

## GLENCOE CLUB.

For many years a club flourished in Perth, under this denomination. What was its origin is now difficult to ascertain; but so far as can be learned, it appears to have arisen with the natives of the Highlands, residing in Perth, who, in some manner, were related with the *Massacre of Glencoe*. For the last twenty years the club has been nearly extinct, and the name rarely mentioned, but by a few people familiar with their meetings. Their original object appears to have been of a commemorative nature; as they had no funds, neither was any advantage reaped by being a member. They had an annual meeting, and then dined together in an inn within their own district, which they reckoned to be between the Meak-vennel, and the High-street-port. At this meeting they elected their office-bearers, viz., a provost, dean of guild, bailies, treasurer, and councillors. The members were chiefly confined to men in business in that district, and when any of their number committed a breach of the rules, they were brought before the council; and although they were punished with neither bonds nor imprisonment, they were *bled* pretty freely in the purse, which was spent in the rendezvous. The last provost of any notoriety, was Mr David Peter, a spirit-dealer. Before his reign the chair was filled by Mr Wright (uncle to Provost Wright), whose happy humour qualified him to take the lead in any festival. During his reign the society attained the zenith of its glory; he was succeeded by King Davie, a nailer, who kept the public-house still known by the name of the *Glencoe Tavern*. After the deaths of these worthy citizens, the club greatly declined,—but since the Parliamentary Reform, it appears to have emerged from obscurity. When the Church of St Paul was built, one of the members of Glencoe, a home-spun poet, presented a petition to the Lord Provost and Council of Perth, for a bell on St Paul's Church, which was granted; and shows that Glencoe, at that time, was influential. The bell is rung every morning at a quarter before six; besides answering religious purposes. In that district there was another club kept up, with an annual feast, termed the *Willie Club*. This club was originally confined to individuals of the name of William; but, some years ago, it died a natural death. Many persons were admitted to it, whose only business was to chat over the days of langsyne, and keep up a personal kindly feeling for each other. Their dinner was held in Gunny Christie's Hammermen's inn, at that time famous for being a good house for travellers; but, as the old members died, the club failed entirely. Since the passing of the Reform bill, the fourth ward of the Burgh of Perth have again assumed the title of Glencoe. Among themselves they hold several convivial meetings. At all the elections of councillors for the

burgh, they have returned Reformers; and so linked are they, that no Tory need pretend to serve them, in burgh politics. They seem so connected together, as to form, although a part of the city, a community entirely disjoined from the other three-fourths of it, by habits and manners of thinking peculiarly their own.

## TURNPIKE ROADS.

Before the introduction of the turnpike act, the roads in the county were in a miserable state—indeed, inferior to the worst of our present statute labour roads. Many were mere hilly tracts, on which carriages could not venture, and totally unfit for foot passengers. From this cause business was necessarily retarded, and could only be carried on generally by pack horses. When a farmer sold his grain to a baker or a brewer in town, all his neighbour's horses were put in requisition, a sack with a boll of victual laid across each, and away they marched in troops to town. To have met a party of farmers, on their way home, after selling their stock, and getting a liberal allowance of ale, flying furiously along the narrow rugged road, where it was difficult to get out of the way, was extremely dangerous. Where carts could be used, two bolls of barley was a load, or four bolls of meal, and their progress only averaged about a mile and a half an hour. Generally the roads did not admit two carts to pass but at particular places; and so deep were the ruts that, it was impossible to get on without occasional assistance. In the winter season the mode of conveyance was doubly hazardous.—Horsemen fared little better. In the Carse of Gewrie, now so much famed, farmers rode with great caution, and selected their paths with much care. About 40 years ago, a proprietor near Errol who had recently come to Scotland, was riding quickly along the road then in use, which led to Perth, when he met a tenant of his own, and Mr Thomas Baird, sen., now of Bridgend, mounted, but walking slowly, whom he accosted thus, “Well, Clashbenie, you and your friend Baird seem afraid to ride;—but look at me, I'm not so.” They answered, “You do not know our roads yet, sir.” The laird, in an air of defiance rode briskly off; but presently they heard a cry, which, on turning round, proved to be the laird and his horse stuck fast in the centre of the road. Assistance was procured, the laird was dragged out in a well mudded uniform, and then his horse by means of ropes. Several of the old farmers in the county will, on the recital of this single incident, recall many similar. The mercantile gentlemen travelled on horseback; saddle horses were very numerous, gigs were not known; there were a few post chaises, but their progress was very slow. After the year 1775, a chaise with two horses was set

a-going between Perth and Edinburgh, styled the *Fly*. This conveyance set off from Perth the one day at seven in the morning, and reached Edinburgh at nine at night—and the day following started and returned at the same hours. This *Fly* to Edinburgh three times a week was considered not only very expeditious, but of great utility to the inhabitants, and the proprietor was loudly praised for his noble enterprise. At present, the Aberdeen Defiance reaches Perth from Edinburgh in four hours, just ten hours less time. Any repair the roads underwent was by statute labour, each farmer giving a certain number of men for so many days, who perhaps would have to travel ten miles to the place. The day's labour consisted in throwing bullets of unbroken stones gathered from the fields into the holes in the roads, and where stones could not be found, they were filled with earth out of the ditches, so that travelling even in a carriage was dreadfully fatiguing, from the jolting over the stones so carelessly laid, and sinking into holes. The line of the roads seem generally to have been little regarded, for the nearest cut was selected, however inconvenient; and we still see many of the old roads up one brae and down another. The old road to the Queensferry, and the Auchterarder road, are beautiful specimens of this kind. The mail, at the time we speak of, was a very simple machine. It consisted of a board above the axle of a pair of wheels, drawn by a single horse; the driver having the whole responsibility of the letters. The royal vehicle came from Edinburgh at first twice a week, then it came and went each alternate day. The letters were delivered by a woman, who went through the lieges at her own leisure on the second and third day after their arrival. The letters beyond Perth were subject to delay and insecurity. The carriers, on whom a great part of the business of the town devolved, were much respected, and many of them made large sums of money. Those between Edinburgh and Perth took a fortnight to go and return; and the charges for goods was in proportion to the accidents of the journey. Cases occurred where carriers were capsized several times before they reached their destination, often sustaining the loss of a horse, besides damaging the goods.

Parties to the country, to spend a day as now enjoyed, was in those times never dreamed of. Instead of a visit in a droaky, no family ever thought of leaving town, unless in cases of a domestic calamity. The mode of travelling was, for the most part, for the guidman and wife to ride together on horseback, and the family, if young, were placed into creels slung over another horse, whose halter occupied the hand of their mother, while the father managed the first.

## PERTH FAIRS.

Wednesday and Friday are the ordinary weekly market days. The *butter market* was anciently held on the pavement on the south-side of the High street, above the Kirk-gate, but the merchants found it to be a nuisance, which shut up their doors. On a complaint from them about thirty years ago, it was confined to the High-street, below the Watergate; but since that time a convenient market at the west-end of the Flesh-market has been erected, with stalls and benches for the use of the country people and retailers, where it is now held. A great number of carriers come from all quarters on the Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

The first fair in the year held at Perth, is the first *Friday before Old Handsel Monday*. This fair used to be termed the "leg and the loaf day," and the "hen and the heap day," which arose from the circumstance of the wives of many of the small farmers and cottars bringing in their yarn and hens for sale, and purchasing a leg of mutton and a large loaf to celebrate Handsel Monday with. The bakers had always very large loaves provided for this day's sale. A man could always find a loaf suitable to his family, however large it might be. Peck loaves, and two peck loaves, butcher meat, &c., were carried home for Monday's feast, although for the next twelve months not a bit of flesh was seen by their families. Strange as this may appear, it was in many instances the case: they had their bit of land, which yielded meal and lint; their cow kept them in milk; and with the produce of their garden, they made a shift to get through the year without the luxury of butcher meat. Since the cottars and small farmers have decreased in the country, the market has fallen off, and their small eans of butter, cheeses, &c., have been converted into large kits and substantial cheeses, which come to St. John's-day market.

*The First of Luhe market*, or, as some will have it, "the first hail ouke of March," was held on the 10th of March. If it happened on a Saturday or Sunday, it was held on the first succeeding Tuesday; but it is now held on the first Friday, and is frequented by dealers from all quarters. In this market horses are to be found, from the small Shetland pony to the heaviest draught, or the finest riding horse: there is also a good cattle market, at which a fine show is usually on the ground.—About the middle of last century the cattle markets were held in the Gallows Park on the Burgh Muir. A guard of the burghesses armed with Lochaber axes, under a captain, were marched out to keep the

peace ; but the distance having been found inconvenient for transacting other business in Perth, the market was shifted to the North Inch. Of late years, all the cattle markets are held on that part of the South Inch where Cromwell's fort stood. This fair still retains the same features it was wont to have. The horse market is now held in the South-street of Perth—and the show generally extends on both sides of it, from the Jail up to Methven-street.

*The Sand market* for cattle were held on the Shore every Friday in May, old style ; but in lieu of these markets, a weekly cattle market has been established throughout the year on the Inch.

*Midsummer market*, the greatest of all the fairs, in ancient times continued for a fortnight. It was long held on the 5th of July, or the first Tuesday after, but it is now held on the first Friday of the month. It has a great horse and cattle market. Before hand labour was superseded by the thrashing machine, the farmers had more men and women about them than at present, all of whom claimed Midsummer fair and Old Handsel Monday as their own peculiar holidays, which is still conceded to them. This fair was anciently the feeing time ; but fee or not fee, they make a point of attending it, and do so in such numbers that it is a complete squeeze to get along the streets. The country, fifty years ago, was full of chapmen, who travelled on horseback with large packs and lodged at farm-houses. They were generally well received and lodged for their packet of news, which they always had ready to vend with their wares. It was no uncommon thing for orphan boys to be set adrift in the country with a small box of needles, pins, laces, &c., and a few ballads, and afterwards succeeding in acquiring a horse, as well as a good and valuable pack. Midsummer fair was for these persons a central point, where they annually assembled. As a body, they were not only intelligent but wealthy—and formed themselves into an association, directed by a presee, who was styled "my lord." It was by this class of men that the cloth shops in Perth used to be occupied ; the summit of their ambition was to fill a shop ; and many of the fortunes of our most respectable merchants originated in the profits of the pack. They appeared in such numbers at the fairs, as literally to fill the High-street from the Kirkgate to the Guard-vennel, with a double row of stalls, covered with blankets. An awning extended in front about four feet, and the back of the stalls was furnished with shelves for their goods. Towards the afternoon the lasses collected in parties on the street, or ranged themselves in front of the chapmen's booths, waiting anxiously the arrival of their joes, to give them their fairing. Towards evening they again made their appearance, and not unfrequently battles between the coun-

try and town lads was the consequence ; when a general uproar was the result ; to the benefit of pickpockets and such like gentry, the non-conservators of peace and justice. On the following day, which was kept as a part of the fair, the packmen held their meeting for the election of their preses and other office-bearers. On this occasion they had races on the South Inch of a singular description. A gallows was erected, with a ring placed on the cross-beam, through which each rode at full speed with a rod in his hand ; and the man who could carry off the ring on his rod gained the prize. Afterwards a small barrel inclosing a cat and a quantity of soot, was hung up. Again they rode through, giving the barrel a stroke ; and the man that broke the barrel and let out the cat (by which he received a plentiful shower of soot about his ears,) gained the prize. The poor cat was then tossed about amongst the mob, which put an end to its future usefulness. Its remains afforded rude sport to the youths ; and whoever happened to be present at this period of the amusement, met with rough usage. Among the last of these meetings, a respectable citizen's wife was present, whose offspring bears a very legible testimony of the existance of this old usage. She happened to be at the time *enciente*, and was struck on the side with the cat ; the child bears to this day, a vivid mark of the cat on her side.

*St John's Day*, formerly the 9th, is now kept on the 1st Friday of September. It consists of a horse and cattle market. In the horse market frequently 1000 horses are for sale ; the cattle market presents also a great show. Formerly, a great plaiding market was held the day previous ; when the fair happened on Tuesday, the plaiding market was held on Monday morning. On such occasions, the Sabbath evening presented numerous bands from the Highlands, with their small ponies loaded with plaiding and blankets, coming into town. Great quantities of wool were also brought in. St John's market is regarded among the inhabitants principally for butter and cheese, the sale of which has so increased within the last forty years, that the carts now occupy the High-street below the Watergate. George-street, on both sides, as far as the bridge, and part of Charlotte-street. There has of late been upwards of 240 carts of dairy produce sold on one day. A good deal of business was done at one time in bleached linen ; the spinning and weaving of which afforded occupation to many families in the country. By these sales a great part of their rents were paid. Another article was oak spokes, from the Highlands, for cart wheels ; these generally met a ready sale. At this market, the streets and inches were long pestered with slight-of-hand gentry. De'el boxes, wheels of fortune, clubs and garters, pins and thimbles, ginger-bread, pins, and swindlers of that

stamp ; but, some years ago, when Robert Ross, Esq. of Oakbank, held the office of Lord Provost, he declared war against all these unamiable-looking gentry. Wherever he met them, he upset their tables, kicked away their pins, and persevered until they became afraid of his magisterial authority. Now, few of these public pests are to be seen at the fair. At this market, sheep were annually bargained for—being near to the season when flocks were brought from the Highlands, and bought up by the Perth butchers, who kept them on the inches until they were required. Since feeding with turnips has been introduced by graziers, another system of purchasing sheep has been adopted. These Highland sheep were much smaller in size than they now are ; 8lb. the quarter was thought very large ; they generally averaged barely 6lb. a quarter. The meat of the Highland sheep was remarkably sweet, and sold here from a shilling to eighteen-pence a quarter.

*Little Dunning market*, held on the 20th of October, is now kept on the 3d Friday of that month. It is also a great butter and cheese market ; frequently, there is as much of these articles at this, as at St John's Fair. In 1834, there was 230 carts in the market. This fair is now established for hiring or feeling farm-servants, instead of Mid-summer ; which brings a great attendance of men and women, who assemble principally between the Watergate and the Skinnergate, where they are fee'd. Of late years, several young men have fee'd to several masters, with no intention to enter their services,—spending their aerls, in dissipation. This unprincipled procedure has, in a number of instances, proved hurtful to the farmers ; a stop has however been put to it by Sheriff Barclay, and farmers are now more on their guard. Formerly, great quantities of flax were brought to this market. Farmers were then in the practice of keeping a number of maids, principally with a view to spinning—the produce of their labour forming the chief source from whence the rent was made up : a farmer's kitchen exhibiting in the long winter evenings much of the bustle of a little manufactory : three or four maids spinning ; the mistress of the house reeling their yarn ; and the master, men-servants, and herd boys, assiduously employing their vacant time in knitting mits and hose, or occupied in repairing the horse gear,—while the whole party were edified by the interesting horrors of a ghost story. Owing to great changes in the management on rural affairs, and the unwearied efforts of the giant steam having banished the cheery thrifty wheel from the ingle side, little flax is now raised in the country. *Little Dunning cattle market* is well attended. This fair, and some others in the country round, was frequented by people to buy their winter marts, a practice that long prevailed here. Many who were not able to purchase entirely, joined toge-

her, to have one amongst them. This so raised prices, that little fresh beef was to be had through the winters, except that of milk cows, fed by the cow-feeders in town, which were very poorly kept. Since the stall-feeding of cattle has become general, the salting of winter beef has fallen into disuse. Numerous flocks of goats were formerly brought from the Highlands to this market; their flesh was much esteemed for hams, but since planting has become so general, they have been banished from many quarters: their skins were at one time much used for soldiers' knapsacks, dressed with the hair on.

*Andersmass Horse and Cattle market*, held on the 11th of December, is always well attended. There is generally also a good supply of butter, cheese, &c. Formerly large droves of small Highland swine were driven to this fair; but this small kind have entirely disappeared. The day after this fair, and the day after Mid-summer, are the terms on which the house rents in Perth are paid. At Andersmass, the houses are given up or are taken by tenants, for another year. The term for removing is Whitsunday.

*Palm-sunday- eve market* is held the first Friday of April. The chief business done at this fair is in barley, and grass seeds. Formerly a great deal was done in lintseed. It is also a cattle, but not a horse, market.

At these fairs, and on the weekly markets, the coopers bring out their different articles, and expose them on the High-street, between the council-house and George-street. This branch of business has, however, declined since the introduction of tinplate articles. The cap market has also declined from the earthenware being so reasonable in price.— There is still, however, one or two stands with wooden dishes and riddles, situated on the north side of the High-street, between George-street and the Skinno-gate. A great number of nailers used to come to the fairs from Pathhead, with cart-loads of nails; these, however, have entirely disappeared. A great number of country shoemakers used to attend the shoe market, in the South-street. There are, however, very few who do now attend it.

*Wool Market*.—Last year, 1835, the Magistrates of Perth established a market for wool. The samples, which were single fleeces, were exposed in the council-room, and the sales were extensive and satisfactory to the sellers. At four o'clock, the wool-staplers and sellers dined in the Salutation inn, where a great deal of business was done. This market in future is to be held a week after the Inverness wool market, which takes place in the month of July each year. The samples of wool in future,



are not to be confined to one fleece of each kind merely, but to three fleeces of wool. Although the notice announcing this market was limited, a great number of wealthy wool-staplers attended, and every support has been provided, to establish it successfully. The establishment of this market is due to John Richardson, Esq. of Pitfour, a young gentleman, who, for several years back, has exerted himself to promote the prosperity of the City of Perth.

#### BAD SEASONS.

Perth is generally esteemed a healthy place. From the improved state of the country around, as well as from the excellent police of the town, much has been added to the health and comfort of the inhabitants. There is nothing more conspicuous than the change that has taken place since the country has been relieved of heavy woods, for well drained lands.— The winters have been nothing in severity or duration to what they were formerly. The ravages of the Tay on the breaking up of an intense frost, are now but seldom heard of; nor are the labours of the poor retarded by storms. This change is most gratifying; and still more so when contrasted with years of famine that have gone by, during which the industrious poor suffered so severely.

The year 1740 was long memorable for the length of its severe winter, and still more severe dearth, or famine. Its severity I shall represent by reference to cases, from which the reader may estimate the extent of the calamity in this, as well as succeeding years which I shall notice.

An old man in Perth who had a family, gave a pitiful description of the state of the inhabitants in Perthshire. The frost set in with the greatest severity very early in the season, binding the earth to a great depth, which happened to be very wet at the time. A strong north-east wind then set in, with a heavy fall of snow, which continued for four successive days. The river Tay was frozen almost to the bottom; horses and carts passed over it freely, without creating a crack; and an ox was roasted on the river which was sold for one shilling per pound. The spring came on, but no thaw. The snow gradually gave way; but still the season advanced without heat to relieve the ground. The frozen clods were ploughed down, and the seed committed to the ground in this state. The summer continued cold and bleak in the extreme, with little sunshine. The harvest passed in the same cheerless way; the little of the seed which sprung up was very poor both in grain and straw. The supply of food for man and beast became extremely scarce, and sold at extravagant prices. The importation of grain from foreign quarters was then unknown to the general body of the people, and the national feelings at this time

prevented measures from being concerted to alleviate the common distress. In England distress was partially felt. In Perthshire there was no potatoes, and little or no wheat; butcher meat could be had, but so poor as to be little better than carrion. To this food in many places not a bit of bread could be obtained. In some districts in the Highlands, families lived for months on the flesh of their sheep, without tasting bread or meal. The distress was not confined to man alone. The beasts in the field were driven by destitution to the nearest dwelling houses; their natures were subdued into tameness, and many died from starvation—which the poor assiduously searched for in the mornings. The same old man who described the horrors of this year, gave an instance of brute suffering which occurred in his house, then infested with rats, although not before that year. He had a loom in the one end of his house, at which he constantly wrought. When his wife dished up the kail to cool in the cogue, they were set on the lid of a chest beside him, (for they had neither table nor plates to sup from,) and he had to keep his ellwand at hand to drive away the rats. The continuance of the severe weather increased their boldness; and latterly they became so familiar with him as to wait for a portion of his cheer. When the season became friendly, to use the old man's words, "the brutes flitted frae me!"

The succeeding severe winter laid aside almost every description of labour. Spring brought again the same bleak chilly easterly weather. During its continuance, the frozen clods formerly ploughed down were now turned up in the same state: any seed they had preserved was of such a doubtful quality, that little hope was entertained that it would spring at all. It was, however, sown; and when it did spring, the description my informant gave of it was, "that he could lie down in a field and not hurt a stalk of it." About the beginning of June, a thorough thaw commenced; the wind came round to the west; the sun shone forth in all his splendour; the weather became all at once exceedingly warm, with genial showers, which made the seed to spring up, as if by miracle, which yielded a crop more favourable than the farmers anticipated, from the previous general appearance of the thin corn fields.

Since 1740, we have been frequently visited with bad harvests by which the poor suffered most severely. The year 1782 was remarkable for the "saawie" harvest, which prevented the corn from ripening. The meal was dear and scarce, besides being of a very bad quality. Potatoes were then raised to some extent, but the growers had not the method of preserving them through the winter. Indeed, they were deemed unfit for use after the new year. During the succeeding spring and summer, meal was hardly to be got for money. When a small supply came to

Perth, the people assembled in multitudes, which rendered it dangerous for old or weakly people to attempt to get any of it. When meal could not be procured, Provost Ramsay obtained from England a number of cargoes of white pease, which he made into meal. This at the time was a great blessing to many families.

The harvest of 1791 was extremely wet, attended with direful consequences. After harvest was commenced, a constant rain set in; for three weeks the shearers never attempted to cut a stalk: as they were at that time all hired for the harvest, they became a heavy burden on the farmers. The grain was got lodged; part of it rotten, and part was put in the stack damp which heated. To have seen the corn-yards, one would have thought they were on fire, from the great smoke they sent forth. To have seen them from a hill, they resembled so many smothered fires here and there. The meal this season was very bad in quality; it was red as iron rust—with so little substance that, however full the stomach was after a meal, a person in the course of an hour became as hungry as if he had fasted for a whole day. This was not all, it introduced severe fluxes and fevers, which spread extensively, especially among the poor, who suffered severely. The horses and cattle, from the great scarcity of food, became weak. In the spring, many of the horses had to be lifted up in the mornings; so general was this, that the small farmers went from farm to farm to help their neighbours to perform this office.

Of the seasons that have been remarkable for dearths and consequent distress, "the dear years," as they are significantly termed, exceeded them all. They pressed heavily on all classes of society; and while they are painful to reflect on, they were no less remarkable for the revolution they brought about in the whole system of agriculture, as well as the immense rise in the price of every article necessary for existence. After the breaking out of the French Revolution, Mr Pitt, then Prime Minister of this country, formed the idea of starving the French nation into his terms. In this, however, he failed; a policy which, in course of time, reverted upon our own heads; for the whole of the ports on the Continent came to be under the controul of the French, who caused them in turn to be shut against us, so that no supply could be had from that quarter, even had they been able to give it.

In 1800, the spring set in with a cold easterly wind; the usual seed time continued cold and wet throughout, strong frosts at night with a bleak and barren sky, accompanied with frequent snow blasts through the day; created general alarm. The summer continued cold and barren; and

when the harvest came round it was found that corn, wheat, barley, pease and beans, and potatoes, were each deficient in quantity and quality, to an great extent; when the grain came to be thrashed, the worst fears were realized. The produce was small; what was of it was little better than dust, without nourishment either for man or beast. Out of sixteen bolls of corn sent to the mill, only two bolls of meal of the proper quality was got. A general and unprecedented rise in price took place in grain, butter, cheese, milk, hay, and straw; this was aggravated by a heavy reduction in the wages of the manufacturing classes, along with a very great difficulty of finding work at mere nominal wages. When the labouring classes did procure money, a difficulty arose as to what provisions for their family could be had for the amount. The condition of the poor at this time was heart-rending: many of whom existed on diets of the humblest kind; which merely sustained life.

The spring of next year set in still more inauspicious, with a cold barren drought, accompanied by furious gales from the north and north-east, that raised the soil from the fields in clouds of dust: vegetation was completely checked. The summer came with great heat and drought, which withered every blade of grass, garden stuffs, &c. The seed that had been sown in the spring was of such poor quality, that little of it germinated, and that little was completely scorched. The general distress now became extreme. Even the Continental States felt its horrors. From America little supply could be obtained. Indian corn meal was the only thing that could be procured: at first it was very ill relished, but dire necessity reconciled people to it. As this supply was soon exhausted, nothing was to be had but flour bread—which in turn was also limited. The diets of a family were measured out to each individual, in quantities which only provoked the appetite it was meant to appease. Even where there were no children to provide for, food and flour were hoarded with the most rigid care, and in many cases refused to the most needy families. At this time the penny loaf weighed  $2\frac{1}{2}$  ounces; the quartern loaf sold for twenty-pence—sometimes it could not be had for money. It was quite common for the bakers to shut their shops by noon, when their bread was sold, to avoid the distressing impertunity of the poor. Besides the difficulty of procuring grain, there was a great scarcity of water generally felt. Almost all the country mills were dried up; even the mills in Perth were inactive, and with difficulty the water wheel could be made to revolve: the millers' exertions were utterly insufficient to meet the loud demands. Carts were arriving daily from Dunkeld, Crieff, Auchterarder, and other towns in the county, to get a small supply of bread or meal of any kind. Even on Sabbaths their arrivals were

frequent, and their case so urgent, that bread had to be baked for them in violation of the Fourth Commandment. It was often with great reluctance that these carts were allowed to depart. To obtain food, many of the labouring classes had to sell their furniture; and the poorer of them were reduced to the necessity of disposing of their bedding and blankets, and many articles of use, to keep their families in existence. Poor old men and women were often seen searching the dunghills, picking out bones and remnants of vegetables, to boil into soup. During the calamity, a number of people at the west-end of the town, on hearing that a cow-feeder had lost a cow by some disorder, the carcase of which, after being skinned, was thrown into the Clayholes, assembled in bodies, and with creepers dragged out the carcase, on which they fell with all the eagerness of cannibals; tearing it to pieces, each struggling for a bit, as if it had been the finest of food.

Farmers and cow-feeders at this period were reduced to the greatest difficulty in keeping their cattle alive. Fields of whins were let as high as £12 an acre, and readily taken. The cutting and thrashing them gave temporary employment to many poor villagers, which afforded them and their families some little relief.

From the great pressure on all classes of the community, and painful cries of want and distress, the Legislature was induced to pass an act prohibiting the making of any flour finer than just taking the coarse bran from it. In all genteel families it urged each person to be restricted to a loaf per week. This act was complied with; and the baking of pastry, confectionaries, &c. entirely given up. So strictly was this observed among the nobility, that I may just give an anecdote in proof of it. The Hero of Camperdown, with his daughter, happened to stop at the George Inn of Perth at this time. At dinner, some pastry was brought forward, to which his daughter asked permission to help him. The Earl smartly lifted it from before her, in presence of the waiter, saying, "it was shameful to indulge in any dish of the kind, whilst thousands could not procure a morsel." His daughter, like a woman of sense, begged forgiveness for the unintentional offence, as it arose from no motive of selfishness.

Liberal subscriptions were made to procure grain, for sale, at reduced prices to the poor. In this quarter they were attended with the happiest results. Besides these, a public kitchen was established, which provided to applicants one meal a day, made from cattle's heads, houghs, and pieces of beef, boiled down with plenty of barley and pease. Every day the making of the broth was superintended by a part of the committee of management. It was not uncommon to see the Lord Provost, or a rever-

end gentleman, standing over the boilers and handing out the broth to the numerous attendants. Their number was very great, and embraced many worthy people who had seen better days. As they generally assembled before the time for distributing the soup, each as they arrived stood in succession and formed a line which extended from the centre of John-street, where the kitchen was, as far up as the Meal-vennel, advancing in single file with their flaggons. With the soup each got a small loaf at a reduced price. Notwithstanding this benevolent measure, there were many industrious families, who from false delicacy, declined coming forward to share in it. Many of them were days without breaking their fast; sometimes they had but one meal a day, such as it was. Many instances occurred of labourers in the fields who fell into the furrows they were digging, through weakness from want of food; and were only protected from premature death, by the anxious attentions of their families, who watched their hours for return.

Of the many instances of family suffering, a record of one will suffice:—There was a decent citizen in the west-end of the town, with a large family; the little he could procure by labour went but a short way amongst them. He had struggled industriously day after day, and asked credit in every quarter, in the hope that times would shortly come round when he could discharge it. Here he was disappointed: those who had anything to sell saw the utter impossibility of getting payment: and thus every door was closed. Distress entered the family; the whole of them, with the exception of himself, were confined to bed. From hard labour in the day, and the want of rest at night, he also became unfit for much exertion. One Saturday morning, the last morsel he could command was consumed by the members of this sick family. Every exertion through the day to get a supply failed; at night he became mentally distressed, for Sabbath was approaching, without a morsel for their sick pillows. Wearied thinking on every shift, he resolved to commit himself to Providence, who alone could relieve them—conscious that he had done all he could honestly do. In this frame of mind he went to the bedsides of his family, and prayed fervently for them all. On the Sabbath morning he was aroused by a rapping at the door, which on opening he found to be a sister of his wife's, a farm servant, who had come ten miles with a supply of meal, meat, butter, and cheese, which her mistress had given her for their use. This happy relief was acknowledged by prayer. It appeared that, on the Saturday evening, a poor woman from Perth called at the farm-house, who, in the course of conversation, gave an account of the state of the family, which caused her mistress to dispatch the welcome messenger early in the morning to relieve their necessities.

In the midst of all this calamity, his Grace John Duke of Athole, with his usual kindness and attention to the county, bought up a magazine of corn which the government had laid up in London, for some intended expedition that did not take place. This supply he bought at 45 shillings per boll, which amounted to £30,000. His Grace caused it to be forwarded with all speed, with orders to give every parish a portion corresponding to its extent, at PRIME COST, after allotting a quantity for seed. This proved a signal blessing in both ways, as the farmers had very little grain fit for seed. When this seed was sown it was easily distinguished from any other species of the same grain. Much though his Grace did, ignorant people raised a cry against him, because he did not sell the corn far below prime cost. They openly alleged that he was enriching himself at the expense of the people. Many other injurious statements were made against him, which only established his Grace's character for benevolence among the intelligent part of the community.

The harvest of 1802 proved disastrous in the extreme. The failure of the crops had again been general all over the Continent, and the political feeling of the warlike Powers towards Britain, rendered it impossible to procure any supplies from that quarter. Oatmeal in Perth, when it could be had at all, sold from 3s. 4d., to 3s. 6d. per peck; even at that price the inhabitants had to undergo a squeeze for an hour or two, before half-a-peck could be got from the dealers, who were prohibited from selling more to one family. Frequently the quality was so bad, that nothing but dire necessity caused it to be used. Many families were reduced, through the winter, to the necessity of steeping the coarsest bran and barley, and made the pourings into a kind of sowans. In spring, their situation became deplorable. Subscriptions were raised to supply the poor with meal at reduced prices, which did much good. As labour was difficult to be had, money of course was not much in circulation among the poor, who felt this season the more acutely, from their clothes being reduced by wear, and having no funds to replace them. In addition to hunger, they had to endure cold. They conducted themselves, however, with great fortitude under their severe privations.

The spring of the year 1803 set in with the same dreary aspect; again the cold and barren north and east winds continued to blow in heavy gales, that withered every green blade. The prospect was appalling in the early part of the summer: there was neither dew nor rain.—The heavens had become as bright as brass, and the earth as hard as iron. Gloom filled every countenance, and the only topic of conversation was the appearance of the crops, and probable change of weather. What had

briared in the fields was sickly, and gave no promise. The Mid-summer market of that year set in fair and clear. Towards noon a small cloud appeared, which soon spread into extreme darkness. In a few minutes lightning flashed with astonishing rapidity in one quarter of the heavens; and in another, balls of fire were seen rolling along, zig, zag, like forked lightning, which, darting through the darkness, produced a terrifically grand effect. This was succeeded by tremendous peals of thunder; and rain fell in torrents. In a moment, the crowded scenery of the fair vanished as if by magic; the streets that had, a few moments before, been impassable by crowds, were left without a single individual. Never did any person witness such a torrent; its continuance, general extent, and vivifying effect, produced what was most anxiously looked for. This was succeeded by general warmth, which produced a most luxuriant crop. Past miseries were forgotten, amidst the anticipation of abundance. The change of weather was the theme of joy everywhere, which was enhanced by the sudden and unexpected news of peace with our enemies abroad. However high provisions were before this, the prices experienced a sudden change: meal fell from 3s. 6d., to 2s. 4d. a peck, and other provisions in a corresponding ratio. Families that had money ran and bought up a year's supply, at the current price, thinking that past experience justified such prudential conduct. In a few weeks thereafter, meal sold at a shilling a peck.

These "dear years" produced a wonderful revolution in the agricultural and mercantile world, entirely changing the state of society. Before this period, the rent of land was very low, and an industrious farmer had no difficulty in making money; land afterwards, however, rose in value. Various theories were advanced at the time, for this change; but the one most currently believed in, was, that entails imposed many restrictions upon land proprietors in Scotland, as well as in England. To secure their consent to measures then going on in Parliament, for meeting an expensive war, a proposal was made, that no corn should be introduced into Britain under a specific price. This policy forced the waste lands into cultivation, and enhanced the rentals throughout Britain. It also provided the means of sustenance to our kingdom, should the world declare war against us, as it had done before. Whether this is the correct theory or not, it was generally believed, and met with a great many supporters. It may, however, be stated, that land in this county, rose in value nearly one hundred per cent.; but while land was thus fictitiously raised, a like fictitious value was not added to all our other industrial branches of wealth.



The uncommon circumstances in which the country was placed, by the breaking out of the war again, tended to keep up, rather than diminish the rent of land. Every salary under government was augmented; the pay of the army was doubled; high bounties were offered mechanics in most of the branches of trade for home consumption. They got wages in proportion to the rise in the price of provisions; whilst many other branches in the manufacturing line suffered a heavy reduction, which placed the workmen in a miserable situation. Speculations in land and in farming were, however, carried to an unprecedented extent; rents were increased three fold. Farms were let by public auction, and so high did the bidders go on these occasions, that one gentleman, astonished at the advance offered for a farm he was letting in this way, called out to the company to remember he was only letting the land, not selling it!—Merchants and others, who had saved a little money, became farmers. When the new leases of the farms in the Muirton were drawn out, there was a clause in the lease, that if the lands around the North Inch should be feued out, the tenant was to have a reduction of L.5 an acre, for what was taken from him. To the proprietor's astonishment, the bidding went about L.8 an acre above that rate; these farms were formerly let on an old lease below L.1 an acre. The pendiclers speedily disappeared in every quarter. Farm was added to farm, until, in many parts of the county, whole parishes were in a few hands, and the population thrown into the towns and villages.

The farm servants, who formerly resided in the house with their master, and formed part of the family, were now turned into comfortable sheds or bothies, where they slept, and prepared their humble diet: the extensive wealthy farmer not brooking the idea of living in the same house with his servants. The family meals were commuted for a certain allowance of meal and milk, and upon this food, with the occasional luxury of potatoes, on which the Scottish peasant may be now said almost exclusively to live. It was formerly the pride of Scotland, that her peasantry were the most independent and intelligent in the world; but the degrading bothie system, with its concomitants of severe labour, mean living, and promiscuous intercourse, has operated with terrible effect in prostrating those feelings of independence, and even in subverting their intellectual superiority. This system also deeply affected the servants in their matrimonial alliances. For as farmers in these parts had cot houses, a servant had generally to retire, when he got married, to the nearest village, or become a labourer at the outskirts of some populous town.

In 1810, the effects of the war proved highly disastrous to the Perth manufacturers. The town also suffered during the calamities of 1819, arising principally from a number of speculators of no capital, who carried on for a time with great success. To keep moving, many had to sell by means of agents on commission, thus forcing off goods in every state of the market. These gentry, the moment they had a lot of their fabrics ready, sent them off to their agents, and drew to a certain extent, at three months' date. By the time it came due, the agent took care to have the goods disposed of at any rate, to honour his acceptance; in this way the funds of the needy manufacturer, or rather of his creditors, melted with a rapidity inconceivable to those unacquainted with this accommodation system. In a short time many of these manufacturers had to compound their debts with one shilling per pound. At this time the whole kingdom was involved in the deepest distress: heavy failures were daily taking place in every quarter, to an enormous amount; every post brought the news of some insolvent or bankrupt house, by which one or other of the Perth citizens were involved. The banks drew in their discounts, and confidence seemed to be at an end. Manufacturers reduced the wages of the weaver, again and again, so very low, that it was impossible for a man, with the utmost diligence, to procure even the coarsest fare for his family; and eventually employment, even at a nominal rate, could not be had.

In the West country, the distress had become so heavy and general, that dissatisfaction against the government became almost universal. Although the legislature could not controul commercial transactions, yet the weavers believed that it was entirely to blame; open resistance took place, which ended with the loss of lives, and other serious consequences to those concerned. Fortunately, in Perth a different course was pursued: a general meeting of the weavers was called, at which George Penny, now of the Strathmore Journal office, was chosen preses. He accepted of the chair, on the express condition that no politics were to be introduced; if they were, he was invested with power to dissolve the meeting. This was adopted, and rigidly observed through all their subsequent proceedings. This prudential step was a dreadful disappointment to a party who had come prepared with a set of resolutions, which they intended should be set forth. Instead of these, a respectful memorial was drawn up, one of which was sent to the Lord Lieutenant of the county, the other to the Lord Provost of Perth, both stating their situation, and praying that means might be devised for finding employment to hundreds of families, entirely destitute. It is but justice to the memory of his Grace John Duke of Athole, to state, that he in-

stantly laid the memorial before Provost Morrison, both of whom gave instant attention to the subject. A general meeting was convened of the county gentlemen, in which A. M. H. Belshes, Esq. of Invermay took an active hand, and got a subscription commenced. The Duke put down L.100; the City of Perth L.100; the Earl of Kinnoull L.100.—Many of the other noblemen and gentlemen belonging to the county, and the city, came liberally forward. A fund of upwards of L.2000 was soon placed under the management of a committee, to find out-door employment. Under this committee there were soon about a thousand persons employed. In the Muirhall quarry, which Mr Richardson of Pitfour kindly gave for the time, some were engaged breaking stones; others trenching ground, in the neighbourhood. Another difficulty started,—the men being turned off the loom, hundreds of women, who subsisted by winding yarn, and draw-boys, became also destitute. The women were directed to turn their attention to spinning; but here they had another obstacle to encounter, the spinning-wheels had all been converted into winding ones, and the committee found themselves under the necessity of repairing them. This cost L.160. The price given for spinning was so much reduced, that the committee added 3d. to each spindle. In no instance, except in desperate cases, was any relief given without labour. This system of compelling all to work was an excellent preventive of disaffected meetings, then spreading fast in the west.

The winter of this year set in very early; the labourers' situation in consequence was truly deplorable. Any little clothing they had was ill suited to stand the winter blast, particularly those who had been accustomed to labour within doors. Besides weavers, relieved by this subscription, many other classes applied to the committee for work during the winter. The clothing of the majority of the labourers was deplorable: frequently were the poor men seen at Muirhall, on the top of the hill, standing with hardly the vestige of a sole on their shoes, amongst the snow, exposed to the keen north wind; with only a few cold potatoes and a little salt to their breakfast, which sustained them until they went home at night. The weather at last became so severe, that all labour was at a stand. In one week, L.160 in money, and about 30 bolls of meal, was given for their support. This state of things, more or less distressing, continued from August to April, when the funds were exhausted. During this severe privation, the individuals submitted with uncommon resignation. Whilst other towns were running riot, with insurrectionary movements, all was quiet and orderly here. Twice a week, a small supply of meal was issued, according to the numbers in the family; and to shew the general dread that was in the country, of insurrection,

One trifling circumstance may be here related. When the meal was to be given out to them, the men all assembled at Penny's house, (who had been appointed to superintend its distribution,) to receive tickets and directions to go in squads to certain dealers, to receive their allowances. One evening after dark, as the whole bodies were moving from his house to their respective places, they were met on the way by some gentlemen from the country, who were not aware of their object, and became extremely alarmed. They set off to the Procurator Fiscal, whom they found dining out. On entering the room where he was, they exclaimed, "The Radicals are up in immense bodies, and there will certainly be mischief to-night in town." The Fiscal asked in what direction they were going? On being told, he laughed heartily, and replied, "They are Penny's Radicals; as fine a body as ever was in Perth, and too well drill'd to create alarm." The gentlemen seemed not quite satisfied. The Fiscal then stated, "that the *bodies* they saw were too grateful to be dissatisfied, and it was beyond his province to prevent them from going to their meal ginals."

Notwithstanding the general good behaviour of these men, on this, as well as on other occasions, there were a few idle, discontented, and worthless people always eager to stir up mischief. Of these a few were formerly leaders of political movements, who endeavoured to assume an ascendancy over the rest. They formed a secret committee among themselves, with a view to controul the whole, and regulate the hours and price of labour. One day, when Penny went out to Lethendy, where the whole body was then employed, he was met by this party, with one of the overseers on their shoulders, on their way to leave him into a deep pond, because he would not concede to their views. Next day, when on the way out, he found about two hundred of them on their way again to intercept him. For this purpose, they formed into a body across the public road, and would have him to read a communication which they had induced some gentlemen to sign, directed to their committee; to which he replied, he could not recognize any gentlemen but the committee under whom he acted, and then forced his way through them. On this they moved away past him, but they formed again in a more determined manner, without offering any violence, when he again broke through them. He had not, however, gone far, when one of their leaders came up in front of him, with a stone in each of his hands, and in a menacing and brutal manner, ordered him to stop or he would knock his brains out. Without a moment's hesitation, he replied, that "no man would stop him on the King's highway;" and on this gave the bold intruder a push backward, that made him stumble and fall. Penny

then walked on, and left the crowd a little astonished, and the majority heartily ashamed of their conduct. These unruly spirits were immediately removed from the rest, and perfect order restored. Had efficient means not been used at this first bursting out of their insubordinate plans, the labours of the committee of management would have been rendered useless, and the well disposed molested in their honest endeavours in behalf of their families.

Since the year 1819, there has been some other seasons of severe pressure in the mercantile world, in which Perth suffered severely. Among these, we may class the memorable Joint Stock Companies, or Bubbles, as they were called, which produced many heavy failures.

Before concluding this chapter, it is proper to state, that the distresses of 1740 obliged the Town Council of Perth to commission 600 quarters of pease and 200 quarters of oats from England. L.800 was borrowed from the old Bank to pay the same. They also commissioned from London L150 sterling of halfpence, and L.50 sterling of farthings;—specie being then very scarce.