CHAPTER VI

WAMPHRAY—A RETROSPECT

AFTER the Earl of Hopetoun began annexations there was necessarily a larger number of people thrown on the labour market, and some years afterwards there came a time of great scarcity, from bad harvests, that taxed the utmost efforts of the parish session to help the poor, both on and off the roll. The Earl of Hopetoun was himself a large contributor to their sustenance, specially mentioning that his donation should be given to persons not on the poor roll. In 1760 he began a series of improvements on his Wamphray estate which gave employment to a number of skilled and unskilled workmen. He provided small holdings and built houses on them, which are now known as Newton, or Gilgal. The first tenants were the tradesmen formerly mentioned, and the regular estate hands. At Hillhead, some distance from the village, the earl placed the house of his gamekeeper and forester, Thomas Little, who lived there and served three different proprietors in the same capacity. His nephew, James, succeeded him in the post and residence, and died there in the eighties of last century.

In 1777 there were in all eighty inhabitants in the village. The new houses were not up to modern requirements, but with walls built of stone and lime, they were in advance of a former day, and were

tastefully set down. The tenants were very proud of them, kept them tidy and well whitewashed. The hedges were well trimmed, and the gardens, carefully attended to, were full of vegetables, flowers, fruit trees, and berry bushes. America did not then send apples, and France was not friendly. Bee-keeping was then also an industry. When the flowers failed in low grounds the skeps were carted off up Wamphray glen among the hills, to give the honey a heather-bloom flavour. It sold at a higher price and added a little more to the general fund in those comparatively poor times, when both industry and frugality had to be equally well practised.

The postal name of these contiguous crofts, which formed two sides of a parallelogram, is Newton, but it is better known locally as Gilgal. It is not difficult for anyone to pass over Wamphray water "dryshod" in summer, so cooper Johnstone, who was an elder and precentor in Wamphray kirk, and a man well read in the Scriptures, said, in his own case, when he flitted from Craigfute to one of the new Hopetoun crofts or small holdings, that he had "passed dryshod over Jordan and encamped in Gilgal." There was very little connection between the two, his and the ancient passage, but the name "caught on and sticks there." This cooper had a mechanical genius above barrels and tubs. He anticipated by more than a hundred years one phase of the fashionable or pet locomotion of the present day. He made a tricycle and, towards the end of the 18th century, rattled up and down Wamphray roads on it. His descendants are still tenants in the Wamphray mill. Besides the efforts of the earl to better matters, the making of the old coach road from

north to south, through the parish, from Carlisle to Edinburgh, towards the end of the 18th century, gave a great impetus to all the industries, brightened the life, and widened the ideas of the natives all along its course. They felt taken out of their isolation, and connected now with the rest of the kingdom. From where the road enters Wamphray till it leaves it, the track of the Roman road was pretty closely adhered to. The coach began to run in 1788. Then came cheerier and livelier times. In the summer and autumn the great and the wealthy travelled on this road in their private carriages, and there were travellers on horseback and wayfarers on foot—a never-ceasing flow "day and daily." At the same time there was the general traffic of the country in long strings of carriers' carts, passing on to Edinburgh and Glasgow and back. This and the earl's attention to his crofts were powerful incentives to the villagers to keep their places in the best of order. That they seem to have done, as succeeding generations told with pride that the "guard and driver" of the mail coach and the carriers had all paid their predecessors the flattering compliment that "Newton was the prettiest village they passed through from Glasgow to Carlisle."

HOSTELRIES AT AND BEFORE COACHING TIMES.

The extra traffic on the road increased the number of the alehouses. There had been from of old one good house of that class at Annanholm.

An Englishman, taking a leisurely tour through the South of Scotland in the year 1700, wrote to the *Scots Magazine* of that period, that he stayed all night at Moffat, and next day travelled south by "Pudeen"

and dined at a "good Scotch house at Annanholm."

Besides Annanholm three other roadside inns came now into prominent notice: Jean o' the Bield's, Bet Gillespie's at Gateside, and Meg Bell's at Newbiggin. Their husband's names and avocations were respectively Ershman, a joiner; Moffat, a tailor; and Graham, a joiner. The wives looked after the public-house business. It was not then the fashion of the day for country women to change their name (surname) when they married; hence the above designations. These landladies brewed the "maut yill" they sold, and their ambition was, which should produce the most wholesome article. In memory of the above liquor an ancient used to smack his lips and say, "I wad raither hae haen't to my parritch than the best coo's milk that ever cam oot o' a byre."

Tradition says that a whisky still also plied its work then, near at hand in Dalmakeddar Linn. As many as thirty carriers' carts have been counted standing at the Bield at one time—men and horses feeding and liquoring ere they took the brae. A grumbling toper, and possibly one that had been refused "another drap," sang:

> "The auld wife o' the Bield may repent till
> she dee,
> For mony a braw penny has been spent there
> by me."

Jean got time to repent, for "Aged 93" is on her tombstone in Wamphray kirkyard. The other two landladies, Bet and Meg, died on the verge of ninety. Their ages pay them a compliment. When the scare of a French invasion in 1805 and 1806 called out from

every parish all the men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five for military drill, exactly eighty of the required age were found in Wamphray. The stated reviews were held at Newbiggin. Meg supplied the refreshments after the review was over. The remainder of the day was devoted to gymnastic and other sports, at which Tom Porteous and other athletes got their strength and skill displayed in such ways as putting the stone, lifting weights, running races, and wrestling.

When the engineers surveyed the route of the coach road they saw Wamphray water dry, and not making provision for the vagaries it was said to be subject to when it got "roarin' fou," neglected to bridge it. The consequence was that the scenes that took place at Annanholm when the water was in spate were comical to some and extremely annoying to others. The oldest inhabitant used to relate that he had seen the mail coach, six private carriages, a long row of carriers' carts, and numerous pedestrians waiting there till the water was fordable. A crowd of the parishioners gathered at Annanholm, some no doubt to sympathise, but probably not a few others to get amusement from the confusion and disappointment occasioned to the travellers.

On one occasion, when the water was not in spate, the driver of the coach had got too much liquor, and refused to mount the dickey. The guard in a tone of authority demanded of him, "How am I to account for this delay?" "Blame Wamphray water," hiccupped out the driver. By and by a new road was made from the Bield to Old Kilbrook, half a mile east of the other road, and on this new route the water was

bridged at a convenient spot. This in future saved a halt when a spate was on.

The carriers' carts were great institutions as they passed along. They served the purpose of travelling grocers, and supplied their customers as they went on. Tea was then an expensive luxury, and to indulge in that beverage was reckoned "rank wastrie," but it was bought in small quantities, and as there was a shyness to buy it on the open road, the carriers humored the feelings of the customer by passing it from hand to hand through the hedge.

Long afterwards when tea became cheaper the women used to laugh and tell of the precautions they took, in barring the door and other methods, to hinder their neighbours from knowing of their indulgence in this harmless but expensive beverage.

"Maut yill" was then the orthodox beverage to treat friends and customers to on special occasions. Tea and coffee have run the yill into oblivion.

POST OFFICE IN WAMPHRAY.

In the 18th century one of the chief post offices between Edinburgh and Dumfries was at Annanholm, in Wamphray. There were two riders, each with pistols in his belt, the one rode to Dumfries, taking to and bringing letters therefrom ; the other rode to Bield o' Tweed, taking the Edinburgh letters, to meet the post there, and bringing the south country letters in return. Letters did not make a big bag in those days, on one occasion the Bield o' Tweed rider carried only one letter for the Edinburgh post. Postage was a dear item. Some sent their letters by a carrier to post in Edinburgh. Others, and they were more numerous,

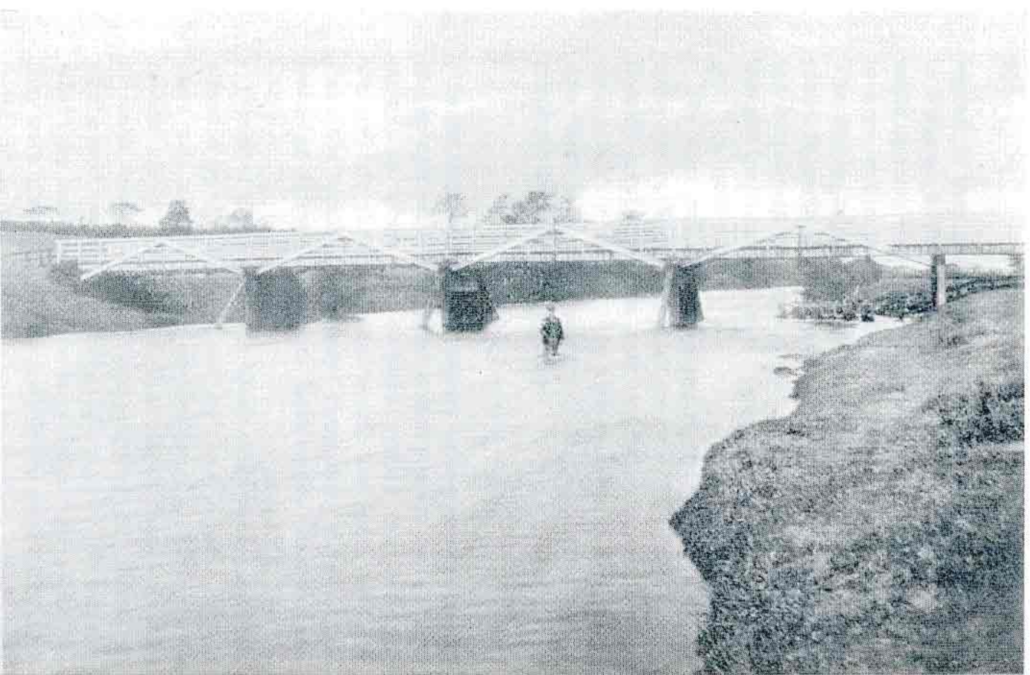
waited till they heard of someone in the district going to Edinburgh, and then there was a parcel of letters made up from this one and that one to bother the man to post in the capital to their friends in Edinburgh. The stamp in Edinburgh cost one penny, in Wamphray it might cost sixpence or sevenpence. Before the friend was in some cases "acknowledged" there was not much saved, but a "penny saved was a penny won" in those days.

The post office was removed to Moffat, and for many years Wamphray letters lay there till Friday (market day), or were sent on by a chance visitor. First a weekly runner, then a biweekly was appointed; now there is a daily runner (two dispatches) and a telephone office in Wamphray.

PUBLIC NEWS.

In the times before newspapers were published, home and foreign affairs reached country parts by word of mouth, so when the carriers passed the door the weaver left the loom, the smith the forge, and the joiner the bench, to "convoy" them along the road and learn the latest news from Edinburgh, Glasgow and Carlisle.

Dumfries market on the Wednesdays was regularly attended by the farmers, and by a carrier also, so that there was a pretty fair circulation of political information afloat among the Wamphray folk—at least as much weekly as kept them arguing and theorising till the next week's news either affirmed or contradicted what they had heard. The beggars, or "gaun folk" as they were often called, also contributed their list of accidents and district gossip picked up in their wanderings.



Jocksthorn Bridge

At the beginning of last century there were few bridges over Annan water throughout its whole coures from Moffat to the Solway. Jocksthorn bridge connecting the highways of Wamphray and Johnstone was erected a little over seventy years ago. Before that time there were three fords of communication with Johnstone parish : one at Annanbank, one at Woodend, and another at Stenrishhill. The last, the most northerly, is still in use. There were various methods of fording the Annan according to the state of the water. Wading and stilting were oftenest resorted to, and it was not uncommon for an expert at stilting to carry a passenger across the water. Accidents happened, and whoever thus employed fell in carrying a neighbour was ever afterwards dubbed as "not to ride the water on," and the phrase passed into general use as descriptive of people who were not to be depended on.

PLACE NAMES.

How places get names is curious enough. The Jock, who has given his name to a cottage, a road, a bridge, and a thorn, is said by tradition to have been a Captain John Thomson (probably a native of the district) whose ship was lying off Lisbon on the day the great earthquake occurred. He saw the effects of that dreadful calamity ; the sight unhinged his mind ; and he could not go to sea again. He worked on Annanbank farm, and often was seen sitting under the thorn and heard singing songs to melancholy airs. The old thorn still stands by the road, near the entrance to the United Free Church, and not far from the bridge and cottage to which it has given its name.

SOCIAL LIFE AND CHARACTERS AMONG THE CROFTERS.

As the inhabitants do at the present day so they did in a former. On certain occasions there was a general turnout of the crofters to help one another in their field-work. The two great events were the potato planting, or "setting" as it was called, and the potato "raising." A feast was held at the end of the day on each occasion. A farmer in the neighbourhood sent a man to plough and sow the corn plot. That did not require extra help, but potato-setting day required a number of hands, and they were forthcoming; and when October came, graips and gatherers were needed to raise the crop, and a turnout of neighbours again occurred. Willie Moffat and his donkey cart was very useful to many at such a busy time, and as Willie needed the help of his neighbours on his own "big" day, so he was quite willing to oblige, if properly approached—but that was needed. If the petitioner forgot his manners and said "cuddie" he lost his case, but if he said "beast" or "ass" Willie turned out willingly and made both himself and the beast an acquisition.

There was then as now no public hall in the parish, but the laird entered into an agreement with Willie to lend his long, well-floored, slate-roofed barn for the public entertainments, such as the two balls—the charity and the ploughman's—the theatricals, the dancing schools, and the large weddings that the villagers have indulged in from time immemorial. (Lecturers, singing masters, and concerts made their displays in the public school.) This made Willie's

house a centre of motion and attraction to the district, and enlarged his self-importance, never at any time small. Anyone desiring the use of the barn had (by Willie's treaty with the laird) to send a deputation to enquire courteously if it could be granted at a certain date for a specified purpose. This embassy had to be made up of cautious diplomatists, for it was not always the first deputation that received a gracious answer.

At the ploughman's ball there was occasionally some horseplay. One morning after a ball Willie's cart was found at the far corner of his field. The innocent party was of course blamed. Next year Willie was on the watch. He kept going out and in till at last his wife said "Sit down." "Sit down, woman," echoed Willie, "Joe Simpson's here, there'll be a nicht o't." He had been in the barn, and seeing Simpson dancing, marched up to him, and said "That's no dancing, man; that's plunging; neither floor nor feet's safe near ye, man," and moved off. Willie had private means and did not need to work hard daily to make ends meet like his other crofter neighbours, so he made it his duty to walk round and see what they were about, give advice and encouragement, and point out shortcomings; and as he never waited for excuse, explanation, or contradiction, he fell into a host of conceits and eccentricities in speech and action that amused the parishioners greatly and kept them quoting him. But Willie was a sympathetic neighbour in cases of illness, though he had his own way of expressing it. "Ye may ca't this and ye may ca't that, but I ca't the decay o' natur," was his sympathetic language to the aged and infirm when complaining of the ills that "flesh is heir to." "It's true, I daresay," was the reply,

but the sufferer could scarcely refrain a smile, and repeated Willie's saying to his next sympathising neighbour.

Willie did not always, indeed he rarely ever did, reply to a question in the way expected. "How did ye enjoy the wedding last night, Willie ?" said one who was not a guest. "There were tubfu's o' whisky at it, man, and a' took a drap o't," answered Willie, and passed on, muttering, "I've made his teeth water." Willie was a very temperate man, the questioner could take a "glass." A neighbour once said, "Willie, ye're no gaun to Douglas for coals and it thunnerin' that way ?" "What do I care for twa or three dunners o' thunner, woman," was the reply as he laid the whip on the beast. The saying went round and was applied to all afraid of "lions in the path." Save the minister, who got a cartload yearly for special parties, nobody in the parish burnt coal. To be upsides with him Willie went to Douglas once a year with the beast and brought home a cartload. The beast being well-fed and well-groomed was, generally speaking, a go-ahead animal, but it drew the line at wooden bridges. Willie thought by putting it to a canter to drive it across the new wooden bridge at Jocksthorn. The beast went on, but no sooner did it hear the sound of its feet on the planks, than it stood stock-still, and would not budge another step forward. It apparently was not sure how far this new venture was safe, and preferred the old mode of fording the stream. An empty cart might safely cross a shallow ford, but a cartload of coals by the same route was risky, so on the third day when Willie returned with his load, his wife and her neighbours were on the watch, and

hastened to the end of the bridge to be ready to drag the loaded cart across. The donkey was unyoked and ridden through the stream, and, when the laden cart was pushed across the bridge, re-yoked on the Wamphray side. A man assisting on one occasion at this ludicrous operation proposed to push the beast and the laden cart along with it, but its owner fiercely said "I tell ye, man, he'll no *brig*." After long consideration the animal did come to see that the bridge was a safe mode of transit. Willie's new saying caught on and was applied to all the over-cautious, and parents with jocular seriousness used to say to the teacher when he proposed to put a boy into Latin, "Do you think he'll brig, Maister?" One of Willie's neighbours at a bridge scene wondered why he did not keep a pony. "It's an honourable beast the ass, man," was the reply. Willie prided himself on his advanced ideas on certain things. His house both externally and internally was before the times, so on looking into his neighbour's thatched house and observing a sooty streak after a wet night, he said, "There's nocht like the slate, man," and moved out. His implements for use on the croft were new in his day. He bought a set of fanners when fanners were a rarity in the country side. Previous to the introduction of that machine the corn was winnowed in the current between the two barn doors, or outside on a windy day. Strange to say, this was the only mechanical invention in the way of lessening human labour that was objected to on religious grounds. His neighbours, chiefly the women, wondered that Willie, being a Cameronian, could patronise such a thing. The Bible did mention threshing floors and winnowing, but "never a word of

fanners." Their argument against them was that it was "forced wun," and that they interfered with, and practically took the work out of, the hands of the "Prince of the power of the air," a dignitary held in greater fear and respect in those days than now.

Willie continued to "dicht" (*i.e.* winnow) the corn of every crofter who did not condemn fanners, and finally that of all, for the objectors came to see that the "Prince's" assistance was an uncertain factor to calculate on. So the fanners won the day.

On his visiting rounds, and on entering the weaver's shop, he would examine the various looms, woollen and linen, and on going out nudge the master, and say, "Ye should magnify ye're office, man, the apostle Paul was a weaver, man." The weaver's wife, standing in the doorway, once remarked that, "None in there had the gifts of the apostle Paul." Willie, passing her, muttered, "Graces are better than gifts, woman."

The ancestors of both the Moffats and the Mitchells had suffered during the persecution in the time of Charles II and his successor, so both Willie and his old uncle, Johnny Mitchell, were devoted Cameronians. They were very regular in their home devotional exercises, and took prayers week about. Eccentricity showed itself also in this connection. They corrected each other in their pronunciation when reading the Scriptures, till the commonsense wife of Willie, listening, found it hard sometimes to observe a gravity suited to the occasion. Willie boldly gave out a certain chapter in Isaiah. His uncle said, "Esaia, Wullie." "Ask ony Latin scholar in the parish, man, if it's no Isaiah," was the reply, and Willie read on.

It is now well over three score years and ten since

John Mitchell, his nephew Willie Moffat, and his nephew's wife, Jeanie, passed away, yet still their names are remembered kindly, and Willie's says and saws are still quoted. The childless couple always kept a little maid. They looked round, picked out an orphan girl (or one out of a large family) about eleven years of age and kept her three or four years. From May to November she herded the cows or attended to her mistress' hand. From November to May she was sent to school. The wages of the girl were small, but the couple kept her well-clad and attended to in every way, and trained for a better situation. If any of the girls trained are still living they will remember Jeanie's kindly ways, and they cannot have forgotten Willie, or the place where they got their early instruction in service.

Thomas Porteous was another of the old-time worthies, but his tastes and genius were cast in a different mould from Willie Moffat's. His general manner and mode of expressing himself were more kindly, but the latter was neither so clear nor so quotable as Willie's. It resembled those elliptical exercises in the old school books wherein words are omitted here and there in the sentences. Head work at school was difficult to Thomas, but at dancing he was a "don," and in every branch of athletics he was most expert. When a volunteer he picked up the military drill readily, and never forgot its graceful movements as long as he lived. In all kinds of parochial entertainments, such as balls, soirees, and theatricals, Thomas was the moving spirit, but when the function was fairly set afloat he retired to the modest position of superintending the decoration of the rooms, and attending to

the lights (at a ball or soiree). In the case of theatricals, he became stage manager and prologue reciter.

At his last theatrical appearance, and at the age of seventy-seven he treated the audience to a hornpipe, as a last farewell to dancing. Needless to say the agility and neatness with which it was performed gave unbounded satisfaction to all who were present.

Thomas first followed the plough, and afterwards took to a chapman's life, and in his country rounds he was accompanied by his dog, Plumper, that he had trained to a marvellous degree of usefulness. It could distinguish colours, and it was quite a usual thing for it to return alone with a parcel to a house where previously Thomas had displayed his samples.

Thomas was also considered the safest man to "ride the water on" when stilting was the means of crossing the Annan. Though he was a great admirer of learning and learned men, he never attempted to train any of his own species in anything higher than gymnastics, yet he regularly attended the annual examinations of the parish school, and, at the conclusion, produced medals with gay ribbons for the *duxes* of the various junior classes. He had a great admiration for the extent of Mr. Charteris' learning, and for his success as a teacher; and once in speaking of him expressed himself thus: "But how can he miss but be learned. There's no' a new word made in Edinburgh but the students send it to him next day"!

When advanced in years this solitary old man turned his house into a museum, and delighted to show off to all comers the nick-nacks the Wamphray lads and others had brought or sent him from abroad, and the curios he himself had collected in the locality. One

deer-horn he was very proud to show off, which was dug out "six feet below moss and four below marl" in the neighbourhood.

A stranger visiting in the parish was taken by his friend to see Thomas' museum. Afterwards, on being asked what he thought of it, he remarked that "the man himself was the greatest curiosity in it." Thomas died in his eighty-sixth year. A small sum of money, which a friend increased, was, with the proceeds of the sale of his museum, devoted by his will to the fulfilling of a long-cherished ambition; the founding of a bursary for a Wamphray school student. A handsome tombstone was erected to his memory in Wamphray churchyard by his numerous friends.

Individuality seems to have been better developed in both sexes a hundred years ago than it now is. Then everyone fell into the groove nature had fitted him for, and everyone was himself, and useful in his own way. This gave a truthfulness, a variety, and a liveliness to everyday life that made it altogether more cheerful. Someone was ever saying something worthy to quote, to laugh at, or think over. In country places the population did not change so much before railway times as it has done since. Son succeeded father for many generations, and all the droll incidents and odd says and saws in the parish and district of a former time were handed down from one generation to another, and kept in mind by frequent repetition, to brighten winter parties and fireside circles. Anything funny or pat that had happened, either at work, in the field, in the house, at church, or in school, were rehearsed and the authors kindly remembered.

WAGES OF SKILLED AND UNSKILLED LABOURERS.

From 1793 till well into the forties of last century the day's wage of both skilled and unskilled labour remained unchanged, except in cases where the landlords let by contract the improvements they were making on their estates, which enabled the workmen, by a little extra exertion, to increase their day's wage above the ordinary rate. The increase during the last seventy years may be attributed to the general prosperity in the commercial and industrial pursuits of the country, to emigration, and very much to the building of railways. To all these causes are due the increase in the price of unskilled labour in rural districts from one shilling and sixpence to two shillings and sixpence and three shillings a day, the rate it at present stands at ; and skilled labour in like proportion. So in 1906 we see both skilled and unskilled workmen paid from five to six times the wage per day they were paid one hundred and fifty years before, and along with better pay there has been a very considerable shortening of the hours of work.

Among the extinct rural industries, weaving, in the heyday of its prosperity, seems to have been the best paying, judging from the number engaged in it and the report of those carrying it on, either with one loom or with three or four in their shop. Its best days were past before 1820. A solitary loom lingered here and there into the thirties and even the forties, but even with the longest hours a weaver could only make starvation wages at the two last dates.

Coopering, in a former day, also seems to have been fairly well paid. Tailoring and dressmaking, according

to parochial records, were very poorly paid. These two trades, owing to easy access to towns and the system of canvassing now practised by many firms, seem on the fair way to become extinct as rural industries. Shoemaking also appears to be doomed.

PRICES OF FOOD.

In March, 1757, the price of oatmeal, according to session records, was one shilling and sixpence per stone. In April it was two shillings. In May it rose to two shillings and twopence. These may seem to us moderate prices, but as wages at that date ran from one shilling to one shilling and twopence to tradesmen, and sixpence a day to ordinary labourers, it was a famine price. Great destitution prevailed.

The years 1782-83 are mentioned in the Statistical Report as most "calamitous years." Indeed, the same authority[1] records the same doleful tale at intervals all through the "nineties" till dearth and want culminated in what the old folks long spoke of as the "dear years." In the last year of the 18th and the first two of the 19th century, owing to bad harvests, oatmeal rose to eight shillings and nine shillings a stone,[2] which was as much as the weekly wage of the ordinary labourer. The poor suffered severely. But there were mitigating circumstances in general in 1800 that the folks of 1757 did not enjoy. Day's wages to all had doubled. Potatoes were now a field crop, and the weaving industry was thriving. The traffic on the public road was practically continuous. Yet withal, the young and strong of Wamphray had migrated in search of food and work elsewhere, as the census of 1801 gives the

[1] Dr. Singer. [2] Old stone was 17½ lbs.

population at 423, whereas in 1791 it stood at 487. The price of meal fell during the next seven years. To show the scarcity of oatmeal in the country at that time one householder often told the story of going from one farmhouse to another in search of it, and at length succeeding in obtaining, as a great favour, from one farmer, three stones for a guinea! Owing to the work that Mr. Fettes gave in the woods, from the year 1802 to 1810, money was more plentiful, and the population again increased to 481. From that date till after 1815 oatmeal again rose, this time to an unprecedented price. After this it fell to a comparatively moderate price, round which it fluctuated for the next thirty years.

In the thirties and forties of last century farmers were in the habit of selling part of their growing grain by auction. Many of the labouring class thus got their oatmeal below market rate. From 1810 till the middle of the thirties there was continuous work for tradesmen and labourers, begun on a great scale by Dr. Rogerson (the new laird of Wamphray), continued to some extent by his son, and afterwards by his heir of entail, Mr. Rogerson of Gillesbie. That work brought an increase of population, the census of 1831 showing 581 inhabitants—the highest number on record.

Returning to articles of diet, and their prices relative to wages, we find that no agricultural produce, save grain,—the "staff of life,"—was so extravagantly out of proportion to wages as it was in the latter part of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries. Beef, mutton, and salmon in those days could be purchased for 3d., 3½d., and 2½d., a pound, respectively; cheese and butter at 3d., 4d., and 6d., a pound; eggs, 4d., a

dozen.[1] Indeed all of these, save salmon, continued at comparatively moderate prices till near the middle of last century. About 1840 beef rose to 6d., and butter to 8d., a pound. From 1750 to the date above mentioned, the chief breads used at the tables of the middle and lower classes were oatmeal cakes, "bannocks of barley meal," and oatmeal and barley-meal potato scones.

In some parts of the country pease-meal bannocks were a favourite bread. Wheaten bread was only used on rare and special occasions. Butcher meat was used regularly only by the middle and upper classes,—fresh in summer, salted in winter. Daily labourers, with big families, during the hundred years we speak of, were mostly vegetarians. When they "saw the rent clear" they kept one of the porkers, salted and dried it, and sometimes also a sheep was bought and killed at Martinmas, and also salted to keep the broth-pot boiling at intervals during winter. But it may be safely affirmed that the poor, and children of the poor, did not then see animal food daily, or even weekly, except when the former worked in hay time and harvest to a farmer, and the latter were hired out in summer as herd boys and herd lassies. Times are altered, barley bannocks disappeared fifty years ago, and wheaten bread has taken its place among the poorest. The butcher's cart makes its weekly rounds, and finds trade. Tea and sugar are one fourth their price of fifty years ago, and far too often seen now on the tables of the poor, and neither, properly speaking, nourishing articles of diet. It is greatly to be regretted that oatcake and the "halesome parritch" so nutritive

[1] Statistical Report.

to youth, middle, and old age, should have gone so much out of fashion in these days. There are two articles whose reduction in price has been an immense boon to the community, namely, soap, so conducive to cleanliness, and salt, so necessary to health and in the preparation of food.

CONCERNING THE VERY POOR.

For many years during the early part of last century there were many wandering poor, and scarcely a night passed without the barns of the different farmhouses being full of them. Unfortunately there are still too many tramps on the road, but in those days the objects of pity were more numerous. Many were maimed and halt and moved about on crutches, the utterly lame being carried on a hand-barrow and the blind led from door to door. This was a tax on the time and patience of the people, but as there was no proper system of relief to deal with that class at the time, it was looked upon as a pious duty. The "awmous" given in almost every case was a handful of meal, which, it is said, the recipients afterwards sold. Actual poverty sent the greater number wandering, but traditional stories are still afloat of some who made a business of begging; one in particular being mentioned as having passed the remark that begging had become half-a-crown a day worse in his time.

EMIGRATION.

To the earliest emigrants from the south and south-east of Scotland, Annan Waterfoot was the port of embarkation to America. Many a "long and last fare-well" was taken there. The voyage was not the short

and enjoyable trip it is nowadays. It took the small ships four weeks or more to plough their way to the "foreign shore." The passengers provided their own bedding and food. When they landed at their destination there was hard work to face and hardships to undergo, but these could be overcome by willing hands and brave hearts, and they were overcome. All the letters to the homeland told of a fuller and happier life, and better future prospects for their families in the new country than there were in the old. It was only when they took a longing to revisit the friends and scenes of their youth in their native land that their hearts were like to fail. But pressing duties and correct reasoning calmed these natural feelings, and they worked on, and thus helped to lay the foundation of a "Greater Britain beyond the seas." The first emigrants, however, were laid to rest in a foreign land before the fortunes were made (or the voyage hither and thither rendered so cheap, short, and pleasant,) that have enabled their descendants in such numbers to visit the land and places that their forefathers loved to speak of so frequently and with such great affection.

A list of a few of the names of emigrants from Wamphray to the United States and the British Colonies from the early years of the 19th century onwards may be interesting to the descendants of these colonists, and also to the descendants of those left in the home country. Among the earliest were Aymers (or Imries) and Charterises to Canada, Littles to Kentucky, Jardines to New Brunswick (Rushibuctoo), Shaws to Ohio, Hallidays and Rogersons to Newfoundland; Hunters, Taits, Tenants, Sanders, Irvines,

Kennedys, and others, to Canada ; Sanders, Carruthers, and others, to the Cape of Good Hope ; Patersons and Dicksons to New Zealand, where one of them, Matthew Paterson, who died lately, was for many years engineer to the Clutha District Council.

COACHING DAYS.

The mail coach began to run through Wamphray in 1780, and continued till the new road from Carlisle to Glasgow through the neighbouring parish of Johnstone was completed in 1820. Thenceforth all the traffic was conducted on the new road till the Caledonian Railway was opened through to Glasgow in 1848 ; then it returned to Wamphray. The old mail coach ran at the rate of ten miles an hour, and later, to suit business men, an extra coach called the "Rapid" was run at the rate of twelve miles an hour ! In the last sixty years locomotive speed has increased five-fold. In sixty years hence are travellers to be whirled along at the rate of two hundred and fifty or three hundred miles an hour ? After what has been experienced there would be a risk in betting they could not. The railway train has set everybody a-travelling. In a former day it was the few who knew anything of their native country beyond a radius of twenty miles of their birth-place. It was the adventurous person who did more. Those who had visited Edinburgh or Glasgow talked all the rest of their lives of the grand things they had seen there. And if anyone had been to "Lunnon" they were famous travellers and courted for their information. Fifty miles apart, friend did not visit friend, save, perhaps, once in a lifetime ; now they can see each other as often as they choose. Masters and

servants, great and small, are carried in the same train to their destination, with a comfort and speed not of old anticipated. What a contrast to a journey on foot, or on a carrier's cart, or on the "top" of the mail coach, on a wet day in summer or a snowy day in winter!

SOCIAL LIFE.

Music was not a school subject in the olden time. The singing master made his appearance every second or third winter, and his class was largely attended. He trained it in the favourite psalm tunes and the best secular songs—mostly Scotch. At the end of a six weeks training the class was concluded by a musical treat to the public, followed by a dance. The absence of the singing master's visits has begun to be regretted in rural districts, as school music does not exactly cover the ground, either sacred or secular, which those visits of his did.

In the interval between the singing master's visits the dancing master came regularly to complete the circle of education. His course also consisted of six weeks, and the class was wholly made up of juveniles. After the first fortnight's training there was an "open night" for parents and others to attend and see how the children comported themselves at "Hielan' fling and a' that," and, if they felt so inclined, "shake their own foot." This class was concluded by a ball, to which all interested "turned out." In the winter season there was usually a ball for the richer classes, and on the evening of every New-year's day a ploughman's ball used to be held; this institution was popular, and well managed by a committee of ploughmen and shepherds. The farmers "looked in" at pay time or

sent a subscription. After deducting expenses the surplus generally amounted to as mnch as purchased all the elementary books needed in the school for the year. Gateside Relief Kirk soirees were a great and popular institution. For many a year the Rev. Walter Dunlop, Dumfries (the famous "Watty"), attended them and edified and enlivened the meeting with his eloquence and witty stories.

THEATRICALS.

The "Gentle Shepherd" was the play invariably acted; it suited the tastes of the people of those days; they thoroughly realised its sentiment and liked it; it never grew stale to either actor or audience however often staged. The names of some of its famous interpreters, such as, Will Barton in Madge, John Pagan and Johnny Charteris in Simon and Glaud, Rob Goldie in Bauldy, and Jamie Little in Sir William, have been handed down, and are still talked of by the descendants of the old stock who saw them on the stage. They were a hardy, hopeful, plucky lot, those people who lived in the hard times of the first forty years of last century. They left nothing undone, either in the way of education or recreation, to better and brighten life, and church was attended as regularly on Sunday as their ordinary work and recreation were on week-days.

DUMFRIES COURIER.

The year 1809 is memorable in the annals of Dumfriesshire and Galloway as the date when the *Dumfries Courier* was published. It was welcomed by everybody, and purchased individually or by a few neighbours

clubbing together. Besides giving more reliable information on both local and political affairs, it gave an impulse to intellectual life generally, that was felt in every parish in the two counties. If it did not originate debating clubs it was the means of multiplying them. The books on the Jewish wars, by Josephus, that were in so many houses, were laid on the shelf. The excitement and horrors of the French Revolution, and the subsequent wars of "Buony" with every European kingdom, till his complete and final defeat at Waterloo, threw all ancient history into the shade to lie there. Great interest was taken in the first Reform Bill, but as it did not very much effect the voting power in Wamphray, no demonstrations such as took place in populous centres were indulged in.

SPORTS AND GAMES.

The traditional sports of ancient rieving times in Wamphray consisted of horse racing, foot racing, leaping, wrestling etc., and these continued with intervals of interruption till the first quarter of last century. The great national winter and summer games, curling and quoiting, were and are still indulged in. Football was chiefly practised by schoolboys in those days. The carpet bowling rink has become quite a favourite house game of late years, and enthusiastically carried on in most towns and parishes during winter.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS.

Women's sphere of usefulness in church and state were not defined on the same lines as in these later days. The Wamphray debating society, formed in the 'teens of last century, neither admitted women as

members nor allowed them to attend its meetings; but the tenant of the house in whose room it was held permitted them to climb the ladder and sit in the "loft" or garret, and there they heard literary and political matters discussed by local orators "gifted with the gab." In 1835, a methodist preacher and his wife, on a missionary tour, gave an open-air service under an oak tree in the corner of the old plantation near the village, and as it was advertised that the lady would preach, the whole "countryside turned out" to see and hear the phenomenon.

Though women were of old allowed in dissenting churches to give their vote in the choice of a minister, yet at a meeting convened for secular matters, concerning the church, they might attend, but only to listen. At one such meeting, an old elder being in the chair, a lady stood up and began to express her mind on the subject under discussion, the chairman, with head erect, called out in a commanding voice, "Seelence there." Jenny was silenced and sat down "mumbling something." What a contrast now to seventy years ago.

LONGEVITY RECORDS.

The Statistical Report of 1798 state, that there were people living in Wamphray, in 1755, at the age of 96, 92, 89, 86, and 83. In 1762, a woman died at the age of 113. The united ages of three Carrutherses of Mylne amounted to 300—father, son, and grandson, being respectively 102, 100, and 98 years old. Jean, the famous landlady of the Bield, died at the age of 93. Jean Burgess, Cacrabank, when she died in 1847, was 101. The oldest on record in modern times was James Potter, son of Alexander Potter, so long church officer

in Wamphray; he died at Templand village, parish of Lochmaben, in the fifties, and is buried in Garrel kirkyard: "106 years" is on his tombstone. He could walk over four miles to visit his nephews after he passed the hundred, and moved about till near his end. The highest ages of residenters during the last forty years ranged from 98 to 93 for men, and 92 to 90 for women; there were a greater number between 80 and 90.

An interesting case of longevity, though not of a Wamphray person, was connected with a residenter who himself reached the age of 93; viz. his "maiden-kimmer," the girl who, at old Scottish baptisms, handed the baby from the mother to the father, was at his death, alive and well aged 103; she died in Edinburgh five years afterwards. The oldest resident inhabitant at present is 87, but there are a few about 80. The two oldest non-resident natives are Thomas Johnstone,[1] aged 96, and a lady near Lockerbie, 90; both are still healthy and able to walk about. Not one of these persons mentioned but were hard workers in youth and middle age, and the foundations of their constitutions were laid in a day when the food used was nearly all home grown.

FUNERAL SERVICES.

The system of "treating" those who attended a funeral has, within the last forty years, entirely ceased. This treating was once thought such a necessary and pious duty to the memory of the departed that, when a family was too poor to provide it, the parish kirk-

[1] Thomas Johnstone has been an elder in a church in Moffat for nearly fifty years. His wife is also a nonagenarian.

session paid for the "necessaries"; these consisted of bread, cheese, ale, and whisky, and those who could afford it added port and sherry wine. The coffin, covered by the mort cloth, was, if the distance was short, generally carried to the grave on "spokes," the company doing duty by turns. If the way was long some kind of vehicle was called into requisition. Some peculiar and gruesomely humorous incidents took place on these occasions. When the way happened to be long there might be a special service on the road, and one who had seen these services at their grandest, used to say, "'Deed, we were a' e'en gey happy whiles afore we got to the kirkyard." The abuse of the system proved its cure. It became disgusting from its total unlikeness to the order and decency required on such sad occasions.

SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS.

Every parish, and Wamphray not least, had its haunted places, which no one, young or old, cared to pass by alone after dark, and especially during the "sma'" hours of the morning. Certain houses were infested by bogles that disturbed the inmates by their noises on particular occasions. The minister was very often called on to "lay the bogle," and generally succeeded in doing so. But superstition dies hard. So late as seventy years ago there were still a few people living who had seen the deil, or when closely questioned, had seen those who had seen him; and men were alive who had seen the "fairies dancing round them, a' the colours of the rainbow," and there were housewives even then who in their younger years had seen the cream (when the butter was slow to

gather) poured out of the kirn into a pot, hung on the fire, and pins thrown into it, to "prick the conscience of the witch" (the cause of the failure). Woe to the poor woman who happened to come to the door while the pot was on the fire, she was looked on as an uncanny person ever after and avoided.

Some of the old people persisted in seeing and hearing and relating stories about ghosts or wraiths, dead lights, and warnings, and when their own stock failed them, told the more wonderful things the old folks before them had seen and heard. Though not at the above date generally believed, and scarcely credited by any, yet these stories, when well told, on a dark night, at the darkest season of the year, and by firelight only, if not edifying and instructive, had a weird charm about them that engaged the listeners' attention, "made them a' grue and their hair stan' on en'." Modern Spiritualists have apparently sought to revive these old beliefs with their accompaniments, but their doings are "stagey" compared to the real old article. Education thinned the thick web of superstition that covered the land, and railways may be said to have torn it to tatters. At least it is not the subject of conversation now. Steam, electricity, cycles, and motor cars monopolise the evening "cracks" and morning salutations of both old and young of this 20th century.

HOUSES.

The last thatched roofs, and dry-stone walls of the cottages disappeared under the regime of the Rogersons. The present proprietor has done a great deal in the way of rendering cottages and crofters' houses dry and

comfortable. The contrast in their interior to those of seventy years ago is very striking. Plenty of lime is also laid down, free, to whitewash the outside walls every summer. The next step is to put a few more feet on the walls to enlarge the attic bedrooms and thus afford better isolation in cases of infectious disease.

OLD BUILDINGS AND RUINS.

Girthhead is the oldest house in the parish. It was rebuilt in 1700, and is still used as a farmhouse. It was built by a Johnstone of the Annandale family, and would be counted a mansion in its early time. Around it and near there still grow some very fine large trees. The two manses, the parish and the Relief, are the next oldest buildings, both of which are a little over a hundred years; all the other buildings fall short of the hundred.

The small part of the wall at Wamphray Place, and the ruins of the hostelrie at the Bield, where "Charlie's men" got refreshments on their way south, and some stones lying on the site of old Kirkhill, are the only ruins remaining.

ANTIQUARIAN REMAINS.

These have been already mentioned: the Roman road, the two large, erect, unhewn stones; the fort on Dundoran, the site of the Roman camp near Broomhills, the supposed Druidical remains on Kirkhill heights, and the old stone over the belfry door, are all that remain. Antiquarian finds are few: a pair of silver-gilt spurs were found by the carters when removing the ruins of Wamphray Place. A more antique thing, a small bronze spearhead was found in a cairn about

eight feet high, in a field near Wamphraygate farm-house. Near by an initialed silver ring was found, said by antiquarians to be a mediæval betrothal ring. These are in the possession of Colonel Rogerson of Gillesbie. Several of the small circular mounds have been opened, but at their base only a thin layer of wood-ashes was found.

ODDS AND ENDS.

Events common to Wamphray with other parts of the country need not be detailed, such as the "dry summer" in 1824, the Burke and Hare scare, etc. The kirkyard was watched, stories were whispered but never verified. The watchers on duty are said to have scared timorous passers-by of the male persuasion as a variety to their gruesome duty.

POTATO FAILURE.

The potato failure in '46 was a great calamity. The brown spots began here and there on the field and spread like ringworms till they covered the whole crop. Where cartloads were expected, all that remained sound were wheeled home on a barrow.

THE MAKING OF THE CALEDONIAN RAILWAY.

It came at the "nick of time" and saved the country from a famine during the potato failure. Englishmen contracted for "lengths" through Wamphray. They employed English and Scotch workmen. There were a few old "roadsters" among the navvies, but the bulk of them were said to be Cumberland lads out to make a little money, who behaved well and were respected. There was a crowd at Wamphray station

on the first Lockerbie Lamb Fair-day after the railway opened for traffic. Some of the frolicsome fools climbed on to the roof of the carriages and sat or lay there. It was just a mercy for them that the carriages were low in those days, and bridges high enough to let them safely through.

BURNING THE WATER.

The Statistical Report of 1834 blames the Upper Annandale folk for that peculiar species of poaching called "burning the water." It was decidedly a wrong thing for them to do; but there is in it two qualities dear to the British constitution, namely, risk and sport.

Many stories are still told of "Carl," the bailiff, shouting while still a long way off, "A ken ye, ye needna rin," and the chases the poachers got from the bailiffs, and of the places they "denned" in for safety; even the pulpit is said to have afforded a safe haven on one occasion; and how the bailiffs were outwitted by being set to watch one man while his namesake was taking fish out of the water two miles up the river, and how the bailiffs outwitted the fishers who were "kangling" about "which was mine and which was thine" over the salmon they had landed on the bank, when the bailiffs stood up behind the bushes and said, "Neither of them's yours, they're baith oors."

With all the appearance of sport there is really none in it. Commonsense should tell everybody that killing fish at the wrong season cannot be considered genuine sport. The idle habits acquired by looking the water where the fish are to be found were put in a nutshell by the father who declared that "Oor John loses his meat seeking his kitchen."