and hay, prepared from the wild grasses of the meadows, formed the only winter fodder. The culture of cabbage was introduced, in the time of the commonwealth, by a detachment of Cromwell's soldiers, one portion of which was stationed at the citadel of Lerwick, and another at Scalloway castle. This plant was soon largely cultivated, and became an important article of food for man, and sometimes for beast. Potatoes were introduced into the islands about

1730, but their cultivation only became general after the middle of that century. They have shewn themselves admirably adapted to the soil and climate, and have long been the staple article of diet, so that it is difficult to imagine how the natives contrived to subsist without them. Probably, cabbage supplied their place. But a deficiency of winter fodder continued to be felt. Hay and straw were insufficient to support the cattle, many of which died. The great agricultural desideratum was supplied chiefly by the late worthy minister of Tingwall, the Rev. John Turnbull, who, about 1807, shewed that field turnips could be successfully reared in Shetland. The cultivation of this valuable root has gradually become general in farms of every class, and it has been abundantly proved that Shetland produces as good turnips as any county in Scotland.

The raising of artificial rye-grass and clover, formerly unknown, has also, within the present century, gradually become general, and their cultivation has always been attended with marked success. White oats may also be included in the list of plants which have been naturalised in Shetland, comparatively recently. It has the advantage of yielding more grain than the black and grey varieties, while its straw, although harder and coarser, is at least as good for feeding purposes. Wheat has been sown, by way of experiment, but the summer is both too short and too cold to admit of its ripening. All culinary vegetables—carrots, onions, parsnips, &c.—grow well. Black, red, and white currants also thrive, while the culture of strawberries, gooseberries, and raspberries, has been attended with moderate success, but, unfortunately, they ripen late in the season. The apple can be cultivated when great care is exercised, but the fruit seldom ripens. The gardens of Shetland often present a very fair display of flowers of the more hardy kinds. There, annuals are in perfection in the end of August or beginning of September.

The soil presents considerable variety. The general nature is peaty, with a subsoil presenting every variety of clay, sand, and gravel. Often the subsoil may be said to consist of splintered rock, generally of the oldest formations, as granite, gneiss, mica schists, &c., which are most inimical to vegetation. For other instances, we have limestone fertilising the country through which it runs. Frequently, peat-moss extends to great depths—say ten to twenty feet—and no cultivation can go on till the most of it is removed. Again, by the ruinous process of "scalping," or removing the turf of the commons for manuring the farms, great tracts of country have been laid bare, and the subsoil, or even the bare rock, exposed. Much moisture prevails, and, consequently, draining is the initiatory step to all improvement.

The Shetlander's croft, already referred to, is generally situated along a voe or arm of the sea, and is separated from the common by the hill dyke, a rough enclosure of turf or stone. The arable land amounts to about three acres; between the cultivated ground and the hill dyke, a portion of about two acres is usually devoted to grass. Formerly, the system of run-rig—*i.e.*, alternate ridges or patches of ground within the same enclosure, being held by different tenants, or perhaps belonging to different proprietors —was universal, but has now been generally abolished, and the land *planked* or allocated in due proportion to each person. No regular rotation of crops exists, as a rule. That most commonly pursued in the country may be said to be,—first year, potatoes (manured); second, oats, or bere (manured); third, oats, with grass seeds; fourth, rye-grass; fifth, fallow. During the last three seasons the ground is not manured.

The manure employed is a compost, formed of alternate layers of turf and earth, from the hills, which has already done duty as bedding for the cattle, seaweed, and the common products of the barn-door and

dunghill, placed one above another. These are collected towards the end of winter, and the compost is laid on the ground immediately before it is turned over. This operation begins about the end of March, and is performed by means of a small sharp spade, with a wooden foot-piece. The diggers generally work two or three alongside each other, and thus a very large "clod" is turned over at once. Before the proprietors, on taking the fishings into their own hands, thought it necessary to partition the farms into smaller portions, a curious old-fashioned Norwegian plough was in common use; but it has long since been superseded by the spade, and is more likely to be met with in an antiquarian museum than a Shetland farm. Most of the carrying of manure is done by means of *cassies* or straw-baskets, borne on the backs, generally of the poor women. Small carts, drawn by ponies, and, more rarely by oxen, are, however, now becoming common. The harrow of this country differs only from that employed in Scotland by being of a smaller size, and having in most cases wooden teeth. In its locomotion—to the shame of the other sex be it said—the women are generally made beasts of burden. Sometimes, however, the pony does the work. The same hoe is used here as elsewhere. Reaping is performed by a sickle, and the scythe is seldom employed, unless for mowing the meadows. The old-fashioned flail does all the thrashing, and the wind the winnowing. After being dried in a kiln, the corn is ground by a handmill fixed in the barn, or by one of the water-mills peculiar to the country. The mill is a straw-thatched hut of the most primitive construction, and the smallest size calculated to admit human beings. The wheel is arranged so that the water is projected against it horizontally, and not perpendicularly, as in mills whose architects have rightly estimated the force of gravity.

The operations of "Vore" (as the seed-time is called in Shetland) do not commence until the end of March.

Oats are generally sown about the middle of April, and bere and potatoes in the beginning of May. In favourable seasons the bere is ready for cutting in the first, and the oats in the third week of September.

Most of the destitution which, in so many seasons, has brought so much misery to the poor Shetlanders, has been due to the destruction of the crops by bad weather, just before they were ripe. Even in the worst seasons, those who had sown early were able to reap early, and thus saved their crops. Therefore, early sowing presents itself as an important remedy against bad harvests. Its chief difficulty is moisture, which could be obviated by drainage.

There is at present no means of determining, with any degree of accuracy, the extent of land under cultivation. It is estimated, in a recent return of the Board of Trade, at 50,720 acres, of which 11,626 are under corn crops. According to the same return, the number of live stock in the county was as follows:—Cattle, 22,269; sheep, 91,620; horses, 5,672; and pigs, 4,850.

The Shetland cow is of a diminutive breed, with long small horns and short legs; but it is said by authorities to have many of the best points of the most choice cattle. In colour she is white, black, brown, or red, rarely displaying a uniform hue. The beef is exceedingly sweet and tender. The cattle are housed every night, and either tethered on the pasture within the enclosure, or sent to the hills during the day. The byres are low stone buildings, with a thatch-roof. The bed of the cattle is formed by dry earth and turf from the scat-holds. Whenever the floor becomes wet, a fresh layer of this material is laid over it without the previous one being removed. In this way the floor becomes more and more elevated, until the compost is obliged to be cleared away, in order to give the cattle head-room beneath the roof of the byre A large

number of hens is kept on each of these crofts. The hens are small in size, but lay a wonderfully large number of eggs in proportion to the food they receive. Ducks are not so numerous. Geese are kept on the hills, there to forage for themselves, unless at the breeding season, and in the depth of winter. The native swine are not good specimens of the race. They are often fed on fish, which gives the pork a disagreeable flavour. The native dog is a mongrel collie, with few virtues to recommend him. These brutes were formerly by far too numerous, either for their own welfare, or the safety of the flocks; but the dog tax, so much resisted, has had the good effect of thinning their ranks, greatly to the comfort of travellers.

CHAPTER X.

THE SCATHOLDS (OR COMMONS) AND THEIR INHABITANTS.

Products of the commons—Game, &c.—The Shetland Pony—The Shetland Sheep—Their Wool—Native Dyes—Skins—Mutton—Method of Removing Wool—Their Food in Seasons of Scarcity—Diseases—Birds of Prey—Attention paid to the Rearing of Sheep in Ancient Times—Wadmel—Shetland "Tweeds"—Proposed Introduction of Grouse—Peat-Moss—Great Depth in many places—Its Formation—The Cutting, Curing, and Transport of Peats—Might not Peat-Moss be further utilised?—Improvements in Shetland Farming, and its Assimilation to that of the Mainland of Scotland—Fishing of greater importance there than Farming—Division of Commons — Shetland rather a Grazing than an Agricultural Country—Years of Destitution by Destruction of Crops—Trees.

AS I have had frequent occasion to mention, the whole interior of the country consists of the unimproved and generally undivided common or scathold. These large tracts of country are made up of peat-moss, bogs, lochs, or bare ground, which has been robbed of its soil by "scalping." They are clothed, where vegetation can exist, with heaths and coarse grasses, interspersed with carices and rushes. In the damper and poorer spots moss is the only plant to be found.

The domesticated inhabitants of these dreary regions are ponies, sheep, and geese. Neither partridges nor moor-fowl are to be found, but the practised eye and ear of the sportsman will soon detect the presence of the snipe, the plover, and the curlew. Rabbits abound in many places. Hares were introduced about forty years ago by the late Mr. Andrew Duncan, Sheriff-Substitute, but have never become numerous.

The Shetland pony is too well known to require description here. Tradition says his ancestors came, with the oldest Norsemen, from the regions round Mount Caucasus to Scandinavia, and thence to Shetland. Be this as it may, there is no doubt his small size is the result of exposure, with coarse and often scanty fare, continued from sire to son over many generations. When these interesting little animals, after leaving their native hills, have been bred in the rich valleys of England for two or three generations, they gradually become larger, and so much improve in every way that their "country cousins" in the far north could scarcely recognise them. In his native hills the Shetland pony runs wild, but not ownerless. I think it right to record this fact, for it is amongst the "things not generally known." On more than one occasion, parties of adventurous youths from "the sunny south" have come over to the Ultima Thule to make a name and a fortune for themselves by hunting the "shelties." These little animals are easily tamed, wonderfully hardy, sagacious, and sure-footed. The rider whose course lies over trackless moors and quaking bogs, and along yawning precipices, even in a pitch dark night, need not fear if his Shetland steed only knows the country. He has merely to give the animal "his head" and he is carried safely through. Since the labour of women and children was prohibited in the coal pits, these ponies have come greatly into demand, and the price has risen immensely. A quarter of a century since, a horse might be bought for £2 and a mare for less. Now, the male animal realises from £8 to £10, and the female from £3 to £5. Animals of the one sex are so much higher than those of the other, because males alone are used in the pits. It is to be feared the breed is deteriorating, in consequence of the best stallions being sold, and those of inferior quality kept for breeding; and this is probably the reason why a particularly fine one lately fetched the high price of £30.

The native Shetland sheep is of the same species as those which run wild in Northern Russia and Scandinavia. Besides the short tail, they are characterised by small size, fine wool, and short horns. They run wild in the scatholds, are never housed, herded, or fed by the hand, and those of different owners are distinguished by characteristic slits or holes in the ears. When any individual sheep in the flock is wanted by its owner, it is hunted down by a dog. In colour these sheep are white, black, spotted black and white, grey, or of a peculiar brownish shade, termed by the natives *murid*. The great merit of the Shetland wool is its fineness, for it is too soft to be very durable. It is capable of being spun into threads more delicate than those which form the finest of lace, and with such worsted, stockings have been made which could be drawn through a lady's finger-ring. The worsted is generally preserved in its natural colour, but it is sometimes dyed. In former times various native dyes were used for this purpose. They are still employed especially in the more remote districts, but they have, to a great extent, been superseded by indigo and cochineal, imported from the south. The variegated and fantastic hues which characterise such articles as the Fair Isle hosiery, and the more commonplace hearthrugs, are obtained by means of these native dyes, most of which are lichens. The *Lichen tartareus* yields a reddish purple, the *L. omphaloides* a blackish purple, the *L. saxatilis* (called old man) a yellowish or reddish brown, and the *L. parietinus* (termed by the Shetlanders scriota) an orange dye. Yellow is obtained from a collection of plants of that colour, and black from peat moss impregnated with bog iron ore.

The skins of these sheep are either dried with the wool adhering, and used as mats, or tanned with a native plant, the *Tormentilla Officinalis*, and made into waterproof clothes, for the men at the fishing, and the women when engaged in their more severe

labours in the hills and fields. The carcase is small, but the meat is sweet and delicate, with a flavour very much resembling the much-prized Welsh mutton.

The wool is removed from the Shetland sheep, not by clipping, but by the more primitive method of *rueing*, or tearing it out by the roots with the hand. The alleged reason for this barbarous process, which gives much pain to the poor animals, is that it ensures the fineness of the next crop of wool. In the winter, particularly when grass is more than usually scanty, both sheep and ponies frequently feed on sea-weed. They may be observed with wonderful sagacity approaching the most accessible shore when the tide begins to fall, and leaving it as high water sets in. In seasons of scarcity, cattle will also assuage their hunger with sea-weed, and they have frequently been known—laying aside for the time their herbivorous nature—gladly to partake of a mess of boiled *sillocks* and water. Those sheep are subject to the same diseases as other flocks. Braxy, sturdy, rot, and scab, have all appeared. About 1770, the scab wrought awful havoc, in some districts carrying of two-thirds of the stock. Birds of prey often prove destructive to the young lambs. Their most formidable enemies are ravens and hooded crows. Even the black-backed gull sometimes attacks them. But the most bloodthirsty of all are eagles, the extent of whose ravages is only limited by their numbers, which fortunately are small.

Before the fishing became an object of so much regard, much greater attention was paid to the raising of sheep than has ever been since. This is shown by the large proportion of the old county acts which are devoted to the regulation of the pastures. Judging also from the large amount of tithes paid in wool to the Pope in the fourteenth century, when the couch of his Holiness was more downy than it is now in the days of Bismarck and Victor Emmanuel, it would

appear the rearing of sheep was attended with far greater success in ancient times than within the last two or three generations. Larger quantities of wool were devoted to the preparation of a kind of coarse cloth termed wadmel, the manufacture of which was for ages one of the chief industries of the country. It was in this fabric that the Shetland udallers were in the habit of paying their *scat* or land tax to the ancient kings of Denmark. The native dyes, above mentioned, are said to have been extensively used in colouring wadmel. Its manufacture still existed in the beginning of last century, but was rapidly on the decline. At the present day a considerable quantity of *claith*, or flannel cloth, is made on handlooms. The "Shetland tweeds" of the southern markets are very soft and elastic, and much prized by sportsmen for shooting suits. Since the islands came into such close commercial intercourse with the Scotch ports, cotton underclothing has to a great extent superseded the old woollen home-spun garments, and the health of the Shetlanders, particularly the females, is said to have declined accordingly.

The introduction of grouse has frequently been talked of. When they thrive so well in the sister group of islands, there seems to be no good reason why they should not also exist in Shetland. The heather is no doubt longer in Orkney than in Shetland, but in many places in the latter country there appears to be enough of it to afford shelter to the young birds.

The peat-moss of this country, which, as already mentioned, prevails to a depth of from ten to twenty feet in many places, has apparently been formed by the accumulation, during many ages, of plants similar to those which now clothe its surface. I use the expression "many ages" advisedly, because a considerable depth of moss is commonly to be met with on declivities, or even near the top of hills; and in such

localities, so far as our knowledge goes, its formation is a very slow process indeed. In low-lying plains on the other hand, where there is plenty of stagnant water, moss is formed very rapidly by the alternate growth and inhumation of aquatic plants, and the alluvion of vegetable matter from the higher beds. Here, as elsewhere, it is at the bottom of the valleys the bog attains its greatest depth. The roots of trees, however, are frequently found imbedded in it, and this circumstance leads us to the double inference that the moss is, to some extent, the product of decayed wood, and that trees once grew wild in this country. At all events, we know that the most flourishing wood, when once the vitality of its trees is destroyed, is very speedily converted into peat. * The vast peat mosses in Shetland are marked, in many places, by clefts of greater or less width and depth. These have evidently been formed by the moss, which has been, all over, swollen by the rains of winter, suddenly becoming contracted by the drought of summer. These clefts generally continue of a jet black colour, the action of rain and frost preventing their being covered with vegetation. The only use to which these vast accumulations of moss have been hitherto applied has been for fuel for the inhabitants. The art of thus applying turf is said to have been invented by Einar, one of the earliest Scandinavian earls of Orkney and Zetland, who, in consequence, obtained the name of Torf Einar.

The important operation of cutting or *casting* the peats takes place towards the end of May. The first step in the process is to *flay* the muir, or remove the *feal* or growing turf. This having been done, the peats are cut by an instrument peculiar to the country, termed a *toysker*, which is a long narrow spade, with a sharp iron plate about seven inches long, placed at right angles to the blade, on its left side. This plate

* Dr. Rennie on Peat-Moss.

or feather, as it is called, determines the form and size of the peat. One peat after another is shaved off with great neatness from the face of the bog, and with the same operation the cutter dexterously turns it out of his instrument, and lays it in its position on the bank. With such celerity is this work performed, that a good workman, in three days, will often cut sufficient fuel to serve one fire a whole year; and the fires of the Shetland cottagers burn almost constantly. Each peat is about fourteen inches long, seven broad, and two and a half thick. Frequently three perpendicular layers are cut in one bank, those from the greatest depths being the firmest and best. One row having been neatly arranged along the bank, another is placed above it, at a slightly oblique angle to the first, in such a manner as to leave interstices to admit air, and thus favour drying. Thus surmounted, a peat bank, shortly after the cutting time, presents a very regular and rather formidable appearance, suggesting the idea of a fortress, with so many tiers of cannons bristling from its walls. After remaining in this position for two or three weeks, the peats are taken down, and being set on their ends, are arranged in small heaps. This operation, termed *raising*, is sometimes repeated. The peats are now dry, and are either built into a stack on the hill, thence to be gradually removed in *cassies* during the year, or are immediately conveyed home on the backs of ponies, or in carts. The apparatus by which the pony is thus literally turned into a beast of burden consists of a pair of straw panniers or *maysies*, attached to a wooden saddle or *clipper*. This process of transport is termed *leading* the peats. Long strings of ponies engaged in this way may be seen in the month of July, under the command of *peat* boys. Peats form excellent fuel, giving out much heat, and often as much light. By the aid of the compressing machine might they not become a substitute for coal? This would render the vast bogs, of Yell for instance, of some commercial value.

We have hitherto been treating of the rude and unsatisfactory mode of husbandry prevailing amongst the cottar-fishermen of Shetland. Within the last thirty or forty years, many attempts have been made to assimilate agriculture in these islands to that of the mainland of Scotland, where it has attained such perfection. "Run-rig" has been abolished; draining, trenching, artificial manuring, and fencing have been carried out in many places by thoroughly competent hands. Steadings have been built, and carts, ploughs, harrows, scythes, thrashing mills, and even reaping machines on the most approved principle, have been introduced. The small native herds have been supplanted by shorthorns, the flocks by Cheviots, Leicesters, and blackfaces. By this means, in several districts, farms have been formed of which the Lothians would not be ashamed, and of which we in Shetland would be more proud than we are, were it not for the painful reflection that eviction was generally the first step in this progressive movement. But it has been my purpose to give a sketch of the native Shetland agriculture, and not of Scotch farming imported into that country. Shetland would, no doubt, make an excellent sheepwalk. Divide its scatholds, drain its hills, and they would graze immense flocks of Cheviots in summer, while the valleys would provide plenty of turnips for their winter keep. All this is right and proper, but the country has greater riches than its moors will ever produce. Its chief treasures swim in the ocean around, and we require men and not sheep to gather them in. Therefore, if we want wealth to accumulate, do not let men decay. Preserve the peasantry. The fishing cannot keep them all the year round; they must have some land. Give the hills to the sheepfarmers, if you will, but give the fishermen decent houses and good crofts, taking care that they farm them properly. Great attention has of late years been devoted to the important subject of dividing the scat-

holds or commons. It is a very expensive process, necessitating actions in the Court of Session, the appointment of commissions to fix boundaries, and the services of skilful and well-paid surveyors. Were the trigonometrical survey of the kingdom extended to Shetland, these very heavy expenses would be saved to that poor country.

The experience of late harvests and blighted cereals, but a moist climate, with good grass and better green crops, seems to indicate pretty plainly that Shetland is a grazing rather than an agricultural country. Leaving out of view, for the meantime, the bright prospect of fatted herds and luxuriant green crops, the too frequent destruction of the cereals by the onset of tempests before they are ripe, with the destitution and misery thereby occasioned, is a matter of the most serious moment. Many are the black years of famine and destitution in the annals of Shetland. Amongst these may be metioned 1740, 1766, 1783, 1784, 1802, 1803, 1804, 1835-37, 1846-49, and even 1869. All these seasons of greater or less scarcity were produced by the destruction of the corn, save that of 1846-49, which was due to the failure of the potato crop.

Trees, as is well known, cannot be reared in Shetland unless with great care, and in very sheltered spots. Seeing that they once flourished, much speculation has taken place as to the causes why matters are so far otherwise now. The best explanation I have heard is one imported from Orkney (where a similar state of matters exist), and it is that the mildness of the climate does not check vegetation when autumn is over, but allows the top bud of the young trees to sprout all winter, until the frost of spring kills it.

CHAPTER XI.

SHETLAND HOSIERY.

That exported restricted to Coarse Stockings, &c., for a long period —Fine Shawl-knitting of Recent Introduction—Its Origin and Rise—Veils, &c.—Present to the Princess of Wales.

SOME account of the woollen manufactures forms a natural sequel to the reference to the native sheep and their wool, which appears in the foregoing chapter. Native *claith* or tweeds having been already mentioned, let us restrict our notice to knitted goods. In the olden times, the under-clothing of the Shetlanders was entirely home-spun, consisting of such comfortable articles as knitted stockings and undershirts, and roughly woven claith garments; while native dyed *wadmel* or claith, for the most part, formed their outside clothing. The hosiery goods, prepared for exportation, appear to have consisted almost exclusively of coarse stockings, gloves, and night-caps, in which a very large trade was done every summer during the palmy days of the Dutch herring-fishing; the Hollanders and their neighbours from Bremen and Hamburgh being the purchasers. After commerce with Leith began to supersede that with continental ports, quantities of these articles were sent thither.

Nor have the close-knitted goods of the Zetland women always been of coarse texture; ladies' stockings having been frequently produced of so fine a thread that a pair could be drawn through a finger-ring, and readily sold at fifty shillings. The open lace-work knitting, for which the islands are now famed, was never heard of until a very recent period; and I have

much pleasure in giving an account of its origin, kindly furnished by an accomplished lady of Lerwick, who is personally acquainted with all the circumstances :—The late Samuel Laing, Esq., of Papdale, when a candidate for the representation of the county in 1833, was, while in Lerwick, the guest of the late Mr. Charles Ogilvy, to whose infant son Miss Laing afterwards sent, as a present, a beautiful christening cap, knitted by herself, of thread such as is used in the manufacture of the celebrated Lille stockings. This cap was much admired, and a lady related to the family succeeded in making an exact copy of it. While doing so, it occurred to her that fine woollen *mitts*, knitted in a similar style, would look well; and she accordingly made a pair, and subsequently a very handsome invalid cap for a gentleman. This was in 1837, when the late Mr. Frederick Dundas first became M.P. for the county. Having received the cap as a present, the honourable gentleman showed it to his landlady in Lerwick, requesting her to try to induce some of her young acquaintances to imitate it in shawls. This she did, but with little result.

In 1839, Mr. Edward Standen, of Oxford, while travelling through the islands, saw a shawl which the above-mentioned lady was knitting, and, on his return to Lerwick, he also mentioned the subject to the person with whom he lodged, urging her to advise young women to knit shawls of that description. Mr. Standen, who was extensively engaged in the hosiery trade himself, now succeeded in giving a fresh impetus to the fine-knitting of Shetland; and by introducing the goods into the London market, was the means of converting what had been for a few years previously followed as a pastime, by a few amateurs, into an important branch of industry, affording employment to a large proportion of the female population of the islands. The articles first sent to market appear to have been somewhat rudely executed, having been knitted on wooden pins.

However, steel wires were soon introduced, and, year by year, the manufacture gradually improved, until it reached its present perfection. Many of the peasant girls display great artistic talent in the invention and arrangement of patterns, which are formed, as they express it, "out of their own heads."

The manufacture of fine Shetland shawls thus became common about 1840, but it was not till five years afterwards that the demand for them became very great. About 1850, the shawls were, to some extent, superseded in the markets by veils, in which a large trade was soon carried on.* More recently neckties and various other fancy articles have been produced by the neat-fingered knitters of Zetland.

All articles of Shetland hosiery, open and close alike, are presently more or less in demand in the southern markets. The amount sold is said to yield £10,000 or £12,000 yearly. Wool from the native sheep has, of late years, become rather scarce; and, therefore, the importation of Pyrenees wool, mohair, &c., has been rendered necessary.

Mr. Edward Standen, to whom the islands are so much indebted in connection with the hosiery industry, in other ways strove to benefit the humble peasantry of Shetland. In 1844, while in the islands, he narrowly escaped drowning, by swimming two or three miles through the open sea, after the boat in which he sailed had gone down with his companions; and, next year, he ended his honourable and useful career in the county to which so much of it had been devoted, by a painful disease brought on by exposure while travelling in the islands.

It is interesting to observe how the rise of this industry is associated with the name of the late lamented M.P. for the county; and how the father of the present distinguished member, who did so much for his

* Vide Shetland Truck Commission Evidence, p. 41.

native Orkney, should, very indirectly and unknown to himself, have conferred such a boon on Shetland.

The handsomest collection of Shetland knitted goods probably ever brought together, was that presented by a committee of the ladies of Shetland, presided over by Miss Ogilvy, Lerwick, to H.R.H. the Princess of Wales, on her marriage in 1863.

CHAPTER XII.

BRESSAY AND NOSS.

East Coast of Bressay—Cave—Bard—"Giant's Leg"—Holm and Noup of Noss—The Cradle—Dr. Copland—Farm of Noss—Dangers of Noss Sound—Bressay again—Gardie—Maryfield—Parochial Statistics—Slate Quarries.

AND now for a visit to some of the "lions" in the vicinity of Lerwick. The Cave of Bressay and the Cliffs of Noss amply repay a day's excursion. Steering southwards through the Sound, and shaping our course along the Bressay shore, we pass, in succession, the mansion of Gardie, the house of Maryfield, the kirk, the manse, and the lighthouse, with various cottages and crofts interspersed between this buildings of greater note. Doubling the point of Kirkabister, and, if we are bold enough, sailing through a fine natural archway nearly underneath the lighthouse, we pass the lofty Ord, and direct our bark eastward, to the root of the Bard. Here we find the cave, its entrance guarded by a *skerry*,* not much above high-water mark. The entrance is a wonderfully symmetrical archway, pretty lofty, and wide enough to admit several small boats abreast. Here the water is very clear and deep; and the display of colours on the roof and walls remarkable both for brilliancy and variety. Our advance into the cavern is now attended with greater difficulty, as the passage becomes narrow and takes a curved direction. Soon the narrows are passed, and we find ourselves in a spacious hall. From its lofty ceiling hang

* Skerry, a flat insulated rock not subject to the overflow of the tide.

numerous stalactites, many of them assuming very fantastic shapes. Pilasters of the same calcareous material have been formed on the walls. So great is their hardness that it is difficult, even with the aid of the hammer and chisel, to detach pieces. In this sea-paved hall reigns Egyptian darkness, save when it is dispelled by the torch of the visitor. Here the smallest noise, even the stroke of an oar, resounds like thunder. Beyond the hall we can penetrate to a considerable distance, but the inner reaches of the cavern become narrower and narrower. At length our skiff is arrested by a sea-beach, from which a faint streak of light is to be discerned shining through a slit in the rock, a long way off. Beyond this, no mortal man is pigmean enough to advance. On a shelf near the mouth of this weird *helyr*,* a native of the sister archipelago is said to have hid from the pressgang; and hence, it is sometimes called the Orkneyman's Cave. Emerging from it, we for a few minutes steer south-eastwards and reach the Bard, in which Bressay terminates on the south. Here the most fantastic forms diversify the surface of the rocks. Nature has been the sculptor, employing the elements to remove the soft particles of which the cliffs are composed, while the harder remain. At the extreme point of the Bard, a narrow but somewhat lofty arch displays itself. The outer pier of this arch acts like a buttress to the precipice, which forms the inner. This curious buttress-like pillar is not inappropriately termed the Giant's Leg. Tradition says that, ages since, a certain Giant, in leaping from Shetland to Orkney, succeeded in getting one leg over, but left the other behind, and here it still stands at the Bard of Bressay.

Advancing north-eastwards for three or four miles, we come to the far-famed Holm of Noss. This is a small islet one hundred and sixty feet high,

* Helyr, a cavern into which the tide flows.

flat and well clothed with grass on the top, but precipitous on all sides. On one side its cliffs are lashed by the full fury of the North Sea; and on the other, its base is washed by the conflicting currents which agitate the narrow strait separating the Holm from the island of Noss. A little to the north of the Holm is the Noup of Noss, a magnificent bluff precipice 577 feet high. All along the cliffs, but especially in those of the Holm and Noup, innumerable sea-fowl (gulls, kittiwakes, guillemots, puffins, &c.) have their nests. They build, for the most part, in curious rounded depressions which Nature has scooped out of the rocks. In the breeding season these stately cliffs present a very lively and interesting appearance. All the way upward, from a few feet above the water to within a corresponding distance from the top, they are garrisoned by close phalanxes of birds of various hues, whose shrill music forms a strange chorus to the deep-sounding sea. Fire a gun, and the air is instantly darkened by a dense feathery cloud, which dashes out seaward, expressing, in notes both harsh and loud, indignation against the intruders on this vast and solitary aviary.

From the heights of Noss a different view is obtained of the awful chasm between the island and the Holm. This space, sixty-five feet wide, was, for a long time, bridged over by a cradle or wooden box swung on two cables. By this means, the eggs of the many gulls which build on the top of the islet were removed, and sheep conveyed to and from its limited but rich pasture. But Mr. Walker, the late tenant of the island, has, very properly, caused this dangerous conveyance to be removed, lest its continuance should lead to that which marked its origin—the sacrifice of human life. The stakes supporting the cables, on which the cradle travelled, were originally fixed on the Holm by a daring cragsman, who scaled one of its beetling precipices. Not condescending to return by

the new route he had opened up, he insisted on going back as he had come, and perished in the descent.

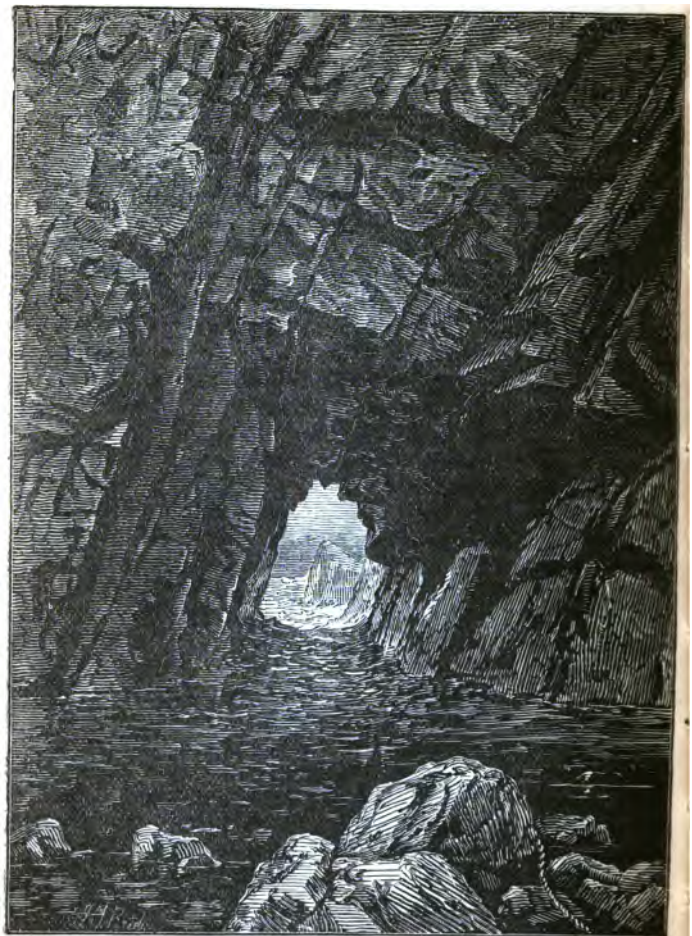
From its lofty Noup, the island of Noss gradually slopes away to a flat peninsula, facing the east side of Bressay. Here stands the old farmhouse, now occupied by a shepherd. In this solitary but romantic abode, Dr. Copland, of London, "the most learned of modern physicians," and author of the Dictionary of Medicine, spent his childhood and youth. The doctor's worthy father was long tenant of the island. Near the farmhouse are the ruins of a small chapel of ancient date.

Noss, which, with the exception of the shepherd's garden, is now entirely laid down to pasture, is very fertile, yielding rich crops of grass. Together with Maryfield, Bressay, this island is now used by the Marquis of Londonderry for the purpose of breeding and rearing ponies to be employed in his lordship's coalpits in the north of England. The noble Marquis is now making the first experiment in *pony* farming in Shetland on a large scale. Mr. Walker effected a great improvement by placing a good stone wall round the precipitous part. At the narrowest point, Noss Sound is only two hundred or three hundred yards wide, and about six fathoms deep. The tide is therefore very strong. This circumstance, combined with the rocky character of its wider portions, and the absence of good anchorage, renders Noss Sound very dangerous, or even fatal, to such ill-starred vessels as have accidentally mistaken it for Bressay Sound.

Having safely crossed the boisterous strait in the yawl of a good ferryman, we pursue our way westward across Bressay. Nothing of interest presents itself to the traveller until he reaches the heights above the western shores of the island, from which an extensive view is obtained, especially from their highest peak, the Wart, a fine conical hill 712 feet high. The handsome manor of Gardie, the residence of Miss

Cameron Mowat of Garth, proprietor of the island, with its hot-house, and well-kept gardens and lawns, is an object of much interest. Farming, on the most approved principles, may be observed at Maryfield. In 1871 Bressay contained a population of 902. The island is five or six miles long, and two or three broad.

Bressay is chiefly composed of sandstone. Its slate quarries, the principal of which is situated at Aith, in the north end, are of some importance. Grey slate, formerly much used in Shetland, is too heavy for the modern style of housebuilding. The thicker portions of stone, however, are still in considerable demand for paving purposes. Lerwick is paved with Bressay *flags*. Bressay is rich in antiquities, among the most remarkable of which may be mentioned the ruins of a famous old church at Beosetter, and the now much more famous slab of stone, bearing on both sides inscriptions in the Ogham character, which was found at Culbinsburgh a few years ago. This monument, probably the most perfect of the kind in existence, is now deposited in the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries, Edinburgh, in whose Transactions it is well illustrated.



SHELDIE CAVE.

CHAPTER XIII.

SCALLOWAY AND TINGWALL.

The Journey—Magnificent View from Hill above Scalloway—The Castle—Earl Patrick Stewart—Gallow Hill—Garden of Westshore—Gibbleston Lodge—Blacksness—Harbour—Tingwall—The Ting—Church, Manse, &c.—Veensgarth and Laxfirth Farms—Dale.

OUR next excursion shall be in an opposite direction, viz., to the village of Scalloway and valley of Tingwall. Whether we walk, ride, or drive, we proceed westwards from Lerwick, pass through the village of Sound, and skirting the head of the valley of Gulberwick and the Hollander's Knowe, follow the road through dreary enough moors until we find ourselves on a height called the Scord of Scalloway. From this point one of the prettiest and most varied views in Shetland is obtained. At our feet lies the picturesque village of Scalloway, with its stately castle, bounded on one side by the sea, and on the other by green fields, which stretch into the fertile vale of Tingwall. On the left, Cliff Sound, a long stretch of water lying between the Cliff Hills of the Mainland and the islands of Trondra, Burra, and Havera, runs down towards Fitful Head, for a distance of ten miles. In front is the land-locked harbour, and outside of it the great open bay of Scalloway displays itself, studded over with sweet isles, clad with verdure, and dark rocks wreathed in foam; while far beyond all, the lofty Foula towers like a blue cloud against the western horizon.

Through Scalloway a pleasant walk may be obtained on a well-made road, which winds along the sea-shore.

The chief object of interest is the Castle, built by Earl Patrick Stewart in 1600, which stands at the east end of the village. Some of its history has already been given; and for a description I cannot do better than quote the words of Mr. Gifford of Busta, the able historian of his native county, who says it "has been a very handsome tower house, with fine vaulted cellars and kitchen, with a well in it; a beautiful spacious entry, with a turret upon each corner, and large windows." Considering the long time it has been unroofed, the building is in wonderfully good preservation. The walls are nearly entire, only a few rows of stones near the top having been removed for building purposes. Beyond one or two cracks, they are without a flaw. Were the Earl of Zetland to desire a residence in the county which enjoys the honour of giving him a title, his Lordship would probably find little difficulty in restoring the castle of his most unworthy predecessor. Memories of Earl Patrick Stewart still hang round the walls of his well-built dwelling. On one of the chimneys is an iron ring, by means of which he is said to have hung the victims of his vengeance; and a small chamber in the wall is pointed out as the place where Stewart successfully concealed himself from the officers charged with his apprehension, until he was betrayed by the smoke of his pipe. While Scalloway continued to be the capital of Zetland, courts of law were occasionally held in the Castle; and, as already mentioned, it was garrisoned by a party of Cromwell's soldiers in the time of the Commonwealth. Than the Castle we have sterner evidences of the ancient metropolitan character of Scalloway. Overhanging the western extremity of the village is the Gallow Hill, whose green summit was in olden times the place of execution for criminals from all parts of Shetland. Most of the victims appear to have been witches, who were invariably put to death by burning. The last executions on record are those of Barbara Tulloch and her daugh-

ter, Ellen King (so-called witches), who perished here in the flames in the beginning of last century. From this same mountain-top a magnificent view is obtained of the various isles, rocks, hills, capes, voes, and bays which go to make up the peculiarly grand scenery of the west coast of Shetland.

Underneath the Gallow Hill is the garden of Westshore, which contains some fine trees (chiefly sycamores). Beyond it, and near the middle of the village, stands Gibbleston Lodge, surrounded by neat gardens. It was long the manor-house of Mr. Scott of Scalloway, but on the sale of his estate it was purchased by the present proprietor, Lewis F. U. Garriock, Esq., of the well-known firm of Garriock & Co., Reawick, who also owns the pretty little estate of Berry, above Scalloway, and contiguous to Gibbleston. The village has three churches—Established, Congregational, and Wesleyan.

At Blacksness, immediately under the walls of the castle, are the well-built quays and stores, where Messrs. Hay & Co. carry on an extensive fish-curing business. An apparatus for drying salt fish by steam, in winter, and another for curing "Finnan haddocks," are objects of special interest. Blacksness affords accommodation for vessels of moderate draught of water loading and discharging at its quays. The harbour affords the best of anchorage. It can be entered either through the Bay of Scalloway, on the west, or through Cliff Sound, on the south. The entrances, being narrow, are somewhat difficult to "take." It is the chief rendezvous for the Shetland smacks fishing at Faroe, and also for the Spanish vessels which come to convey salt fish to the Peninsula. To the herring and white fisheries, long carried on at Scalloway, has lately been added one for lobsters, which has met with fair success.

Throughout a large portion of the year there is great scarcity of employment, and much poverty in consequence. The village is susceptible of many improve-

ments, one of which would be the erection of a good inn. Such an establishment could not fail to attract tourists to this interesting and picturesque locality, and in other ways benefit the place.

Bidding adieu to the ancient metropolis of Thule, we turn northwards, and advance upwards, through the valley of Tingwall, which extends from Scalloway to Laxfirth, a distance of nearly five miles. It runs north-east and south-west. It is very level, and in some places of considerable width. This district, nearly all of which is the property of George H. B. Hay, Esq. of Hayfield, is evidently indebted for its fertility to a vein of limestone which traverses it. Advancing up the valley, we have, on the left, a series of well-tilled little farms, and, on the right, first the Loch of Asta, and then that of Tingwall. These beautiful lakes, which are separated by a narrow neck of land, together form a chain of fresh water, upwards of two miles long. They contain abundance of trout, and are favourite resorts for the angler. The gentle slope of the hill overhanging the eastern shores affords excellent pasture-age. About mid-way between Scalloway and the Manse of Tingwall, we pass a hoary-looking *standing stone*, which marks the grave of some ancient hero, or the site of a battle.

On a rising ground, at the head of the loch of the same name, and commanding a fine view, which extends down Cliff Sound, even as far as Fitful Head, stand the elegant new manse and the less pretentious kirk of Tingwall. Very near these buildings we observe a small islet in the loch, with stepping-stones leading to the shore. This is of great historical importance, for it was here the ancient udallers held their Ting or open-air parliament. Hence the name Tingwall, or the Valley of the Ting, which is the same as Thinga Valla, in Iceland, and Dingwall, in the north of Scotland. The Ting was a court of justice as well as a legislative assembly. When a criminal had

been condemned to death, it was the custom to give him the chance of escaping from the island where the court met, to the church, two or three hundred yards off. If the spectators allowed him to pass, he was held to be innocent. On a site immediately behind the present newly-erected manse, until very recently, stood its predecessor, which for upwards of sixty years was the residence of the late worthy incumbent of the parish, the Rev. John Turnbull, who during that long period entertained at his hospitable board nearly every important visitor to the islands, from Sir Walter Scott to H.R.H. Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh. A handsome monument to Mr. Turnbull, erected by his parishioners and friends, occupies a prominent position in the burying-ground round the church. The churchyard also contains many old monuments, now well covered by lichens. Most of the inscriptions are almost effaced; but one, still quite legible, runs thus: —"*Here lies an honest man,* Thomas Boyne, sometime Foude of Tingwall." Boyne lived upwards of two centuries ago; and it is a fact well worth transmitting to posterity, if a Shetland judge was "honest" in those days of almost universal corruption; but antiquaries prove beyond doubt that this Foude, instead of being virtuous beyond his contemporaries, excelled them all, save perhaps Patrick Stewart himself, in deeds of violence and lawless oppression. The present plain, but commodious church, was preceded by a more ornamental building with a spire. In the old Roman Catholic and Episcopal times, Tingwall formed an archdeaconry, its church of St. Magnus serving as the cathedral for the islands.

About half a mile to the north of these ecclesiastical buildings stands the extensive and highly cultivated arable farm of Veensgarth, with its handsome farmhouse and steading. The valley of Tingwall, like everything else in Shetland, terminates in the sea. The voe of Laxfirth marks its northern extremity.

At the head of this fine bay, and communicating with it by means of a short stream, is the Loch of Strand—small in size, but rich in sea trout. The fertile lands of Laxfirth extend for a considerable distance along the Voe of the same name. They are now used as a sheep farm. The farmhouse is Scotshall, so named from Mr. Walter Scott, Sheriff-Substitute of the county in the beginning of the present century, whose residence it was. Here also the late Mr. James Hay, a merchant of Lerwick, of much note in his time, spent his latter days, devoting himself to the improvement of his property, a part of which he successfully reclaimed from the sea. The present proprietor of Laxfirth is Sir Peter Tait, London, a native of the county, who obtained the honour of knighthood from the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, in acknowledgment of his services as Mayor of Limerick.

Leaving the Valley of Tingwall, and having ascended the hill above Veensgarth, we have our choice in returning to Lerwick, either to follow the old road through the Valley of Dale, or take the highway of more modern construction, which winds round that ravine, describing a much longer, but less steep course. Whichever way we go a fine view is obtained, both of the Dale and the voe to which it gives name. Formerly tenanted by crofters, this glen now forms an important part of the extensive pasture attached to the farm of Veensgarth, just referred to. We now proceed south-eastwards, and reach Lerwick by the north road, passing through the peat ground, which well merits a title proposed for it—the Black Country.

CHAPTER XIV.

FROM LERWICK NORTHWARDS TO NESTING AND WHALSEY.

Remarks on Shetland Scenery in Autumn—North Entrance to Lerwick Harbour—Rova Head—"Luggie's Knowe"—Baa Green—Unicorn Rock—Bothwell's Shipwreck—Girlsta—Catfirth—Vassa—Isles of Gletness—Mull of Eswick—Maiden Stack—Hou Stack—Bay of Nesting—Brough, &c.—Dangerous Reefs—Neap—Hog Sound—Tragedy at Neap—Nesting Statistics—Whalsey—Symbister—Manor House—Whalsey Sound—Its Islands—Manufacture of Kelp—Parochial Statistics, &c.

BEFORE proceeding on our itinerary through the more distant parts of the archipelago, it may be not inappropriate to offer another remark on the scenery. Nothing contributes more to the unique character of the Shetland landscape than the remarkable display of colours. These, of course, vary with the season, but at no time are they more observable than in the early autumn. It would require a well-skilled artist to describe the green and yellow fields, the dark purple hills, the rocks tinted with every variety of sombre hue, the curious alternations of bright light and deep shade that diversify the undulating coast, and the azure sky with its golden sunsets and rosy twilights. The sea is deep blue, as before; but traverse it by night, and every stroke of your oar emits a bright gleam as from liquid silver. Look over your boat's side into a shallow bay, and see its finny denizens (probably small coal-fish) as they dash through their native element impregnated with phosphorescent animalculæ, emit spark after spark, as from a galvanic battery.

On leaving Lerwick for the farther north, we quit the harbour through its "north mouth," passing on the right, Hogan, the busy fish-curing station of Messrs. G. Harrison & Son, a firm which has done much to develop the great Faroe fishing trade. The north mouth of Bressay Sound, very unlike its "fellow of the opposite side," is rather narrow and shallow, in some parts rocky, and has such a strong tideway passing through it, that, unless with a very favourable wind, a sailing vessel cannot stem the current. The termination, on the north, of this long and winding passage is marked by a low rounded point of conglomerate rock, termed Rova Head. Bearing immediately over it, and about a mile to the westward, the hill rises into an abrupt peak, called from a wizard who dwelt there in days long gone by, "Luggie's Knowe." Like his countrymen in modern days, "Luggie" drew his harvest from the sea; but unlike them, his calling exposed him to none of the "dangers of the deep;" for tradition tells us he dropped his line down through a hole in the knowe, and brought up his fish ready cooked at some subterranean fire. Brand, the worthy missionary of 1700, writes of this unusual mode of fishing in the following characteristic terms:—"This was certainly done by the agency of evil spirits, with whom he was in contact and covenant; but the economy of the kingdom of darkness is very wonderful, and little known to us." So thought his contemporaries, for poor Luggie was ultimately condemned for sorcery, and burnt on the Gallow Hill of Scalloway.

Looking northwards from Rova Head towards Whalsey, which from this point bounds our view, we have, on the left, a comparatively low coast, its hills and promontories well clad with verdure; and in front the Baa Green, as the first portion of the intervening stretch of sea is termed, interspersed with rocks. Navigation in this quarter should never be undertaken without the services of a well-skilled pilot. On one

notable occasion that functionary was awanting; and let us see the result. After the battle of Langside, while Mary Queen of Scots took refuge in England, her infamous consort, Bothwell, sought shelter in his newly required dukedom of Orkney. Closely pursued by Kirkcaldy of Grange, with a squadron of two ships, he procured a pilot in Bressay Sound, and sailed northwards, directing his steersman to keep as near as possible to a sunken rock, south of Nesting. Kirkcaldy, ignorant of the coast, followed close in the enemy's wake, when lo and behold! he fell into Bothwell's trap, and had one of his ships wrecked on the rock, which, after the unfortunate bark, bears the name of "Unicorn" to this day.

Westward from the Unicorn is the common entrance to three fine voes, which radiate, as it were, from this point, and open up a considerable extent of country. The Voe of Laxfirth, running north-westwards, has been already mentioned as bounding, on the north, the valley of Tingwall. Girlsta, on the Voe of Wadbister, boasts of a large corn mill (the second of the kind erected in Shetland). It commands an inexhaustible supply of water, brought, through a rapid descent, from an extensive loch close by. The antique looking house of Catfirth, at the head of the Voe of that name, was about seventy years ago used as a linen factory, the machinery being driven by water brought by a canal from the Loch of Sandwater, some distance off. The canal burst its banks; and whether from this cause or not, the enterprise was abandoned. Another branch of Catfirth Voe, running more to the east, leads to Vassa, a bonny green spot, formerly of some importance as the residence of the bailie of the parish. All the bays just mentioned afford a good anchorage, particularly that of Catfirth. The county road passes near the head of each of them.

Emerging from Catfirth Voe, and passing the pretty Isles of Gletness, we follow the bold and extensive

promontory of Eswick, trending away seawards; coming suddenly upon a curious indentation in its iron-bound sides, where, overhanging the fine sea-beach, stands the *town* of the same name. Facing the bluff point of the Mull of Eswick, and immediately under it, the Maiden Stack rises precipitately out of the sea. Some ruins crown its narrow but lofty top. These are said at one time to have formed the abode of a fair damsel, who was banished to this aerial prison in order to ensure separation from some lover who was obnoxious to her relentless father. The gallant Norseman, nothing daunted, scaled the cliffs, carried off his fair prize, and left to posterity the name *Maiden Stack.* Opposite it, and about a mile to seaward, is the huge Houstack, a very prominent object all along this part of the coast. Between the Mull of Eswick and the Hog of Neap, three miles distant, stretches the open and exposed Bay of Nesting. In a pretty nook on its southern shore, is the fertile and picturesque town of Brough, a stronghold in very ancient times, as its name indicates; but, two or three centuries ago, the seat of a powerful and wealthy branch of the Sinclairs, called the Barons of Brough. Their mansion has long since gone to ruins, and the foundations of their handsome chapel can scarcely be traced in the kirkyard of Garth, in the immediate neighbourhood. This edifice was embellished with the family coat of arms and several devout inscriptions, one of which ran thus:—"In earth nothing continueth, and man is but a shadow." The history of the Sinclairs has strikingly verified this motto. The Barons of Brough, like their hearth and their altar, have long since vanished and gone; while their broad lands have passed into other hands. The only existing institution taking a title from that place is the *Garths of Brough*, a very dangerous reef of rocks, lying about a mile north from the Moull and directly in the way of coasters, who must shape their course so as to shun the Garths on the

one hand, and the *Voders* on the other. This reef, situated more easterly, is generally covered by the sea, and is therefore even more treacherous than the Garths. Between this Scylla and Charybdis navigation is safe.

Marking the termination of Nesting Bay, on the north, is the lofty headland of Neap, with the minister's residence on its summit—a more suitable site for a lighthouse than a manse. A high and rocky islet, called the *Hog*, lies so near this cape, that contiguity is readily mistaken for continuity. Nevertheless, a six-oared boat—using the oars as poles—may push its way through the deep chasm termed *Hog Sound;* and probably by so doing *cheat* the strong tide running outside the islet.

Neap was the scene of a bloody tragedy which carries us back to the dark days of the Stewarts. In the minister of Orphir in Orkney, Earl Patrick found a ready coadjutor in his designs upon the udal lands. After the Earl was arrested and sent to Dumbarton Castle, there to prepare for the scaffold, popular fury of the hottest kind was kindled against every instrument of his oppression. "It was then that the parson of Orphir took flight, pursued by the four Sinclairs of Orkney, who toiled after him like blood-hounds for their prey. The wretched man fled to Shetland; the avengers hunted him out—met him on the Noup of Nesting, and slew him on the spot. One of the brothers imitated the tiger in his rage—he laid open the breast of the slaughtered victim, tore out his heart, and with a ferocity, from the bare mention of which the mind shudders, drank of his heart's blood. May the causes which gave rise to such scenes be few on the face of the earth."*

The ancient "parochine" of Nesting is by no means

* Hibbert's "Zetland," p. 293. The Sinclair brothers had been robbed of their lands by Earl Patrick, aided by the minister of Orphir.

rich in modern statistics. In 1871 it contained 868 inhabitants. No special branch of industry can it boast of, and no important fishery is carried on from its shores. The parish kirk is situated towards the north end of the district, while the spiritual wants of its southern portions are to some extent supplied by a Wesleyan and a Congregational chapel, to the latter of which only a resident pastor is attached. An assembly school standing close to the church supplies the educational wants of the northern portion, leaving the southern comparatively neglected. Nearly the whole parish of Nesting is the property of Mr. Bruce of Symbister.

From Neap we advance northwards and somewhat to the east, and soon reach the "Bonny Isle" of Whalsey, as a popular native air terms it. Sandwick, well named from its beautiful beach of white sand, first attracts our attention; and then Symbister, with its fine bay, good harbour and landing-places, advanced agriculture, and, to crown all, its splendid mansion adorning the top of the hill. This building was erected between thirty and forty years ago by the late Robert Bruce, Esq., of Symbister, the great-grandfather of the present proprietor, at a cost of upwards of £30,000. The stone is a pretty granite brought from Stavaness, a point on the Mainland nearly opposite. Containing much mica and talc, it sparkles brilliantly when exposed to sunshine. All the apartments, halls, lobbies, galleries, staircases, courts, and offices of Symbister House are arranged in the most palatial manner. It commands a magnificent view of the whole coast from Lerwick to Unst. Near the shore are situated the business premises of Messrs. Hay & Co., Lerwick, who conduct the fishings in the island; and the old manor house, now occupied by a gentleman who farms Symbister and several adjacent isles. Opposite Whalsey, and between it and the Mainland, is Linga, of considerable extent, and behind that three smaller islands, all of which are used for grazing. Linga was formerly

peopled; and one of its last inhabitants was Mr. Jamieson, afterwards of Leith, father of Professor Jamieson, who so ably filled the chair of Natural History in the University of Edinburgh for half a century.

Proceeding up Whalsey Sound, and taking care that the strong tide which agitates its waters does not carry us on the *Skate*, a large flat rock off Marrister, we pass the neat manse and still neater church. This edifice, recently rebuilt, stands on a point at Brough, a fertile and well-cultivated district in the north-west of the island. The north and east of Whalsey display hills and cliffs of gneiss, which present no features of interest.

If our journey is made by night, particularly in the early autumn, our attention is arrested by fires all along the coast. These proceed from the burning of sea-weed for kelp, an important branch of industry, employing many females. Kelp so valuable during the great French wars, from the soda it contains, is now important to the manufacturing chemist as yielding iodine and bromine, so useful both in medicine and the arts. During the spring and summer of 1870, two women and three children in Whalsey together realised about £25 by the manufacture of kelp—the good women at the same time attending to all their domestic and agricultural duties. Almost the entire male population of the island is employed in the *haaf* fishing—and very expert fishers the stalwart men of Whalsey are. The island contains a population of nearly nine hundred souls. Until very recently there was no school in this large district, and the only stated supply of ordinances was a sermon from the minister of Nesting once a month. Thanks to the praiseworthy efforts of the Established Church, seconded by the generosity of the proprietor, matters have lately undergone a great change for the better. A good school has been provided; and the clergyman now sits as

minister of the *quoad sacra* Parish of Whalsey and Skerries, in the Presbytery of Olnafirth. Than the Established no other Church exists in Whalsey. The Wesleyans for several years had a mission station on the island, but it was withdrawn recently.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SKERRIES.

Passage thither—Grief Skerry—East Linga—Seals—Cormorant—The Otter—Skerry Isles—Their Harbour—The Fishery "The Skerry Fight"—Shipwreck of the *Carmelan*, and of a Russian Frigate—The Lighthouse—Lightkeeper's Houses, &c.—Effects of the Sea—School—Shipwreck of the S.S. *Pacific* on East Linga, near Whalsey, in February, 1871.

IN order to reach the Skerries, we shape our course north-eastward from the south end of Whalsey. Like the course from Lerwick to Whalsey, that from there to the Skerries is everywhere marked with detached rocks of various sizes, which stand up amidst the sea to tell us moderns that the skeleton-like archipelago of Shetland was probably at some remote period one continuous island of no mean extent. However interesting to the geologist and dangerous to the navigator, some of these rocks are of considerable practical utility. One of them, bearing the ominous name of *Grief Skerry*, but really worthy to be called an island, besides affording excellent pasturage for sheep, is the rendezvous for the Whalsey boats during the haaf fishing. The isle is provided with a good beach, along which numerous small huts or lodges are arranged. Here the men land their fish, and enjoy occasionally a few hours repose in the midst of their arduous labours. From Grief Skerry, the fish are conveyed, in a small vessel, to Whalsey, to be cured. East Linga, a little to the westward of Grief Skerry, serves a similar purpose, but on a smaller scale.

Many of these small isles and detached rocks, lying far away from the usual haunts of man, were, in for-

mer times, the resorts of numerous seals. Within the last twenty or thirty years, however, they have gradually declined in numbers, and now are rarely to be met with. It is difficult to account for their disappearance. The number of sportsmen hunting them is scarcely sufficient to do so, nor even the epizootic, which destroyed so many, and sent their bodies floating over the sea, some years ago. The seal most numerous was the *Phoca vitulina*, or common seal. The *Phoca barbata*, or great seal, was also occasionally to be met with, but more rarely. Almost the only representative of animated nature to be found in their old haunts are troops of cormorants, who seem to consider themselves the garrison soldiers of all the small isles. They stretch out their necks and utter an indignant cry, on the approach of human invaders; and, it is only dire necessity which induces them to desert their strongholds, and seek safety in the water.

The otter, which chooses very similar habitations, is now more common than the seal. A good many have lately been caught, by means of traps, in the Skerries, which it is now high time for us to reach, after all these digressions. This group of small islands lies by itself in the North Sea, eastward from the rest of Shetland. It is six miles north-eastward from the nearest point of Whalsey, and about twenty-four miles, in the same direction, from Lerwick.

Of these oceanic isles, three (Brourie, Housie, and Gruna) are inhabited. Between them is a beautiful little harbour, thoroughly land-locked and affording good anchorage. It has three entrances, of which the north and south only are available for vessels, the east being so narrow and winding as only to admit boats. The south entrance, guarded by bold rocks on either side, is only about eighty yards wide. To the traveller who has been tossed up and down by the surging waters of the Skerries (and they are seldom

still), it is truly charming to pass between these rocky pillars, and suddenly find himself in this placid and picturesque haven in the middle of the stormy ocean. The north entrance is broader, but it has a longer channel leading less directly to the harbour, and it is therefore less used than the opposite one.

The Skerries, which contain one hundred and sixteen inhabitants, form an excellent fishing-station, not only for their own population, but for many boats from the mainland. It is chiefly the men of Lunnasting who resort hither in the summer time to prosecute the white-fishing, always returning to their homes at the end of the week. During the fishing season, therefore, these islands present a very animated and interesting scene. Six-oared boats are constantly entering or leaving the pretty little harbour. Generally the fishermen, on arriving from the deep sea, deposit their precious cargoes with the curers, and quietly retire to their huts for a brief season of repose. It has, however, not always been so, for Dr. Hibbert tells us that, "Early in the last century, a contention arose between two considerable families in Shetland, regarding this right (*i.e.*, the right to erect temporary fishing-huts and booths on unenclosed grounds), which proved so serious that it is still traditionally handed down under the name of the Skerry Fight. The fishermen belonging to the Gifford family of Busta came armed, and obtained possession of a booth that they had erected the preceding year. The Sinclairs, also, headed by the valiant lady of the family, took the field. A siege commenced; there was a discharge of fire-arms from each party, with little or no effect, until Magnus Flaus, the champion of the Sinclairs, having tried in vain to break open the door of the booth which was occupied by the Giffords, mounted the roof and swore most stoutly that he would be in the building, though the devil should dispute him admission. On effecting an entrance, he was immediately shot dead by the

occupants within, upon which the Sinclairs took flight, and, like dastards, abandoned their lady, who was by the opposite party made prisoner." A vein of limestone runs through the inhabited isles, and hence the comparative richness of their soil. The crops are, however, frequently blighted by sea-breezes.

It is, however, their splendid lighthouse which chiefly renders the Skerries interesting to the general public. Never was a site better chosen for such a beacon; for the Skerries, and the many craggy isles intervening between them and the east coast of Shetland, have been the scene of many a heartrending shipwreck. It was on a rock near the southern entrance to their little harbour that the *Carmelan* of Amsterdam was cast away in 1664. She was bound to the East Indies, and was laden with three millions of guilders, and many chests of coined gold. "The wreck happened on a dark night, when four men, placed among the shrouds, were endeavouring to discover land. They were not able to descry the land till the vessel was close upon it; and before they could warn the rest of the crew, the ship struck. The mast broke close to the deck, failing at the same time on one of the cliffs, by which means the four men were saved; but the ship itself sunk in deep water, and all the crew on board immediately perished." * As formerly mentioned, † "a considerable quantity of spirituous liquors was driven ashore; and, for twenty days afterwards, the inhabitants of the Skerries were in a state of continued intoxication. When the Earl of Morton heard of the wreck, he repaired to the spot, and was actively employed in rescuing from the water several of the chests of gold. These ought to have come into the King's treasury; and when Charles II. heard of the

* Hibbert's "Zetland," pp. 295-6.
† See Chapter II. on Religious and Ecclesiastical History.

Earl's private appropriation, he is said to have been decided in the views which he had before entertained of recalling the Crown estates of Orkney and Shetland that had fallen into the hands of the Morton family, on the fictitious plea of a mortgage of Charles I." Another amongst the numerous shipwrecks this coast has witnessed may be here mentioned. "In the year 1780, a Russian frigate was wrecked on the island of Whalsey. Mr. Bruce Stewart, the proprietor of the island, ordered immediately his tenants to fit out proper boats to save what lives could be saved. Unfortunately, all their exertions, which were made at the risk of their own lives, could save only five of the Russian sailors. These five men were entertained by Mr. Bruce at his hospitable mansion for several months, and sent home to their native country. From the report of these five men, the Empress Catherine of Russia gave orders to her ambassador at the court of London, to write, in her name, a letter of thanks to Mr. Bruce of Symbister, which letter I have seen."*

Whalsey Skerries Lighthouse,† which was first lighted in 1852, is built on a rocky islet, called the Bond, the most easterly spot in the group. Like those of Unst and Bressay, it was erected by Messrs. D. & T. Stevenson, Engineers to the Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses. The tower rises to a height of ninety-six feet, and contains very similar accommodation to that of its prototype of the Bell Rock. This light is a revolving one, showing a bright flash once every minute. It is visible at a distance of eighteen nautical miles.

A narrow sound intervenes between the Bond and

* Sir J. Sinclair's "Statistical Account, Parish of Nesting," vol. xvii., p. 501.

† This group of isles is usually termed the Skerries, or Out Skerries. Their lighthouse has, however, been termed Whalsey Skerries Lighthouse, to distinguish it from similar erections built on other *skerries*, as Pentland Skerries.

Gruna, of which island the lightkeepers and their families are the sole inhabitants. The houses are fitted up—thanks to the generosity of the Commissioners—with every appliance to promote the comfort of the inmates that skill can suggest and money purchase. The keepers who guard this remote station are generally men of high character and great intelligence. The sound between Gruna and Bond is often so tempestuous that it is very difficult, and sometimes quite impossible, to land at the lighthouse. During a north-easterly gale in February, 1870, the sea broke over the islet and carried away a great part of the road leading from the landing place to the tower, some of the stones forming which were between four and five tons in weight, and had been firmly imbedded in the rock. From the top of the tower, one hundred and seventy-two feet above the level of the sea, an extensive view is obtained of the east coast of Shetland on the one hand, and a great solitary plain of ocean on the other. A fine little yacht, well adapted for these boisterous seas, acts as tender to the station, and makes passages to Lerwick, or elsewhere, as the business of the lighthouse requires.

There is no church in the Skerries; but a teacher supported by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge combines the important functions of instructing the young and conducting divine service on the Sabbath. His school is about the middle of the largest isle.

The Skerries form part of the estate of William Arthur Bruce, Esq., of Symbister (a minor).

A dreadful shipwreck occurred on one of these isles about the end of January, 1871. The splendid iron screw steamer *Pacific* of Liverpool, of about a 1000 tons register, on leaving Norway with a cargo of wood, encountered a strong head wind and a tremendous sea; when, horrible to relate, her propeller suddenly broke with a fearful jerk, and the good ship became disabled

and almost helpless. The weather, however, afterwards moderated, and the wind becoming easterly, the vessel was enabled to proceed slowly on her course, with the aid of the few small sails she could set. Even on the 8th of February, hopes were entertained of reaching some port on the east coast of Scotland or England in safety. On that night, however, a fearful gale set in from the south-east. It continued with unmitigated fury all day on Tuesday the 9th, and was accompanied by blinding showers of dense sleet. In the forenoon the captain, descrying land on the lee, made an ineffectual effort to *wear* the ship. About half-past two the breakers came in sight. As the vessel was drifting directly broadside on them, one or two head-sails were set, in order to turn her head towards the rocks, and thus give the crew a better chance of saving their lives. But the sails were "torn to ribbons," and the ship went broadside on a reef, off East Linga. Two lifeboats were now lowered, but immediately smashed to pieces against the vessel's side. The officers and all the crew went aft, save two men, who took refuge in the fore-rigging. The ship had not lain many minutes on the reef till she broke in two; the after-part gradually sank, and one or two tremendous waves, in the course of two or three minutes, swept the captain and twenty-five of the crew into eternity. Meantime, the forepart of the steamer was carried over the reef, and driven right against the side of the island; whereupon Daniel Coleman and Edward Johnsen lowered themselves down with ropes, and got on the dry land. Cold, wet, hungry, bareheaded, barefooted, and clad only in a ragged shirt and trousers, were these poor men when they came on shore. To add to their other miseries, they soon discovered they were on a small uninhabited island, without any kind of provisions. They would probably have been blown off their place of banishment by the violence of the hurricane, but for a hut used by the fishermen in summer. In this cold, damp, dilapidated erection, they got some shelter

from the pitiless storm, and enjoyed occasional snatches of sleep. On Wednesday Johnsen hoisted a pair of trousers on an oar, placed on the highest point of the island; this signal was observed by the fishermen at Ska, in Whalsey, three miles off, but with such weather they could render no assistance. On Tuesday and Wednesday the only sustenance the survivors obtained was quantities of water they forced themselves to drink from a spring. On Thursday and Friday some grass was added, and on Saturday forenoon the sea, which had been running mountains high round their insular prison, having somewhat abated, they were enabled to approach the shore and pick a few limpets, which they greedily devoured. There were two sheep on the islet, but every effort to catch them failed.

Twelve of the brave men of Whalsey manned one of their powerful boats on Thursday, and attempted to reach East Linga; but the sea drove them back. Another attempt made on Friday also proved futile. On Saturday at noon they effected a landing with great difficulty, and carried the poor starving sufferers in triumph to Whalsey, where the utmost kindness was showered on them. From Whalsey they were sent to Lerwick, and thence to Hull. This narrative is taken from the lips of the survivors. Coleman belongs to Hull, and Johnsen is a native of Sweden. Strange to say, their health is almost unimpaired by the fearful sufferings they passed through.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE NORTH ISLES—YELL.

Its Extent—Character of the Soil—Harbours—Proposed Canal—Parochial Statistics—Manor Houses—Hascussey—Fishings, &c.—Peat-Moss

TAKING our start again from Whalsey, we proceed to the North Isles. Advancing northwards, we skirt the ness and holm of Lunna, cross the entrance to Yell Sound, and soon reach the large island from which it derives its name. In point of size, Yell is next to the Mainland, being twenty miles in length, and six or eight in breadth. It is formed of gneiss, covered with deep beds of peat-moss, and hence its hills are particularly boggy and dreary. Along the east coast the land is comparatively low and green, and in many places very fairly cultivated. On the western side it is much higher, and after advancing some miles northwards, the shore becomes so bold and precipitous, that between West Sandwick and the point of Gloup, a distance of eleven miles, there are only two places where a landing can be effected—the Voe of Whalfirth and Dale of Symbister. The island is, on the whole, very well supplied with harbours. On the south we have Hamnavoe and Burravoe; on the east, Mid Yell Voe and Cullivoe; on the north, the Voe of Gloup; and on the west, Whalfirth Voe and Lady Voe. Yell is divided into two nearly equal portions by the Voes of Mid Yell and Whalfirth, which almost meet each other. "As the intervening space," says the Rev. James Robertson, a former minister of the parish, "consists entirely of peat-moss resting on a substratum of blue clay, a canal might be cut at a very

trifling expense, which the influx and reflux of the sea would, in a short time, convert into a channel, through which boats could pass at any time of tide. Were a communication between the seas on the east and west side of Yell thus opened up, there can be little doubt that the value of a locality in the vicinity of either of the Voes just mentioned would be considerably increased, from the additional quantity and variety of fish that would be introduced into them, and the facility afforded to all the inhabitants of that district of prosecuting the various kinds of fishing on whatever side of the island their endeavours were likely to be attended with the greatest success." * A very good highway traverses the island along the east coast—from Burravoe in the south to Cullivoe in the north; but the absence of transverse roads is very much felt. Parochially, it is divided into North, Mid, and South Yell. The latter two divisions of the island (with a population in 1871 of 1838) are united into one ministry; while North Yell (with a population of 894) is, parochially, united to Fetlar, despite the broad and often stormy strait that separates them.

The ruins of upwards of twenty chapels and eight burghs are still traceable. Each of the three divisions of the island is provided with a good Parish Church, and, also, with a small Wesleyan Chapel. There is a neat Free Church at the head of Busta Voe, and another at West Yell. Both have been recently erected, and, being far from the other places of worship, have proved highly beneficial to their respective localities. The Episcopalians have a mission and school at Burravoe, but no church. North Yell has lately been erected into a *quoad sacra* parish. The present worthy minister of Mid Yell (the Rev. James Barclay), possesses considerable medical skill, and has thus been doubly useful in the parish. The principal proprietors are Major

* New Statistical Account of Scotland—Mid and South Yell.

Cameron of Annsbrae, in the northern; Mr. Robertson of Gossaburgh, Mrs. Budge of Seafield, and Mr. Spence of Windhouse in the middle; and Mr. M'Queen of Burravoe, and Mr. Leask of Sand, in the southern division of the island. The finest manor-house in Yell is West Sandwick—(Mr. Robertson of Gossaburgh)—beautifully situated at the head of Lady Voe, on the west side of the island. Burravoe has been much improved lately. Windhouse occupies a romantic situation on the top of a height, overhanging the ravine between the Voes of Mid Yell and Whalfirth. The neat house of Seafield stands on the northern shore of Mid Yell Voe. In the fertile district of Raefirth, on the shores of the same bay, there stood not long ago the large mansion of the Nevens of Windhouse, who held extensive lands in Yell and other parts of Shetland. The ruins of the house of Raefirth are still to be seen.

The fine harbour of Mid Yell is protected by the fertile island of Hascussey, once inhabited but now laid down to pasture. The principal fishing station is at Gloup. Busta Voe contains extensive scalps, which yield oysters of large size and superior quality. Here cockles also abound. Unfortunately arrangements have not yet been made for regularly dredging the shell-fish of this fine bay, and sending them to market. Large sea-trout are caught in abundance in several of the bays—chiefly in those of Hamnavoe, Vatster, and Whalfirth Voe. The island affords extensive hill pasturage; and it is therefore not surprising that sheep-farming should now be prosecuted on a large scale, with apparently much profit to the tenant. Large sums must have been spent in surface-draining and wire-fencing these great tracts of moorland. Beyond supplying its small and sparse population with fuel, the vast quantities of peat-moss have not been utilised. It has been suggested it would become a valuable substitute for coal, by the aid of the compressing machines. Being rich in quality,

there is no reason why it might not yield some of the valuable substances which have been extracted from Irish peat-moss.

If these remarks were apposite, when written in the beginning of 1871, surely they are much more so now, when the exorbitant price of coals is inducing ingenious men everywhere to seek cheaper substitutes. Nowhere could a Peat-Compressing Company find a better field than Yell.

CHAPTER XVII.

FETLAR.

Its Name—Fertility of the Soil—Geological Formation—Parochial Statistics—Antiquities—Brough Lodge—Fetlar Ponies—Shipwrecks—Supposed Submarine Volcano.

DIRECTLY east from Yell, and separated from it by Colgrave Sound, is Fetlar. Mr. Edmondstone of Buness, in his valuable "Glossary of Shetland Words," maintains that while Yell means the barren, Fetlar signifies the fertile island; if so, names were never applied more appropriately. While Yell is a wilderness of peat-moss and coarse heather, the rich loam of Fetlar yields most luxuriant crops of grass. A squatter from Australia is said to have remarked that there was no pasture in Britain that could compare with the verdant plains of his adopted country, save that of Fetlar. Besides its backbone of gneiss, Fetlar contains serpentine and the more valuable chromate of iron. In strange contrast to the rich valleys immediately adjoining, the soil on certain parts of the Vord Hill is utterly barren. This is due to the presence of iron, which exists in various forms in the island. The sands of the loch at the head of Tresta Bay contain particles of magnetic iron ore; and chalybeate springs, of high repute amongst the natives for their medicinal virtues, exist in various parts of the island.

Fetlar, which is about seven miles long and five broad, contained in 1871 only 517 inhabitants. They were formerly much more numerous, but the late Sir Arthur Nicolson cleared the greater part of his estate of men, in order to make room for sheep. In several

places the island terminates in bold and lofty precipices. The best anchorage is obtained in the large Voe of Tresta, at the south of the island. This splendid bay is guarded on either side by cliffs of no mean height, while its head is lined by a pretty sandy beach, which separates it from a fine fresh-water lake. Gruting Voe, on the north of the island, also affords good anchorage, but only with certain winds. There are no properly made roads in Fetlar, but, owing to the comparative hardness of the ground, travelling is not very difficult. The spiritual wants of its small population are provided for by the Parish Church, which, together with the manse, is beautifully situated at the head of Tresta Bay; and the Free Church, erected near its pretty manse at Fiel. The district can boast of only one school, supported by that great benefactor of Shetland, the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, which stands at Gruting. The ruins of several large broughs are to be seen. In the immediate neighbourhood of one of them, at Houbie, are traces of small dwellings, which were evidently built there in order to secure protection from the stronghold, in the event of a hostile invasion.

In the north-west of the island are the foundations of what Dr. Hibbert believes to have been a Roman camp. Unfortunately, a considerable portion of them have been carried away by the inroads of the sea. The principal proprietor is Lady Nicolson, whose villa-like residence, Brough Lodge, stands at the extreme east of the island. In its immediate neighbourhood, and on the ruins of an ancient brough, from which the mound derives its name, is an observatory, erected by the late Sir Arthur Nicolson, who had a taste for astronomy. The western, but now most populous, portion of Fetlar belongs to the Earl of Zetland; and Dr. Smith holds the small estate of Smithfield. The chief fishing-station is at Funzie, a situation well adapted for that purpose. Besides sheep, a

great many ponies are reared in the island. What is now well known as the "Fetlar breed," is a cross between the horse and the Shetland pony. It possesses a good many of the best qualities of both, but is now degenerating from breeding in. These creatures are swift and graceful, but wild and difficult to train. The colour is generally grey, presenting great varieties in shade. The progenitor of the Fetlar breed was a fine Mustang, which was ridden by the famous Bolivar at his last great battle. Bolivar presented him to Captain (afterwards Sir) Arthur Farquhar, R.N., who brought him to England, and ultimately sold him to the late Sir Arthur Nicolson. * The lofty headland of Lamhoga is frequented by the Peregrine Falcon.

In the olden times, wrecks were not uncommon on this island. "About the middle of the last century, the *Vandela*, a Swedish vessel trading to the East Indies, perished within a short distance of the booth of Funzie; she had on board a sum to the amount of £22,000 sterling, in various coins and pieces of silver. About £18,000 of this money was fished up by means of diving apparatus." † In December, 1870, the fine iron-built barque, *Jahn Cæsar* (410 tons), of Hamburgh, having, strangely enough, mistaken the light of Whalsey Skerries for that of North Ronaldshay, in Orkney, went on shore during a snow-storm at Aith, Fetlar, and became a total wreck. All the crew and much of the valuable cargo were saved.

Pieces of pumice-stone have frequently been driven ashore on this coast. They are generally supposed to have been carried by oceanic currents from Iceland. There are, however, "reasons for supposing that the vicinity of this country itself has been the seat of a submarine volcano." "In the year 1768," said the late

* For this information I am indebted to the kindness of Andrew M. M'Crae, Esq., W.S.

† Hibbert's "Zetland," p. 389.

Andrew Bruce, Esq. of Urie (Fetlar), in a communication to Mr. Low, "we had the visible signs of a submarine shock, which threw ashore vast quantities of shell-fish, of different kinds, and of all sizes, with conger-eels and other sorts of fish, but all dead; at the same time, the sea, for several miles round, was of a dark muddy colour for several days after. *

* Hibbert's "Zetland," p. 390.

CHAPTER XVIII.

UNST.

Hills — Lochs — Geological Formation — Harbours — History and Antiquities.

THE most northerly spot in Her Majesty's home dominions is one of the most interesting islands of Shetland. Of oblong shape, it is about twelve miles long, and four or five broad. The rapid tideway of Blue Mull Sound, about a mile wide, separates it from Yell. Although more level than other islands of the archipelago, the surface of Unst is diversified by several hills of considerable prominence. "Vallafield, rising within a mile and a-half of its southern extremity, runs in a direction parallel to the west coast, and, under different names, to the very northern point." * The bold peak of Saxaforth, the highest in the island, rises somewhat abruptly towards its north end. It is nine hundred and thirty-six feet high, and is visible fourteen leagues off the coast. "Crossfield stands nearly in the middle, and at right angles to Vallafield." † "Vordhill stretches out parallel to the east coast." A chain of lochs runs through the longitudinal diameter of the island—from Burrafirth in the north to Belmont in the south. The most important lake in this chain is that of Cliff, which is more than two miles long. In the west it is overhung by the comparatively high hill of Vallafield; and, altogether, the scenery along its shore is very pleasant. Interspersed between these hills and lakes are considerable tracts of level ground, which afford good pasturage

* Sir J. Sinclair's "Statistical Account—Unst." † Ibid.

where cultivation does not exist. As to geological structure, Unst is chiefly formed of gneiss, and mica, and talc schists, with considerable quantities of serpentine. Through the serpentine run several rich veins of chromate of iron, discovered by Dr. Hibbert, in 1817. Other minerals of less importance have also been found in the serpentine, as hydrate of magnesia.

The coast is generally rugged and craggy, unless along the harbours. It is not very high, except on the west and north. There are three or four very good harbours, particularly Balta Sound and Uyea Sound, both of which have the great advantage of shelter from the isles, from which they derive their names.

History and Antiquities.—Unst appears to have been one of the first districts of Shetland settled by the Scandinavians. Its greater contiguity to their own country than any other island in the group, together with the protection afforded to the vikings by its insulated position and good harbours, probably commended it to the Norsemen as a desirable site for a colony. It was at Haroldswick, in this island, that Horold Harfagre, King of Norway, first landed when on his famous expedition which resulted in the conquest of all the Scandinavian colonies of Shetland, Orkney, &c., and their annexation to the mother country.

Unst appears to have been a place of some importance in the old Pictish times, long before the arrival of the Norsemen. In the neighbourhood of Balta Sound, in the middle of the island, the remains of three Druidical-like circles are to be found. The largest of these is near the now ruinous kirk of Baliasta. "It is formed by three concentric circles, cut into the stratum of soil that covers the serpentine, into which boulder stones or earth were thrown, until they rose above the level of the ground. The diameter of the outermost circle is 67 feet, of the middle one 54¾ feet, and of the innermost 40 feet. There is a small central tumulus of stones in the middle of the enclosure, 12 feet in diameter, the presence

of which is no unfrequent indication of a Scandinavian temple." * Traces of a similar set of concentric circles, of less circumference, however, than those just mentioned, are to be found a mile to the eastward, along the hill of Courcifield; and about eighty feet from this second *temple*, as Dr. Hibbert terms it, is a third enclosure, consisting of only two concentric circles, the outer being twenty-two, and the inner seveteen feet in diameter. One of the neighbouring hill-peaks called the Muckle Heog is said to have been a place of execution which tradition was confirmed by the late Dr. James Hunt, President of the Anthropological Society of London, who in 1865 overturned a tumulus on its summit, and found a considerable quantity of human bones.

The great Ting, or general parliament of Shetland, is said to have met in Unst before it was removed to Tingwall. Its place of meeting is supposed to have been one of the circular enclosures just mentioned. The foude, or judge, sat on the central tumulus, while the udallers took their places within the concentric enclosures, according to their rank in the community. "If any accused person, after hearing the sentence of the lagman, was desirous to appeal to the voice of the people, he tried to effect his escape in a direction that led to the more westerly circle of stones situated on an adjoining hill; and if he reached in safety that sacred site of ground, his life was preserved, but if the popular indignation was against him he was pursued on his way to the sanctuary, and any one before he reached it might put him to death." † The ruins of numerous chapels have been already referred to. They present no architectural features worthy of note, and are merely interesting as showing that, in their younger days, the island contained a large population, much attached to the Roman Catholic faith.

---

* Hibbert's "Zetland," p. 405. † Ibid. p. 406.

CHAPTER XIX.

UNST—*(continued).*

Itinerary—Belmont—Uyea Sound—Muness Castle—Balta—Balta Sound—Buness—M. Biot—Some Distinguished Natives of Unst—Chromate Quarries—"Fenian Invasion"—Parochial Statistics—North Coast—Lighthouse.

IN order to enumerate the various objects of interest in their order, let us return to our method of following the coast, commencing in the south. Overlooking the troubled waters of Blue Mull Sound, and commanding a fine view of the small island of Linga, and the opposite shores of Yell, Belmont, the tasteful mansion of Major Thomas Mouat Cameron, the principal proprietor in the island, stands at the head of a pretty inlet. The Major resides chiefly at Annsbrae, Lerwick, only occasionally visiting Unst. In the olden time, Belmont was celebrated in the *far north* as the almost constant residence of his relative, Thomas Mouat, Esq. of Belmont, a gentleman much esteemed in his day for his learning and varied accomplishments. Mr. Mouat, together with the Rev. James Barclay, then minister of the parish, wrote the first Statistical Account of Unst, published by Sir J. Sinclair. He also lent material assistance to Dr. Hibbert, in the preparation of his great work on Zetland.

Advancing eastward from Belmont, we enter the safe roadstead of Uyea Sound, protected by the island of the same name. The shores of the bay, on the Unst side are pretty well lined with buildings, consisting of dwelling-houses, shops, cottages, and the plain but commodious church. A standing stone, of ancient date, is a prominent object on the heights. There is

a good pier, where an extensive herring-fishing is carried on in the autumn. The island of Uyea is rich both in arable and pasture land. It is inhabited merely by the proprietor, the farmer, and their servants Outside Uyea are the very fertile grazing islands of Haaf Grunie, and Wedderholm. Grunie yields serpentine of a superior quality, which takes on a high polish, and might be useful for ornamental stonework.

Leaving Uyea Sound by its eastern entrance, which is rather shallow, we reach the point of Muness, the site of a celebrated feudal castle, now in ruins. It is surrounded by a group of cottages, and belongs to the estate of Garth. "It consists of an oblong building, with a round tower at the north-western angle, and another at the south-eastern, while at the other two angles are hanging turrets, with beautiful machicoles delicately wrought in an extremely hard freestone. Several of the shooting-holes are ingeniously contrived with a deep cut or groove from right to left, and also up and down (giving a starlike sculpture to the stone), so as to allow an increase of range to the archer or musketeer. Over the door is the date of erection, 1598, and a tablet inscribed with ancient Gothic letters, beautifully raised :—

> "List ze to know this building quha began?
> Laurence the Bruce, he was that worthy man,
> Quha earnestlie his airis and affspring prayis,
> To help and not to hurt this wark alwayis."

"This self-praising Laurence was a Perthshire gentleman, who (like Moses of old), had fled from his native country in consequence of having slain a neighbour in some affray. He was son of Euphemia (daughter of Lord Elphinstone), who, having borne as a natural child to James V. him who was afterwards Robert Stewart, Abbot of Holyrood, and Earl of Orkney, married Bruce of Cultemalindie. This castle might even yet be repaired so as to make an excellent habitation, although the secretary observed, with regret,

many of the finely carved stones built into, and forming a portion of, the dry masonry of the dykes and cottages adjoining. The 'worthy man' above mentioned is said to have perished in a boat with all his people during a sudden squal." * His recorded deeds clearly prove that Cultemalindie had as little title to worth as his half-brother, Lord Robert Stewart, or to honesty, as his friend and accomplice Thomas Boyne, Foude of Tingwall. Both friends praised themselves, probably because no one else would; and both inscribed their praises on stone, evidently hoping future generations would ascribe to them virtues which their own knew too well they were utterly devoid of.

Having doubled the point of Muness, we advance northwards along a rather uninteresting coast towards Balta Sound, passing, as we reach its south entrance, the small island of Hunie. Balta Sound is a rather narrow voe or bay, running nearly two miles into the land. It is rendered completely land-locked by the island of Balta, which lies directly across its mouth. Balta is about a mile and a-half in length: towards the ocean it is precipitous, but towards Unst it slopes gradually down to a sandy beach. The island, which is now uninhabited, is of a peculiarly light green colour in summer, owing to its luxuriant grass, which feeds ample flocks. It is infested by numerous rabbits, whose burrowing amongst the sand, together with the action of the elements, has carried away a good deal of the soil.

Balta Sound is a very safe harbour, affording good anchorage. On its north side stands the neat manor house of Hammar (Mrs. Spence of Hammar), and near its head is Buness, the residence of Mrs. Edmondstone, of

* Wilson's "Voyage Round Scotland." Part. II. pp. 318-19. The Secretary here alluded to is the late Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, Bart., who, as Secretary to the Scottish Fishery Board, accompanied Mr. Wilson on his interesting voyage.

Buness. This is a very elegant mansion, surrounded by well laid-out gardens and lawns. An important addition has recently been made to the house by the late proprietor. It was at the house of Buness that M. Biot, the celebrated French philosopher, dwelt for several months in the year 1817, when engaged in measuring the time of the seconds pendulum. Here also Captain Kater carried on similar observations the following summer.

The connection between Buness and these men of science is recorded on a monumental stone, erected within the grounds by the late laird, who was the host of both during their sojourn in the island. For the hospitality shown them, Mr. Edmondstone received the warm thanks of the National Institute of France, and the Royal Society of London. It may be not uninteresting to the reader to give some of M. Biot's impressions of Shetland. "It was no longer," says the philosopher, "those fortunate isles of Spain, those smiling countries, Valentia, that garden where the orange and lemon trees, in flower, shed their perfumes around the tomb of Scipio, or over the majestic ruins of the ancient Saguntum. Here, on landing upon rocks mutilated by the waves, the eye sees nothing but a soil wet, desert, and covered with stones and moss, and craggy mountains scarred by the inclemency of the heavens; not a tree, not a bush, to soften the savage scene; here and there some scattered huts, whose roofs covered with grass allowed the thick smoke with which they are filled to escape into the fog." * Considering the distracted condition of his own fair but unhappy country, immediately before the time he wrote, we are not surprised to find the French *savant* reflecting on the civil tranquillity of the Ultima Thule. "During the twenty-five years in which

* M. Biot's Journal, quoted by Mr. Wilson, in his Voyage Round Scotland, pp. 312-13.

Europe was devouring herself, the sound of a drum had not been heard in Unst, scarcely in Lerwick; during twenty-five years the door of the house I inhabited had remained open day and night. In all this interval of time, neither conscription nor press-gang had troubled or afflicted the poor but tranquil inhabitants of this little isle. The numerous reefs which surround it, and which renders it accessible only at favourable seasons, serve them for defence against privateers in time of war;—and what is it that privateers would come to seek? If there were only trees and sun, no residence could be more pleasant; but if there were trees and sun, everybody would wish to go thither, and peace would exist no longer." *

The Edmondstone family has done much (probably more than all others combined) for the literature of their native country. The late Dr. Arthur Edmondstone, F.R.C.S.E., a very talented physician, long resident at Lerwick, besides a host of trenchant pamphlets on various controversial subjects, wrote his "View of the Zetland islands" in 1809. Notwithstanding an unfavourable criticism in the *Edinburgh Review*, when it first appeared, the work has been a standard one on Shetland ever since. In 1806, Dr. Edmondstone wrote an able monograph on Ophthalmia, based chiefly on his own experience when a surgeon in the army. It still holds a respectable place in surgical literature. His brother (Dr. Lawrence Edmondstone, still alive, and resident at Haligarth, near Buness) has been a keen observer in natural history, to which science he has contributed much. His accomplished lady, recently deceased, possessed a felicitous literary style. Her chief writings are an interesting little work entitled, "Tales and Sketches of Shetland," "A Visit to Shetland" (Chambers's Papers for the people), and "Sunshine over Shadow," being

* M. Biot's Journal, supra cit.

the life of her son (Mr. Thomas Edmondstone, jun.) This gentleman was a naturalist of extraordinary promise. When eleven years old, he discovered, in his native island, the *Arenaria Norvegica*, a plant hitherto unknown in the British Flora; and at twenty he became Professor of Botany in the Andersonian University of Glasgow. A few months afterwards, his bright career was cut short by a violent accidental death, when engaged as naturalist in H.M.S. *Herald* in the Pacific. Mr. Edmondstone wrote a Flora of Shetland, the result of his numerous botanical explorations. A daughter of Dr. L. Edmondstone (Mrs. Saxby, widow of the late Dr. Saxby, who was distinguished for his knowledge of natural history), possesses great poetical talent, and lately delighted her countrymen by the publication of a volume entitled, "Lichens from the Old Rock." The late worthy proprietor of Buness recently, at the request of the Philological Society, published a "Glossary of Shetland Words," a work likely to prove very useful in rescuing from oblivion the remains of a language fast becoming obsolete.

Somewhat to the north of Balta Sound are the chief chromate quarries. This mineral, as already mentioned, was discovered by Dr. Hibbert in 1817, but it was only in 1822 that the late Mr. Edmondstone, of Buness, commenced to work the quarries. At first the chromate fetched as high as £10 per ton, but soon the prices fell, as mineral of a better quality can be procured from America and Russia. For a time no market could be found for Unst chromate, but now it sells pretty well, as manufacturers find it convenient to mix it with ore of a softer consistence. It is used chiefly for producing yellow paints, and also in the preparation of the new colours, magenta, solferino, &c. Three different qualities of chromate are obtained from the Unst mines, first, second, and third. For a long time the third-rate quality was unsaleable, and a great quantity of it accumulated, from year to year, as rubbish. Recently,

however, the energetic factor on the estates of Garth and Annsbrae contrived an apparatus for washing away the *debris* from the third-rate chromate; so that the mineral remaining after this process now realises about £1 7s. per ton. The mines at present employ about fifty men and boys. The ore is detached by means of blasting, and the fragments are brought to the surface, and the water pumped out of the holes by steam-power. These mines have been a source of great gain to the proprietors, and must also have done much good by employing many of the islanders.

At a little distance from the head of Balta Sound stands the Parish Church, a large and comfortable building, devoid of architectural attractions. A little higher up the valley is the large and handsome manse, beyond which again is situated Hillside, the pretty residence of the Rev. Mr. Ingram. It is surrounded by well laid-out gardens, lawns, and fields; and within this private enclosure is a well-built Industrial School, and the neat Free Church. The late Rev. Dr. Ingram, the venerable father of the present respected minister, died in the beginning of the year, at the very advanced age of 103.

Before quitting the subject of individuals of note connected with Unst, it would be wrong not to mention that this island has given a Principal to the University of Glasgow. The Very Rev. Thomas Barclay, D.D., the late Principal, was youngest son of the late Rev. James Barclay, Minister of Unst, who died in the end of last century. The charges Dr. Barclay held, in succession, were, the parishes of Dunrossness and Lerwick, in Shetland; Peterculter, in Aberdeenshire; Currie, in Midlothian; and lastly, the Principal's Chair in Glasgow. The talents and learning which thus raised him are too well known to require mention here.

A few years ago, the remote island of Unst came very prominently before the British public. In the

summer of 1866, some suspicious cruisers had been observed amongst the fishing vessels at Faroe. About the middle of August, a most alarming article appeared in the *Scotsman*, giving an account of a serious Fenian raid on Unst. The island was described as having been invaded by two or three Fenian vessels, which bombarded and fired the church, levied heavy contributions, and carried off several of the leading inhabitants as hostages. An immense sensation was produced. The Government is said to have sent a man-of-war so far north as Peterhead, while the Lord Advocate made arrangements with the Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in Scotland for the protection of the country. In the course of the day in which the article appeared, it was found the paper had been hoaxed. This fact was telegraphed all over the kingdom, and every means was taken for the detection of the offender, but without success.

In 1861, Unst contained a population of 3060. The last Census shows a population of only 2780. The Established Church is represented by the Parish Church, and a mission chapel, and school, lately erected in the south-west of the island; the Free Church, by commodious churches at Uyea Sound and Balta Sound, and a chapel in the north end of the island; while the Wesleyans have a small chapel and mission house in the north district. The Wesleyan minister at Unst must have very arduous duties, for he is the only clergyman of his denomination in the north isles; and therefore he has to itinerate through Unst, Yell, and Fetlar, supplying, in succession, the chapel in each district.

Good roads have lately been made in Unst, at the expense of the island itself. They extend from Uyea Sound to Haroldswick, and again, from Buness to the Loch of Cliff.

In order to visit the north end of the island, however, let us betake ourselves to the highway of the sea. If our bark be small, and propelled by oars or a fair wind,

we leave Balta Sound through its northern entrance, navigation through which is rather intricate, as it contains some shallows. Passing in succession the open exposed bays of Haroldswick and Norwick, with their rugged shores, we double the point and Holm of Ska, and direct our course towards the northern shores of the island. Ska was long regarded as the most northerly point in the British dominions, but Captain Thomas, who conducted a very elaborate survey of the Shetland coast, has determined that this distinction belongs to the Holms of Burra Firth, farther west. As we skirt the northern shores of Unst, under the brow of Saxaford, the scenery increases in grandeur, boldness, and variety. The lofty cliffs, pierced here by magnificent caves, and there rent by fearful gios, with silvery mountain streams pouring down their sides, defy description, as much as the great gaunt-looking *stacks* which rise out of the ocean, as if to guard them from its assaults; and the clouds of sea-fowl, which relieve their solitude by many screams, and variegate their iron sides by the constant movement of their phalanges. This precipitous coast is rent in twain by the long and deep indentation of Burra Firth, which runs into the land between two bold headlands, or rather two steep-sided hills. On the fine head of Hermaness, which guards the western side of Burra Firth, a few pairs of the *bunxie*, or Skua gull, still build. This large and beautiful bird is now found nowhere else in the British Isles, save in Foula. "The great Icelandic owl (*Strix nyctea*), the most beautiful and magnificent of all the European nocturnal birds of prey, is known to haunt the moorish wilds and craggy cliffs of Unst alone, of all the British Islands." *

About a mile to north of Hermaness, several high and naked rocks stand alone in the ocean. On one of these, called Muckle Flugga, the Unst Lighthouse,

* Wilson's "Voyage Round Scotland," Part II., pp. 314-15.

represented in the accompanying engraving, is built. For a description of this interesting structure, we cannot do better than quote an article by the distinguished engineer who erected it. "This class of stations (*i.e.*, those on outlying isolated rocks"), writes Mr. Stevenson, "may be fitly represented by the North Unst Lighthouse, off the north coast of Shetland, which we select as being the most northern point of Her Majesty's British dominions. The north Unst tower is built on an outlying rock of a conical form, called a 'stack,' which rises to the height of nearly two hundred feet above the sea. Towards the north its face is nearly perpendicular, and exposed to the full 'fetch' of the Northern Ocean. Its southern face is an abrupt rocky slope, which, previous to the cutting of steps on its surface, could only be scaled with great difficulty. The top of the rock affords little more area than is sufficient for the site of the lighthouse. The tower is fifty feet in height, and contains the light-room, sleeping-room, kitchen, and provision store. The base of the tower is surrounded by a semicircular building, containing the oil, coal, and water stores. There is only one part of the rock at which a landing can be effected, and that, of course, only in favourable weather. The dwelling-houses for the families of the four lightkeepers are built on the island of Unst, in a creek called Burra Fiord, about four miles from the lighthouse. The first light on this rock was shown from a temporary tower, erected in 1854, at the suggestion of the Admiralty, for the benefit of the North Sea Squadron, then engaged in prosecuting the Russian war. It was deemed advisable to provide certain lights before winter set in, and only a few months remained to make all the necessary preparations for indicating to our navy the rugged shores of northern Shetland. The *Pharos* steamer left Glasgow with the workmen and temporary lighthouse and dwellings, on the 31st July, and the light was exhibited on the 11th

LIGHTHOUSE, UNST.

October; and when it is considered that the whole of the materials and stores—consisting of water, cement, lime, coal, ironwork, glass, provisions, &c., and weighing upwards of one hundred and twenty tons,—had to be landed on an exposed rock, and carried up to the top in small quantities on the backs of labourers, it will be seen that the exertions of Mr. Brebner, who acted as resident engineer, and of Mr. Watt, who took charge of the landing department, were in the highest degree praiseworthy. Even with the fine weather that prevailed, the landings were latterly very difficult, and could only be accomplished by lashing ropes to the various articles and lowering them out of the landing-boats, and thereafter hauling them to the edge of the rock. But notwithstanding all untoward circumstances, the whole process of transporting the materials to the top of the rock, and erecting the lighthouse was accomplished in the wonderfully short space of twenty-six days. The temporary houses were of iron, surrounded by a casing of rubble masonry, set in cement. Seeing that these temporary buildings were elevated two hundred feet above the sea, it was hardly to be expected that they should have had anything but the wind and the rain to withstand; but the succeeding winter months revealed a very different and unlooked-for state of matters. From the 1st to the 4th of December, the north of Shetland was visited by a severe gale from the north-west. The foreman of the quarries, who had been left to complete the cutting of the steps on the face of the rock, reported that on the 3rd of December the sea began to break over the rock about nine A.M., and increased in weight until one o'clock: several seas thereafter broke heavily on the tower, and one of them burst open the door of the dwelling-house, deluging the whole with water, so that the view we have given in the woodcut does not exaggerate the fury of the waves. Similar storms occurred during the winter, and the seas fell with

such violence upon the iron roof of the dwelling-house, and on the lantern of the lighthouse, as to raise fears for the safety of the buildings. An elevation of nearly two hundred feet was not sufficient to place these temporary buildings beyond damage from the sea; and in erecting the permanent establishment, it was resolved to raise the lightroom fifty feet above the lofty rock on which it stands, so that the seas might pass over without obscuring or endangering the light. The permanent structure which we have already described, shows a fixed dioptric light of the first order, and was completed in 1858, at a cost—including the shore establishment—of about £32,000."* There is nothing worthy of remark on the bold and rocky west coast of Unst. Towards the south, where it becomes low, is situated the pretty house, grounds, and farm of Lund, the property of Miss Cameron Mouat, of Garth. Unfortunately Lund, which in Norse signifies a grove, is only that in name.

* "Our Lighthouses," by David Stevenson, F.R.S.E. *Good Words*, 1864, pp. 107-8.

CHAPTER XX.

LUNNASTING.

Doura Voe — West Sound of Whalsey — Vidlin Voe — Lunna — Parochial Statistics — Industries, &c.

HAVING now endeavoured to examine the chief objects of interest in the North Isles, let us again return to Whalsey, and from that island, as a starting point, advance in a north-westerly direction. The great wide bay of Doura Voe separates Nesting from Lunnasting, and stretches for several miles into the land. Its ample waters afford excellent anchorage, but, unfortunately, commerce in these parts is very limited, and few vessels can avail themselves of the shelter of Doura Voe. Laxa, at the head of the bay, has long been famed for its excellent trout, from which circumstance it derives its name. The granite quarry of Stavaness, which point guards the entrance to Doura Voe, on the south, has already been mentioned. Unless for the building of Symbister House, the stone from this place does not appear to have been applied to any purpose.

Leaving Doura Voe, we proceed northwards through the West Sound of Whalsey, that is between the Mainland and the smaller islands east from Whalsey. On our left is a high and rather rocky coast, and on the right these picturesque little isles. Doubling the bold head of Lunning, we enter the pretty Voe of Vidlin. On the north side of the bay, and immediately opposite the headland just mentioned, the gneiss hills of Lunnasting, hitherto wild and rugged, assume a softer and more regular outline as they approach

Lunna, where an isthmus connects the large peninsula of Lunna Ness with the rest of the district. Here stands Lunna House, the seat of Robert Bell, Esq. of Lunna, the sole proprietor of the parish. This quaint and old-fashioned, but most comfortable and commodious mansion, occupies a commanding position at the top of a steep ascent, immediately overhanging the low isthmus just mentioned. Never was a more romantic site chosen. The rugged hill opposite, crowned by a neat little tower; the pretty blue voe on either side; the undulating banks in front, and the well-trimmed gardens, lawns, and walks around, all render Lunna one of the most beautiful and picturesque spots that can be imagined. Its Norse name, which signifies sheltered place, is strictly true to nature. The fine old Parish Church, well supported by buttresses, and an even more ecclesiastical-looking private house, serve greatly to ornament the low ground between the bays. Lunnasting, for many generations, belonged to the family of Hunter, of Lunna. On the death, upwards of thirty years ago, of Robert Hunter, Esq. of Lunna,* a gentleman much esteemed for his abilities and varied accomplishments, the estate passed to his only daughter, who was afterwards married to Robert Bell, Esq., advocate, for many years Sheriff-Substitute of Zetland. The Bells, sprung from an ancient Dumfriesshire family, have held a high place in the medical profession in Edinburgh, since the days of Benjamin Bell, the great surgeon of last century. The same family has given more than one able lawyer to the Scottish bar.

Around the head of Vidlin Voe, where the Parish

* With true patriotism, Mr. Hunter took an active interest in endeavouring to obtain representation in Parliament for his native county, of which privilege it had been unjustly deprived until 1832. While the Reform Bill was before the Legislature, he resided in London, and embraced every opportunity of urging the claims of Shetland on the Government. Happily the efforts of Mr. Hunter and others were crowned with success.

School stands, the land is rich and well-cultivated. The Established Church is supplied by a missionary, who is the only clergyman resident in the district. The Wesleyans and Baptists have each a small chapel at the head of Vidlin Voe, the most central spot for the population. Only an occasional service is held in these places of worship by ministers from a distance.

The deep-sea fishing is the chief industry of Lunnasting. As already mentioned, the men during the haaf season, land their fish at the Skerries. There is one pretty large arable and sheep farm in the district; but the most of the cultivated land is divided into crofts. A considerable quantity of sea-weed is frequently collected along the shores, and mnufactured into kelp.

CHAPTER XXI.

YELL SOUND TO SULEM VOE.

Lunna Ness—Yell Sound—Its Islands—Its Tideways—Coast of North Delting—Sulem Voe—Mavisgrind—The Road there.

BIDDING farewell to Lunnasting, we leave the Voe of Vidlin, and shape our course in a north-easterly direction along the shores of Lunna Ness. This large peninsular promontory stretches out into the sea for a distance of about four miles. It contains few inhabitants, and is almost entirely devoted to pasture. At its point is a low green islet, termed Lunna Holm. Having either sailed round the Holm, or through the narrow sound separating it from the Ness, we take a north-westerly direction, and find we have entered Yell Sound. This great stretch of water lies between the island of Yell and the northern portions of the Mainland. It is studded over with islands, more or less picturesque, all of which, from the rich succulent grass they yield, afford excellent pasturage. Cattle and sheep fed in such places have always been more esteemed in Shetland than those from the pasture of the larger islands. Of these isles Fish Holm, Samphray, Bigga, Brother Isle, and Lamma, all were peopled about fifty years ago; but they were from time to time, "laid down to grazing," until Little Roe was the only one in the group that could boast of human inhabitants. Recently, however, it has shared the same fate. Many voes, some of them running far into the land, open into Yell Sound. This arrangement is particularly observable in North Delting. The Sound is almost constantly agitated by fiercely-conflicting tides, fre-

quently heaving up tremendous billows, and rendering its passage by boats most dangerous, if not impossible. The number of isles and rocks by which their course is obstructed, together with the circumstance that the tide of one end of the strait is an hour later than that at the other, seems to account for these phenomena. These tideways form a favourite resort for all kinds of fish, especially the sillock, which is often caught in myriads in Yell Sound and its tributary voes.

In sailing up these troubled waters, let us keep close to the Mainland, since we have already attempted to take a bird's eye view of Yell. Proceeding northwards, and looking into the common entrance to the fine voes of Swining, Colafirth, Deal, and Firth, we soon reach Mossbank, with its large mercantile establishment, and neat U.P. Church and manse. This place is also of importance as the chief ferry between the Mainland and Yell. Here also the telegraph cable, which connects the North Isles with the Mainland, is laid. All the way up the Sound, we have, on the right, a fine view of its bonny isles.

Having doubled the Ness of Calback, four or five miles beyond Mossbank, we reach the mouth of Sulem Voe. It is by far the largest voe in the country, running as it does into the land for about ten miles, and separating Delting from Northmavine. To the eye of the stranger, it looks more like the mouth of a great river than a land-locked arm of the sea. Let us sail up through it, and look if anything interesting can be seen on the shores of Sulem Voe and its tributary branches of Garth and Voxter. The land along its shores slopes gradually towards the sea. It is generally pretty green with verdure, and in several places is cultivated. The places of most note on the left, or Delting bank, are the town and farm of Garth, the parish kirk of Scatsta, and the new and handsome manse at Voxter. On the right, or Northmavine bank, Sulem, with its good fields, numerous cottages,

and little Congregational chapel, is the only place of importance. The head of Sulem Voe is only a few hundred yards from that of Busta, on the west side of the island—a strip of land, not much above the level of the sea, separating them. It has frequently been proposed to connect them by a canal, which would tend greatly to further commerce and to develop the resources of the country. It would not be very expensive, as few rocks are met with along the line proposed.

But one of the upper and more westerly reaches of this voe brings the waters of the east and those of the west of Shetland (that is, those of the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean), into much greater proximity. At Mavisgrind, the entrance to the great peninsula of Northmavine, a narrow isthmus of rock, not more than thirty or forty yards wide, separates the two seas. The construction of the county road, immediately before it reaches this point, is a great triumph of engineering skill. For several hundred yards it winds round the base of an almost perpendicular cliff, being laid on a bulwark of large stones built into the sea. It is very pleasant to walk along this level path, with the still waters of the voe below, and the towering cliffs above —their clefts decorated here and there by the dog-rose and other wild plants and shrubs.

CHAPTER XXII.

SULEM VOE TO FEIDELAND.

Bardister—Ollaberry—North Roe—Fishing Station at Feideland.

ON leaving Sulem Voe, our attention is attracted by the peninsula of Gluss, on the west side of its entrance, protecting the nice little Voe of Bardister, at the head of which stands the neat house of the same name. It is the residence of Mr. Henderson of Bardister, a member of the family which has possessed the property for several generations. Upwards of a mile to the north of Bardister, the fertile lands of Ollaberry surround a fine little bay, looking out upon the Sound of Yell. This is one of the prettiest spots in Shetland. On a fine summer evening nothing in the far north can excel the beauty of the scene. The estate of Ollaberry belongs to Mr. Gideon Anderson, whose well-built dwelling-house is worthy of its situation. Near it are a neat little Mission Church, recently built by subscription by the Established Church, and a good specimen of a country mercantile establishment. At the head of the bay, the United Presbyterians have, within the last ten or twelve years, erected a very handsome and substantial set of buildings. Church, manse, and school, are within a few feet of each other.

A sail along the coast, between Ollaberry and the extreme north point, will amply repay the traveller. The junction between land and sea is effected by means of steep and moderately high banks, presenting beautiful undulations, and covered, in the proper season, by most luxuriant verdure. Each bay and voe along this course has its own features of interest and beauty.

The small Voe of Quayfirth, comparatively wide at the entrance, gradually becomes narrower, and tapers to a point at its inner end. The fine large land-locked bay of Colafirth, farther north, has an exactly opposite shape. The principal place along its shores is Lochend, which, like most favourable situations in Shetland, can boast of a shop. North Roe, which lies along the shores of an open roadstead, is of some importance as supplying the spiritual and material wants of the hyperborean region around. It is graced by a neat little church, recently erected by subscription, by the friends of the Established Church, and a well-built Wesleyan chapel and chapel-house, besides two mercantile establishments.

We are now very near the most northerly extremity of Northmavine and of the Mainland of Shetland, but have not reached one of its most interesting localities. Nearly three miles beyond North Roe is the long Ness of Feideland, jutting out north-eastwards into the sea, its rugged and craggy shores speaking too plainly of the violent element that almost surrounds it. The name of this tongue of land is derived from the richness of its grass. On the low marshy isthmus, which prevents the Ness from becoming an island, numerous rows of huts mark the site of the largest fishing-station in Shetland. In the summer season, Feideland presents a very lively scene. Men assemble from all parts of Northmavine, Delting, and Yell. Their six-oared boats are constantly arriving from, or setting out for the deep sea, while the beach is all life and animation with fish-curers, *beach* boys, and women splitting, washing, salting, and drying the valuable products of the deep. Large flocks of gulls hover about, no doubt enjoying the scene, but also picking up such portions of refuse as come within their reach.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE HAAF-FISHING

THE Feideland haaf (*i.e.*, deep-sea fishing-ground), is thirty or forty miles from land. Each six-oared boat carries from 4000 to 6000 fathoms of line, provided with one thousand or twelve hundred hooks, which are baited by such small fish as can be obtained, as piltocks, haddocks, herring, &c. The water in which the lines are set varies in depth, from 50 to 100 fathoms. They are sunk, and kept in their proper places along the bottom, by means of *cappie stones*, arranged at certain intervals, while their position is marked on the surface by three buoys. The setting of the line occupies, in moderate weather, three or four hours. This accomplished, the men rest for about two hours, and then begin to haul them. This important process occupies the whole crew. One man pulls in the line; another takes the fish off the hook, and places them in the after-*room* of the boat; a third guts them, and lays the heads and livers in the middle-*room*, the offal being thrown overboard; while the other three keep the boat still by means of the oars. Ling is the fish chiefly caught; but along with these some tusk and a few cod. From six to ten ling weigh a hundred weight. From twelve to fifteen hundred weights of fish are reckoned a fair haul; from twenty to twenty-five an excellent one. From thirty-five to forty hundred weights or *weighs*, as the men term them, are seldom taken, and when they are, the heads, and even the small fish are thrown overboard to make room for them. Should the weather become severe, considerable danger is involved in carrying such a large cargo to land. The largest quantity of fish

known to have been brought on shore from the haaf at one time, was seventy-two *weighs*, or three tons twelve hundred weight, taken by a North Yell boat in the summer of 1870. Between two hundred and three hundred *weighs* of wet fish is reckoned a good catch for a six-oared boat during the haaf-fishing season, which, as already mentioned, extends from about the middle of May to the middle of August. The North Yell boat just mentioned, caught in 1870 five hundred *weighs*, or twenty-five tons. Ling is sold to the curers at about 7s. 6d. per hundred weight, or £7 10s. per ton. Thus, a boat catching two hundred and sixty hundred weight in a season, would earn £97, or £16 to each of its six men, certainly no great reward for the toils, exposure, and danger they endure.

In addition to the marketable fish just mentioned, skate, halibut, and even the stone biter (*Anarchicus lupus*), are often caught. They are retained by the fishermen for their own domestic use. The hooks also frequently bring up from the bottom of the sea pieces of sponge, coral, and various other interesting specimens of natural history. For a long period, the only food the men carried, for their sustenance at the haaf, was some oat cake and blaand. Now, however, they frequently carry large open kettles, in which they light peat fires. These conduce greatly to their comfort, enabling the men not only to warm themselves, from time to time, but to make coffee, and cook some pork or fish. The pangs of hunger are often warded off by chewing tobacco. It is difficult to understand how men undergoing such arduous labour and severe exposure, could subsist on mere blaand and oatmeal.

The means of propelling the boats have also improved since the olden times. Until within the last thirty or forty years, they never carried canvas, unless they could easily lie their course. Whenever the wind was contrary the oars were used. Now, however, when the wind is unfavourable, the men set their large square

sails and tack up against it, only using one or two oars to assist the steersman and make the boat lie nearer the wind. The oars alone are never had recourse to, unless in calm weather, or when the contrary wind is so strong as to render it dangerous to carry sail. The class of boats used at the haaf has, within the last few years, gradually been getting larger. Instead of the old yawl of eighteen or nineteen and a half feet, many of the craft at the present day measure twenty-two feet of keel, with their dimensions in height and breadth proportionately increased.

Accidents are very common at the deep-sea fishing: many a boat has perished. This fatal occurrence generally takes place in one of three ways—either the craft is upset in a squall, or it is filled by a heavy sea; or, a gale of contrary wind setting in, the men become exhausted in their efforts to reach the land. It is most painful to witness the distress of the fishermen's wives and families when a gale has overtaken the boats at sea. Several times boats have been picked up, and the exhausted crews rescued, by ships, far from the land. In 1832, herring boats from Shetland were driven to Norway, where the men were hospitably entertained by the natives all winter, and sent home in spring. That same season, seventeen fishing boats from Shetland perished in a storm. About £3000 was raised, chiefly in Shetland and London, for the relief of the widows and orphans. On all similar occasions the generous British public has been ready to help the sufferers. It is only just to mention that the fearful disaster of 1832 would have been worse still, but for the philanthropic exertions of three or four Dutch busses, which succeeded in rescuing seven or eight boats' crews just about to perish from exhaustion.

Much waste takes place at these fishing-stations. The offal and large vertebral bones of the fish, which would make such excellent manure, are almost invari-

ably thrown away, the former at sea, and the latter after they are landed. The sounds, from which that valuable substance, isinglass, could be easily prepared, either share the same fate, or are salted for winter food to the natives.

All along the promontory of Feideland, a fine view is obtained of the beetling cliffs of Yell opposite, and of the great wide ocean all round. Nearly two miles beyond its point, those great gaunt rocks called the Ramna Stacks, with their summits of green grass, suddenly rise out of the sea, as if to terrify the mariner. Fierce conflicting currents run round these rocks, and between them and the land. Both experience and skill are therefore required by the fishermen in "taking" the little harbour of Feideland, particularly when the weather is coarse.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SAND VOE TO ROENESS VOE.

Pirates' Visit, &c.—North-west Coast of Northmavine—Uyea—Roeness Voe—Action fought there—Roeness Hill—View from its Summit.

BETWEEN Feideland and Uyea is formed a somewhat large, but very open and exposed, bay, opening into the head of which is an inlet termed Sand Voe. Except from its fishing-station, this remote arm of the sea is scarcely heard of. A century ago, however, it attracted some notice. Early in the winter of 177—, the natives were surprised one morning to observe a formidable looking vessel come to anchor in their unfrequented voe. Curiosity induced them to put off, in order to discover what she was; but the boats were ordered away, and no one allowed to come on board. The ship was moored to two anchors from both head and stern, yards and top-gallant masts *struck*, and everything made "snug," evidently for the winter. Although forbidding the natives to visit their ship, the crew occasionally visited the shore in order to procure water or provisions; on which occasions the natives, having their curiosity stretched to the utmost, used every means to obtain information from the sailors, but for a long time without result. At length it "leaked out" that the mysterious ship was a pirate, carrying sixteen guns. The sailors were mixed as regards nationality, but all of that desperate character befitting their employment. At length occurred an incident worthy of so lawless a crew. One of their number was so inveterate a thief that, while no locks in the ship were proof

against his peculations, he was equally proof against the restraining influence of even the piratical form of bodily punishment. His comrades now fell upon the ready method of binding him hand and foot, bringing him on shore, and burying him alive. This barbarous murder filled the simple natives with horror; and, on intelligence reaching Lerwick, great indignation was aroused. But how were the desperadoes to be met? There was no man-of-war on the Shetland coast, and no opportunity of communicating with the Admiralty. Native resources were opportunely called into use. A large smack was speedily equipped, mounted with two guns, and placed under charge of an experienced shipmaster, William Thomson, and was about to proceed to Sand Voe to give the pirate battle, when it was ascertained he had sought safety in flight.

The grave of Yacob Stays, the piratical thief, is still shown on the shores of Sand Voe; and, to this day, his ghost is said to haunt them after nightfall. The skipper who thus gallantly prepared to fight the battle of justice and humanity against such fearful odds, received no better reward than the title of admiral, conferred by his neighbours, amongst whom he was known, for the rest of his long lifetime, as "Admiral" Thomson.

Along the north-west coast of Northmavine, between Sand Voe and Roeness Voe, there is little worthy of special notice, save the evidence everywhere observable of the tremendous power of the great Atlantic, to whose full fury it is directly exposed. The monotony of the high and rugged cliffs, which form this long stretch of sea board, is relieved by the magnificent *stacks*, which rear aloft their heads between them and the ocean, and the pretty isle of Uyea, which is said to yield the richest grass in Shetland. Uyea is said to be nearly as rich in copper ore as in grass. It is alternately an island and a peninsula, according as the tide elevates or depresses a "bar" of sand between it and the mainland. From the highest point of this pretty isle, a

splendid view may be had of the neighbouring peculiarly wild and grand sea-coast, of which the few travellers who have explored it speak in almost rapturous terms. From the absence of roads on the land, and steam communication by sea, it is unfortunately, as yet, practically inaccessible. As we advance westwards, the coast increases in height; for the great mountain of Roeness Hill—the highest in Shetland—terminates towards the ocean in gigantic precipices of red granite, many of whose adamantine masses have given way before the yet stronger chemical power of the atmosphere and mechanical force of the sea. The large Voe of Roeness, opening directly from the ocean, sweeps round the base of that great hill, and, owing to this circuitous course, its upper reaches—much wider than the middle—become a safe land-locked harbour. This arm of the sea, seven miles long, goes far to meet that of Quayfirth on the opposite side of the land, and thus cuts Northmavine in two. Though near a battlefield, on which the elements wage perpetual warfare, this seeming mountain lake in the "Highlands of Shetland" looks like the abode of eternal peace. Yet even Roeness Voe can speak of human strife and bloodshed. One of the very few successes the English gained in their unfortunate war with Holland, in the time of Charles II., was won here. A Dutch frigate of sixty guns, relying on the friendly spirit of the people, to whom their nation was such a benefactor, came to winter in Roeness Voe. The British Government being informed, by the treacherous natives, of her situation, despatched two frigates to that voe, where they met the enemy's ship. A hot contest ensued, in which the Dutchman, after a gallant resistance, was overpowered, and struck her colours. Many Hollanders were slain. Their bodies were interred in a knoll along the banks of the voe, still called the "Dutchman's Knowe." The ascent of Roeness Hill, from the voe, is very steep, and, for its speedy accomplishment, requires no small strength

both of limb and lung. The view from its summit (1447 feet high), on a clear day amply repays the toil. All Shetland, from Unst to Sumburgh, and even Fair Isle, and from Foula to Fetlar, stretches out in bird's-eye view before us. This chaotic-like display of hills, and isles, and rocks, interspersed with seas and lakes, seems to merit the poet's sobriquet of "melancholy isles of farthest Thule." The highest peak of the hill is crowned by a watch-tower, built of large stones, without the aid of cement. Five or six people can contrive to squeeze themselves into it at a time. The structure is evidently of ancient date, and, being useful as a landmark at sea, it is pretty carefully preserved. Several Alpine plants are found on the sides of Roeness Hill. Dwarf specimens of such native trees as the mountain ash, and various species of the willow, are also to be met with. When removed to gardens, in sheltered situations, they have thriven and attained no mean size. While nearly all the other hills of Northmavine are as wild, rugged, irregular, and savage-looking as can well be imagined, the hill of Roeness presents a rounded form, with a comparatively smooth surface—a singular circumstance, as they are all of the same granitic structure.

CHAPTER XXV.

ROENESS VOE TO HAMNA VOE.

Wonderful Effects of the Sea—Grind of the Navir—Villians of Ure—Holes of Scraada—The Cannon.

THE rugged coast between the Voe of Roeness, and that of Hamna, is much indented by deep gios, but, otherwise, is devoid of interest. The fine rocks of Ossa Skerry, more than a mile off the shore, tend greatly to relieve the eye as it gazes over the vast expanse of ocean. They are tenanted by numerous gulls. The extensive tract of country between the two voes is so bleak and bare as to merit as little attention as its sea-shore. The safe little bay of Hamna Voe, which runs into the land for about a mile, forms a good fishing-station. Its shores had the honour of giving birth to John Williamson, the great innoculator of last century, who had wonderful success in averting the ravages of small-pox. The bones of good old "Johnny Notions" lie in the churchyard of Braken, close by.

The great peninsula of Northmavine contains a good many tributary peninsulas, several of which we have had occasion to notice. We now come to the most interesting of all. Hamna Voe, entering the land from the north-east, goes far to meet Braewick, which enters from the south, and between them a peninsula is formed. On viewing the coast, no one of the least reflection can fail to be struck by the evidences that are everywhere observable of the tremendous force of the ocean. While the cause of this wonderful phenomenon has ever been the same, its effects present the most singular variety. The chief reason for this variety has evidently been the

greater or less cohesive force, inherent in the different rocks.

Let us see some of the effects of the sea. At one place the great Atlantic, after battering against the iron-bound coast for ages, with the force of its mighty artillery, has cut for itself a passage through a precipice of porphyry, termed the Grind of the Navir.* The pieces of rocks which the sea has cleared away in forming the Grind, are remarkable, not only for size, but for the distance to which they have been borne. They are cubical in shape, several tons in weight, and have been carried about one hundred and eighty feet from their beds, and piled into two or three immense heaps.

Inland from the Grind of the Navir, is a long stretch of level plain, crowned by beautiful, soft, velvety turf. Dr. Hibbert thus eloquently describes it:—"The verdure that embroiders this proud bank, on which numerous sheep continually feed, pleasingly harmonises, on a calm day, with the glassy surface of the wide Atlantic; nor is the pleasure less perfect when the smooth coating of so luxuriant a green turf is contrasted with the naked red crags that form the precipice below, whitened with the spray of the breakers which continually dash against them with angry roaring. The rich surface of pasture that thus gradually shelves from the elevated ridge of the coast bears the name of the Villians of Ure: and well might we apply to this favoured spot of Thule the compliment that has often been paid to some rich vale of England—'Fairies joy in its soil.'"†

Nowhere could a more delightful promenade be found, and no sport in Shetland is more enjoyable than a scamper over this plain on pony-back. Such an excursion should not, however, be undertaken without a guide, or a good knowledge of the country, for, not many hundred yards from the Grind, we come suddenly

* Grind—a gate or gateway. † Dr. Hibbert's "Zetland," p. 528.

upon two immense perforations in the earth. They look like two huge quarry holes, but their sides are precipitous, and well blackened by an atmosphere loaded with sea salts. A natural bridge, covered by green sward, separates them above, but its great archway unites the two Holes of Scraada *—for that is their name—beneath. But the stranger arrives at the crowning wonder of all when he discovers that the bottom of both the "Holes" is filled with sea-water. The sea enters through a cavernous tunnel, about 100 yards long. It is most interesting to stand on the bridge, which spans this mighty chasm, and see the surf beat on the beach of the inner "Hole," while, at that point, the burn from the Loch of Houland, not far off, throwing itself over the precipice sixty or eighty feet high, descends in an angry waterfall, as if to oppose the entrance of brine, into its subterranean abode. This view must be more astonishing still during a winter storm, for, "when the wild waves are rushing in, impelled by the unimpeded fury of the western blasts, the vexed waters, forced through the lengthen cavern's jaws, are said to spring upwards in a lofty column from the inland gulf. There is thus, at the same time and place, a continuous cataract of river water, and an ascending spire of a more intermittent nature from the briny deep." † A whale is said on one occasion to have made its way into this strange subterranean sea. Its fate is not recorded, but we shall presume it never returned to the ocean.

Not far from the mouth of the tunnel leading to the Holes of Scraada is an aperture in the cliff, called the *Cannon*. It apparently communicates with a wider chamber concealed in the rock. With a strong wind, a quantity

* Scraada is said on high authority to mean the devil. The Holes of Scraada are therefore pits where Satan is supposed to have his seat.

† Wilson's "Voyage," p. 326.

of spray is blown into the chamber; the air is in the meantime condensed, but rebounding through its natural elasticity, it forces the water out again with a loud noise, and a copious discharge of fine foam, not unlike the report and smoke of a piece of ordnance.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Eshaness—Cross Kirk—Stenness—Dore Holm—Tangwick—Drongs —Hillswick Ness—Heads of Grocken

AS we proceed northwards, along the green braes of Eshaness, it is pleasant to behold its rich pasture, and fine flocks and herds. The churchyard of Braken was once surrounded by a considerable population, but the arable ground in that quarter has long since been converted into a sheep-walk. The burying-ground, still in use, besides several interesting monuments, contains the foundation of a once famous edifice, termed the Cross Kirk. Long after the abolition of Popery, Cross Kirk held a high repute for sanctity, and hither many pilgrims repaired. Some of its virtues were believed to extend even to the shell snails which sheltered in its mouldering walls. The poor creatures were collected, dried, powdered, and prescribed as a remedy for jaundice. "It was customary . . . to walk at Candlemas to the Chapel, in the dead of night, with lighted candles,—this being the ceremony used in memory of Christ, the Spiritual Light. The tapers thus solemnised would, no doubt, be converted to the popular use which their well-known virtues throughout all Christendom have from time immemorial suggested; they would be lighted up whenever thunder was heard, or the malevolence of demons was apprehended." * At length arose Mr. Hercules Sinclair, minister of Northmavine, who, in the heat of his Protestant zeal, caused the old kirk to be razed to its foundations.

---

* Dr. Hibbert's "Zetland," p. 531.

Stenness is well adapted for the large fishing-station of which it is the seat. It is as near the western fishing-ground as any point of land can be. The isle of the same name, acting as a breakwater, completely protects the convenient little harbour from the violence of the Atlantic, while its ample beach of small boulders affords great facilities both for hauling up the boats, and drying the fish. The long rows of boats on each side of the little *wick*, testifies to the large number of boats' crews which prosecute the Stenness haaf-fishing.

The isle of Stenness wears a most desolate aspect, and displays abundant evidence of the awful havoc wrought by the ocean, when it dashes with unmitigated fury against an unprotected coast. Nearly every winter immense blocks of rock are forced, by this tremendous hydraulic pressure, from their native beds, and carried away to a distance, sometimes up an acclivity. Dr. Hibbert found, that in the winter of 1802, a tabular-shaped mass, eight feet two inches by seven feet, and five feet one inch thick, was dislodged from its bed, and removed to a distance of from eighty to ninety feet. The learned doctor gives measurements of other large blocks that have been removed; and goes on to remark—"Such is the devastation that has taken place amidst the wreck of nature. Close to the Isle of Stenness is the Skerry of Eshaness, formidably rising from the sea, and showing on its westerly side a steep precipice, against which all the force of the Atlantic seems to have been expended; it affords a refuge for myriads of kittiwakes, whose shrill cries, mingling with the dashing of the waters, wildly accord with the terrific scene that is presented on every side." *

On leaving the little harbour of Stenness, by its rather intricate south entrance, the lofty Holm of Tangwick comes in view, its sable hues forming a

* Dr. Hibbert's "Zetland," p. 527.

marked contrast to the gay colours of other rocks along the coast. Through it the sea has cut a magnificent archway, seventy feet wide, and high enough to allow a vessel with all sail to pass. From its gigantic portal, this huge rock gets the name of the "Dore Holm."

At the commencement of the low ness of the same name stands the quaint old-fashioned manor-house of Tangwick, for several generations the residence of the Cheyne family. The good old mansion is kept in good repair, and as nearly in its original state as possible. The Cheynes of Tangwick came originally from Aberdeenshire, and are descended from a minister who held the parish of Nesting at the Reformation. They resided in Shetland ever since, until the late Mr. Henry Cheyne settled in Edinburgh, where he attained to eminence in his profession of Writer to the Signet. The present representative of the family is his son, Sheriff Cheyne of Dundee.

We have seen many notable instances of hard rocks upheaved from their beds, and dispersed in many pieces, by the force of the ocean, but we now come to something that has stood for ages proof against its repeated and violent assaults. The Drongs must ever excite the wonder and admiration of all lovers of the grand and beautiful in nature who have the privilege of seeing them. "This immense rock," writes the late minister of Northmavine, "rises almost quite perpendicular to the height of an hundred feet from the water, and at a distance has the appearance of a vessel under sail. Near to this are two very high pillars, of the same kind of rock with the Drongs, and with the stupendous crags upon the shore; and it is not improbable that these have all been at one time united together, but have separated, not by volcanic eruptions, but by the billows of the ocean, which nothing almost can resist during the winter storms." * It is interesting to behold these mag-

* New Statistical Account of Scotland—Northmavine.

nificent pinnacles, not only from different points of view, but with different kinds of weather. In summer they seem to smile upon the glassy sea beneath, and the blue sky above, while the rays of an unclouded sun intensify the red colours they present. In winter the Drongs lend terror to the frowning sky overhead, and the tumultuous waves beneath, as they send column after column of white spray upwards, as if to destroy the towering pillars which so proudly overtop them. The large promontory, called the Ness of Hillswick, faces the Drongs on the south. The cliffs—for it is precipitous all round—are of the same bright red colour as the Drongs, but over their sides a curious bluish lichen, of various shades, has grown. These brilliant and variegated colours, and the many grotesque stacks, and caves, and crags they adorn, render a sail round Hillswick Ness peculiarly pleasing. On the opposite side of the little bay of Sandwick, and north from the Ness, the bright red heads of Grocken heave their bold peaks aloft.

THE DRONGS.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HILLSWICK.

THE large Voe of Urifirth runs into the land for about three miles. Protected from the violence of the Atlantic by the Ness of Hillswick, it is as safe a haven as could be desired. On, and near to the low isthmus which connects the peninsula just mentioned with the rest of the parish, Hillswick is built. For centuries it appears to have been the most important place in Northmavine, and this metropolitan character is still maintained. Here stand the Parish Church and manse, and the mercantile establishment where most of the business in the parish is transacted. An extensive beach of well-rounded boulders, extending from the warehouses around Hillswick House to the manse, is found very useful for completing the drying of the fish brought from the different stations previous to their exportation. Externally, the church presents a very neat appearance. The front is Gothic, with a handsome belfry. The windows are small in proportion to the size of the building, but this arrangement is considered suitable to the climate of Shetland. Internally, it is fitted up with an elegance that would do credit to any city church. St. Magnus Church—for that is its name—was erected in 1870 at a cost of £1700. The heritors have behaved most generously in granting such a handsome building. In doing so they must, no doubt have remembered that the present distinguished minister of Northmavine has, within the last few years, erected a church at Ollaberry, and another at North Roe, free of cost to the parish. Northmavine, whose

population in 1871 amounted to 2572, is thus very adequately supplied with ordinances, both by the Establishment and Dissenters.

A good parish school, newly erected, stands at Urifirth, at the head of the voe of that not very euphonious name. Hamna Voe, a branch running north-eastwards, is one of the safest harbours in Shetland. The headland, between those two arms of the sea, consists of red granite, which is said to take on a high polish, and to be peculiarly suitable for the construction of piers, and other works requiring great durability. Shetland possesses vast resources of this kind which have hitherto been utterly neglected. Their development would be an enterprise of great importance.

Hillswick appears to have been the abode of prehistoric man, for Mr. Millen Coughtrey, a promising student of medicine, when on a natural history expedition in that district, in the autumn of 1870, came upon the remains of an ancient kitchen midden, and examined its contents. "Among these were four long-handled bone-combs, seven other bone implements, including a broken needle, four rude awls, a scraper, and a punch, various pieces of broken pottery, the bones of domestic and other animals, some splintered, and others showing teeth-marks of animals and marks of cutting produced by man; he also found the shells of the usual edible molluscs and a quantity of fire-split pebbles. He considered it to be the tail-end of an outlying kjokkenmodding of some broch, or of some solitary family contemporary with the broch-dwellers. The principal portion of the heap had evidently been washed away by the sea." *

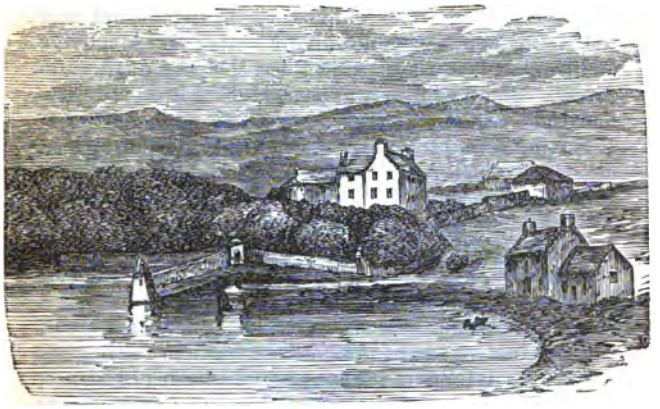
There are many temptations to linger in this very interesting district, but time speeds on, and we must now, in the words of Claud Halcro, say—

* Report of proceedings at meeting of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, held at Edinburgh, Monday, 13th February, 1871.

"Farewell to Northmavine,
Grey Hillswick, farewell,—
To the calms of thy haven,
The storms on thy fell."

On sailing southwards, through the huge bay of St. Magnus, whose great arms stretch from Eshaness to Papa Stour, there is nothing in what remains of the Northmavine coast worthy of special notice, except that it is singularly stern and wild. Eagleshay, in the mouth of Magnussetter Voe, is rather a pretty little isle, with a deep cliff dividing it into two unequal parts. "This appearance has given birth to a monstrous tale. The two sons of a deceased udaller, in sharing their father's money between them, made use of a cylindrical wooden vessel, named a *cog*, which being unequally divided within, by means of a transverse piece of wood, formed, when turned on one end, double the measure that it was when resting on the opposite margin. The younger son was blind, and the elder, in dealing out the respective shares, clandestinely contrived to fill the greater measure for himself, and the smaller one for his brother. 'You have now your share of the money,' said the heir, whose eyes were perfect. 'I doubt it,' said the blind one, 'and may the Lord divide Eagleshay to-morrow, as you have divided the money to-day.' The defrauded son had his wish. After a horrible night of thunder and lightning, the island was found in the morning split across by a deep rent into two parts, one of which was just twice the size of the other." *

* Hibbert's "Zetland," p. 533. It is a curious coincidence that a legend precisely similar attaches to the island of Langa, in the bay of Scalloway.



BUSTA HOUSE.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Swarback's Mine—Muckle Roe—Busta—The Giffords of Busta.

PASSING the northern mouth of Roe Sound, and sailing under the towering granite cliffs of Muckle Roe—scooped out here and there into magnificent caves, once the haunts of robbers and smugglers—we reach a strait, which rejoices in the curious name of Swarback's Mine. Lying between the islands of Roe and Vemintry, it forms the common entrance to an important congeries of voes, opening up a great extent of country. The Voe of Busta runs north, that of Aith south; while Gonfirth takes a south-easterly course, and Olnafirth stretches circuitously in the same direction, several miles into the heart of the mainland. The eastern shores of Muckle

Roe are low, fairly cultivated, and well sheltered by the land-locked bay. The Sound between that island and the Mainland is navigable only by boats; and so narrow and shallow is it, that, at low tides, the people can wade across. Small as it may appear, Muckle Roe is twenty-four miles in circumference.

Having passed the opening, we skirt along a fine green ness, and soon reach Busta—a place which has for generations figured largely in Shetland history. Than its situation, none more favourable could have been selected. Nature has scooped out an amphitheatre in the hill-side, with a small circular branch of the Voe at its base. Not many feet above the water's edge, rises the good old mansion of Busta, embowered in trees. The productiveness of the gardens, once so fertile, has been seriously impaired by their overshadowing influence. Many of these trees are native, and the perfection they have here attained is evidently due to the rich soil, sheltered situation, and the protection of high walls. The grounds of Busta are laid out in the straight Dutch style of last century. This arrangement is particularly observable in the Willow Walk, the principal avenue leading to the house from the county road. It runs straight as an arrow, for several hundred yards, through a ravine. The trees have grown so much over the road that the stranger must take care to avoid the fate of a learned divine—now no more—who, on riding through the avenue, encountered one of John Gilpin's mishaps, and involuntarily hung, not his harp, but his hat and wig, on the willow tree.

The principal entrance to the house of Busta is through a baronial-looking hall, with a massive stone staircase. Over the doorway, which looks towards the gardens, is the coat of arms of the Giffords. Beyond the entrance the house has no pretensions to architectural embellishments. It consists of three distinct portions, each erected at different periods since the beginning of last century. The drawing-room and dining-room are adorned

by many fine family portraits, the most of which were executed by a native artist, Mr. John Irvine.

The Giffords of Busta have rather a romantic history. Like several other families of Shetland lairds, they spring from a clergyman. This gentleman was minister of Northmavine at the Reformation. His descendants prospered, and acquired a considerable estate, which, however, being divided amongst the different members of a large family, became so atomised, as to be of little use to any one. In the beginning of last century arose Thomas Gifford, a man of great sagacity, energy, and business talent. He was a Whig and a Hanoverian, while all the other Shetland lairds were Tories and Jacobites. This circumstance gave him great political influence in the troublous times of the two rebellions. The Earl of Morton appointed him Steward-Depute of the county. To the occupation of proprietor and chief-magistrate he added that of a merchant, and appears to have got most of the trade of the islands into his own hands. With these advantages he soon consolidated the family property, absorbed many neighbouring lands in it, and, in course of time, accumulated the largest estate in Shetland. Everything seemed to prosper with Mr. Gifford. Not only was he rich and powerful, but the sun of domestic happiness shone on him. He was the husband of an accomplished spouse, a daughter of Sir John Mitchell, of Westshore, Baronet, and the father of four promising sons. But human happiness, ever evanescent, proved particularly so in his case. One dire day in 1748, Busta's four sons, accompanied by their tutor, went to visit their uncle, who was chamberlain to the Earl of Morton, and lived at Wethersta, on the opposite side of the voe. The young men spent a pleasant evening, and were returning as they came, when, horrible to relate, the boat was upset, and they all found a watery grave. Wonderfully did the good laird bear up against this fell blow, which left him childless, and without an heir in his old age. He found his

consolation in the words, "The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

When the first outburst of sorrow was over, some rays of hope began to dawn on the bereaved family. Mrs. Barbara Pitcairn, a humble relative, who lived in the household, began to give promise of a coming child, and declared she had been privately married to John Gifford, the eldest of those who were drowned. In due time she gave birth to a son. The good old laird was soon afterwards gathered to his fathers, and left the estate to the able management of his widow, Lady Busta.* Her young grandchild, Gideon Gifford, was brought up as heir, and, eventually entered on possession of his wide domain, which he enjoyed all his lifetime, no one questioning his right. Mr. Gideon Gifford appears to have lived in great style, assuming all the pomp and display of a great Highland chief, and certainly not adding to the value of his estate. He died in 1812, and was succeeded by his eldest son.

Arthur Gifford, Esq. of Busta, was no ordinary country squire. To great natural abilities, and no mean scholarship, he added a very handsome face and form, a commanding presence, and most pleasing and highly cultivated manners. Although by no means bound with them, his estate being entailed, he very chivalrously became responsible for his father's debts. He held his extensive patrimony undisturbed for twenty long years. In 1832, the representative of a remote branch of the family, settled in America, raised an action in the Court of Session, with the object of having himself served heir to Busta, on the ground of Gideon Gifford's alleged illegitimacy. A long and tedious proof was led, eminent counsel retained, large numbers of elderly men and women, cognisant of the circumstances, had their old age enlivened

* In these days the wives of the largest proprietors in Shetland got the title of Lady—as Lady Busta, Lady Symbister. Those of less note had Madam prefixed to their surnames, while those of a lower caste still, were only called plain Mrs.

by a trip to Edinburgh, there to give evidence in the Parliament House, and as a necessary sequence, great expense was incurred. The laird's chief defence consisted in the production of marriage lines, said to have been found in John Gifford's pocket after his dead body had been brought on shore in 1748. The circumstance that the property had been in the undisputed possession of the defender and his father, for eighty years, weighed greatly in his favour. Still the evidence on the opposite side was strong, and the jury wavered. At length they came to a decision in favour of Mr. Gifford.

Amid the congratulations of his friends and tenantry, the good laird once more took possession of his patrimonial mansion, but the estate was fearfully burdened with debt. Most nobly did he bear up against such difficulties. He lived amongst his people, kept up his dignity, was lavish in his hospitality, enjoyed the respect and good-will of every one, all the while managing his property so well as to pay off a portion of the debt each year. But a stroke of apoplexy came in the spring of 1856, and took the good old man to his long home. The present representative of the family is his niece, Miss Gifford of Busta, who resides at the manor house of that name.

The estate of Busta includes three-fourths of Northmavine, the half of Delting, besides smaller portions of land in Walls, Aithsting, and Yell. The rental for the year 1872-73 is stated in the parliamentary returns of 1874 to be £2707. The sum may not seem large, but it takes an immense extent of poor Shetland soil to bring in such a revenue.

CHAPTER XXIX.

BUSTA AND BRAE TO OLNAFIRTH.

OPPOSITE Busta, and higher up the Voe, is Brae. On the narrow neck of land, already referred to as separating the Voes of Sulem and Busta, the Dutchmen, in the olden times, were in the habit of erecting their trading-booths, from which they supplied the surrounding districts with goods, such as groceries, liquors, fishing materials, and articles of clothing—receiving fish, oil, butter, wool, and other country produce in return. This was no doubt the origin of the truck system, about which we have heard so much lately.

Brae still maintains its commercial character, for, not many yards from the site of the old booths, stand the shop, merchant's house, and stores, where a considerable business is carried on. Lower down the Voe, and nearly opposite Busta, the Free Church and manse and an Assembly School and schoolhouse stand in close proximity to each other. The church is a one-storied building, without any architectural pretensions. It is neatly fitted up, and seems well adapted to the climate. The manse is externally a very pretty building, and its internal arrangements such as to render it a very comfortable house in a damp and stormy country like Shetland.

This district is not without remnants of remote antiquity. About a quarter of a mile north from Busta is a standing stone, as erect as on the day it was placed there; and about the same distance south from Brae, the foundations of a burgh are still to be observed, occupying a prominent position on the sea-

shore. It is curious to notice the various sites of these ancient strongholds. Most of them stand on small and generally artificial islands, in the middle of lakes; others on the edge of high precipices; while others, like that just referred to, are destitute of such natural advantages, and occupy positions on a low-lying coast.

Advancing southwards, we pass Wethersta, a pretty populous and well-cultivated district. In former times it was a place of some importance, and was the seat of a large manor-house, where Earl Patrick Stewart appears occasionally to have resided. The ruins of this building are still to be traced.

Doubling the Ness of Wethersta, we reach the voe of Olnafirth, which arm of the sea is indebted for its not very euphonious name to the circumstance that, in the old Norse times, herrings were caught in its waters —a description true to the present day. It branches off from that of Busta, nearly opposite the middle of Muckle Roe, and has its entrance partially closed on the south by the small island of Linga. This name, which occurs in almost every district of Shetland, is said to mean the *heather* island. Olnafirth Voe is at first pretty wide, and takes an easterly direction. The gneiss hills on either side are steep and clad with heather; and two or three cottages on its left bank are the only habitations to be seen. When this arm of the sea has run more than half its course into the land, it suddenly becomes constricted, and takes a circuitous sweep to the south-east, again expanding as it goes. An excellent inland harbour is thus formed. The district round about is called Olnafirth. The land on the east side of the Voe, lying as it does over a bed of limestone is particularly green and fertile. It was once the abode of many thriving cottars, but some years ago they were removed to make room for meaner creatures; and now Olnafirth Park is one of the best sheep-walks in Shetland. It contains no human habitation save the shep-

herd's cottage. Its shores, however, are graced by a large and handsome Parish Church, recently erected, and by the walls of its predecessor, now unroofed.

Along the head of the Voe a busier scene presents itself. A shop, with extensive stores, warehouses, and artificial beaches for drying fish, adjoining, and a pier with small boats and vessels around it, mark the seat of a large country business. On the rising ground immediately over the business premises, stands the large and handsome dwelling-house of the merchant, and near to it the smaller but equally neat residence of his partner.

Nor is it merely in commercial matters that the district has recently made progress. It was long felt to be a hardship for the parish minister, who lives about seven miles off, to supply the church of Olnafirth as well as that of Scatsta, in the north part of the parish. The evil was obviated, a few years ago, by the appointment of a resident missionary from the Home Mission, whose villa-like dwelling occupies a prominent site at the head of the Voe, on its eastern side. The presence of this gentleman must be a great boon to the district, for there is no other clergyman of any denomination within six miles.

Olnafirth was for many years destitute of a school, but this pressing want has also lately been supplied by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge. A neat school and teacher's house has been erected near the head of the Voe, on its eastern side. At the head of this large inlet, and towards its western side, is a fine sequestered glen, which runs far into the country. A large burn, with a deep channel, and steep, undulating banks, presenting a very pretty appearance, runs through this glen.

In very severe winters, the Voe of Olnafirth is sometimes frozen—a rare phenomenon in the mild climate of Shetland.

Olnafirth gives title to the presbytery which has its

seat there. It comprises all the northern and western parishes of Shetland. The Presbytery of Olnafirth has, within the last few years, come prominently before the Church. Under the able leadership of the Rev. James R. Sutherland, of Northmavine, this court felt itself obliged to deal vigorously with a minister who was suspected of immorality, and another who refused to reside in his parish. Many an animated debate took place, and great interest was excited in their proceedings. Both the clergymen have been removed—the one by deposition, the other by death; and since then the Presbytery of Olnafirth has come less prominently before the public. While Olnafirth is its ecclesiastical designation, in the mercantile world this same district is known as Voe.

The parish of Delting, in 1861, contained a population of 1975, but in 1871 it had decreased to 1859. It has probably not increased since. Next to the Busta trustees, the largest proprietor is Major Cameron of Garth. Mr. Bell of Lunna, Mrs. Spence of Windhouse, and the representatives of the late Mr. Hoseason of Mossbank, hold smaller properties in the parish.

The county road winds along the eastern shores of Olnafirth Voe, and passes through the Park of the same name. Immediately after leaving the Park, by its southern gate, it receives the branch road leading from Mossbank, and, about half a-mile further on, that from Lunna. From this last-mentioned point, it runs southward through the Lang Kame, a great solitary valley, throughout whose seven miles of length not a human habitation is to be seen. At its extreme south end, however, a humble specimen of an inn has lately been erected, on the shores of a pretty lake called Sandwater. This is a very convenient half-way house for such travellers as can put up with its extremely primitive arrangements. To the lover of solitude, a ride through the Lang Kame is very enjoyable. Sounds there are none, save those of nature: the mountain air is pure and bracing, the road is almost

perfectly level, and, from the bottom of the valley, which is filled with deep banks of peat-moss, or with a chain of lakes, the heath-clad hills rise gently upwards on each side.

CHAPTER XXX.

OLNAFIRTH TO AITH.

Travelling along the land-locked Voes of Shetland.

EMERGING from Olnafirth Voe, we pass the mouth of Gonfirth Voe, and steer southwards towards that of Aith, the last of the congeries of inlets entering from Swarback's Mine. The mouth of this fine loch, as it would be termed in the Highlands, is pretty well closed in by Papa Little, an oval-shaped island, once the abode of two or three families of men, but now the habitation of many families of sheep. Aith signifies the vicinity of a fertile soil; and, like all Scandinavian names of places, it is well applied. The land on the western side of the Voe is comparatively flat and very fertile; and terminates in a pretty beach. On the eastern side it is overhung by the steep hill of Scallafield, 916 feet above the level of the sea, the highest peak of a ridge which extends from Weisdale to Olnafirth. On the same side a tributary inlet termed East Burrafirth runs for more than a mile into the land. Its name is also expressive, for, on a holm, in its midst, stand the ruins of what was once a burgh.

To the lover of aquatic sports nothing could be more delightful than a sail through the land-locked voes, say from Busta or Brae to Aith. If wind favours, how swiftly the skiff glides over the smooth waters, and the ten miles voyage is soon accomplished. As the point of view changes, the hills, and promontories, and isles on either side ever present themselves in varying perspective, and disclose some new features of stern beauty. But the steersman must look well to his duties, for a sudden squall may come down from the hills at any

moment, and place his bark in danger. This inland travelling by water is one of the most pleasant features of Shetland life, and the journeys must be not unlike those performed on the rivers and lakes of North America. Suppose the good old days were back again, when all the landholders of Zetland lived amongst their people, and the laird of Westsandwick, leaving his goodly mansion, on the shores of Lady Voe, West Yell, resolved to visit his brother proprietor at Bigton, in Dunrossness. Entering his gallant bark he soon winds his way through the islands and tideways of Yell Sound, and sails up the river-lake Voe of Sulem for ten miles. Landing at North Brae, the stalwart crew haul their boat across the level isthmus, and again launch her in the Voe of Busta. A ten miles' journey is now performed in the manner above described. Leaving his bark at Aith, and sending her home again, in charge of the crew—and the old lairds never travelled by sea without good crews—the worthy gentleman, accompanied probably by one attendant, makes the best of his way on foot, or on pony-back, across this wider and more rugged isthmus, to Bixter, on the shores of the voe of that name. Here a new boat is obtained, and the aquatic journey resumed. Descending the fine Voe of Bixter, and emerging from its mouth, the little craft shapes her course through the Bay of Scalloway, availing herself when possible of the shelter of its islands. Sailing up the harbour of Scalloway, and down that fine stretch of land-encompassed water termed Cliff Sound, she doubles the head of Ireland, and reaches Bigton just as the last rays of the setting sun disappear behind St. Ninian's Isle. A sixty miles' journey has thus been accomplished, through land-locked voes and bays and sounds, interrupted by only two short portages. A trip which shews the traveller such an extent of country, and such a variety of scenery, with so little fatigue, is very pleasant, but rather expensive.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AITHSTING—VEMINTRY—THE OLD LAIRD OF FOGRIGARTH.

SHETLAND is a country of islands, but it is also one of peninsulas, and the isthmus between Aith and the Voe of Bixter connects the great western peninsula with the rest of the Mainland. This large tract of country, with its tributary islands, forms the wide ministries of Sandsting and Aithsting, and Walls, Sandness, Papa, and Foula. A narrow strip, however, of Sandsting and Aithsting lies on the eastern side of the isthmus, and is separated from Weisdale by the ridge of a high hill.

Aithsting, like several other parishes in Shetland, evidently derived its name from its ting or open-air parliament. This court, as the name implies, was held at Aith, from which we shall endeavour to commence our examination of the district. The northern parts of Aithsting, although wild and rugged, display much romantic beauty. It is astonishing to observe the constant variety of scenes here produced without the aid of trees or of the works of man. The hills gnarled, as it were, by the storms of many winters, assume an endless diversity of savage forms, while quaint-looking voes or lakes, winding round their bases, present a smooth, blue surface, which strangely contrasts with the sombre hues of the rugged country all round.

In the island of Vemintry, not more than three miles long, as Dr. Hibbert justly remarks, "all the varieties of a Shetland landscape are exhibited—the fissured cliff, the barren crag or knoll, on which few tufts of vegetation hang, the low fertile grassy patch, or the still and dark

mountain lake, the rocky gio deeply indenting the coast, the bold promontory jutting far out into the sea, or the long winding voe." Being much intersected by arms of the sea, the island is as irregular in outline as in surface. On the summit of its highest hill are the ruins of an ancient watch-tower. Every prominent hill-top appears to have been provided with such an erection, on which the Norsemen lighted signal fires on the approach of invaders. Vemintry affords excellent pasturage, to which purpose it is now entirely devoted, the farmer who rents it having, a few years ago, removed his residence to the point of the mainland opposite. Uyea Sound separates the island from the Mainland. It is a beautiful stretch of water, two miles long, expanding, here and there, into wide pools, and, in other places, almost obstructed by projecting points of land. All Aithsting is a good pastoral country. Save the main line from Lerwick to Walls, which passes along its southern border, it is unprovided with roads, a disadvantage partially compensated for by the long winding voes, which penetrate it in so many directions. A sail through the Voe of Unifirth, or that of Clousta, is most interesting. The Bay of West Burrafirth is unsafe for vessels, being open, exposed, and rocky. It again derives its name from a burgh, whose ruins stand on a holm in its midst.

Aithsting is sparsely inhabited by a hardy race, of handsome form and primitive habits. No district in the country is probably worse supplied with religious ordinances and education, than that extensive portion of Aithsting extending from the public road near the head of Bixter Voe, northwards and westwards. A Parish Church at Twatt, in the extreme south of the district, six or seven miles from some of its outlying *touns*, where a service is held every three weeks, and the Parish School, at the same place, are the only regular places of worship and instruction in Aithsting. The Wesleyan minister from Walls, however, holds an occasional service at Aith, and one or two other places.

By far the greater portion of Aithsting is the property of Mr. Grierson, of Quendale. It was purchased by an ancestor, in the end of last century, for little more than twice the present rental.

In one of the most remote fastnesses of Aithsting is a *toun* bearing the odd name of Fogrigarth. As very few strangers have visited this curious place, let us hear the account of one who has. "My boatman," says Dr. Hibbert, "led me to a small creek at the head of Burrafiord, where the setting sun brightened into a fine purple, a wild intermixture of crag and lake. The smoke arose from a low house, built of unhewn stones, after the most ancient fashion of the country; it was the head buil or manor-house of a small landed possessor of Aithsting, named the Laird of Fogrigarth. On opening the door, I passed through a double range of servants of both sexes, who occupied forms disposed along each side of the room, and made suitable obeisance to the *hoy saedet* or high seat of the house, filled by the laird himself, with all the patriarchal dignity worthy that primitive state of manners described in an ancient poem of the eighth century." The landed dignitary, to whom the learned geologist was thus introduced, was Robert Doull, a well-known character in Shetland in his day, which was a very long one, and ended about 1855. Many a strange story is told of him. On the passing of the Reform Act of 1832, Mr. Doull, like every other proprietor in Shetland, with a rental above £10, suddenly found himself, for the first time, entrusted with the franchise. A contested election took place, and an agent for the Whig candidate, in the heat of his political zeal, made his way to the mountain retreat of the laird of Fogrigarth. Saluting his host with all due respect, the gentleman of the law politely intimated he had come to solicit his vote. "But what am I to get for my vote?" replied the shrewd elector. "I'm surprised," rejoined the agent, "I'm surprised a gentleman of your intelligence should put such a question:

we don't pay for votes, I merely ask you to support the liberal candidate, for the good of your country." "And can ye tell me what they are *liberal* o', is it dir nain money or da parliament money? And, besides, Mr. ———, ir ye travelling about like dis for de good o' yer kountry—get ye naethin' for it?" replied the laird. The lawyer's answer is not recorded, but it is well known that Robbie Doull—for the neighbours addressed him with such familiarity—of Fogrigarth, played a distinguished part at every subsequent contested election that occurred during his lifetime in Zetland. At his death, having no family, he left the property to a young man he had adopted.

CHAPTER XXXII.

SANDNESS.

Melby House—Holm of Collaster.

ADVANCING westwards, along the coast of Aithsting, and crossing the mouth of Snarra Voe, we reach the sequestered parish of Sandness, the northern division of the ministry of Walls. This is an extensive valley, looking northwards. On the south it is overhung by a great mountain, called Sandness Hill; and on the north, its low and, in many places, sandy shores are washed by the agitated waters of Papa Sound. The valley is very fertile, and somewhat densely populated. A more thriving and industrious peasantry is not to be found in Shetland than that of Sandness. Their well-tilled fields, and well-filled barn-yards, testify to their energy and prosperity; and the superior quality of their cottages, to the liberality and kindness of their landlord. Besides the cultivation of their crofts, their chief employment is the haaf-fishing, for the prosecution of which the shores of Sandness are very favourably situated. Many of the men, however, sail to Greenland, or from some of the southern ports, during the summer season. The manufacture of kelp affords employment to a few females.

Occupying a prominent position in the western part of the district, is Melby House, the residence of Robert T. C. Scott, Esq., of Melby, who, with the exception of the small lairdship of Snarra Voe, is sole proprietor of Sandness. The house of Melby is surrounded, on three sides, by fine gardens, office houses, and luxuriant grass parks; while in front of the court-yard is a pretty sea-beach. It commands an extensive view, not only

of Sandness, but of Papa Stour, St. Magnus Bay, and the many high hills and bold headlands that surround it. In addition to the many pictures which adorn his mansion, the laird has an extensive museum of eggs, shells, medals, coins, weapons of warfare, and objects of worship.

There is, as yet, no road to Sandness, hence its great hill most effectually separates it from the rest of the country, and renders the district very secluded. Sandness Hill is not only high and steep, but very extensive, so that a journey over it seriously tests the locomotive powers of the best pedestrian. There are several fresh-water lakes in Sandness. In the largest of these, termed the Loch of Collaster, is a small holm, the resort and breeding-place of myriads of gulls. The islet is preserved by the proprietor, and the eggs removed by his orders, at certain rare intervals. Some seasons pass without the birds being disturbed. As many as from eight hundred to one thousand eggs have been collected on one visit to the holm.

Sandness is provided with a Society School. Besides the little Parish Church, it has a Free Church, and a Congregational and a Wesleyan Chapel. The parish is regularly visited by clergymen of these denominations from Walls, but none of these gentlemen are resident in it. It contained, in 1861, a population of 606; which number in 1871, had increased to 643.

HOLM OF COLLASTER.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PAPA STOUR—THE VE SKERRIES.

Superstitions regarding Seals, &c.

SEPARATED from Sandness by Papa Sound, upwards of a mile in breadth, is the island of Papa Stour. The passage of this strait, always difficult, is sometimes dangerous, owing to the fiercely conflicting tides by which it is agitated. The island derives its name from *stour*, a Norse word signifying great, and the Latin *papa*, a priest. It thus signifies the great island of the priests, in contradistinction to Papa Little, and the still smaller island of Papa, in the Bay of Scalloway. There is every reason to believe that the *papæ* who gave their names to these three islands were the ancient Culdee missionaries, who probably dwelt there.

Papa Stour is upwards of two miles in length, and nearly of the same breadth. The coast is much indented by voes, which form very good harbours. This island is one of the most fertile in the Shetland group. Its inhabitants (amounting in 1871 to 351), are almost entirely confined to the rich belt of cultivated land, which runs along the east side. Unfortunately the island is almost totally unprovided with peat-moss. As a substitute, turf from the interior of the island has been dug to such an extent, and for such a long period, that now the soil is almost entirely removed, and, what was at one time beautiful green pasture, is now a barren desert of sand and gravel. Such peats as the people do enjoy are brought from the somewhat distant islands of Muckle Roe and Papa Little.

Lepers from the western parts of the Mainland were sent to Papa, where they were accommodated in huts, at a distance from the houses of the natives.

Papa forms an excellent fishing-station. In addition to its own natives, several boat-crews resort thither in summer to prosecute this important industry. The people of this island are primitive in their habits and very superstitious, many of them still believing in dreadful supernatural beings, who infest the commons in large numbers after nightfall. Many Norse customs and pastimes lingered here after they had been forgotten in all other parts of Shetland, save Foula. Until within the last twenty years the "Sword Dance" continued to be performed during the winter evenings.

The precipitous west coast of Papa affords highly interesting rock scenery. Fearful *gios*, towering *stacks*, and magnificent caves—differing in many respects from all we have hitherto noticed—present themselves in great variety.

When seals were more abundant than they now are, they frequently took refuge in the caves of Papa. Some are, however, still to be found, particularly in "Christie's Hole," a long, tunnel-like cavern, whose roof is pierced by an aperture, which, opening into the greensward far above, admits light into its deep recesses. At the inner end of this remarkable cavern is a sea-beach. It is to this subterranean retreat that the seals resort for safety, and the sportsmen for their destruction. Having obstructed the cave's mouth by a strong net with wide meshes, the boat's crew make a loud noise; whereupon the creatures, leaving the dark recesses around the beach, and making for the open sea, are hopelessly entangled on their way, and then readily secured by the jubilant boatmen.

Looking westwards from one of the fine headlands of Papa, we behold a vast expanse of ocean. Save the solitary Ve Skerries, nothing intervenes between our standpoint and the great western continent. With such

a scene before us, we readily fall into the mood of the Teutonic poet who sings—

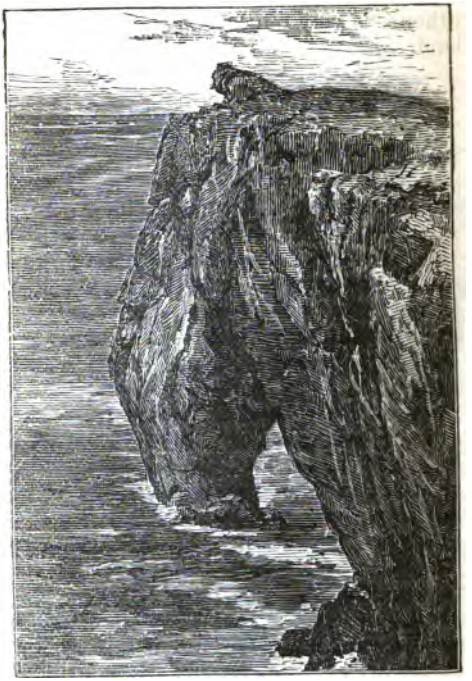
> "Thou boundless, shining glorious sea!
> With ecstasy I gaze on thee,
> And as I gaze, thy billowy roll
> Wakes the deep feelings of the soul."

Papa Stour is divided between two proprietors—Lady Nicolson, and the trustees of the late Arthur Gifford, Esq., of Busta. A nice little Parish Church—lately put in good repair—stands near the chief centre of the population, on the east side of the island. The churchyard surrounding it is enclosed by a good wall (unlike some of the country burying-grounds), and contains one or two interesting old monuments. The Wesleyans also have a small chapel in Papa. The island is regularly visited by the Free Church and Wesleyan minister at Walls, and by the unordained missionary of the Established Church, whose sphere of labour is Sandness and Papa, but who also resides at Walls. It has now a regular school, the salary being granted by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge.

The Ve Skerries are a detached group of naked rocks, very little above the level of the sea, situated in the ocean, seven miles north-west from Papa. Their name signifies danger, and like all those derived from the Norse, is most appropriate. They are still the resort of seals. Various superstitions hang round these rocks and their amphibious denizens. The seals were believed by the fishermen to be mermen and merwomen. The belief was that lofty mansions of coral and pearl filled with a pure and serene atmosphere, existed beneath the sea. Their inhabitants, who were creatures of the most singular beauty, had a *penchant* for occasionally visiting the supra-marine world. In order, therefore, to accomplish the upward voyage, the mermaids assumed the covering of the seal. Was it their example which induced the supra-marine ladies of the present day to

assume these beautiful but expensive jackets of seal-skin?

The Ve Skerries have frequently been spoken of as a site for a lighthouse. The situation of the keepers would certainly not be enviable; but there is no doubt a lighthouse is very much required on the west side of Shetland.



THE HORN OF PAPA.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FOULA.

West Coast of Walls—Hivda-Grind Rocks—Five Hills of Foula—Lum of Liorafield—Skua Gull—Precipices—Myriads of Sea-fowl—Supposed Carbuncle.

THE coast from Sandness southwards is singularly wild and rugged, consisting, as it does, of a series of precipices, much torn up by the elements, and indented here and there by deep gios. Over-topping them all (for none of the cliffs is over 600 feet in height), the great hill of Sandness heaves its head aloft. The only landing-place along this inhospitable line of sea-board is at a small inlet, called Dale, from which a haaf-fishing is carried on. This indentation in the coast is prolonged for a great distance inland in the form of a deep glen, along whose steep sides several well-tilled crofts are arranged. This sequestered *toun* of Dale is the only place of human habitation on the great stretch of moorland which separates Sandness from Walls.

The point of Wattsness marks the termination of this line of coast, on the south. As it is the nearest point on the mainland to the island of Foula, it may be well to proceed thence to visit that romantic and solitary rock in the ocean. The distance is eighteen miles, and the course south-west. Unless it be the traveller's good fortune to obtain a steamer—and they are by no means numerous in these latitudes—the best conveyance to Foula is a good six-oared fishing boat. A sailing vessel is not so agreeable, for the passage is beset with tideways; and calms and fogs are by no means uncom-

mon in the summer time—and no one who could help it would visit Foula at any other season. About three miles from this island, in an easterly direction, are the Hivda-grind rocks, a dangerous reef of considerable extent. With low tides, when they are about four feet under water, the tang which grows on them is distinctly visible above the surface. In one or two deep depressions on the surface of one of the largest rocks of Hivda-grind are several large loose boulders, which seem to have lain there for ages. Whenever the sea is much agitated—and it is never still—the boulders are set in motion, and by their friction wear away the substance of the rocks and deepen the pools in which they lie. These boulders suggest two curious questions, the one for the geologist, the other for the hydrographer—viz., How came they there? and, Why are they not washed out of these basins, over the reef, and allowed to sink in the deep water alongside?

As might be expected, the Hivda-grind rocks are very dangerous to commerce, and several vessels are known to have perished on them; how many others have shared the same fate will only be known when the sea gives up its dead. The lofty island of Foula, which may be seen, presenting the appearance of a dense blue cloud, from every hill-top of any height in Shetland, now displays itself more distinctly. It is about three miles long, and nearly two broad. Its hills, divided into five conical peaks, occupy the western portion of the island; while along the eastern half, a plain, almost level, runs from end to end. Its geological structure is almost exclusively of sandstone. The best landing is at a little inlet, called Ham, exactly in the middle of the island. All the inhabitants are, of course, confined to the level plain.

The Foula hills are as steep as they are high; and from whatever point it is commenced, their ascent is a very arduous undertaking. Exactly opposite the little harbour of Ham is the hill of Hamnafield, which

terminates, on the west, in a sheer precipice 1200 feet high. It is on the top of this peak that tradition places the "Lum of Liorafield," a narrow chimney leading to the subterranean regions. So great is its depth that several barrels of lines are said to have been let down through the "Lum," without reaching the bottom. Recent explorers have, however, failed to discover this remarkable opening.

One of these hill-tops is the breeding-place of the bunxie or skua gull. This beautiful bird, the largest and fiercest of the gull tribe, builds no nest, but lays its eggs and brings forth its young amongst the grass or heather, so that a visitor can easily handle the young bunxies. If he does so, it will not be with impunity, for the parent birds hover round, and, whenever opportunity offers, pounce down upon the intruder with a sudden and violent swoop. So near do they come, that, if his head is bare, the skull of the visitor is in danger of being seriously injured by the strong bill of the skua. If he is armed with a good stick, and is able to use it adroitly, he can readily return the compliment by breaking the wing of his feathered assailant. The bunxie is brown in colour, and has a strong, sharp, well-hooked bill. Its body is two feet long, and the wings, when extended, measure about six feet from tip to tip. This bird is the terror of all the feathered race, and even the eagle has a salutary dread of it. Save in the north of Unst, the skua is found nowhere else in Great Britain. The proprietor of Foula very properly gives his tenants strict orders for the protection of this truly *rara avis*.

The whole west coast of the island is one great line of gigantic precipices, from 1100 to 1200 feet in height. All we have hitherto examined, even those of Noss, are as nothing compared with them. Everywhere along these giddy heights a magnificent view is obtained of the various projecting points, which diversify the cliffs; of the surging waters, which wash their feet; and of

the dense clouds of sea-fowl which darken the air and spread themselves over the sea. One of these projecting points used to be the breeding-place of the white-tailed eagle, and its eggs were distinctly visible through the great distance separating them from the spectator's stand-point at the top of the cliff. From another point farther north than this, some rays of bright light can be seen at night, radiating from the dark surface of the precipices. These were long believed to proceed from a large and valuable carbuncle, but this supposition has never been confirmed.

CHAPTER XXXV.

FOULA—*(continued).*

The Cragsman—Highest Hill—The People—Churches and School—Traces of Norse Language—Scenery, &c.

FOR a long period the chief trade of Foula was in the feathers and eggs of wild fowl. The daring cragsman descended to the scene of plunder by the aid of ropes. If the distance of the breeding-place from the top of the cliff was moderate, say from twelve to twenty fathoms, he fixed a rope to stakes, driven into the ground, and descended by gradually lowering himself down, by means of his hands and feet, with which he grasped the rope. Having finished his work of destruction, he ascended by the same means, either bringing up the dead birds strung to his belt, or attaching them to the rope's end, and hauling them up, after he had gained the top of the cliff himself. If the distance the fowler desired to descend was greater, say thirty or fifty fathoms, he had a rope fixed round his waist, and was lowered down by his companions. This dangerous traffic is now almost abandoned, and it is but seldom one of the islanders descends the cliffs. It is said that in the olden times, when it was universal, the Foula man used to say, "My *gutcher* (grandfather) *guid* before, my father *guid* before, and I must expect to go over the Sneug too."

The peak of the Sneug, 1369 feet above the sea-level, is the highest hill-top of Foula. From its summit the neighbouring hills, which, from every other situation look so high, appear quite insignificant. A most extensive view is obtained; the whole west coast

of Shetland stretches out before us, like a continent of no mean dimensions, and several of the islands of Orkney can be distinctly discerned.

The view from the summit of the Foula cliffs, grand as it is, is greatly excelled by that from the water beneath them. The scene defies all description. Nothing is more fitted to impress the spectator with the littleness of man, and the greatness of God, displayed in creation, as he gazes upwards on these stupendous cliffs, towering from the ocean, as it were, to the very skies. There is nothing to enliven the majestic solitude of this terrific wall of adamant, save the discordant screams of the countless myriads of seafowl that inhabit every available spot along its giddy pinnacles, and the great ocean for ever roaring at its base. Why the sea has not made more inroads upon the west coast of Foula may be accounted for by the circumstance that the water, even immediately under its cliffs, attains the great depth of fourteen fathoms.

Than those of Foula a better set of people does not exist in the isles of Shetland. They are sober, industrious, hospitable, intelligent, and very attentive to the ordinances of religion. Although the rapid tideways and high winds prevent them from prosecuting the fishing with regularity, they are nearly all in very comfortable circumstances. The extensive pastures of the island yield good grass; and the sheep and cattle they sustain prove a source of great profit to the islanders. Strange to say, the population has, for the forty years, ending with 1863, ranged between 230 and 240. In 1861 it was 233. This stationary condition of the population is due to the small number of births, for very few natives ever leave the island. Many married couples in Foula have no children. In this respect the people of Foula contrast very strikingly with those of Fair Isle, who are exceedingly prolific. Again, while the people of Foula are well-to-do, those of Fair Isle are very poor. Skin diseases, so common

in Fair Isle, are scarcely known in Foula. Beyond the circumstance that the men are rather short in stature, no evil effects of intermarriage, so prevalent in Foula, are observable. The population appears not now to be so stationary as during the previous generation, for the census of 1871 shows an increase of twenty-four over that of 1861.

Nearly half the population occupies the Hametoun, a district in the extreme south of the island, where there are sixty-five acres of well-cultivated land. The rest of the people live in the neighbourhood of Ham, or at the north end.

The island is provided with a Society School, a Parish Church, and a Congregational Chapel. The teacher, on whom devolves a great many other offices, acts as reader in the Kirk. The Chapel, to which most of the people belong, is placed under the care of a regularly appointed pastor. The Free Church, which also has a small number of members, has a catechist, who conducts religious services. No feature in the religious life of the people of Foula is more remarkable than their scrupulous observance of the Sabbath. This is one of the evidences of improvement; for we are told that during last century, it was the habit of their ancestors, every Sunday, after the church was dismissed, to assemble for the purpose of testing their strength and skill at putting the stone, and other athletic exercises. While the young men were thus engaged, the old men are said to have stood by to witness the contest, and entertain the company by narrating their own feats of strength and daring when they were young.

The Norse language continued to be spoken here long after it had been forgotten elsewhere. In the end of last century, a good many nouns from the mother tongue were preserved, and also a few verses of old Scandinavian songs. There is every reason to believe this is the island Agricola saw from the

northern shores of Orkney, when he exclaimed, "Despecta est et Thule." Foula probably signifies the fowl island, but it is curious it should have such a close philological resemblance to Thule.

This St. Kilda of the Shetland archipelago is the sole property of Robert T. C. Scott, Esq., of Melby.

Nowhere could the lover of nature spend a more pleasant summer week than in this lonely isle of the sea. Whether rambling amongst its lofty hills, sailing round its gigantic cliffs, musing by its rocky shore, or talking to its primitive people, he can find much to call forth reflection of the most pleasing and profitable kind.

> "There is a pleasure in the pathless woods;
> There is a rapture on the lonely shore;
> There is society where none intrudes,
> By the deep sea, and music in its roar;
> I love not man the less, but nature more,
> From these our interviews, in which I steal
> From all I may be, or have been before,
> To mingle with the universe, and feel
> What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal."
>
> —*Byron.*

Fair accommodation for strangers can be had at the factor's house at Ham. Messrs. Garriock & Co., Reawick, who have a store in the island, send a small sloop there as occasion requires. Three months have, however, frequently elapsed without a mail, and a gentleman resident at Walls, only twenty miles off, used to remark that he had, at the same time, a correspondent in Foula and one in China, and that he could often get an answer sooner from the latter than the former.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

PARISH OF WALLS.

Island of Vaila—Vaila Sound—Churches, &c.—Peculiar Names of Places—Ancient Burghs and Tumuli, &c.—Gruting Voe.

RETURNING to the point of Wattsness, and skirting the somewhat low and rugged coast of Walls, we soon reach Vaila Sound. This spacious and well-protected harbour may be said to form the centre, around which all walls, as it were, clusters. The fine pastoral island of Vaila, which thoroughly protects it from the ocean, is upwards of a mile in length, and of nearly the same breadth. It is the seat of a good old-fashioned manor house, in which the former lairds of Melby had their chief residence. Around the house the land is very fertile and well cultivated. It was here a London Company, under the direction of Messrs. Wilcox & Anderson, carried on for several years a very extensive cod-fishing. While it lasted, this enterprise proved a great boon to the district by affording lucrative employment to the people; but the Company, finding it was not profitable, withdrew their establishment about 1842.

Nearly all round the pretty shores of Vaila Sound are strewn little groups of cottages, each more or less sheltered by some point of rising ground—for there is nothing level in this quarter save the sea. The only manor house on the Mainland side of the Sound is Burrastoe, the substantial residence of John T. Henry, Esq., which occupies a picturesque situation on a point near its western entrance. Along the same line of coast are the residences of no less than four clergy-

men of different denominations—Established, Free, Congregational, and Wesleyan. The manse was formerly at Wattsness, a very inconvenient situation for a gentleman whose chief duties lay four miles away; but the old house has been abandoned, and the present elegant and commodious structure erected in its stead. The Free Church minister has not only a comfortable little manse, but, unlike most of his brethren, a good glebe also.

Vaila Sound is prolonged inland, in the form of a bay, and round its head all the churches, save one, the Parish School, and several houses and shops, are built. The large Parish Church has recently undergone extensive repairs. The Independents, three or four years ago, erected a handsome new chapel; and the Wesleyans are about to follow their example. The Free Church stands about a mile west from the other ecclesiastical buildings, and its congregational school further on in the same direction. However pretty may be the shores which line Vaila Sound and the other bays of Walls, its hills, which are formed of quartz, are sufficiently rugged and anything but inviting to those who have an eye for the beautiful.

The names of places in this district differ much from those in other parts of Shetland. Many of them end in *twatt*, as Germatwatt. While the name Brough is by no means uncommon all over the country, as applied to places where ancient burghs have stood, it occurs here as a mere termination, as Stourbrough. Not only these names, but the ruins of "Pictish Castles," and many tumuli, hitherto unexplored, prove that Walls was a place of no small importance before the bold warriors of Scandinavia set foot on the shores of Shetland. Thunderbolts—or battle-axe heads, as they are generally supposed to be—are occasionally dug up in the neighbourhood of these old buildings. I lately purchased a good specimen of this ancient stone weapon. The good-wife of the house, who

parted with it most reluctantly, and only after a pretty good price had been offered, informed me it had been dug up in the common, a short time before, where it had fallen from the skies during a thunderstorm, and that her husband, who was from home, would be very angry with her for selling the thunderbolt, as it brought good luck to the house.

The population of Walls proper, in 1871, was 1309. The county road connecting the district with Lerwick extends only to the head of Vaila Sound, and a very imperfectly formed tract is continued from that point to the western part of the district.

By far the larger portion of the parish belongs to Robert T. C. Scott, Esq. of Melby. The rest of it is the property of John T. Henry, Esq. of Burrastoe, and several smaller heritors.

Separated from Vaila Sound by the promontory of Whitesness, is Gruting Voe, a fine stretch of water, four or five miles in length, and having two or three tributary inlets. It separates Walls from Sandsting.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Culswick—Skeld—Reawick—Selie Voe—Kirkholm—Sand—The Mitchells of Westshore.

THERE is nothing worthy of note along the exposed and rocky coast between the mouth of Gruting Voe and Skelda Ness, save the ruins of a large burgh, which stands on the edge of a bold cliff at Culswick. In the picturesque hamlet of that name are to be found about the best Shetland tenants' houses in the county. These were recently erected by the late Miss Irvine, in whose family the property has continued for several generations. The bold promontory of Skelda Ness, which juts out for some distance into the sea, and is a very prominent landmark all along the west coast of Shetland from Walls southwards, is much indented by deep gios. Along its eastern side, the narrow Voe of Skeld runs for a mile into the land. At the head of this arm of the sea is the busy dockyard of Messrs. Garriock & Co., Reawick.

Separated from Skeld by a moderately high hill, and surrounding a small open bay which looks eastwards, are the fertile lands of Reawick, the seat of Andrew Umphray, Esq. of Reawick, the representative of a family which has held estates in Shetland at least since the time of the Spanish Armada. His commodious mansion stands at the top of a rising ground which commands an extensive view of the southern coast of Sandsting. On the southern shore of the inlet of Reawick stand the extensive premises where one of the largest businesses in Shetland is carried on, and on the northern, the neat little residence of the Messrs. Garriock. A large portion of the lands of Reawick is farmed under the personal direction of the proprietor,

whose extensive efforts for their improvement have been attended with remarkable success.

Northwards from the Bay of Reawick, and somewhat to the east, an inlet termed Selie Voe—derived from a Norse word signifying a herring—runs into the land for upwards of a mile. The hill on its western side is very steep, but the land on the opposite bank is flat and fertile. At the head of this voe stands the residence of the worthy minister of the parish, surrounded by his ample glebe. Off the ness which guards Selie Voe on the east, and separated from it by "a piece of sea-way," full of rocks, both sunken and above water, is a craggy islet, narrow in proportion to its length, and rising to a considerable height above the sea. In most parts it is precipitous, but in one or two places easy of access. In several places along the smooth, grassy surface of Kirkholm—for that is the name of this isle—are a few gentle undulations. These are associated with an event of no less historical importance than the destruction of the Spanish Armada. One of its proud galleons sunk on the Haddock-Sand, a portion of the sea opposite Reawick. Escaping in their boats, the crew took possession of Kirkholm, erected huts, sank a well, and partially fortified the islet. Finding the natives more friendly than they had anticipated, the Spaniards selected an eligible site at Sand, where, to commemorate their preservation, they erected a church, and dedicated it to the Virgin Mary. An arch of the church still stands in the old kirkyard of Sand—a favourite place of sepulture with the good people of Sandsting.

Between the Kirkholm and the equally rocky point of Foraness, which directly faces it on the west, the Bay of Sand opens its wide mouth towards the south. Never was place better named. The bottom of the bay is of sand, and all along its head is a beautiful flat seashore of the same material, pearly in its whiteness. From this fine beach rich green fields rise gently upwards. On the west side of the bay stands the large

manor-house of Sand, built in 1752, by Sir Andrew Mitchell, of Westshore, Bart. The large garden, which flanks the house on either side, and the extensive court-yard in front of it, were evidently well laid out at one time, but since the proprietor ceased to occupy the place they have been neglected, and the grounds devoted to simply agricultural purposes.

The Mitchell family held extensive estates in several parishes of Shetland for several generations before the baronetcy was conferred on its head. This elevation is said to have come directly from royalty. A member of the family held the important office of a physician in the household of King George II., and found favour in the eyes of that monarch. His Majesty offered him a baronetcy, but Dr. Mitchell, having neither an estate to support nor a family to continue the title, resigned it in favour of his brother, the laird, who possessed both these advantages; and Mr. Mitchell of Girlsta became Sir John Mitchell, Baronet. Before their elevation, the Mitchells took their title from Girlsta, but at that time they substituted the name of Westshore. This baronetcy only continued for two generations. Sir John was succeeded by his son, Sir Andrew, who, having a large family of daughters, but no sons, left his honours to his brother, the second Sir John. On his death, the title became extinct, and the estates were sold about the year 1790, for the benefit of Sir Andrew's eight daughters, or their descendants. The prices realised were wonderfully small compared with the value of land at the present day. Most of Sir Andrew Mitchell's daughters married, and through them most of the leading families of Shetland became connected with each other. On the sale of the Westshore estate, Sand came into the possession of the Scotts of Scalloway, in whose family it continued until that fine property, in its turn, came into the market, when it was purchased in 1855 by Joseph Leask, Esq., a highly successful merchant of Lerwick.

Sand is particularly well situated for the capture of whales; and so frequently had a shoal been stranded there, for a long period previous to the last sale of the estate, that the handsome returns they brought to the landlord had come to be reckoned part of his yearly rental. A proportionately high price was accordingly paid for the property, and all his friends anticipated that Mr. Leask, who had been largely and successfully engaged in the Greenland whale-fishing, would be at least equally fortunate at home. But these hopes have not been realised; and from whatever cause, not a whale has entered the bay of Sand since 1855.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A Whale-Hunt—other Whales less frequently met with—Sharks.

THAN a whale-hunt no better sport could be desired. When a pack of these "monsters of the deep" is descried off the Shetland coast, the intelligence spreads like wildfire from one hamlet to another, and "Whales! whales! whales!" is the universal shout. The fisherman leaves his lines, the farmer his oxen, the women their knitting-wires and domestic duties, and even the children their playthings,—and every one rushes to the boats. The ammunition for the impending conflict is speedily procured, consisting as it does of abundance of small stones, in each boat, and a few big kitchen knives, harpoons, and lances, amongst the whole fleet. Some laird, merchant, or other man of influence, assumes the command, and leads the attack. Having neared the enemy, the boats creep slowly round the whales, and make every effort to get between them and the open sea. This accomplished, they gradually close in upon the pack, and endeavour to direct its course to a shallow sandy bay. All this time the utmost silence is maintained. If, happily, the whales have entered the chosen bay, their pursuers come to close quarters. Now begins the *melée*. The poor animals—for whales are not fish—finding the water becoming shallow, turn round and make for the open sea. Then commences the howling, shouting, screaming, and stone-throwing of the excited crews, and the alternate diving and re-appearing, and rushing to and fro, of the equally excited whales. Stones are most effective missiles, not only from the splash they make on the surface, but from the effect

their descent through the water has on the animals. If the assailants succeed in terrifying the poor creatures, they rush on to their fate. If, however, the whales, headed by the bull, who always leads the pack, succeed in breaking through the barrier of boats, they escape to sea.

Whenever the infuriated whales are fairly stranded, the men jump from their boats, and, with whatever sharp instrument they can best command, stab them through the heart. The dying *flurry* now sets in. Amid the exultant shouts of the captors, the huge animals struggle fearfully, lash the water furiously with their tails, spout up columns of mingled blood and water, and even utter curious squeaks like a pig. Meantime the agitated sea becomes red with blood.

Exciting as this sport undoubtedly is, there are some painful incidents connected with it. Young whales, too small to run aground with the rest, are often seen swimming round, and occasionally sucking milk from their dying mothers.

The work of death having been accomplished, *flenching*, or the separation of the blubber from the flesh, is the next operation, and one at which the Shetland men display great dexterity. The dead whales having been flenched and decapitated, a public sale is called, and the blubber disposed of to the merchants. It generally realises from £10 to £15 a ton, and the heads from 8s. to 12s. each. The crang or whale flesh is generally left on the beach, to be devoured by birds of prey, or carried away by the sea, while polluting the atmosphere all round. Occasionally it is taken to the dunghill, and capital manure it makes. More rarely it has been exported and sold to manufacturers of artificial manures. Why should it not be applied to the nobler purpose of feeding human beings? The people of Faroe eat it at this day, and so did those of Shetland in days long gone by. Why, therefore, do their descendants spurn it, even in seasons of scarcity? Whale flesh when raw

resembles, in appearance, very coarse beef. On being cooked its colour becomes very dark. It is, nevertheless, exceedingly tender, digestible, and wholesome. The taste resembles beef, with a game flavour.

According to the "use and wont" of the country, the proprietor of the land adjoining the shore where whales are stranded, obtains a third of the proceeds, while two-thirds are divided amongst the captors. A single shoal has very often brought a landlord £300 or £500, and, on some rare occasions, it has been large enough to yield him £800 or £1000. The shares of the captors, likewise, vary with their own number, the number of the whales, and the value of the blubber. A man drawing a "full share" will often make by his adventure £3 or £5, while women, youths, and children, if present, receive smaller dividends.

The claims of landlords to shares of whales stranded on their property, resting as they do—not on the law of the realm—but on the use and wont of the individual county, have not unfrequently given rise to litigation. The proprietors formerly received half the proceeds, but by a compromise effected by a decision of the Court of Session in 1839, it was arranged they should, in future, receive only a third.

While the "caaing" whale is the most frequent visitor to the Shetland coast, the spotted whale is sometimes also captured there. The "finner" is rarely seen on the coast, and still more rarely captured. One or two large whales (said to belong to the great Greenland species) have been killed in Shetland, but many years have elapsed since such an event took place. In the absence of the proper gear required for their successful capture, these huge monsters would probably not have been secured had they not accidentally become extricated in some narrow inlet, whence they were unable to escape. The natural history of the whale is still imperfectly known.

Sharks are also rare visitors to this coast. The Sand-

wick and Dunrossness fishermen, however, report that they are very numerous at a certain spot, upwards of thirty miles to the south-east of Sumburgh Head. These rapacious creatures are readily caught, near Iceland, by means of large hooks attached to portions of a small chain, and baited with pieces of pork, but no fishery for them has ever been attempted in the Shetland seas. The liver of the shark is of immense size, and yields abundance of valuable oil.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Bixter Voe—Some Parochial Statistics of Sandsting—Weisdale Voe—Islands in it—Sound—"Church of Our Lady"—Free Church—Estate of Kergord.

THE long and rocky promontory of Foraness, with its tributary holm, intervenes between the bay of Sand and the great Voe of Sandsound or Bixter. Shortly above its commencement, the fine circular hill of Sandsound—tilled and inhabited to its very summit—advances, as it were, into the sea, and renders the passage very narrow. Beyond this construction the bay expands to a width of nearly two miles, again becoming narrow. Several places of interest line the shores of Bixter Voe, such as Innersand, and Semblister, with its large Parish Kirk on the left bank, and Sandsound, Tresta, and Bixter on the right. The bottom of this large sea-loch yields numerous shell-fish to the dredge, especially the *yeog (Mytilus Modiolus)*, so valuable as bait to the fishermen.

Sandsting and Aithsting contained, in 1861, a population of 2670; and, in 1871, one of 2805. The chief heritors of this wide ministry are Mr. Grierson of Quendale, Mr. Leask of Sand, Mr. Umphray of Reawick, Mr. Greig of Sandsound, the Busta trustees, and Mr. Johnston of Tresta. The Parish School is at Twatt, Aithsting. Places of worship are not wanting, for besides the Parish Church, Sandsting alone can boast of no less than two Independent and the same number of Wesleyan Chapels. The Independents have a clergyman resident near Reawick. The Wesleyan places of worship are under the superintendence of their minister at Walls.

The next arm of the sea to that of Bixter, and separated from it, as usual, by a high hill and a ness, is the

beautiful Voe of Weisdale. Its comparatively wide entrance is well closed in by three fine grazing isles, having a rich soil and highly expressive names. Hoy signifies the high island, Flotta the flat, and Gruna the green one. Some distance in past the isles the voe becomes very narrow, and continues so till its termination. The hills on either side, particularly on the west, are high and steep, but the soil is remarkably fertile, owing to the presence of limestone. On the west side of the voe, at its narrowest part, stand the ruins of what was at one time the beautiful residence of the family of Ross of Sound. No more favourable situation could be found in Shetland, and every effort has evidently been made to improve it, by laying out the gardens and approaches to the house tastefully. The style, which is similar to that of Busta and Sand, has been carried out with excellent taste, and at some expense. Years have, however, wrought many changes here. The fields are as green as ever, and the hardy sycamores—perhaps the best in Shetland—flourish as well as formerly, even without the shelter of high walls, but the manor house of Sound, once so neat and well-appointed, is now in ruins, and presents the very picture of desolation. The small promontory, which shelters the nice little harbour of Sound from the rather heavy seas which sometimes set in to the outer and wider part of the voe, is occupied as a churchyard. In this enclosure the foundations are still to be seen of the "Church of Our Lady," an ancient edifice which was long venerated as a place of extraordinary sanctity. Pilgrims resorted to it from all parts of Shetland, said prayers, lighted candles, and deposited offerings in order to obtain any object they most fondly desired. In this manner sailors sought good weather, fishermen good success at the haaf, and farmers good harvests. But objects of even greater interest were prayed for at the sacred shrine of "Our Lady." Brand tells us—"It was much frequented by women, who, when they desired to marry went to this church, making their vows and

saying their prayers there, so assuring themselves that God would cause men come in suit of them." Pilgrimages continued to be made to this old chapel even so recently as 1841, when the New Statistical Account of Scotland was written; and at that time a worthy elder, who lived close by, was in the habit of regularly gathering the coins deposited in the ruins, and placing them in the poor's box.*

The highway leading to Sandsting and Walls runs along the flat eastern shores of Weisdale Voe, and on reaching its head, gradually ascends the steep Scord Hill, which overhangs that inlet, on the west. To cut short this long road, foot passengers cross it with a ferry-boat at Sound, thus saving at least two miles of a journey. A handsome Free Church, with ornamental Gothic front and belfry, stands on a prominent knoll, exactly at the head of the voe. Immediately behind it is the manse. This church, built in 1864, and soon afterwards provided with an ordained minister, must have been eminently useful, for previous to its erection, there was no place of worship in Weisdale, and the people, apparently regarding the church of the neighbouring parish of Whiteness as too far away, attended it but seldom. All parties seemed to recognise the need of such a Christian agency in Weisdale. The Earl of Zetland subscribed to the building of the church the munificent sum of £150 —about a third of the whole amount. Mr. Black of Kergord, the largest proprietor in the parish, and a staunch Episcopalian, also gave it every encouragement.

A fine fertile valley, with a beautiful burn running through it, stretches from the head of Weisdale Voe, for three or four miles into the country. It is almost the sole property of D. D. Black, Esq. of Kergord, who has a well-built residence in it. Since he purchased the estate, about twenty years ago, this gentleman has

* See "New Statistical Account of Scotland"—Parish of Tingwall.

devoted much attention to its improvement. He first carried out a system of consolidating several of the old Shetland crofts into one farm. These small farms, after being provided with good houses and steadings, were let to experienced agriculturists from the mainland of Scotland. This system, not working well, was soon abandoned; and lately the whole, or nearly the whole of the upper valley of Weisdale, with a large extent of hill pasture adjoining, has been converted into a sheep farm. One of Mr. Black's improvements has been the erection of a large corn-mill, which must be a great boon to the district. The changes just referred to have, of course, greatly diminished the population.

CHAPTER XL.

WHITENESS.

The Loch of Strom—Sinclairs of Strom, &c.—Parochial Statistics, &c.

REGARDING the parish of Whiteness, which lies immediately to the south of that of Weisdale, there is not much to remark. In the western part of the district the soil is fertile, owing to the presence of limestone. Two long and narrow promontories project into the bay of Scalloway. Of these the southern, called Ustaness, is of by far the greatest importance, being fertile, populous, and well cultivated. Stromness, the northern, is somewhat narrower than the other, and can boast of only a few crofts. At its point stands the neat house of Jackville, than which no better out-of-the-world residence could be found, even in the Ultima Thule.

The large Loch of Strom, separated from the Voe of Stromness merely by a bridge, runs north-eastwards into the country, for a distance of three miles, until it loses itself amongst dark hills of gneiss. Over this bridge, which is supported by several small piers, the county road passes. So important was it reckoned in former times, that, in the beginning of last century, a collection was made over the whole Church of Scotland for the repair of the bridge of Strom. It has lost none of its importance since then, for were it removed the journey from Lerwick to the western districts of the country would be immensely lengthened. Several well-tilled portions of land lie along the western banks of the Loch of Strom. Near the bridge is the substantial little

manor house of the Craigie family; and somewhat beyond it, the well-built parish kirk stands on a romantic stance, close to the water; while at the very head of the loch, the Wesleyans have erected a small chapel, for the benefit of the solitary crofters inhabiting the remote inland valley of Kuchron. Except that portion near the bridge, which is enriched by limestone, and well cultivated, the eastern shores of the loch consist of steep heathery hills. This fine sheet of water has its surface diversified by several small holms. On one of them are to be seen the ruins of a stronghold, where a son of one of the Earls of Orkney is said to have fled from the wrath of his father. A branch of the great Sinclair family, which, for many generations, held lands on the banks of this lake, seems to have produced some men of mark and valour. Dr. Hibbert tells us that "Sinclair of Strom, in 1530, gallantly headed a number of udallers that composed part of the force which the Governor of Orkney raised in opposition to the designs of the Scottish Government, when, in favour of the Earl of Caithness, it was decreed that udal rights should be exchanged for feudal servility. In this contest the Earl of Caithness was slain; and in the subsequent reconciliation of the Monarch of Scotland to the udallers, Edward Sinclair, of Strom, with thirty companions in arms, received a respite from the King for a nominal term of nineteen years."

Whiteness Voe, which lies southwards from the ness of Ustaness, affords very good anchorage. Several good beaches along its shores are taken advantage of as fishcuring stations. Besides the parish kirk, where a Missionary on the Royal Bounty regularly officiates, it is provided with a little chapel, to which preachers of all denominations have access. The largest proprietors in Whiteness are the representatives of the late Captain Craigie, of Strom.

Overhanging Whiteness, on the east is the high hill of Wormidale—so named from a small waterfall in the

burn beneath—over which the county road passes. From the highest point of this road a magnificent view of Shetland isles and seas can be obtained, extending to Foula on the one side, and Whalsey Skerries on the other.

CHAPTER XLI.

From Whiteness Southwards—Isles in Bay of Scalloway—Trondra—Burra Isles—Disaster to Dutch Fleet—House—Parochial Statistics—Havera—Ancient Affray between Men of Burra and Coningsburgh—Bigton—St. Ninian's Isle—Spiggie—Parochial Statistics of Dunrossness, &c.—Conclusion.

THE coast between Whiteness and Scalloway Harbour is singularly bleak and uninteresting. The eye of the traveller is, therefore, attracted by the pretty group of little islands in the bay, a good view of which he obtains in passing. Of these, Papa, Oxna, and Linga, are tenanted, each by about two families of crofter fishermen; while Hildesay, Langa, and the Chenies are devoted to grazing. Further south than these, is a cluster of much larger and more interesting islands. Trondra, which lies opposite Scalloway, and contributes to the formation of its land-locked harbour, is flat and comparatively fertile. It is the property of the Earl of Zetland.

Southwards from Trondra are the Burra Isles. Of these West Burra is the largest, being upwards of four miles long, but very narrow in proportion. East Burra, or House, is shorter, but of greater breadth in proportion to its length. A long stretch of water separates West Burra, on the one hand, from Trondra and House, on the other. This narrow strait more resembles a river than a portion of the sea. It takes a meandering course, sometimes becoming narrow and constricted, and again expanding into wider pools, so that, as his graceful skiff swiftly bears the traveller down through the Sound of Burra, some fresh object of interest meets his eye, on passing each projecting point. In one place, the two islands of Burra approach so near to each other,

that they are connected by a wooden bridge, beneath whose arch six-oared boats can pass. Owing to the presence of limestone, the soil of Burra is very fertile. It is a singular fact—be the cause what it may—that the crops ripen here, and in some of the other islands of less magnitude, somewhat sooner than in the Mainland. The population of Burra is much larger in proportion to its extent, than almost any other district in Shetland. This is evidently owing to its convenience as a fishing-station. As the fisheries on the west coast of Shetland are by no means so productive as formerly, the great majority of the men of Burra have abandoned them, and entered on other branches of trade. Many of them are engaged in the Faroe fishing, in which they are highly prized for their skill and perseverance.

It was on the west coast of Burra that the Dutch navy met with a serious disaster in 1652. "The vessels were driven by a gale on the west side of the island; a fire ship was wrecked, and a man-of-war sank to the bottom. The rest of the fleet ventured among the small islands, and rode in safety." *

Burra is evidently the Burgh Westra of the "Pirate," where the hospitable Magnus Troil is represented as holding high revelry. The Burra Isles were long the property of the Sinclairs of House, whose old mansion still stands at the south end of the island. Towards the end of last century, however, the estate passed by marriage to the Scotts of Scalloway, to whom it still belongs. The Sinclairs of House, who held these lands for many generations, were an ancient family, said to be descended from the old Earls of Orkney. The old church of Burra was adorned by a spire, but it has long since been removed. The islands of Burra, together with those of Havera and Papa, belong to the ministry of Bressay, Burra, and Quarff. Burra and Quarff, however, form a *quoad sacra* parish, the minister residing at

* Hibbert's "Zetland," p. 456.

Quarff. Besides the parish church of Burra, the United Presbyterians have a good church and manse. Their minister is the only clergyman resident in the island. Both the Wesleyans and Baptists have also small chapels. There is a good Society school and schoolhouse, romantically situated on a small holm, between the two islands, but connected with one of them by a causeway of stones. The population of Burra and Quarff in 1871 was 900.

South from the isles of Burra are those of Havera. Regarding Great Havera, which is inhabited by two or three families, there is nothing special to remark, further than that it can boast of the only windmill in Shetland, and that several magnificent caves diversify its rocky coast. Little Havera is devoted exclusively to grazing. All along its eastern or mainland side, Cliff Sound is overhung by a high and steep ridge called the Cliff Hills. The right of pasturage on this extensive range of country long formed a subject of dispute between the people of Burra and those of Coningsburgh. Writing in 1822, Dr. Hibbert tells us,—"Several pitched battles are said to have been fought about two centuries and a half ago between the parties, in one of which the men of Burra and House crossed the Sound of Cliff during the night, and occupied a station among the hills in ambush. In the morning, their wives and daughters, who were instrumental in the plot, dressed themselves in male attire, and launching several yawls made their appearance in the Sound as in hostile array. The Coningsburghers, easily deceived by the formidable appearance of this mock armament, came down the hills to attack the boats, when they fell into the snare that had been laid for them, and being fiercely attacked in the rear by the male inhabitants of Burra and House, were for the most part killed and routed." *

Disputes regarding these scatholds appear to have

* Hibbert's "Zetland," p. 457.

continued until about 1786, when an arrangement was come to between the proprietors of Burra and Coningsburgh.

Passing the little sandy inlet of Maywick, the only landing-place on that rocky coast, we double the head of Ireland, and soon reach Bigton, with its elegant manor house, large, well-cultivated fields, and luxuriant grassparks. Bigton, which is one of the most favourably situated residences in Shetland, is the property of William A. Bruce, Esq. of Symbister and Bigton, who owns an extensive estate in the ministry of Dunrossness. The Bigton estate for a long period belonged to the Stewarts, but towards the end of last century it passed by marriage to the Bruces of Symbister, who have held it ever since. Immediately opposite Bigton, and connected with the great lawn in front of the manor by means of a sea-beach, is St. Ninian's (or, as it is popularly termed St. Ringan's) Isle, now entirely devoted to pasturage. On the west side, which faces the ocean, it is precipitous. In ancient times this island must have been of some importance, for it contains the ruins of a once famous chapel, dedicated to St. Ninian. The coast from Bigton southwards to Spiggie is singularly beautiful in summer, the high and undulating banks that form it being, in most places, clothed with luxuriant grass of a peculiarly light green. The large loch of Spiggie is separated from the sea merely by a beach of sand. At Sconsburgh, near the eastern shore of this lake, a thriving mercantile business is carried on by Mr. Henderson, the proprietor.

Dunrossness proper contained, in 1861, a population of 2113; and, in 1871, 1945,—the decrease being accounted for by emigration. This district has four churches—Established, Free, Wesleyan, and Baptist, all within a short distance of each other.

Colsay, a grazing island, lies a short distance off the inlet of Spiggie; and, two or three miles south-west from it, Fitful Head.

"Like some tall cliff that rears its awful form,
Swells from the vale and midway meets the storm;
Though round its breast the gathering clouds are spread,
A fitful sunshine settles on its head."

The mention of this abode of Norna must remind the reader that it was with this district I attempted to commence my description of Shetland. If he has followed it, his patience must be well exhausted, and he will now be ready to leave the "melancholy isles of farthest Thule," and seek new fields and fresh pastures, in fairer climes, and under more southern skies.

"Land of Isles in a Northern sea:—
Land of mist, and storms' revelry:
Land of the raven, and sea-mew,
Of eagle bold, and wild curlew:—
Land of brown heath, and treeless plain,
Of winding voe, and surging main.
Of bare grey skerry, and green holm,
Of ocean's deep caves, lash'd with foam,
Of whirling gurge, and racing tide
Of crag, and scar, and precipice:—
Land of Thule! The Roman came;
From far he view'd thee o'er the main;
His power thou felt not, nor his chain,
Thule the Free, was still thy name:—
Land! Thy sons were the sea-kings brave,
In galley strong ploughing the wave;
Their sword was bright, their word was true,
Fam'd in the World, both Old and New:
Land, where sea-kings of old did dwell,
Where their sons now dwell—Fare-Thee-Well!"

—*Rev. D. Landsborough.*

CHAPTER XLII.

THE POOR LAW.

ONE of the most interesting, and, at the same time, probably the most painful chapter in the history of Shetland, is that which relates to the Poor Law.

The old system of managing the poor in this country wrought admirably, and appears to have given universal satisfaction. For a description, I cannot do better than quote the excellent Statistical Account of Unst. "The number of poor dependent on alms is generally from twenty-five to thirty. For their support the parish is divided into fourteen parts, called *quarters*, through which the whole poor are dispersed. To each of these a proportional number is assigned. In every family within each quarter the poor belonging to it receive their board for as many days as the family occupies merks of land; and, after proceeding in this manner through the whole families in that quarter, return upon the first again. When any person, unable to support himself, applies *to be put upon the quarters*, as it is called, the minister gives notice of the application from the pulpit; and, if nothing be urged against his character or circumstances, as rendering him an improper object of the charity, he immediately obtains his request. The weekly contributions made at the church, together with the more liberal one at the celebration of the sacrament, are expended in the purchase of clothes and other necessaries for the poor, who are maintained upon the quarters. None are suffered to go about begging. Children, if in moderately comfortable circumstances themselves, are obliged to support their aged parents,

when they fall into extreme poverty; but are assisted from the funds in the hands of the kirk session with money for the purchase of clothes to them." * The system here so graphically described continued until the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1845. The working of that law in Shetland has been ably described by George H. B. Hay, Esq. of Hayfield, Lerwick, in his evidence given before the Poor Law Committee of the House of Commons, on the 1st of April, 1870. Than this talented gentleman, no one better acquainted with the subject could be found in Shetland. In preparing this short chapter I shall make free use of Mr. Hay's evidence. In 1845, the expenditure on the poor in Shetland was £250; in 1846 it had been more than doubled, amounting to £532; in 1869 it had reached £5319—in other words, it increased twenty-one fold in fourteen years.

The following table, taken from the source above-mentioned, will help to illustrate the existing state of matters :—

Registered Poor.	Casual Poor.	Total number of Poor.	Expenditure on Poor.	Gross Rental of Shetland in round numbers.	Its Annual Value, after deducting Burdens, is about
1112	197	1309	£5319	£30,000	£21,000

Thus, about 25 per cent. of the rental goes to the relief of the poor. The amount of assessment in each parish varies. In Tingwall one year, owing to particular circumstances, it reached 10s. per pound rental. In Unst, in 1869, it was 7s. On an average of all the parishes it is from 3s. to 4s. Surely, with all this exorbitant expenditure, the poor are supplied with every comfort. The very opposite state of matters prevails.

* "Old Statistical Account of Scotland,"—Parish of Unst.

The really deserving poor form a comparatively small proportion of those who swell the pauper rolls. They receive, generally, from sixpence to eighteenpence a week, or from rather less than a penny to rather more than twopence a day. It is difficult to understand how they can possibly subsist on this wretched pittance. If any portion of their weekly allowance can be spared from their rent, it is generally spent on tea, the paupers trusting to their own exertions, or the charity of their neighbours, for the moderate supply of bread, with *sillocks* and potatoes, which goes to make up their too scanty diet. It is heartrending to observe the squalor, starvation, and misery of every form that mark their wretched abodes. A very large number of recipients of parochial relief are most undeserving persons, prostitutes, women with illegitimate children, or idle and lazy females who will not put themselves to the trouble of working for their bread. The relief of pauper lunatics is likewise a very heavy burden on the parish funds. When Mr. Hay gave his evidence, there were fifty-seven pauper lunatics, the most of them living in asylums, at the expense of not less than £26 a year each. Again, the Shetland parishes suffer a peculiar hardship from the circumstance that many persons leave the islands in their youth, spend the best of their days as sailors or domestic servants, for instance, without acquiring a settlement anywhere, and then when they grow old become burdens on the district which gave them birth, but has never been benefited by their industry. A large proportion of the poor rates again, never reach the poor, deserving or undeserving, being spent in management, inspectors' salaries, &c., or in lawsuits to determine the settlement of individual paupers. Tingwall had to pay £200 of law expenses, for one particular case, in one year.

But the heavy taxation, with the vast and ever increasing expenditure it entails, has probably been the least evil produced by the present poor law. No more effectual means could have been invented for demoral-

ising the community. The small tenants feeling the rates press heavily upon them, think it a pity to lay out all this money without getting some return. Accordingly, as each one has some dependent parent, aunt, child, or other relative whom he is well enough able to assist, he contrives to place that person on the poor-roll, in order to get his assessment back again. The process of demoralisation thus becomes very rapid and wide-spread. Children abandon their parents, parents their children, brothers their sisters, and even natural affection is destroyed. Many men leave Shetland and become prosperous mariners or colonists, but they very frequently cease all communication with "the old folks at home," in order to get quit of their support, knowing very well that the parochial board must take them up. Before the present law was enacted, such men almost invariably did their best for their infirm relatives.

Again, the poor law dries up the sympathies of the charitable. How can a Shetland heritor, however kind-hearted, relieve the necessities of the deserving poor of his acquaintance, when the strong arm of the law puts its hand into his pocket, and forcibly extracts a fourth of his income, to be expended in the support of vice, idleness, and hypocrisy, as well as honest poverty? Amongst the vices promoted by the poor law, illegitimacy holds a prominent place. Before its enactment, the proportion of illegitimacy in Shetland was not one per cent. annually. Now it has reached three or four. A worthless woman knows very well that the more children she has, the greater will be her allowance. Therefore, an unfortunate seldom stops at one illegitimate child.

In Shetland, it is now considered no shame to be a pauper, but very often an object of ambition, particularly amongst spinsters on the "shady side" of forty. In order to attain this laudable object, they spare no effort that hypocrisy and deceit can suggest. In illustration of this, I may relate an incident that lately

occurred in my own experience. An unmarried woman, somewhat over forty years of age, having applied for parochial relief in a country parish, was refused until she could produce a medical certificate declaring she was not able-bodied. The inspector of poor accordingly sent her to me for examination. She described some extraordinary nervous disorder, which caused torment from head to foot. I failed to detect this wonderful disease, and inquired if there was anything else the matter with her, whereupon she replied, "Oh yes, sir, I'm lame; I have a very bad ankle." This joint was immediately laid bare, and carefully examined. I, however, could discover neither disease nor deformity. She was then requested to walk across the room, but her *lameness* was so great she could scarcely move. I then told her I had made up my mind regarding her case, but requested her to go a message to the foot of the street, while I wrote out the certificate. She poured all sorts of flattery and blessings on my head, and vowed she would do anything to oblige me. The candidate for parochial honours had no sooner left the house than I planted myself in the window in order to watch her mode of locomotion. She tripped lithely down the street, and all the lameness had suddenly vanished. On her return, I handed her a certificate, declaring her able-bodied and an impostor, duly enclosed in an envelope, addressed to the inspector. Upon receiving it, she again uttered a host of benedictions, evidently thinking the document was favourable to her claims, a delusion which would soon be dispelled when the note was opened by the executive officer of the Parochial Board.

For this dreadful state of matters, there appears to be only one remedy, viz., that suggested by Mr. Hay to the Committee, which was the repeal of the existing law, and a gradual return to the good old system. Ex-Bailie Lewis of Edinburgh, a high authority in such matters in his evidence before the Poor Law Committee,

advocates a remedy very similar to that proposed by Mr. Hay. Mr. Lewis thinks the support of its poor a duty incumbent on each Christian congregation. The old system in Shetland, if reintroduced, would have to be modified to suit the altered circumstances of the times. If the present law continues, there is reason to fear the whole rental will be swallowed up, and extensive eviction, with all its miseries, must be the result. Sheep do not come on the Parochial Board, and therefore they will be preferred to men.

THE END.

ABERDEEN: PRINTED BY G. & W. FRASER, 76 BROAD STREET.

TLAND
60°
iles 69 to a Degree.
5
10
40'
30'