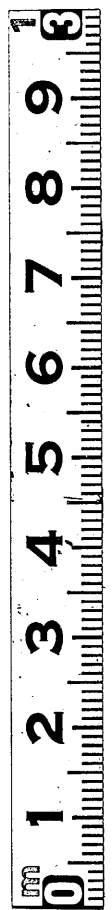


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CONSIDERATIONS
 ON THE
 FISHERIES
 IN THE
 SCOTCH ISLANDS:
 TO WHICH IS PREFIXED
 A GENERAL ACCOUNT

ELUCIDATING THE
 History, Soil, Productions, Curiofities, &c. of the
 fame, the Manners of the Inhabitants, &c.

By JAMES FEA,

Surgeon in the Royal Navy, and a native of the ORKNIES.

Piscis hic non est omnium.

LONDON:

Printed for the AUTHOR at DOVER.

MDCCLXXVII.

INTRODUCTION.

AFTER such a load of complicated miseries, accumulated on the heads of the devoted nations of Europe by destructive wars, the ambition of Princes, and the delusive notions of glory and power entertained by their subjects; they at last begin to understand the true in-

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terests of mankind; they perceive that industry is a surer way to public happiness than the sword. The Scotch in particular begin to be sensible of it, though they have been behindhand in that respect, owing to the hand of oppression, the uncultivated state of their country, the ignorance or mistaken notions of their natural resources, and the barbarous remains of that feudal system, the bane of mankind, which miserably maintain their ground in some measure amongst them, especially in the North. The light of reason has at last prevailed. Associations of different

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different denominations have been entered into, to improve the country; the hand of benevolence has been opened; generous subscriptions have been raised to give a new face to North Britain, and soon it will be found by an happy experience, that the felicity of men lies in their hands, and that the most ungrateful spots in the universe may afford abundantly, not only the necessaries of life, but also convenience to a numerous population.

But without expatiating on the different branches of industry, commerce, and improvement, which, properly

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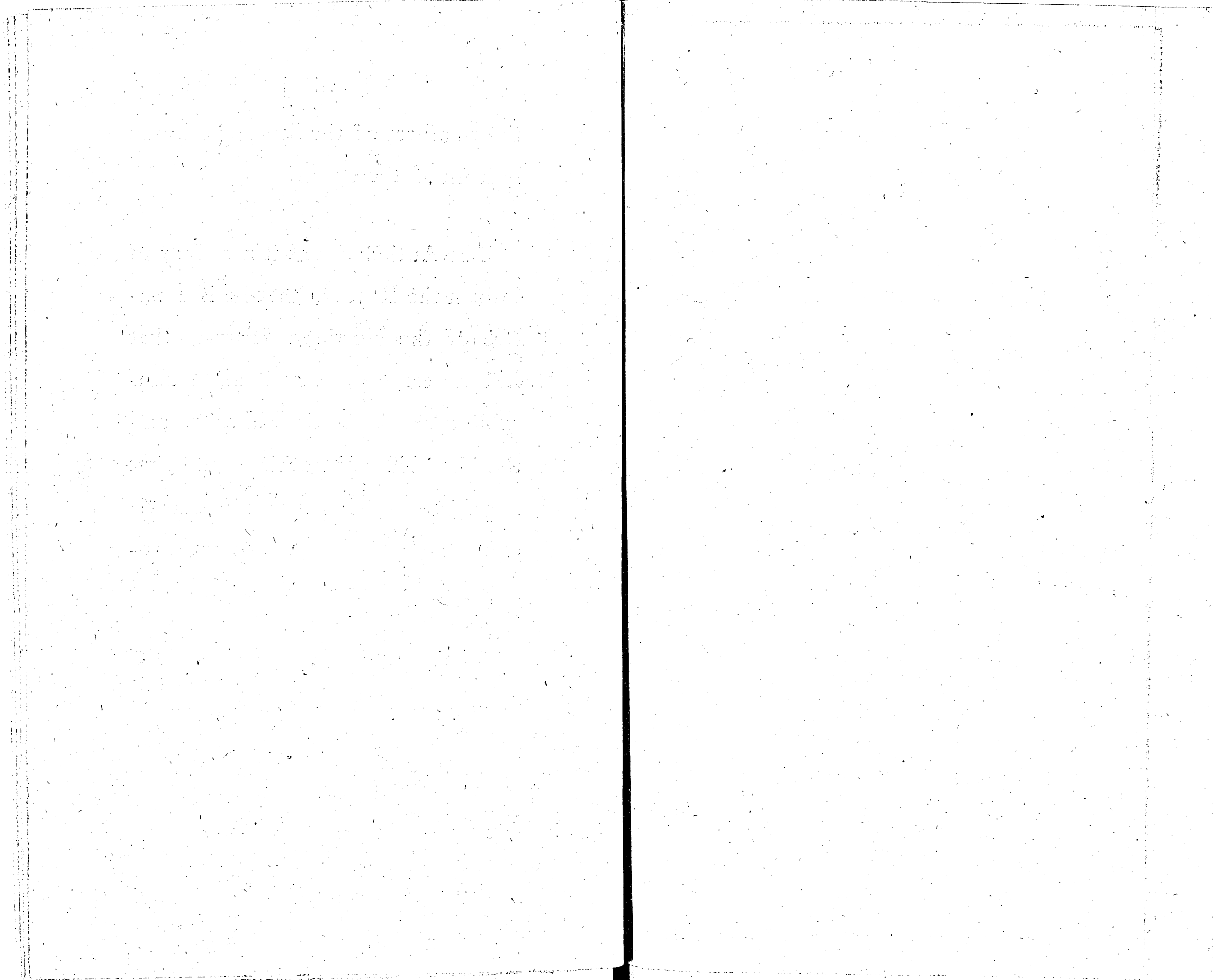
properly cultivated, may place the Scotch in a distinguished rank amongst trading nations; I shall confine myself to the Fisheries in the Scotch Islands. These are properly a mine of wealth, far preferable to the New World; because by its nature it will constantly promote, perpetuate, and reward industry, strengthen and enrich the empire at large, and give for the defence of the state, a numerous supply of brave and experienced seamen. Let the proud Spaniards cross the Atlantick, to dig out of the bowels of the earth those precious metals which rule the world;
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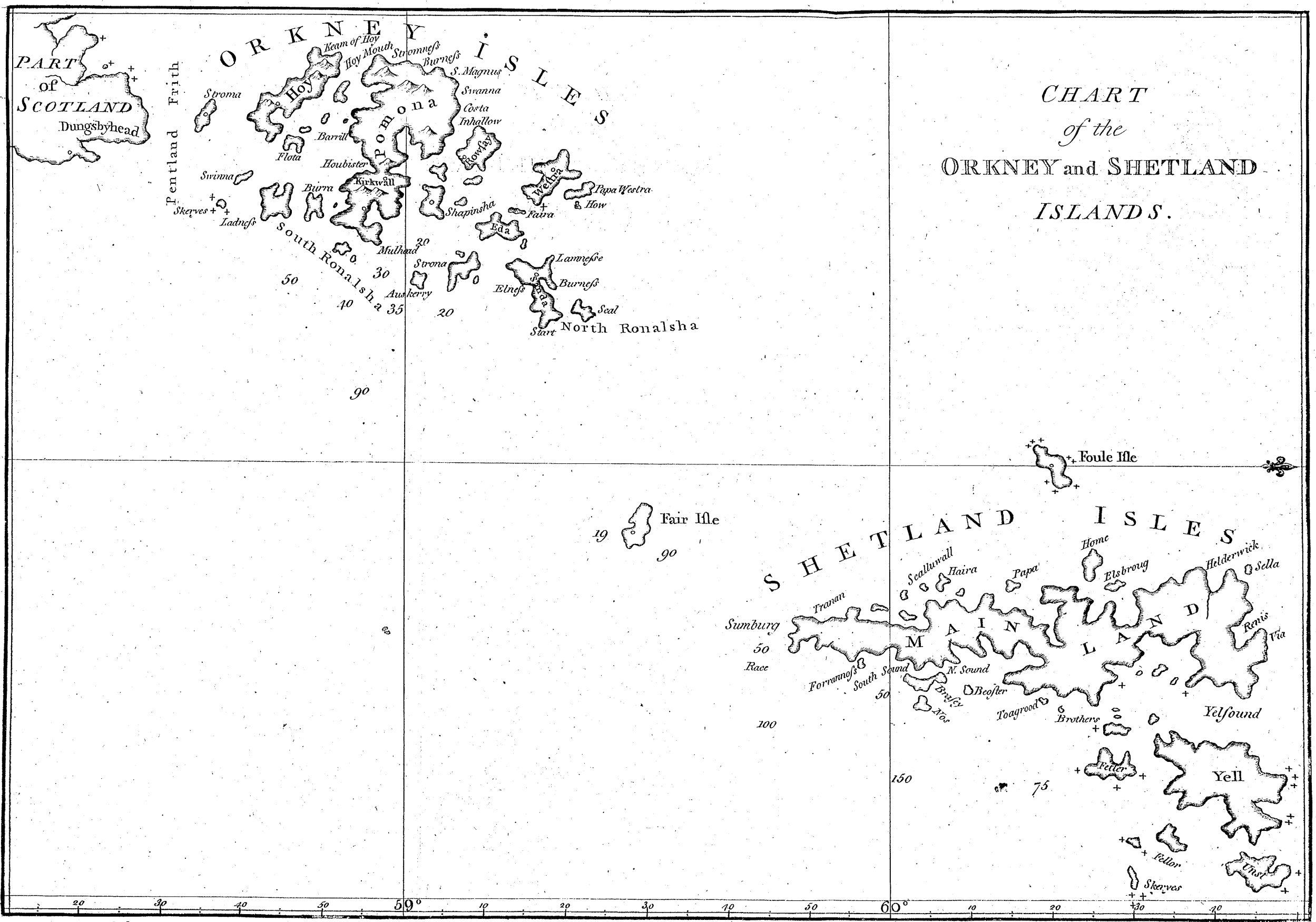
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the treasures of the Scotch lie in the bottom of the ocean.

The Author deems it necessary to inform the Reader, that he is a native of the Northern Islands, that he has been employed in an honourable character in the Fisheries, and that he will say nothing but what is grounded upon his own experience, and the most accurate researches.

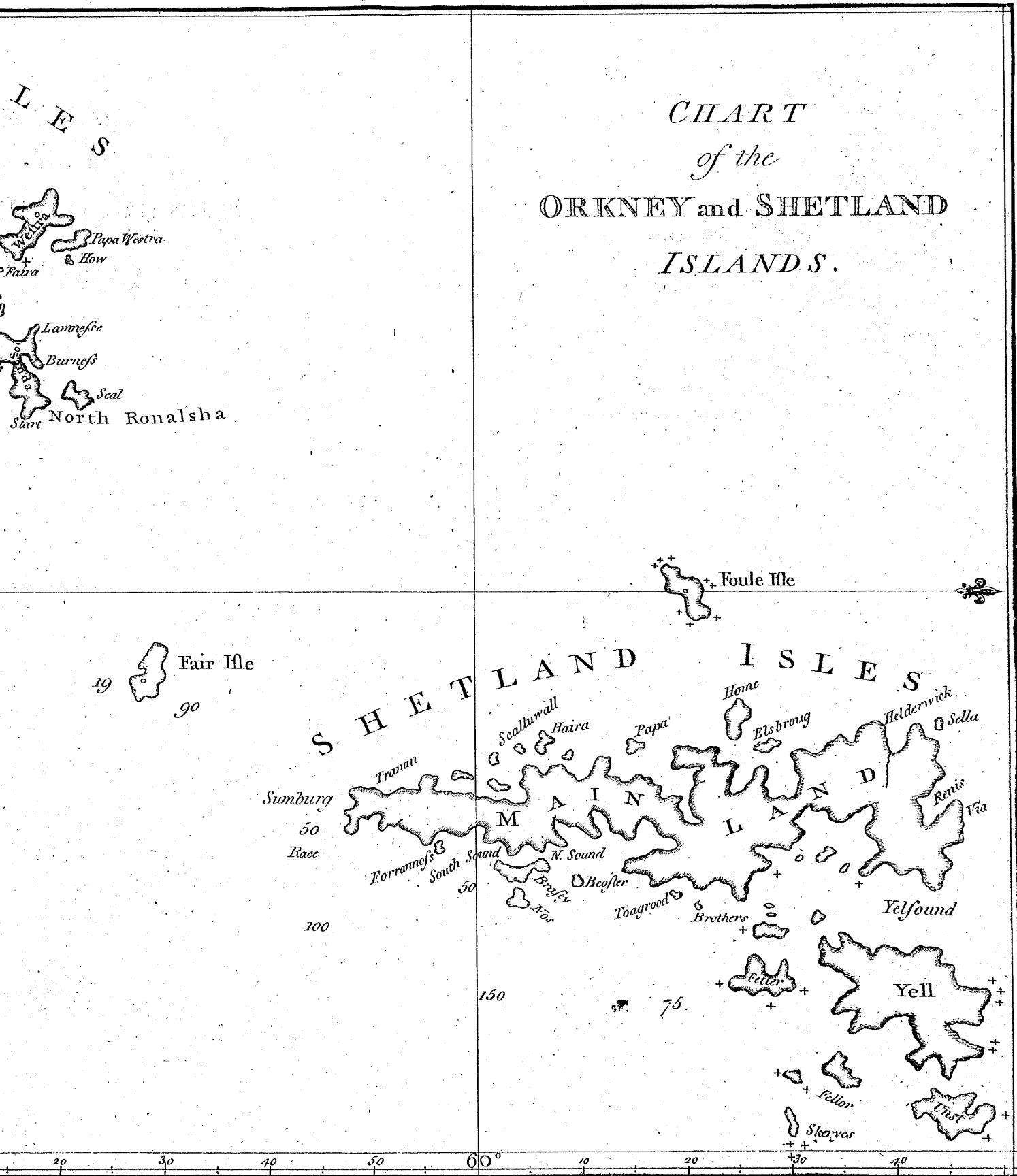
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Engraved for Pea's History of Orkney Shetland &c.

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CONSIDERATIONS
ON THE
FISHERIES
IN THE
SCOTCH ISLANDS.

*Description of the Orkney and Shetland
Islands, with the Hebrides, &c.*

THIS cluster of islands, in our language called Orkneys, by the Romans, Orcades, lie in longitude 3 deg. 22 min. west; latitude, 59 deg. 10 min. The longest day is eighteen hours and some odd minutes.

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The winters, as in most small islands, and, indeed, constantly near the sea, are generally more subject to rain than snow. The frost and snow are not of a long continuance: but the wind is very boisterous; and it rains, sometimes, not in drops, but by spouts of water, as if the whole mass of clouds dissolved together.

The island, properly denominated Orkney, has under its jurisdiction all these isles of Orkney and Shetland. The cathedral, dedicated to St. Magnus, is in Kirkwall, and shall be described hereafter.

It is supposed to have been founded by Rolland, Count of Orkney, but afterwards enlarged by some bishops of that see.

Besides the cathedral, there are thirty-one churches in this diocese, with many ancient chapels, now in ruins.

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At the Reformation, Robert Stuart, Earl of Orkney, having obtained the property of the bishoprick, from Bishop Bothwell, by the exchange of the abbey of Holyrood House, became sole lord of the country, and ruled it as a sovereign, as did his son, Earl Patrick, who succeeded him: but at last the earldom was annexed to the Crown by the death and forfeiture of the said Earl Patrick Stuart. The bishop's lands were resigned to King James VI. who gave back to the bishoprick several lands in the parishes of Harra, Orphir, Stromness, Sandwick, Shajunsha, Walls, Hoy, St. Ola, Evie, Burra, and Flota, to be an appendage to the bishop and his successors for ever, with the right of patronage of all the vicarages of Orkney and Shetland; together with the hereditary right and jurisdiction of sheriffship and bailery within the bishoprick, exempting the inhabitants and vassals within the said bishoprick from the jurisdiction of the

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sheriffs

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sheriffs and stewards of the earldom. The bishop's revenue formerly was very considerable; but lately has been reduced, by paying the chamberlain and other officer's fees.

The Christian faith was greatly promoted in this country about the beginning of the fifth century, when Eugenius II. reigned over Scotland; at which time Paladius was sent by Pope Celestinus to convert that kingdom. The first planters and possessors of this country were the Picts, as the generality of our historians do affirm, who call Orkney *Antiquum Pictorum regnum*.

This country was anciently governed by kings, after the manner of the Picts, and other nations: but by the injury of time, and neglect of writers, only two of them are mentioned; one was Belus, King of Orkney, whom Hollingshed calls Bladus, and

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and Boethius Balus. The other king whose name has been transmitted to posterity is Ganus: he reigned in the time of Caractacus, king of the Britains. These islands continued, in all probability, under the government of their own princes till the utter subversion of that kingdom, anno 839, when Kenneth II. that renowned king of Scots, subdued these islands, and added them to his other dominions: but in the year 1099, the Norwegians possessed themselves of this country, and held it one hundred and sixty-four years. At this period, King Magnus, of Norway, transferred it again to the Scots, under King Alexander, for four thousand marks, and one hundred marks a year.

Orkney being thus recovered from the Danes and Norwegians, it was at first annexed to the crown of Scotland. In the sequel, King Alexander gave the property

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of it to a nobleman, surnamed Speire, Earl of Cathness, whose son, Magnus Speire, Earl of Cathness, Orkney, and Shetland, was in great repute in the days of King Robert Bruce: but he dying without male heirs, his daughter, Elizabeth Speire, succeeded him in the estate, and was married to Sir William Sinclair, who forfeited his life for absenting himself from the parliament.

The earldom of Orkney and lordship of Shetland was again annexed to the crown. It so continued till the reign of Queen Mary, who conferred it on James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, and intending to make him her husband, created him Duke of Orkney: but that audacious and guilty man dying miserably, after ten years imprisonment in Denmark, Lord Robert Stuart, natural son of King James the Fifth, was made Earl of Orkney, in August 1581; and he being beheaded,
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and his son hanged, the island had several governors till the year 1647. At this time, William Douglas, Earl of Morton, obtained a *wadset* or mortgage of this country from King Charles the First. To him succeeded his son, Robert Douglas, Earl of Morton, in 1644, who was succeeded by his son Robert, from whom Orkney and Shetland being redeemed in 1669, they were re-annexed to the crown, except the lands of the clergy.

The mode followed at present for the government of these islands is, that the King's Exchequer grants a lease of them to the highest bidder, at a *roup*, or outcry; when the *taxman's* lease is out, which is commonly in five or six years, the lords of the treasury *roup* it anew upon the same terms.

Before the abolition of the hereditary jurisdictions, there was a baillie in every
B 4 parish,

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parish, as well as the islands, to inspect the manners of the inhabitants, to hold courts, and determine in all civil causes, to a certain amount; but if the matter be above, it is now referred to the sheriff, or his deputy: whereas, formerly the people were under the jurisdiction of the bailies, assisted by six or seven of the most intelligent persons within the parish or island, called *lawright men*.

These continued to exercise their authority in their respective districts. They had the inspection of the police, with power similar to that of our constables, and thus took cognizance of such delinquencies as occasionally happened; which, if slight offences, the bailie or his deputy punished, according to the degree and circumstances of the fault. At present, the same authority is vested in the sheriff; but if the offence exceeds the limits of his power, he sends the delinquent to the seat of justice, which

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which is now held for felony at Inverness, for the county, before the judges, in the course of their periodical circuit. These lawright men have an uncommon privilege inherent in their office by the custom of the country. If there be any suspicion of theft, they take some of their neighbours along with them, during the silence of the night, and make an exact research, which is called ransacking. They search every house they come to; and if they light upon the article stolen, they seize the person in whose possession it has been found, and bring him to condign punishment.

The islands of Orkney are twenty-six inhabited, viz. South Ronaldshay, (which in the Danish tongue signifies island,) Swanna, Hoy and Walls, Burra, Lawman, Flota, Faira, Cava, Græmsfay, Pomona, or the main island, Copinsfay, Shapinsfay, Damsfay, Inhallow, Stronsfay, Papa Stronsfay

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fay Sanday, North Ronaldshay, Eday, Ronfay, Wyre, Gairfay, Egleshaw, North Faira, Westra, Papa, Westra. The rest of the islands are called *holms*, (holm in the old Norwegian language signifies an island,) and these are only used for pasture; all of them are separated one from another by some narrow freights.

The people in those islands are generally civil, hospitable, sagacious, circumspect, and religious; the gentry, especially, are courteous and obliging, free and open, graceful in their manner; they have clear understandings, are extremely quick in discerning their interest, and indefatigable in the pursuit of it.

Abroad, in foreign countries, wherever necessity or curiosity often drives them, they are industrious, frugal, and very dexterous in complying with the customs and manners of the nations whom they resort to.

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to. They are well bred, and generally as learned as any of their more southern neighbours.

The ladies of condition are handsome, fruitful and modest, and very careful in the discharge of the characteristic duty of their station, the proper management of their families, and the education of their children.

They are temperate in their diet, even when transplanted into countries where all the luxuries of life are too much indulged. They are zealously attached to their country, though very willing to settle abroad, when they have any opportunity of doing it with advantage.

These islanders are generally longer lived than in the more southern parts of the kingdom, a man being hardly reckoned old at fourscore, and several living to above

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an hundred; it has even been known that these *centenaries* have been able to earn their bread by hard labour: all which is ascribed to their temperance and frugal way of living, being strangers until of late to the luxuries of wealthier nations.

The genera of diseases which generally prevail, and are endemical in these islands, are the scurvy, agues, consumptions, &c. The inhabitants speak English after the Scotch way, but with a better accent than in several other parts of Scotland: only in some inland parishes they speak a language amongst themselves, which they call *Norn*, *i. e.* *Norena*, or the Norwegian tongue, which they derive from their first planters, the Norwegians, who peopled those islands about the period when they settled in Great Britain.

The only remarkable town in all this country is Kirkwall, a royal borough, long
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possessed by the Norwegians. It is built upon a pleasant *oyse*, or inlet of the sea, near the middle of the main land. It contains one large street, about a mile in length, having a very safe *roadsted* for shipping: many of the King's ships have often rendezvoused here in time of war, as well as at Stromness, by which the trade of the islanders was greatly protected.

Kirkwall is the seat of justice; the sheriff, commissary, and admiralty keeping their courts here. The cathedral, dedicated to St. Magnus, is supposed, as said above, to have been founded by Rolland, Count of Orkney, (vide Chamberlaine's History of Great Britain,) anno 1138, but afterwards enlarged by some bishops of the see.

The dimensions of this superb structure are as follow: the length on the outside, including the choir, and the sanctuary, is
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two hundred and twenty-five feet; its breadth, fifty-six; its height, from the pavement to the weather cock, one hundred and thirty-three; the height of the main roof, seventy-one feet. It has twenty-four windows open, and as many shut, for want of funds to keep glass in them.

There is a window on the east end, twelve feet broad and fifty-six feet high, including a window built in the form of a rose at the top of it, the diameter whereof is twelve feet. There is another window pretty similar on the south, and of the same dimensions. There is also a window at the west end of the choir, or sanctuary, finished after the same manner, though less in size. The roof is supported by twenty-eight pillars, fourteen on each side, in circumference fifteen feet each, besides four pillars, which support the steeple, each twenty-four feet in circumference.

Strangers

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Strangers upon viewing the front of the church are greatly struck with its beauties.

Under the window last described are three large doors, the largest in the middle; it is supported by small pillars of red and white free stone, with a cut foliage, or wreath, running round the upper part of the doors, curiously embossed, and having a very pleasing effect on the eye. In the body of the church are found the monuments in marble of many of the canons and prebendaries, who served this cathedral in popish times.

The choir presents to your view the stalls of the canons, &c.; they are curiously carved with different figures, alluding to scriptural passages. In the center, between two of the pillars which support the steeple, is the organ-loft, where the organ was formerly placed, and is now

used

used as a church seat by the grammar school boys. People of rank are buried in the church, a custom which is justly reprobated, on account of its pernicious tendency. There is a great variety of monuments and sepulchral stones, inscribed to the memory of several persons unknown to the present generation. Facing the pulpit is a seat for the provost and magistrates, town council, &c. This seat is highly finished, with paintings, carvings, &c. Here is, also, a large loft for the pilots, or other seafaring people, decorated with paintings of sundry devices, especially a ship under sail, as a badge of their profession.

Here is, likewise, a public school for grammar, and other branches of learning, endowed with a competent salary from the public, whilst, besides, the masters are allowed some little perquisites extra by their disciples.

You

You find besides in every parish in the islands, schools for teaching English, writing, &c. In the town as well as in the country parishes, the schoolmaster is usually præcentor, and kirk-session clerk, which brings him some advantages, for he receives one shilling, and sometimes one shilling and sixpence, for the publication of bans of marriage, sixpence for registering christenings, and threepence for every person that removes from the parish.

All schoolmasters are obliged to take the oaths of allegiance, to subscribe the confession of faith, and must submit to an examination from the Presbiters of the district.

The civil government of Kirkwall is, in general, much the same with that of most of the royal boroughs.

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The magistrates and council of the borough of Kirkwall, are a provost, four bailies, a dean of *Guild*, a treasurer, *deacons of craft*, &c. This council govern the town, and no persons are allowed to be present at their deliberations; except in extraordinary cases, as in the election of magistrates who are all annual, and usually chosen about Michaelmas; the imposing, setting of fines, or any other manner of letting *tacks*; the conferring of livings, or other offices of the borough; the constructing or repairing public works; the disposing of the public money above a fixed and limited sum, &c.

Here is seen a *Tolbooth* or town-house, neatly finished at the expence of James Earl of Morton, when Lord of the country. He also gave the remains of the old castle, to complete the above structure. At the north end of the town is a fort, built by the English during Cromwell's usurpation,

usurpation, ditched about, with a breast-work, and other fortifications, on which they have some cannon planted for the defence of the place.—The gentlemen in Kirkwall, as well as the meaner sort, have adopted the English dress; excepting that the latter wear bonnets instead of hats, which are knit chiefly at Kilmarnock in Scotland, and are exceeding cheap for the convenience of the islanders. Football playing is the principal diversion of the common people, which they practise with great dexterity.—The fair called *Lammas fair*, is held by charter in the beginning of August, and is one of the privileges of the town of Kirkwall. On this occasion, the people from all the islands, as well as from the main land, resort to the town; together with numbers of merchants from Bamf, and Murrayshire, Caithness, &c. with goods of various kinds, suited to the demands of the country people. To prevent quarrels,

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which frequently happened, and often proved very fatal to many of the parties on these occasions, it has been thought proper by the provost and magistrates, to form a body of militia, composed of the inhabitants, who are regularly trained up in the use of arms, and other military exercises; this is called in the provincial dialect *Weapon-shawing*.—Thus the public tranquillity is maintained, and the merchants, as well as the country people, may sell without molestation their commodities, the latter vending the articles manufactured by themselves, as blankets, stockings, linen cloth of different qualities, cattle, horses, &c. But the firths and other inlets, are the principal checks on violences and depredations, for upon the least alarm of that kind, the ferries are stopped, and the delinquents taken and punished. The entertainment for the gentlemen is *golf*, bowling, fishing, fowling, *curling* on the ice in hard frosts, and such

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such-like manly exercises. Cock fighting, at times, is also practised, and the few game-cocks kept in the island are not inferior to those of England in point of spirit and courage.—Our bull-dogs are equally fierce, and it is probable, that this courage is more owing to the climate, than to the nature of the animal, for if conveyed into foreign regions they degenerate.

In the *Tolbooth* before described, are deposited all the archives, or records of deeds, done by the inhabitants at sundry periods; together with the court-rolls, and proceedings in law. They have been written for several ages in the Latin tongue, which our Scottish lawyers in general possess in an eminent degree.—Sir John Skene accounts for the laws being written in Latin, to their being drawn up by the Romish clergy, who always endeavoured to keep the people in ignorance,

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which

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which is one of the great pillars of the pope's authority. But the true reason seems to be, because the civil law, which has always been the common law of Scotland, was written in that language. Near the church stands an old venerable edifice, called the *Bishop's palace*, on account of its being the residence of the Romish bishops in the Orkneys.

Reid, the last of them, lived in the reign of *Mary*, queen of Scots, and was at a time ambassador from that unfortunate Princess to the court of France, where he acquitted himself with the greatest credit and honour.

It is said that he died full of grief, lamenting the precarious state of his religion, and the approaching storm which threatened his royal Mistress. He was buried with a funeral pomp worthy of such a distinguished character. The first thing

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thing which strikes your eye in the edifice above mentioned, is a large tower, built of gray stone, the doors and windows of freestone. The great gate as you enter in, is elegantly terminated by a large Gothic arch, magnificently decorated with white freestone.

At the bottom of this arch, upon the right hand, is a large vault, some call it a dungeon, where criminals were confined. There is no opening to it to be found at present, except the door; it is a place of great extent, and curiously arched. In passing through the gateway, you enter into a spacious court yard, of a very great extent, and formerly paved in a very neat manner, as the remains of the pavement still demonstrate.

There has been another arch way of equal elegance, at the opposite end of the square, but it has been taken down for

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various purposes in building. I omitted mentioning that there is a statue of the above bishop, cut in white freestone, which stands in a niche in the centre of the tower, and is deemed by connoisseurs a masterly performance. In this noble pile are various places both for recreation, and other conveniences, as well as defence, according to the times.

When the Earl Patrick Stuart resided in Kirkwall, he built contiguous to it, a spacious palace, only in part of white free stone, according to the Ionic order.

The power of the admiralty-court is in those islands very great; the jurisdiction of that court taking cognizance of all trespasses committed in ports, harbours, creeks, and within flood-mark. The deputy is stiled *the King's justice general upon the seas*; and nothing relative to his jurisdiction can be interfered with in the first instance, but,
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by the Lords of the admiralty. There are other causes resorting to his court, such as piracies; seizing prohibited or fraudulently-imported goods; *breaking arrestments* or *attachments*, and resisting his precepts; procuring passes and certificates in maritime cases, other than from the admiralty; transporting beyond the seas traitors, rebels, disorderly persons, fugitives, in defiance of justice; throwing sand or ballast into harbours, or channels, whereby they may be choaked; taking away buoys, cutting cables, committing murder, within the jurisdiction of the court; punishment of offences committed within his jurisdiction by mariners, &c.

The government of the church in these islands is presbyterian, and is the same as in Scotland, *i. e.* by kirk-sessions, *presbitries*, provincial synods, &c. The constitution of this church is so universally known, that it requires no comment.---

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We have but few dissenters who live amongst us, *i. e.* those who are deemed dissenters in England, are of the established church here.

There are few Romanists here, they are chiefly numerous in the Hebrides.—There are some Anabaptists, who reside in different parts of the islands. The great constituent doctrine of those people, is their entirely rejecting the infant baptism; but in the baptising of adults, they constantly make use of dipping. In appointing pastors, some of them use the imposition of hands. They are a decent, orderly people, and seem to have their arguments for their faith well grounded and derived from sacred history. The chief of protestant dissenters are the episcopalians. A particular detail of the grievances they complain of will be here annexed and discussed; as also the tenets of the people called Methodists, by bishop Warburton.

Of

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Of Protestant Dissenters.

1. The protestant dissenters, as I have said, are chiefly *episcopalians*. The rest, for numbers or interest, are very inconsiderable.

1. The laity among the episcopalians enjoy the same privileges as the established church; they are under no restrictions, and are not bound by any tests; though they fill all places of trust, either civil or military, they only take the oaths to the government. The episcopal clergy are subject to several penal laws, and to justify those severities, they are reported to be most of them *Nonjurors*. Those, however, who swear allegiance to the government, and are not convicted of error, scandal, or insufficiency, are suffered to enjoy benefices quietly, without disturbing the presbyterian establishment.

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2. The terms of *assumption* and *comprehension* are only those, to subscribe the confession of faith, to own the presbyterian government as the only government within Scotland, and to promise uniformity in worship.

This the presbyterians think easy, because any man that is episcopally ordained, is not hereby obliged to take new orders, or to abjure his own faith.

3. In the church government, there are severe penalties, but they are directed only either against intruders into parishes without a legal claim, or against those that preach by virtue of an authority from deprived bishops. This measure affects presbyterians and episcopalians equally.

This they say is justifiable, because they pretend that some of the said bishops have

have extorted an oath of allegiance to the Pretender.

4. They affirm that those penal laws are seldom or never put in execution, and that in consequence, there are several episcopal meeting-houses in Scotland, in which the preachers, professed enemies to the government, either make no mention of any sovereign, in the public service, or pray artfully for their sovereign in general, or else for one different from the present King of Great Britain. This is the plea which the Scotch presbyterians alledge in defence of the penal laws against the episcopalian ministers.

I shall only observe upon this subject, 1. That connivance is no toleration. 2. That there is no toleration admitted; for any episcopalian minister, though he were to give the most uncontrovertible proofs of his fidelity to His Majesty, and adherence

rence to the protestant fucceffion, whereby he can be licensed to hold any meeting, wherein to worship God with those of his own persuasion, who think that they cannot in conscience, submit to the presbyterian government.

5. Quakers, so called, we have none in the country, which is much to be regretted, as their harmless lives and exemplary virtues entitle them to respect and veneration wherever situated. They are just in their dealings, and charitable to proper objects of distress, especially their own poor, which they maintain with an unparalleled generosity. In short, they are worthy of imitation in their general deportment, by most of those who too freely arraign their tenets, and criticise on their religious principles.

The confidence which the legislature has placed in their simple affirmation, is a convincing

convincing proof of the above; as we are assured, that the lives and properties of our fellow subjects are equally secure, both in civil and criminal cases, when they are summoned to give evidence; no instances of their falsifying the truth being ever adduced.

We have no Methodists settled amongst us, which is very fortunate; as their uncharitable tenets tends with weak minds to the most dangerous consequences.

The history of Methodism, as stated by Bishop Warburton.

6. They who now go under the name of Methodists, were in the days of our forefathers called *Precisians*; terms similar and of almost equal import, and being of their own devising, shew how much the same spirit actuated them at all times.

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The elder Methodism, on its first appearance, put on the same patient exterior; which we see the younger brothers wear at present. During the firm administration of Elizabeth, this sect disguised, but barely disguised, its native ferocity in a feigned submission, after having first excited persecution with the zeal of fanaticism. It was not long before the secret wishes of those turbulent reformers were crowned with success; and at this period they compared themselves to a precious metal, which after being tried in the fire, leaves its *caput mortuum* behind.

They with great propriety changed their name from *Precisians* to *Puritans*; but in the weak and distracted reign of Charles I. they ventured to throw off the mask, and under the new name of independent, became the chief agents of all the dreadful convulsions which gradually fapped the throne,

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throne, and transferred the sceptre to the hands of a base usurper.

Independency was a name as well suited to the weakness of that government which it defied and overturned, as Methodism to the strength of this, of which it stands in awe.

Nor is this pedigree, which makes Methodism of the younger house, to independency inverted, like heraldic fictions to enoble any subject.

Whoever reads the voluminous account of the internal state of the regicides, while under condemnation, written and published at that time by their friends, to make them pass with the people for saints and martyrs, and compares them with the circumstantial journal of the Methodists, will find so exact a conformity in the frenzy of sentiments, and even in the cant of

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expression, upon the subjects of faith, grace, redemption, regeneration, justification, &c. as may fully satisfy him, that they are both of the same stock, and always ready, on a return of the same epidemical mania, to produce the same fruits. All the difference which distance of time, and variety of circumstances have effected, is only this, the Methodist is now an apostle independent, and the Independent was then a Mahometan Methodist.

Of the State of Physic in the Orkney Islands.

In all these islands is to be found a number of quacks, whose prescriptions prove often fatal to the patients, especially in their treatment of the small pox in the natural way. But of late, our islanders have almost totally surmounted their prejudices against inoculation, and this has saved the lives of thousands.

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We have also apothecaries, who always advise upon occasions, as those professing the medical art, to which title they have no pretensions.—An apothecary may be very useful in his professional line; but when he deserts, or neglects his proper branch, and presumes to advise in matters relating to physic, and therapeutics, he becomes an arrant quack, and invades a profession to which he is an utter stranger. In short, there is no more affinity between the business of an apothecary, and that of a physician, than between the grinding of colours, and the art of painting.—Nevertheless, no profession is more invaded by conceited and ignorant pretenders, than the art of medicine.

Divinity and law have their palisadoes and intrenchments, for who dares pretend to enter their precincts, but those who are properly initiated:—But the cobweb fences of physic, are every day invaded by im-

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postors

postors of every denomination. — Broken weavers, tinkers, valets, buffoons, fortunetellers, &c. who, to the scandal of our age and nation, arrogantly assume the name of doctors; and this is the last resource to which men of broken characters apply for bread. Yet it is well known, that our more southern neighbours too often extol the most contemptible empirics, and trump up noxious and fatal nostrums, as the *nec plus ultra*, of the noble art of physic.

In short, these wretches are the bane of society, and yet they spring up in a perpetual and rapid succession, as mushrooms in a summer day, and make dreadful executions, before the public is convinced of the deplorable effect of their murderous prescriptions. The pernicious art of those physical assassins is so much the more dangerous and detestable, as it is nearly impossible to oppose it with success.

success. *Mundus vult decipi*. Men, and especially the vulgar, are fond of novelty; and this natural bias of the human mind will probably at all times prevail over reason and argument.

This is a proper place to give some singular instances of longevity in our islands.

George Papley, born in the island of Westra, died at the very great age of 129 years. He was seven years old when the unfortunate Charles the I. was beheaded; he recollected the reign of his murderer, and the regular succession of Kings which followed; knew their respective names, and the dates of the principal transactions of their reigns.

Mr. Martin relates his knowing a gentleman in the island of Stronsay, who had a son in the 110 year of his age; and that

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before he died, he knew one William Muir, who died at the age of 140.

Jane Alexander died at Kirkwall aged 105 years, and five months, with all her faculties entire. When Mr. Martin was in the Hebrides, or Western Islands of Scotland, he says, he knew a man of the name of Gillouir M'Crain, who had kept 180 Christmasses in his own house.

Natural History.

There are many native fossils found in the islands, and some extraneous substances of an adventitious, or foreign kind, which have not been generated in the earth, but brought there by the expansive effects of earthquakes, deluges, or other extraordinary phenomena in various parts of the globe.

There are plants, shells, bones, teeth, &c. both of sea and land animals, found

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found in great abundance in several parts of the earth, and which to a naturalist are an inexhaustible source of curious speculation and inquiry.—In many parts of these islands, there are strata of peat, which sometimes are many miles long, but the breadth uncertain, especially in the isle of Pomona. Peat is a sort of turf, supposed to be a composition of the branches of leaves, and roots of trees, with grass, straw, plants, and weeds; which having lain long in water, are formed into a common mass, so soft as to be cut through with a spade, it is used for fuel. The depth below the surface of the earth, where it is found, is from one foot to eight.

Great number of trees have been seen under ground, in different parts of the islands, as also on the sea shores, mostly of the fir kind. The heads of various animals, such as horses, with the bones

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and horns of deer, &c. have been also discovered. Some years ago, in a moss called *Scapa*, was found under a large slate stone, three urns, as it is supposed with burnt human bones; and many such have been observed in various parts of the country. Here are several tumuli or small hillocks in these mosses, and elsewhere, supposed to have been artificially raised, and which may probably contain the remains of those adventurers, who fell victims to their temerity by the sword of the inhabitants, as thieves or plunderers in their hostile incursions from the continent. One of these incursions, amongst several which I could mention, is sufficiently authenticated by the account founded upon records of an action that happened in the parish of Stenness, between the natives and a party of Highlanders, who having several times invaded the country, were at last routed with great slaughter, and their leader slain; they are said to be buried in the tumuli

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above mentioned, of which many are seen on the supposed field of battle.

In the parish of Sandwick, strata of oyster and cockle shells have been found several feet from the surface of the earth; the shells are brittle and separated from each other. In the islands of Westra and Sanday, are great extents of a peculiar earth, making a regular stratum, immersed in a bed of white sand, and of which the islanders make lime for several purposes.

There is also a great variety of medicinal springs in these islands, especially one within two miles of Kirkwall, called *Blackley's Well*, on the common post road.

The water of this spring is very transparent, and of a bluish colour when put in a glass; it has a pleasant taste, and an inky smell; it has been found to be highly impregnated with vitriol, nitre, and salt.

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Its quality is purgative and diuretic, and recommended for removing obstructions and disorders that proceed from too flow a motion of the blood; it attenuates gross, vicious, and mucous humours.

Many other springs are likewise to be found well calculated for the cure of various cutaneous complaints, to which the natives are constitutionally liable, as that in the parishes of Orphir, Stronfay, &c.

Most of the gentlemen in the country keep pointers, as the country abounds with grouse, or moor game, but no partridges are seen, as they have no cover, from the nature of the soil, which consists of short stubble, small quantities of furze, &c. Curs keep the farmer's house and fields in the season, when the corn is growing.

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This species is gentle, obedient, submissive, and faithful. Those dispositions joined to their extraordinary sagacity, endear them to their masters; accordingly no animal is so much caressed, or valued. He is so tractable, and so much formed to please, that he assumes the very air and temper of the family he lives in. Greyhounds we have none, nor any of the flow hound kind; for we have no hares, by the same reason that we have no partridges.

Snipes we have abundance; also all the different species of wild ducks, wild geese in winter, swans, grey and green plovers, a few woodcocks, which generally resort to the vicinity of our mineral springs during the severity of the season.

There are great numbers of the grey curlew, but extremely difficult to shoot, on account of their wary disposition, and the particular turn of their eyes. The only

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only true amphibia we have here, are the otter and seal, many of whom are caught by the inhabitants, either by shooting or nets.

In the general description of the country, I must not pass over in silence the remarkable wells of Swana.

They are two great whirlpools in the Pentland firth, which divides the Orkney islands from the British continent, and near that isle which is called Swana. These whirlpools never fail to swallow up any vessel that comes within their vortex; and as the water is perpetually moving circularly, they are most dangerous in a calm; but if there be any wind, and the vessel under sail, they may be passed over without danger. In case the mariners who carry passengers between the main and the islands, should ever be driven near those eddies by the tides, they throw an empty barrel,

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barrel, a bundle of straw, or some other voluminous body, into the nearest whirlpool, and whilst that is swallowing, the draft to the vortex ceases, and the sea around is calm enough to suffer the vessel to get in the mean time beyond the reach of its attraction. Whatever is swallowed up in this manner by either of the whirlpools, is found floating soon after at the distance of some miles. There are but few whirlpools of this kind, that we have any account of, except only one on the coast of Norway; and this is the famous Marlstrom, known to the ancients, who called it *umbilicus terræ*, and the description of which is pretty similar to that of our wells.

The next island to the whirlpools, is that of Swana, which forms an eddy very favourable to the inhabitants of the neighbouring islands in their cod fishing, in which they are very successful, as they
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bring frequently to the fish booth at Walls, fifteen or sixteen hundred at a time, for the stipulated price between them and the proprietor.

The natives catch abundance of black pollocks, which they dry on the rocks; and when dried, they sell them to the inhabitants of Kirkwall, for ready money. This island is about a mile and half long, the soil is a strong clay; very subject to sea gusts, on account of its situation.

There is a large *Holm* upon the south-east coast of Walls, called *Switha*, where amazing quantities of these coles or black pollocks are taken. This island, or more properly Holm, is only fit for feeding sheep or black cattle. It is also very convenient for sheltering such of the inhabitants as resort here in the fishing season, and dry their fish on the rocks.

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Next to this Holm is *Flota*, an island abounding with peat of the best kind; the soil is indifferent, but excellent for pasture, which might answer great purposes, as it shall be explained in the sequel.

H O Y.

At your return from the westward, you find Hoy-Head, which forms a part of Pentland firth: It is a promontory the most remarkable of any in the country for its extreme height, and is the desired and secured land-fall for all the shipping, intended to touch at the Orkneys.

When the navigators have descried the land, from the inhospitable coast of the continental shore, they steer boldly in, having nothing to fear from shelves, or rocks; as the land gives on each side a proper *birth*, as sailors term it, till the harbour of Stromness opens to them.— This promontory or mountain is only accessible

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cessible from the northernmost part of the island, and that by a winding path. When the traveller arrives at the summit, he is agreeably surpris'd at the appearance of a very extensive lake of fresh water, abounding with trouts; but how the spawn has been conveyed thither, is a problem difficult to solve; the grand beautiful prospect from this extreme elevation, which presents itself to one's view, the coast of the continent, the ships passing through Pentland Firth, the neighbouring islands to the northward, &c. is the most awful, and passing all description.—Great attention is required in the descent, on account of the great steepness of the mountain, or the most dangerous consequences are to be dreaded. At a small distance from the foot of this cape, is a rock called by the natives the *Dwbarfy-stone*; where in the reign of superstition, a hermit is said to have lived, there pent up as the old Druids in their oaks. It is reported that this an-

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chorite cut out of the body of the stone, his kitchen with the chimney, and his bed room.—The particular impression of the bed is remarkable for two pillows, which insinuate, that the holy man had no aversion to a companion occasionally.—In this strange habitation there is room enough for several people; here the herds of black cattle shelter themselves from rain, or the intense heat of the sun. A vague tradition farther reports concerning this recluse, that he was very skilful in the great and long-lost art of miracle-making, curing the sick, expelling the devils, and performing other wonderful feats, by prayers, fasts, exorcisms, and other devices, formerly so familiar to the Romish saints.

This island, among many others which shall be mentioned in their turn, is very fit for the raising of horses, &c. after the manner of the Highlands; there is plenty of excellent grass growing spontaneously

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in the valleys and rising grounds; these horses require no attention, at least very little, and only in severe winters, when they repair, as by instinct, to the houses for food; a little provender must be then given them, until the weather becomes milder, and they return to their former retreats.— If the raising this hardy breed of horses within ourselves, was properly encouraged, we should have very little or no dependance on our continental neighbours for supplying us, as they have hitherto done for many years past, taking away annually fourteen or fifteen hundred pounds from the country; that expence would be greatly increased, did not the Orkney farmers barter old or blemished horses for some of their young *stags*. It is an unerring maxim, and not to be controverted, that a man does much better in breeding up a horse himself than in buying him from others.— The intelligent breeder sees that proper care be taken of this useful animal, and never applies him too early to labour, as this oversight

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oversight can never be remedied afterwards; his spirit is often broke, his growth checked, the state of his body enfeebled and relaxed; yet notwithstanding all this, it is a matter of fact, the best farmers in the country often follow the old track, and prefer buying horses to the trouble of bringing them up. The stables in these islands are generally built of dry stone, without mortar—this must make them very cold, and the atmosphere being moist to the extreme, horses in consequence catch colds, frequently degenerating in glanders.— This contagion sweeps them fast away, without the owner ever suspecting that the loss is the fruit of his ignorance. Farther, it is a melancholy reflection, that those useful animals, who till and harrow the ground, besides other drudgeries, should have no attention paid to them by their inconsiderate masters, in making a suitable provision for their winter food; they have no hay given them, but

only

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only straw, chaff, &c. though the feeding on chaff kills many, on account of the impurities with which it is replete.

It goes greatly against those islanders, that they labour too much with horses, and too little with oxen. One horse bears the price of three oxen in the purchase—is more delicate in constitution, and when dead, nothing is of any value but his skin; whereas an ox when unfit for service may be fed for slaughter, and fetch to the owner, by its spoils, nearly the original price; besides that he is satisfied with the coarsest provender, feeding upon the litter that is thrown out from the horses' stables, or upon the sea weed along the shore.—

Goats would answer very well in this island, and in that of Walls, on account of their mountainous and rocky situation. Their milk would prove medicinal, as well as in the Highlands, having abundance of wild thyme and other medicinal plants interspersed

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interspersed amongst those rocks where they feed; they are an animal easily tamed, and have more sagacity than the sheep; and instead of having an antipathy to men, they voluntarily mingle with them; goats are sensible of caresses, and capable of a considerable degree of friendship; they have a lively, capricious, and wandering disposition, are fond of high and solitary places, and frequently sleep upon the very points of rocks.

They are more easily supported than any other animals of the same size; for there is hardly a plant which they will not eat with pleasure; neither are they so liable to distempers as sheep; the expence of their food is next to nothing, as they live mostly on such plants as are rejected by other animals, and can be maintained upon the most barren mountains—but their produce is valuable; cheese is made from their milk, which besides is reckon-

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ed good in consumptions, and other diseases. Their flesh, tallow, hair, and hides, are all useful and saleable commodities.—To the Hoy, Walls lies next, forming along with it one continent, but divided for convenient purposes; it is pretty much the same soil with Hoy; the raising of horses the same way as already described, might answer also here, but the inhabitants give the preference to sheep, more than in any of the northern islands; though they take no pains to tame them, and they are as wild as deer in other countries, they are run down with dogs in the season of sheep-shearing, or at other times; this barbarous practice of taking them in this manner is unhappily practised all over the islands, by which many of these innocent animals are either destroyed by being forced over precipices, or maimed by the bites they receive in the chace. The people who assist on these occasions, bind the creatures when seized by
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the dogs, and leave them on the spot till all are taken; but as they frequently forget where they have bound them, and as there are a great many turf banks in the neighbourhood of these chaces, the sheep by their struggles fall into them, and are totally lost, becoming the prey of the eagles, ravens, crows, or other voracious birds peculiar to the country.

As this animal is so singularly useful to man in feeding and clothing him, it might be naturally expected that he would be more attentive to its preservation, by screening it from such a wanton destruction.

In the more southern parts of Scotland, with what assiduous diligence do they attend their flocks.—They know and improve the season, when proper for letting the rams to the ewes; when near the term they are separated, and enclosed apart, for fear of the consequences which

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might arise from their being then together. After they have dropped their young, the shepherds eye them carefully, and fold them up at the proper hours of retreat; such a careful and regular method preserves them from wandering dogs, eagles, ravens, &c.; at the proper season the wool is cut with shears; in the room of which, the natives, a few excepted, pull it unmercifully, which not only torments the beast, but destroys the spring, or elasticity of the wool, in which its superior quality consists.

We have immense extent of wastes, in these islands, abounding with grass and pasture for the maintenance of sheep and black cattle, horses, &c. There the rich inhabitants, with proper industry, might soon double their different stocks, which would return ten fold for the first outlaying, besides giving their tenants an example highly useful, for the general improvement

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ment of the country; and singularly adapted to remove the miserable prejudices, to which the generality of the natives are wedded against a fixed and regular system of cultivation and improvement, so successfully followed by their southern neighbours.

The sheep in these islands having no shepherd to attend them, and the farmer no inclosure to bar their access to his fields, they run altogether in a body to feed upon his growing corn, chiefly in the night time; but they are generally met by the proprietor, who is upon the watch in expectation of such attacks; and his dogs frequently kill, or for the most part tear, maim, and worry to death the poor creatures, without the least consideration of their general utility. In Walls is a very good harbour called the *Long Hope*, where ships may ride with the greatest safety from

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from any wind, being sheltered on all quarters.

Its access is easy, as it is almost open from Pentland Firth, and always good pilots to be had.—To this harbour the lobster fishers from London rendezvous during the lobster seasons. This fishery is of the greatest service to the inhabitants, as two men working for three or four hours only in their boats, will earn from fifteen to eighteen shillings, though they receive no more than one penny for each lobster, which is to have both claws, and measure five inches in the barrel.

In the neighbourhood of this haven, is the feat of the family of Melfetter, at all times distinguished for their loyalty, hospitality, &c.

The present possessor, in conjunction with some gentlemen from Dunbar, now carries

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carries on a very extensive cod fishing—they are very successful, loading their boats every day; they can venture in the Firth. The conditions of their agreement are, that all merchantable fish of eighteen inches, from the nape of the neck to the last joint of the tail, bring one penny, exclusive of the liver and offals, which are the property of the fisherman. The oil he makes, and the smaller fish, he disposes of where he pleases. This fishery is no new attempt, as it has been held in succession for a considerable time by the Melfetters, to their great emolument, and to that of some English adventurers who were equally successful.

South Ronaldsbay. In this island are two excellent harbours, the one named *Wide-wall*, to which ships may have direct access from Pentland firth.—When moored, no winds can hurt them, except, perchance, that blowing from the north west.

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The other harbour is called *St. Margaret's Hope*, where the vessels are land locked.

Here is a pretty village, with a decent public house, &c. The soil is a strong clay, the same as Setfurth in Swana; the situation and form of the island render the lands that are cultivated, subject to a stagnate water, which falls in winter; besides, agriculture is so little understood, that the unthinking farmer never dreams of an injury, which he might easily prevent by cutting proper drains to let off the water; he contents himself with waiting for the heat of the sun, and the gales of wind usual in the spring, to dry it up.

Burra. Close to the north coast of this island is the island of Burra, divided by a navigable inlet or passage called *Water Sound*. This is the common passage for the shipping going to Stromness; but as
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the tides are rapid, and also some rocks at the mouth of the inlet, a pilot is therefore necessary. This island is one of the most beautiful spots in the country, being highly meliorated by inclosures, and other regular plans of modern improvement. It formerly belonged to Sir James Stuart, who died in the Marshalsea, in London, anno 1746, before he was tried for rebellion. This unfortunate man added art to nature, sparing no expence to perfect his plans in the most modern taste.—There is abundance of rabbits in this island, as in several of the others; but the absurd method of shooting them, practised by the inhabitants, is justly reprobated by our continental neighbours; who take with ferrets, nets, and dogs, in the day time, catching what number they think proper without injuring the warren. By the above method, the rabbits after being wounded, crawl into holes and there die, while the others that survive either perish
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from the stench of the dead carcases, or abandon their habitations, flying to the mosses and rocks, becoming a prey to dogs, eagles, &c. It is remarkable, that those rabbits that fly to the rocks, frequently try the hospitality of their companions in the warren, by entering their habitations; but they are prevented immediately from settling as aliens and strangers.

There is here quantities of very good turf, which proves a very great comfort to the inhabitants, as well as to those of *South Ronaldshay*, who depend on their being supplied from this place.

The ferry-house for the post from Caithness, is in the island of *South Ronaldshay*. The post, in its course to Kirkwall, passes through that island, is ferried over *Water Sound*, proceeds through *Burra*, from thence crosses *Holm Sound*, and soon arrives at Kirkwall, which is five miles off.

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This business is carried on with the greatest regularity, though it frequently happens on account of our storms and gales of wind in winter, that four or five mails, and sometimes more, that are due, arrive at the same time.

Copinshay. To the east and north of the inlet to *Holm Sound*, lies the island of *Copinshay*, bounded by the eastern ocean. This island is remarkable for its high and stupendous rocks to the eastward and northward, which, with a detached rock called the *Horse*, of equal height with the other, proves a happy land-fall to the shipping, coming from the east and north seas; *i. e.* from *St. Peterburgh*, *Narva*, *Memel*, *Hamburgh*, &c. These ships are bound, some to *Dublin*, *Belfast*, and other ports in *Ireland*, the others to *Whitehaven*, *Liverpool*, *Lancaster*, &c. In their second voyage, they commonly arrive at the latter end of *October* and *November*,
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the most stormy periods of the year, with long nights, and very little chance to find pilots at any distance from the land. They steer for Stromness, where they frequently winter, on account of the contrary winds which blow from the westward for months together. It has been often proposed, and is much desired by the masters of merchant ships who navigate in that tract, to have a lighthouse erected for the reasons above assigned. In the said high rocks, nest various kinds of birds, namely, mews, gulls, willocks, &c. and of the latter, thousands are taken by the interposition of a net, that covers the chafms, or coves in the rocks, which forming dark and dismal passages, are the more fit for the birds to breed in; they fly and are taken into the cod of the net, by firing of muskets, hal- lowing very loud, &c. which frights them. This method is practised in all the diffe- rent islands where the said birds resort; and thus administer profit, for they sell

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the feathers, &c. There is but one farm house on the island, and the owner lives chiefly by raising a few sheep and rabbits, having no dependance on a crop, as the corn is generally damaged with sea water. The Horfe island is pretty extensive, though of no service to the possessor, but for grazing a few sheep in the short sum- mer of this climate, and which must be taken out again in August, when the sea- son changes. This island is remarkable for breeding the best hawks in the king- dom. The hawks through the other islands are excellent, but particularly so here. Every year the King's falconer sends down a commissioner to collect those hawks, and to bring them to Edin- burgh. By an ancient custom, he de- mands a hen from every house in the different parishes, for the subsistence of these birds; but as they cannot consume one half of this provision, he sells the rest.

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Stromsay.

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Stronsay. This island lies to the east and north of Copinsha, is between five and six miles in length, its breadth uncertain. There are several places round the island where ships may anchor with great safety, especially in *Linga-sound*, *Huip-sound*, *Harigar*, &c.; but the proper harbour was formerly *Papa-sound*, which is now choaked up with shifting sand banks, and for this reason is only fit for the reception of very small vessels.

The soil of this island is pretty similar to that of the other already described. The natives have plenty of good turf; there are many good sheep walks, but under the same management as already stated in Walls. Between this island and Copinsha, runs a very strong current called *Stronsa firth*, frequently very dangerous for boats. The ships coming from the southward have nothing to fear in their passage to the northward by the above inlet;

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let; only the mariner must have the attention to give the land on each side a proper birth, borrowing, if any, way to the eddy side.

Sanday. The island of Sanday is only remarkable for its light sandy soil, and fertile productions generally speaking; it abounds with rabbits.

There is only one harbour for the safety of shipping, which lies in the northermost of the island called *Otterswick*. In this place any ships in distress may run ashore without any danger. You find here another landing place called *Kettle Toft*, used solely in summer.

North Ronaldsay. This island lies to the northward of Sanday, and is the most northerly of all the land; is very low and the shores sandy with many rocks and shelves on the coast. On this account, together

gether with the rapidity of the tides, which at certain times take their course round these rocks, the landing proves often fatal to the shipping; many are lost every year, and some of very considerable value. In 1740, the *Swecia* of Gottenburgh, an homeward-bound East-India ship, valued at half a million sterling, was lost on a rock called the *Feef Dike*; and in 1744, the *Crown Prince of Denmark*, an outward-bound East-India ship with thirty-one chests of treasure, besides other merchandize, met with the same fate. Between this island and the Fair island is the tract of foreign ships, the loss of which is frequently owing to the masters being ignorant of the course and force of the tides. I am happy to congratulate my countrymen on the adopted proposal of having a lighthouse erected on this island, the pressing necessity for which needs no comment. Many ridiculous charges have been laid against the natives, as if they

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used spells and other delusory methods to procure those shipwrecks; but the imputation is so absurd, that it needs no refutation. The inhabitants, who have more honour than many of their civilized and refined neighbours, give constantly a just and fair account of the goods wrecked on their shore. The mariners who profit too frequently by those scenes of distress, have often and voluntarily made oath, that they received from the inhabitants, the most singular proofs of humanity and attention, saving their lives at the risk of their own, and returning all the property, when recovered, without the smallest trifle being withheld.

Westra. Westra lies more to the west and south than the above island; it has only one place where the shipping can shelter, called *Pero Wall*.

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But of late, the loose sand carried off by certain winds, has so shalloed the harbour, as to render it unfit for the reception of vessels of any considerable burden; the same cause has also been the ruin of many parts of the island. It is remarkably well situated for fishing, and as agriculture cannot be followed with any advantage to the farmer; the inhabitants should naturally turn their thoughts that way, which would be exceeding advantageous to them. Near *Pero Wall* is to be seen the remains of a castle, built by Hepburn Earl Bothwell, for the reception of Mary Queen of Scots; it is neatly finished, being chiefly of freestone, with a regular line of fortification according to the times, such as battlements, watch-towers, sally ports, &c. besides a large well in the middle of the first hall.

North Fara. Between the above island and Eday lies *North Fara*, a very small island

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island, and of very little consequence, having no harbour or bay; it forms one side of *Ferfness bay*, Eday forming the other. Eday, which lies to the south of North Fara, is about six miles in length, by three in breadth, having an excellent harbour called *Calf sound*, with an inlet from the north and south.

Calf island, or Holm, forms the easternmost side of the harbour. On this island the pirate Gow was taken, by James Fea, Esquire, the then possessor. The pirates approaching the harbour, in order to pillage, unadvisedly, run their ship ashore. Mr. Fea attacked the crew after their landing with their arms; and after a severe conflict, they surrendered. Gow with nine more of the pirates, suffered at Execution Dock, in 1725; and were hung afterwards in chains along the river.

Hand view of the island. F 4 The

The said Gentleman received from Government for his services 1100l. besides 300l. for the salvage of the ship and cargo, and 400l. in a purse from the Merchants of London, as the said pirate had been extremely detrimental to the trade of the kingdom. The form, soil, &c. of this island, are generally the same with Hoy and Walls, already described.

In Calf Island are the remains of several salt pans, formerly belonging to the Earl of Carrick, who resided in Eday; but upon his death they were neglected—though it is my opinion, that they might be revived to great advantage, as there is an inexhaustible quantity of good turf all round.

Ronsay. Next to Westray lies the island of Ronsay, which is pretty similar; but as it has no harbour, I shall pass it over in silence.

Gairsay

Gairsay and *Eglesbay*, are two small islands, abounding with grass, sheep walks, &c. but no harbours or havens are to be met.

Inballow. This island lies to the south of Ronsay, between that and the main island; but as it has no harbour, it is of very little consequence. From its situation, it is equally exposed to sea gusts. A curious remark is, that a cat will not live in it.

Shapinsbay. This Island is about five miles in length, and three in breadth, very fit for pasture, but indifferent for the production of corn. It affords plenty of peat for fuel; and has the advantage of one of the most commodious harbours in the country, called *Elwick*, chiefly accessible from the southward and eastward.

No

No storms from any point of the compass can hurt the shipping here, when moored; and, in case they should be driven on shore, they can receive no damage, as the shores all around are mud and small beach.

Pomona. This island, twenty-four miles in length, is called *Pomona*, or mainland; near the center is Kirkwall, already described; and about five miles eastward from this town lies *Deerness*, remarkable for its excellent harbour. About twelve miles south-west lies Stromness, where the shipping, in passing and repassing, generally rendezvous, on account of its harbour, which is excellent. Much about the same distance lies *Birsay*, a beautiful spot, very fertile, but more exposed than any part in the country, to be damaged by sea water. Here are the remains of a very large edifice built by Patrick Earl of Orkney, already mentioned, for his country residence.

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The soil is various in the different parishes, but the system of agriculture is the same every where, and deserves no encomiums.

General Remarks.

The people in these islands pay to Government an annual composition, amounting to thirty pounds for the exciseable articles they make use of, such as candles, soap, leather, whisky, &c. This mode is a great relief to the natives, as they have no trouble with gaugers, as on the continent. They manufacture here, as well as in Shetland, great quantities of stockings, caps, &c.; they also make a sort of worsted stockings, which are the finest in the world, and often superior to those of Jersey and Guernsey. This article they dispose of abroad, for a much greater price than silk; some having been sold at thirty shillings a pair and more. But these stockings are rare, and not made for

for a general market, being rather calculated to display the great ingenuity of the people in spinning and knitting.

The inhabitants rear great plenty of flax, which they make into linen cloth; and its quality is not inferior to any of a similar texture in other parts. This proves a great relief, being a ready-money article at all times. The natives dress also leather for their own use; but it is thinner than on the continent, by reason of the hard feeding of the cattle, but for all that, it is strong and durable.

For tanning they make use of the *Tormentile root*, which grows every where in the hills and mountains; this is a great saving, as the other bark becomes a very chargeable article.

Most of the islands abound with excellent turf, except *Sanday* and *North Ronaldsay*, where

where they burn cow dung, which they prepare diligently in summer; also sea weeds, &c. The better sort bring coals from Newcastle, on board the ships returning in ballast, after delivering their cargoes of kelp; and frequently from Leith in Scotland. They use turf for cooking, washing, or any other domestic purpose. The exports from these islands, and those of Shetland, which might be greatly increased, are beef, butter, oil, furs, calf skins, raw hides, tallow, sheep and lamb skins, kelp, linen yarn, made linen, worsted, cotton and thread stockings, a smaller kind of bleaching alum manufactory, &c.

All these islands seem as if nature had purposely designed them for promoting trade; for besides the kelp made from their sea weeds for the glass manufactories, chiefly at Shields and Newcastle, they have the greatest variety of the very best clay,

clay, which might turn to great account in the making of earthen ware; for which article large sums of money go from the country annually.

To conclude, though some countries may glory in being richer, on account of their seas being better navigated, and their lands more fertile; yet these islands, by dint of industry and application, might abundantly supply all their wants, as the country is susceptible of great improvements, on account of the safe harbours and bays: if encouraged it could soon obtain a profitable trade by sea, especially by a prudent management of its fisheries. Besides, foreigners would settle amongst us, by reason of our constitutional freedom, both religious and civil, and the ease and security of our government, in protecting their property against the rapacity of despotic states and arbitrary clergy. The reputation of our fair and generous dealings

ings would be another powerful inducement to them: all these advantages united, would soon change the face of the country, and procure a brilliant maritime trade.

The Isles of Shetland.

Of the Shetland Isles. The isles of Shetland, the ancient Acmodæ, belong to the crown of Great Britain, as they did formerly to that of Scotland, being part of the stewartry of Orkney, and governed by the sheriff's deputy; they lie to the N. E. of the Orkneys, between 60 and 61 degrees north latitude, facing Norway.

The nearest isles of Shetland lie eighty miles from the Orkneys, and the sea between them is very turbulent and stormy. Those properly called isles are in number forty four, all inhabited; the others are called Holms, and though large enough, they are only made use of to feed cattle. Many Scotch families have settled in the Shetlands.

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Shetlands. Their manners, address, customs, &c. are the same as in the Orkneys; but the vulgar of the natives are descended from the Norwegians, and speak a corrupt dialect of their primitive language: they are generally healthy, often living to five, six, or seven score years of age.

There are many obelisks still standing, and many old fabrics, which are said to have been built by the *Picts*; they resemble pyramids, with a winding pair of stairs within reaching to the top; under them are cells, all vaulted over; and from the top they made a signal by fire, in case of any imminent danger. The land is clean in many places; some parts are mossy; but in general the soil is a sandy clay.

The produce of the country is chiefly fish, butter, oil, wool, feathers, beef hides, stuffs, stockings, woollen gloves and garters.

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ters. There has been seen at one time in *Brassay-Sound* 400 sails of Dutch Busses employed in the herring fishery, which is so profitable a branch to that thriving nation. After the *Fair Isle*, which lies half way between Orkney and Shetland, the first that offers is called *Mainland*, as being the largest: it is about sixty miles in length.

In Shetland they have one Presbitery, which assembles at Scalloway. In the town of Lerwick, the capital of Mainland and all the Shetland isles, there is a citadel called Mountfort; it stands on a rising rock on the north end of the town, and commands the harbour called the Sound of *Brassej*; it has a large stone wall, with several heaps within, and where a battalion may be mustered. Several pieces of ordnance were placed on the walls in the late contest with the Dutch.

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Though the moderns are at variance about the particular situation of the ancient *Thule*, yet they all agree it was somewhere towards the north; many make it to be one of the British Islands, and as *Conradus Celtus* said long ago that it was encompassed with the isles of Orkney, so I have applied this name to them.

Bochart observes that *Thule*, in the Syriac or Chaldean language, which is a dialect of the Phœnician, signifying darkness, the ancients, who had a mighty notion of the darkness of the regions farthest north, gave them the general name of *Thule*; and indeed it being indisputable that the Phœnicians ventured far beyond the Mediterranean, it is probable, that when they came to the coasts where fogs were thick and nights long, they have generally called them *Thule*, which name the Greeks, and after them the Romans,

mans, not understanding, they applied to some island in the most northerly part of Britain. That the ancient *Thule* must be placed there, will appear evidently from this: What Cæsar observed of the ancient Britons, that they painted their bodies blue, and fought with armed chariots, *Silius Italicus* affirms of the inhabitants of *Thule*; and it is plain that the poet could speak only of those whom the Romans fought with in his time.

*Cæculus haud aliter cum dimicat incola Thules,
Agmina falcifero circumvenit acta convino.*

Pliny was of the same opinion, for he treats of *Thule* in the same chapter with the British Islands; and Tacitus in his life of Agricola, says, that when the Roman navy failed about Britain, *despecta est & Thule*, that is, they saw *Thule* as they failed by the Orkneys, &c. Sir Robert Sibbald
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thinks that the Orkney and Shetland isles were the first that were called *Thule*, as being the first remarkable islands that the Carthaginians met with in their course from Cadiz, steering to the north, and also because Statius calls them Hesperia, or western *Thule*. Therefore, what the ancients say must refer to some British northern isles, which the Romans invaded under Agricola, and were then possessed by the Picts, whom Statius, who lived in the time of Domitian, calls Caledonians. How far an inquiry into the etymology of the various names of the inhabitants of these isles may serve to determine the nations from which the present inhabitants sprung, is a subject well worth the pains of a skilful and judicious antiquarian.

Upon the whole, it is certain that it can never be properly discussed without a competent

competent knowledge of the Celtic and Gothic languages; and of the several dialects which have been formed in these northern, and north western parts of the world. The customs and manners of the people of Shetland will be particularly noticed in our observations on the fisheries. These islands abound with excellent harbours, creeks, and havens; exceedingly convenient for the general purpose of fishing. Their soil is more fit for pasture than corn, and for that purpose is very well watered. The country in general is hilly and mountainous, there being but few plains, and they of no great extent. Their situation for trade, is equal if not superior to the Orkney islands, especially with the German continent, where a great part of their traffic centers.

The horses in these islands, called by the natives *Shelties*, are generally small, but so well proportioned that they are

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very fit for labour, or for travelling through the country among the rocks and mosses, so peculiar to its position. The air is cool and piercing; yet many of the inhabitants live to a great age. About the summer solstice, they have so much light all night, that they can see to read by it. The sun sets between ten and eleven at night, and rises between one and two in the morning; and *vice versa*, the day is so much shorter, and the night longer in the winter; which, with the violence of the tides, and the raging of the seas, deprives them of all foreign correspondence from October to April, during which time they know little of what passes in the other parts of the world. A celebrated instance of this is, that though the revolution in 1689 happened in November, they knew nothing of it till May following, when a fisherman who arrived there told them of it; and then they

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they imprisoned him, in order to try him for spreading such news.

They are much subject to the scurvy, by eating too much fish; but nature has furnished them with great quantities of scurvy grafs, cabbages, &c. for an antidote. They have little corn of their own growth, and therefore import great quantities from Orkney. Most of the fishers make for their drink butter milk mixed with water, and this they call *Bland*. The better sort have good beer and ale, with every other articles of luxury, of which they are very liberal to strangers. The small quantity of grain they raise is oats and *big*, but chiefly of the latter. Their ewes are very prolific, and for the most part bring forth two, and sometimes three lambs at a time. They have abundance of black cattle and sheep, but their general management is absolutely as absurd, as

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that set down in the description of Orkney.

Their religion is the Protestant, according to the rites of the church of Scotland, and they are generally, as well as the natives of Orkney, very religious. There are two towns in these islands; the first and the most ancient is *Scalloway*, on the west side of Mainland, where there is a castle four stories high. The inhabitants are some hundreds in number. The second and largest is *Lerwick*, which, by their fishing trade, is increased now to several hundred families. The *Dutch, Hamburgers, &c.* come hither to fish in June, and go away in August and September.

The most remarkable of the other islands here is *Yell*, eighteen miles long and nine broad; it has three churches and several chapels. Farther north lies *Vift*, much of the same dimensions, plain,

plain, pleasant, fruitful, and well inhabited. It is the most agreeable of the Shetland islands; has three churches, and as many harbours. The natives say that no cats will live in it. *Trondra* is over against *Scalloway*; it is three miles long and two broad.

A little to north-east lies *Walhfey*, three miles long and as many broad. On the east of *Brassay* Sound is *Great-Rule*, eight miles long and two broad; it has a good harbour.

Six leagues west from *Mainland* lies *Foula*, three miles in length. More to the east lies *Brassa*, five miles long and two broad; it has some good arable land, and two churches. *Burra* is three miles long, has good pasturage, abounds with fish on the coast, and has a church. No mice will live here; and it is said, that they

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they forsake any place where the earth of Burra is carried.

The country is divided into twelve parishes, but there are many more churches and chapels. Like *Orkney* it has no wood; a peculiar sort of fish and fowls is found in it. The inhabitants are very bold in venturing to sea at all seasons for fish; and in climbing the rocks for fowls.

The chief families in *Orkney* and *Shetland*, are the *Bruces*, *Sinclairs*, *Monats*, *Nirens*, *Stuarts*, *Grames*, *Moodies*, *Dowglasses*, *Honeymans*, *Trails*, *Baikies*, *Sutherland's*, *Craigies*, *Youngs*, *Buchanans*, &c. But the most ancient, and I may say the original, are the *Flets*, *Halcrows*, *Richens*, *Feas*, *Skollas*, *Grottes*, &c.

The men in all these isles are stout rowers, and will tug a long time at the oar

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oar without intermission. They use no compass, but take their measure from the sun, moon, and stars; and chiefly from the courses of the flocks of sea fowls; because they know to what rocks or islands they resort. They have two ropes for climbing the rocks, twenty four fathoms in length each, and covered with cow hides salted, to prevent their being cut by the rocks. They climb by turns, and bring home some thousands of eggs and fowls at a time. They also make gins of horse hair for catching the fowls; sometimes however, they lose their lives by climbing.

A Summary View of the Western Isles, or Hebrides, as stated in Mr. Martin's Account, &c.

These islands, called by the ancients *Hebrides*, or *Ebudæ*, which are very numerous, and several very large, and well inhabited, were little known to the world, till

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till very lately. Mr. Martin observes, that before him they never had been described by any man that was a native of the country, or that had been in all of them. From him, therefore, I shall borrow in part what I have to say of them; and shall keep to his method in their nomenclature, beginning first with those that lie most northerly.

Lewis, called by the natives Long Island, is one hundred miles from north to south, and from three to fourteen from east to west; it belongs to the shire of Ross, and was once in the diocese of the Hebrides. It does not all go by one name. The northern part, which is called Lewis, is but thirty-six miles long, and ten miles, in some places twelve miles, broad. It reaches from the north of Bowling-head, to the south of Huffiness; the soil generally sandy, and fruitful in barley, oats, and rye; it bears also flax and hemp.

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With oats the people make usquebaugh, which by frequent distillations becomes excessively strong.

There are many convenient harbours in the island, which abounds with cod, ling, herrings, and a great variety of oysters, cockles, muscles, limpets, and other sorts of shell fish. Whales they have in great numbers, and of several sorts; the lesser they eat and find them tolerably wholesome. They have cows, horses, sheep, goats, and hogs; their beef is small, but very tender. Deers are plentiful in the chace of Oservaul, which is fifteen miles round. The fresh water lakes, with which the island abounds, afford trouts, eels, and salmon. Every lake has a river of its own, which runs afterwards into the sea, and in summer time is stored with salmon.

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The southern part is named Harries, which for soil and commodities, is much the same as Lewis. The shore on the west side of the island is stored with a great variety of curious shells, finely streaked with beautiful colours. The ground in Bernora, a small island belonging to Harries, is so good, that when manured with sea-weed, the great manure of those islands, barley will yield twenty, sometimes thirty fold. Lewis belongs to the Earl of Seaford; and Harries to the Laird of M'Leod. There are great numbers of small islands which depend upon Lewis and Harries.

The Isle of North Ust is about nine miles long from north to south, and thirty in circumference. The west side is arable, and exceedingly fruitful, especially in barley; it produces also plenty of black cattle and sheep; it has an excellent harbour called Lockmaddy, in which incredible quantities

quantities of herrings have been taken. Four hundred sail of ships have been loaded with herrings in one season. The other fish and fowl are here much the same as in the other north-western Islands. Several small islands belong to North Ust. The proprietor is Sir David M'Donald, of Fleet. The inhabitants of Lewis, Harries, and North Ust, are all protestants.

Benbecula, two miles south of North Ust, is nearly round, three miles in diameter, and about ten in circumference; soil and produce the same as in North Ust. The Proprietor and inhabitants are all Roman Catholics.

South Ust, two miles south of Benbecula; is from twenty to twenty-three miles long, four broad. The soil is fruitful, and produces barley, rye, and oats plentifully. Lakes full of trouts and eels. Inhabitants

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Inhabitants healthy. One man lived lately one hundred and thirty years, and retained his appetite and understanding. The Irish tongue is spoken here in great perfection.

Barray, two leagues and half from South Uist, is five miles long, and three broad. It is in all respects like the islands which lie north of it. The inhabitants, all Romanists, pay great reverence to St. Bar, their tutelar Saint. All these islands lie in a row, southwards one of the other, from Barray, down to Lewis.

Between Harries and Rofs lies Sky, the second for bigness of all the Western Islands. It is forty miles long, and twenty, in some places thirty, miles broad, near one hundred miles in circumference. It belongs to the shire of Inverness, from which, in the south, it is not above three leagues distant, and at the ferry not a mile broad;

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broad; it is navigable by the largest ships of war; the current there is so violent, that no vessel is able to sail against it, though the wind proves never so fair, so that the tide must be always observed. The way of ferrying cows in the narrow ferry, called the Kyle, where the said tide is so rapid, is thus: they tie a *with* about the cows lower jaw, and so bind five of them together, after which a man in the end of the boat holds the with that ties the foremost, and so rows over, carrying in the space of a few hours at low water three or four hundred cows. The soil is fruitful enough in the flat grounds, and produces corn and cattle plentifully, which are to be found in the other Western Islands. Herring, cod, and ling, are common upon their coasts, and the herring in great abundance; they have many and convenient harbours for the taking of them. The country is populous and the people handsome, and very healthy.

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It is divided into three parts, possessed by three different proprietors. Almost all the inhabitants of Sky are protestants.

Gigay lies west of Cantire, four miles long, one broad; it belongs to the shire of Argyle. Soil is good for pasture, and arable. Inhabitants protestants. Near it is Garay, a little island about a mile round.

To the north of Cantire, lies Jura, twenty-four miles long, and six or seven miles broad, belonging to the Duke of Argyle. The ground is fruitful and lies high, especially towards the middle, where two very high mountains, called the Paps of Jura, are noted sea marks for a very great way. This is esteemed the wholesomest spot of ground belonging to the isle of Great Britain. From March to September, the air is perfectly pure. No epidemical diseases are ever known here; gouts, agues, consumptions, palsies, lethargies,

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thargies, rickets, coughs, are very rarely heard of. I must not pass by, says an anonymous writer, Mr. Martin's favourite island of St. Kilda; it is but two miles long and one broad; the inhabitants, are about two hundred, well proportioned and comely; they are zealous protestants, as far as their knowledge extends, very regular and just in their conversation; strangers to luxury and excess. They have a chapel where they meet every Lord's day, to repeat the Lord's prayer, the belief, and ten commandments, and neither work nor allow any stranger to work on that day.

They have an altar and crucifix in their chapel, on which they lay their hands when they take the marriage oath, or any other oath. Their houses are of one story, of stone, and covered with turf; they make their beds in the walls of the houses, and lie on straw, although they have plenty of down and feathers; and they

live altogether in a little corner to the east of the island. The people all speak Irish, and are of the same race with the Highlanders on the continent. One wonderful qualification that some of these islanders are said to possess, ought not to be overlooked. It is too well attested to be called in question, though if it were not so, no man without folly could believe it, that is, the second sight. It is a faculty of seeing absent persons, and things to come, represented to their imaginations, as if they were actually visible and present. Thus if a man is to die, his image shall appear in its natural and distinct shape, in a shroud, to one that perhaps never saw his face, and sometime after the man whose image so appears shall die. This quality of second *sightedness* is not hereditary. The person who has it, cannot exert it at pleasure, nor can he communicate it to another, but it comes of itself, and exercises itself wholly against the will,

will, and often especially in young Seers, to the great trouble and consternation of those whom it possesses. Observation teaches you to judge of those visions; and they are scarcely ever known to fail.

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CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

FISHERIES

IN THE

SCOTCH ISLANDS.

CONSIDERATIONS, &c.

THE Scotch Islands, though so precious and valuable by the immense trade which might be carried on on their coasts, are almost unknown, not only in Europe, but even in the British empire.

If the English cast a look on the map of our possessions in this part of the globe, they hardly observe those *isolate* spots, or consider them with indifference and contempt, in the same manner as the Chinese are reported to treat all the countries in the four parts of the world, except their own.

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In their maps, China fills almost the whole globe, whilst the rest of the world is scattered in the angles, as unworthy of notice.

Yet the Scotch Islands are peopled with a hardy, laborious, faithful, brave, and virtuous race of men, who deserve to be treated with more regard, not only on account of their being our fellow subjects, but because they are useful to the Empire at large, and may become greatly more so if properly encouraged. Nevertheless, these men who are intitled to all the rights and benefits of society, are neglected and oppressed. Though the hereditary jurisdictions are suppressed by law in North Britain and her dependencies, the destructive effects and spirit of the feudal system are still felt, especially in the most northern part of the kingdom, and in the islands, where the sterility of the soil, by rendering it unfit for agriculture and the various

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various branches of commerce, which fertility produces, adds to the misery of the inhabitants. Yet in those climates, which seem purposely formed by nature, an immense trade may be procured, and carried on with the greatest success. It is by encouraging the fisheries, a constant treasure, which is peculiarly our own, and cannot be transferred to rival nations by any revolution in commerce. These fisheries, so abundant, so rich, and so extensive, would be an inexhaustible source of wealth, which may be procured with little expence; and even that expence would be advantageous in promoting several manufactures, and centering entirely amongst our own people. The fish when taken, are a commodity of great value; for either they become part of our home consumption, and thus save much money, or they are exported; and in that case, what costs us nothing but labour, would be disposed of for ready cash, or commodities of foreign growth,

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growth, which must be otherwise paid for in specie. The Dutch now seem to engross, unrivalled, that valuable branch of our fisheries, which consists in exports, and procure them more wealth than all the mines of Peru and Mexico produce to the Spaniards, it being calculated at two millions *communibus annis*, besides its answering other political purposes. Necessity first put the Dutch upon these fisheries, and the vast gain they brought in powerfully encouraged them to pursue, as they have done, a branch of trade, entirely adapted to their situation, genius, and mode of living. That nation drags our coasts every year for herrings, cod, ling, tusks, &c.; thus depriving the empire at large of invaluable advantages, which a similar industry would naturally center amongst us. In the course of their fishing, they labour under every disadvantage, especially in their herring fishery, coming from their own coasts, two hundred leagues at least,

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to those of Shetland, and often making very long voyages.

The restriction they are under in the country as aliens, by not being permitted to dry or mend their nets on shore. In consequence of which, many of their necessary tackling is lost, are terrible checks, besides several of them losing their season by so many disappointments. Yet by firmness and perseverance, in spite of so many obstacles, the Dutch have the art to make the barren coasts of Shetland another Peru for themselves.

The wisdom of their government is conspicuous in many points, and perhaps worthy our imitation. They receive no bounties on any branch of their fisheries, for which reason they labour with indefatigable industry, to enrich themselves by their fisheries, without assistance from the public.

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These adventurers when successful, not only become opulent, but communicate the blessings of industry to thousands. It is well known that the female servants in the republic, after saving a few years wages, will sooner join their moiety in a fishing scheme, than in any other plan whatsoever, as they generally gain at least six per cent. Before the last war, the Dutch employed from eight to ten thousand persons in the herring fishing only; that number was greatly reduced in consequence of the hostilities. But since the return of peace, they have added several hundreds to their original numbers.

Thus they continue to act as if these coasts were their own, scarcely acknowledging the superiority of our state, and our inherent rights to that immense branch of trade. But it is to be hoped, that upon the revival of our fisheries, the King's ships that are always sent to protect our
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busses against the frequent insults to which they are exposed from those intruders, will effectually support and secure to ourselves that inexhaustible source of riches. For were they to be kept at the prescribed distance from our coasts, which is five leagues, they would have little chance.

It is a known fact, and particularly by their constant station close to the coasts during the fishing season, that great shoals of herrings in their passage to the west and south, keep within that distance, for natural reasons which might be assigned: under such numerous difficulties, the Dutch herrings must cost double the sum that it would to us, coming at least to six shillings per barrel as they fall from the net. It is therefore the height either of supine indolence or ignorance, to suffer a foreign nation to engross a trade which they have often in their edicts emphatically stiled *the golden mines of the republic.*

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The wary Dutch never insure, not even their Greenland or Davis's-Straits ships, although they remain so long as the latter end of September, in those dreary latitudes, frequently exposed to be destroyed by the ice; the irregular motion of which is increased by the multiplied storms of wind, and the terrible agitation of the sea, attending the change of seasons. Yet amidst all these difficulties, with many more that might be stated, they brave and surmount all obstacles, commonly returning home with full cargoes.

Were we to enter into a minute and particular consideration of the several branches of our fisheries, this article would swell this general sketch beyond the limits which I have prescribed to myself; because to do ample justice to a subject of such concern to the British nation, would require such a full and particular discussion. We shall however observe, that since Providence has

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so eminently stored the coasts of Great Britain with so great a treasure. And since fisheries are an extensive and permanent nursery for expert seamen, it is not only a duty we owe to the Supreme Being, not to despise its gifts, but we owe to our country to promote every thing conducive to our security and welfare as a great nation. No state can have a navy, where there is not a line of business sufficient to breed and employ seamen, without any expence to the public; and no trade is so well calculated for training up those useful members of society, as our fisheries.

The situation of the British coasts, is the most advantageous in the world for this purpose; the Scottish Islands, especially to the north and west, lie most commodiously for carrying on the fishing trade to perfection; and no country in Europe can pretend to come up to Scotland for the abundance and quality of the said natural product,

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duct, with which its numerous creeks, bays, rivers, lakes, and coasts are replenished. King Charles I. was so sensible of the great advantages to be derived from the fisheries, that he began the experiment by a company of merchants, though the civil wars that ensued soon forced him to drop that great project. Charles II. resumed the same, but that voluptuous Prince, more addicted to his pleasures than the interest of the nation, was always needy, and to satisfy the rapacity of his mistresses and minions, he was compelled to take back the funds he had applied to that object, and the company was dissolved. Since the Union, many efforts have been made to retrieve the fisheries, and a company called the Royal British Fishery, was established. In the year 1750, the parliament of Great Britain taking the state of the fisheries into consideration, an act was passed for the encouragement of the white-herring fishery, and granting a charter,

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charter, whereby a corporation was created, to continue twenty-one years, by the name of the society of the *Free British Fishery*. It was put under the direction of a governor, president, vice-president, council, &c. who were to continue in office for the space of three years, with power to make bye laws, and to raise a capital of 500,000l. by way subscription; it was also enacted, that any number of persons, who, in any part of Great Britain, would be inclined to subscribe 10,000l. into the stock of another society, under the name of the *Fishing Chamber*, and to carry on the fishery on their own account of profit and loss, should be entitled to the same bounty allowed to the first. The bounties were thirty shillings per ton, to be paid yearly for fourteen years, besides three per cent. for the money advanced by each chamber. The act contained other proper regulations relative to the nets, marks on the barrels, the number of hands employed, the quantity

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tity of salt, &c. Then by the encouragement given by this act, a laudable emulation was seen to prevail in the two kingdoms, and fishing Busses started from almost every port, to repair to the Shetland Islands, where the herring fishery was to be carried on with the greatest ardor by foreigners of all denominations under the auspices of Great Britain. But the principal sharers in the profits of this branch of trade, were the inhabitants of Orkney. The Busses were commanded and navigated by them; they supplied the other necessary hands, such as gippers, salters, coopers, &c. The women knit the nets; and even the aged and children were employed all of them earning a comfortable subsistence. The trustees wisely sent down proper persons to instruct the inhabitants, especially in backing the nets, which is a most essential part, for if the mesh does not hang square in the water, it generally misses the fish.

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This happy establishment prevented the emigrations of the natives, which were so frequent before, owing to the wretched life they led. The peculiarity of our insular situation in the northern sea, naturally inclines to that element, and in consequence, whatever may indulge that propensity, would keep the people at home; and nothing can do it so effectually as the fisheries, when properly encouraged. They would cheerfully intermarry, and that tender attachment implanted in our breasts by nature for our progeny would be a sure pledge to government for their persevering in the place of their nativity, to the great advantage of the state in general. The soil in our islands is for the most part mossy, or a strong clay. The inhabitants previous to the fishing season, cultivate the most favourable spots, as well as their confined notions of agriculture will admit. Black oats, big, or common barley, potatoes, cabbages, are the sole produce of their

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lands, but the climate so peculiar to the country, too frequently disappoint them in the expected return for their labour, which is the sole support of their families the remainder of the year.

This change commonly begins early in August and continues till May, with foggy weather, storms, and hard gales of wind, blowing chiefly from the west, in which point it perseveres almost months in the year. Though nature has wonderfully fortified our coasts on that quarter, with high and stupendous rocks, so necessary to repel the continual efforts of the Atlantic ocean, yet the most melancholy effects ensue in consequence, when the winds blow in great force, the surges rise in proportion, dashing violently against the rocks. The white salt froth which is forced up above the highest promontories, mixes with the air in circulation, is carried over lands under cultivation, falls as it passes
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on the corns, dries and hardens upon them, by which its farther growth is totally impeded, and the most sanguine hopes of the poor farmer entirely destroyed. The straw even, as well as the hay, becomes unfit for any purpose in husbandry.

The poor natives in these circumstances must have recourse to their landlords, who pay their services in the fisheries on their own terms, as will be seen hereafter.

As the inhabitants have but little reason to depend upon a yearly support by tillage, I could wish they would solely apply their minds to the fisheries, which would very soon reward their labour a thousand fold.

Nevertheless a plan properly digested, being absolutely necessary for this great undertaking, I beg leave to offer my ideas on that head. I would propose that convenient spots of ground contiguous to the

best fishing places, and previously surveyed, should be purchased, and comfortable houses built thereon, with a cabbage garden, a piece of ground for potatoes annexed to each, being all what a fisherman requires. These would soon become large villages, and in time towns, where each family would be most usefully employed for themselves and the public. Vide the plan for promoting the Scotch fisheries here annexed.

The following contains the substance of the plan agreed upon to promote the Scotch fisheries by the Committee.

“ That a company shall be instituted,
“ called the Joint-stock Company, any
“ member of which subscribing 50l. shall
“ be entitled to a vote in the expenditure
“ of the money, and in the appointment of
“ the different officers and directors; and
“ such persons as shall raise an extraor-
“ dinary sum, to be entitled to an adequate
“ advan-

“ advantage. The number of subscribers
“ not to be limited,

“ That six trustees shall be appointed
“ for the direction of affairs; that the
“ money contributed, shall be expended
“ solely in the erecting of houses, and
“ other buildings, fit for the accommo-
“ dation of persons entrusted with the
“ management and carrying on of the
“ fisheries.

“ That as soon as fifty houses are erec-
“ ed on any particular spot mentioned
“ by the Directors, the inhabitants shall
“ proceed to the election of magistrates,
“ and other officers necessary for the go-
“ vernment of the town or village.

“ The the inhabitants of the towns or
“ villages shall be exempted from paying
“ any of the public burdens, excepting
“ what by a majority of two thirds, shall
“ be

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“ be found necessary for repairing the
 “ streets, defraying the expence of the
 “ police, &c. &c.

“ That such persons as shall happen,
 “ from poverty, to be incapable of paying
 “ their share of the necessary burdens,
 “ shall be permitted to remain free in their
 “ possessions for a limited time.

“ That there shall be no incorporation
 “ of trades, nor any monopoly whatever,
 “ but every person proving to settle in the
 “ towns or villages, shall have the free
 “ exercise of his profession.

“ That the rents of the houses shall
 “ serve as a return to the company for the
 “ money expended.

“ That the company shall purchase
 “ lands from the original proprietors, at a
 “ fair

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“ fair valuation, and build thereon by
 “ contract.

“ That any person may have permission
 “ to build on the company's lands, by
 “ paying a small annual ground rent.

“ That any member of the company
 may purchase any other buildings at the
 “ original cost.

“ That at the end of four years, the
 “ company shall make a fair dividend, or
 “ allow their money to remain in the
 “ hands of the directors, for the purpose
 “ of being applied towards the extension
 “ of the fisheries, or be disposed of in any
 “ other manner most advantageous to the
 “ proprietors.

“ That the company shall relinquish
 “ their right to such houses or buildings,
 “ as soon as the inhabitants shall find them-
 “ selves

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“ selves able to purchase them at a fair valuation.” These are the principal heads of a plan which it is supposed government will readily agree to.

It is farther proposed, that there should be storehouses filled with every necessary for fishing, as well as provisions, coals, &c. for the men, first at the government's expence, or of the more wealthy private adventurers. The articles immediately required, are boats with tackling, hooks, leads, lines, of all kinds, &c. The boats committed to the fishermen, should be constructed under their own direction in their respective districts, without compelling them to use others, the management of which they do not so well understand. This measure would inspire them with confidence, and encourage them to go at greater distances from the shore in quest of fish. The form of the boats upon the different coasts intended for the seats of the

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the fisheries, vary much; and one invincible argument in favour of the above proposal is, that the passage from island to island being attended with difficulty, and frequently danger, from the rapid currents, boisterous seas, rocks and shelves, &c. evinces the necessity of leaving this matter to the fishermen without any controul. Contiguous to these storehouses, should be booths for the reception of the fish as it comes, &c. for the payment of the several articles debited against them. For executing this part of the plan, it is proposed, that each boat shall have five men, and one of the most experienced be appointed patron or skipper. It is understood that each boat shall be regularly marked and numbered. The fishermen upon receiving the boats with all the materials necessary, shall become debtors for the same, by their respective names being inserted in a book as in all mercantile business, under the stile of debtor and creditor. The fish they bring

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bring to the booths, shall be received as the credit of the fishers, for the fishing season, at a stipulated price agreed upon between the agent and the fishers, according to the size and quality, *i. e.* cod eighteen inches from the nape of the neck, exclusive of the neck, to the upper part of the tail. Ling by the general run of the tell. Tusk by the tell. Seath Haick by size and tell. Skeat by tell. All these different species are to be received at the booths, where a receipt of each delivery ought to be given for the satisfaction of the fishers; with a strict adherence to fair dealing, which is the very soul of commerce, as it inspires mutual confidence. The moment this confidence is lost, the present important scheme must fall to the ground. Farther, as it is highly probable that the wives, children, and inmates of those people will be employed in some branches of this plan, their labour should be added to the fisher's credit, in order to expiscate

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expiscate their debit the sooner. The daily or piece labour being arranged between the agent and the natives, there should be at the end of the season, a settlement of the fishers' account, the balance struck; by this and other similar methods, the fisheries will prove a great and constant source of riches; and what is still more to our purpose, it will be inexhaustible. There is no danger in extending them as far as they will go, for the fish will in proportion be better cured, more hands and more vessels will be employed in the fisheries and exportations, and the strength of the British navy will be prodigiously increased. Such a plan will awe our enemies, and compel them to maintain a pacific system, for fear of still greater disgraces than those which they experienced in our late contests by the number and superiority of our seamen.

We hope that the eminent persons who have taken some initial steps to carry on
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this capital undertaking, will persevere, by applying for a national aid, in whatever mode their wisdom may direct; and that in the august assembly of the nation, this salutary plan will meet with no resistance, against its being immediately carried into execution. Besides the great advantage that will result from such a measure, it is in a manner necessary to prevent those emigrations occasioned by misery, oppression, and want of employment. As the poor natives have no visible way of living, they naturally repine at their fate, and seriously think of departing a country where they are neglected. The following plan for carrying on the fisheries, grounded upon the most minute and exact observations, is with the greatest deference submitted to the inspection of the public, especially of those, who by duty or inclination, are led to support such a laudable and important enterprize. It is introduced for a cool and unprejudiced discussion, in
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that chaste and simple stile which ought to characterize publications of this kind. If this essay should contain any hints for others to improve upon; I will think myself amply rewarded for all my trouble.

Should the plan for the revival of the fisheries be carried on by the members of administration, they becoming, in such a case, the first adventurers, I beg leave to point out the great and numerous advantages that would result from a prudent management of their funds, as it is well known, that by many base and shameful transactions, the sums so generously bestowed by government for the support of the last royal white-herring fishery, were soon exhausted, and thousands of poor people disappointed in their hopes of a comfortable living. Let them first secure to government by acts of the legislation, the benefits of the bounties offered to private adventurers; this with the bounties
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on the exportation of dried fish, cured with foreign salt at three shillings per quintal, or gross hundred, would be a great saving to the fund, and greatly assist in carrying on the plan from its infant state to a high degree of perfection. The oil made from the livers of the white fish, &c. cheeks, tongues, founds, rane; all these articles with the coarser fish, *i. e.* coles, haick, skate, &c. cured at no expence to the fund, but be brought to a home market would also bring a considerable profit. Thus a few superintendants, understanding thoroughly the management of the fisheries, would soon be able to raise a fund, more than sufficient to support and continue this great business, without assistance from the original stock. The profits arising from the more valuable part of the fish, would be so considerable, as to supply a constant treasure for supporting and securing the honour and dignity of a great commercial nation. But

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if we are disappointed in our hopes, that the government will take the first step in this affair, the whole plan must remain in idle phantom, and the poor natives of our northern islands, finding no redress to their grievances, and no support under that load of complicated misery to which they are reduced, will be compelled by necessity to emigrate, and seek elsewhere an asylum, where they may meet with a kinder treatment. In such a case, all future prospects of enriching the state by that inexhaustible source of wealth, will be nothing but a vain dream.

For it can never answer any solid purpose for private individuals, to carry on the fisheries singly, notwithstanding all encouragement. The bounties offered by government, are long before they are paid; private adventurers are forced to borrow upon the credit of the above, and that at a more than ordinary interest.

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In general, they are people of small fortunes, and soon crushed in their efforts, in case of any accident at their first setting off. Besides they are too frequently tempted to perjure themselves, at the custom house, where they are obliged to swear to the number of men they employ, to that of their nets, according to the usual act of parliament in similar cases, before they are entitled to receive the bounties. They also frequently buy their cargoes at the locks in the Highlands, and return full loaded; the country boats supplying them for a trifling consideration, at the very time that the law expressly says, that these cargoes must have been taken in open sea, by their own industry. In the Hebrides, the proposed seat of the fisheries in that quarter, the natives always had a military turn, and have on all occasions supported that gallant spirit, with the greatest reputation, against the enemies of the state. This spirit may be turned with great advantage

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vantage towards the sea, by applying them to the several branches of the fisheries; and thus preparing a set of brave tars to man the royal navy, when necessity requires, especially as the land army may at all times be easily recruited in our inland towns and villages. Another object worthy of attention is, that the servants in those islands, being inclined to sloth, and all the vices that attend it, the most effectual way to make them, and our numerous beggars and vagabonds, useful to the state and themselves, is to offer them a prospect of bettering their condition at sea. Sir Walter Raleigh made it appear to King James I. that the Dutch gained annually by the herring fishery on our coasts 137,000*l.* besides what they employed in their home consumption.

Their profits amounted in the time of Sir Joshua Child, to 500,000*l.* It is very generous on our part indeed, to let them

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reap the benefit of that treasure, which benevolent providence accumulates in our seas.

I beg leave to conclude this long preamble to this plan, which I submit to the public by a striking paragraph, which has lately appeared in our public prints. The author, after expatiating on the subject, adds these remarkable words; “ If we turn our
 “ eyes at home, we will find districts of
 “ much greater extent than Holland, and
 “ of much more value, though of not the
 “ smallest to the community at present.
 “ The cluster of islands called the Heb-
 “ rides; if they had been lately discover-
 “ ed in the Pacific ocean, would have been
 “ colonized by Englishmen. In extent of
 “ territory, they surpass the united Pro-
 “ vinces; in climate, soil, bays, and har-
 “ bours, on their coasts, they are infinite-
 “ ly superior. They are neglected how-
 “ ever by England, and almost depopula-
 ted;

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“ ted; while Holland contains one hun-
 “ dred and thirteen cities, fourteen hun-
 “ dred villages, and two millions of inha-
 “ bitants.”

What must a judicious reader infer from all this, and much more that could be said on such an important subject, but that notwithstanding all our pretensions to sound policy, we are in many respects like children, with regard to their insensibility and indifference towards what must in the end concern them essentially. I now come to the most material part of this publication, which relates to the taking, curing, &c. the fish in our northern coasts.

The people of property in the Shetland Islands have for several years past turned their whole attention to the fishing of cod, ling, tusk, &c. which when the seasons are favourable, is commonly attended with great success, as this plan was the chief
 K 4 object,

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object; they have reduced many of the larger farms on their estates, and converted them into smaller parcels, affording only to the tenant a potatoe ground and a cabbage garden, with little or no ground.

This system afforded them an extraordinary number of hands to man their boats in the fishing season. They have booths erected at the most convenient and customary places of landing, where the men throw the fish, and where they are supplied with what they want for the season. The warehouses contiguous to the booths are furnished, not only with every thing necessary, but also with articles of luxury; some of them very ill calculated for the circumstances of the purchasers. They receive from Hamburgh, linen, spirits, hooks and lines, &c.; from Holland much the same, with the addition of snuff, tobacco, &c.; from Scotland hats, ribbands, printed linens for their wives and daughters,

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daughters, &c. For all this the fishers pay a very advanced price upon the product of the season, at a stipulated sum.

Many of the proprietors have of late acted much against their own interest, by permitting these poor people to run deep in arrears, for several superfluities; little reflecting, that if the fishing season does not turn successful, they must be farther under the necessity of supplying the families of their tenants with the common means of subsistence, without which they must perish, as they depend solely on the fishing to repay their employers. But this way of acquitting themselves, is not always certain; and in a bad season, their debts, which have been insensibly accumulating, become a heavy burden, under which they sink into despair, and invoke death, which soon clears their accounts. Thus the creditors are frustrated, and the state deprived of useful subjects.

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The general employment of women, children, and the aged, in winter time, is knitting of stockings, mittens, and night-caps, which they sell for money prices to the Dutch fishers, at the annual fair of Lerwick, in the month of June, previous to their beginning to fish for herrings. These articles are but a small relief in distress, as the returns are trifling.

The boats, which is the greatest expence, the fishers have also from their masters; they are all Norway built, and brought from a place called *Geau-Sound*, because their form is preferred by the Shetlanders, though they are exposed to the greatest danger in these slender machines.

The sums which the merchants or landholders receive from government, as bounties upon the exportation of their fish for foreign markets, are very considerable, amounting generally to near 3000l. sterling.

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The markets for these exports, are Hamburg, Barcelona, Bilboa, Leghorn, and Genoa, in the Mediterranean, Bremen, Verden, and Holland, &c. What is designed for home consumption, is not entitled to any bounty. The agreement between the Lairds and their fishers, differ in some parts of the country; some giving more, and some less; but the medium prices are; for a guild ling, *i. e.* the largest sort, from fourpence to sixpence; tusk, from twopence to threepence; merchantile cod, measuring eighteen inches from the nape of the neck to the last joint of the tail, threepence; feath, or cole fish, skate, &c. one penny. The reader will see from the above statement, what miserable encouragement the poor fishers have in the pursuit of this slavish and hazardous employment.

It has been already observed, that some landholders give greater prices for what

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is commonly called green-fish; and it is certain, that those who give most, are the greatest gainers; as the fishermen by receiving this extra sum, bring all the fish they take to their masters; whereas the others who have not an equal inducement, dispose of their prime fish to the succouring vessels in the offing. But when they are detected, the skipper and the whole crew, with their families, are unmercifully banished the islands.

I shall now proceed to shew the mode of fishing during the winter and spring seasons. In many parts of the country they take great quantities of cod, which sets into their *voes*, as they term it, being a Norwegian word for an inlet.

This supplies the inhabitants for present use, though the quality of the fish is but indifferent. They therefore make stock-fish of the remainder, by drying it in their

Skoes,

Skoes, with which every family is furnished. These *Skoes* are built with stone without mortar, at a proper distance from one another, for the purpose of the wind blowing through the crevices on the fish, that hang two and two by the tails on poles. This stock of fish they vend, wherever they find a market, but mostly to the shipping: As they use no salt in curing it, there is no restriction on its sale.

The various articles for the grand fishery being provided, they push in a body all around the islands on the same day, which is commonly the first of June, and a kind of annual jubilee. They soon reach the *Haaf* as they call it, that is the usual distance for laying their lines, which are more or less in length and number of hooks, according to the different parts of the country; there they immediately set to work, and persevere with the most unremitting diligence during the season, which

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only lasts six weeks; for when the sun begins to decline to the south, the nights grow dark, and the succouring vessels frequently lose sight of the boats under their care. These boats left to themselves, strive to push for the shore, amidst the greatest danger, especially when they are stationed in the west of the Shetlands, fifteen or sixteen leagues out at sea; and often miserably perish within sight of the shore, where the wives and children of the poor fishers are the melancholy witnesses of their sad catastrophe, without being able of affording them any assistance. These accidents happen more frequently to the young, who have less experience; but the veteran are often known to keep at sea for several days together, rather than to attempt a landing, when the wind blows with violence, and from that particular point of the compass to which these coasts are the most exposed. They always row by turns on these occasions, constantly
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keeping the stems of the boats to the sea. Of late years, the fishers are obliged to go at greater distances than formerly from the coasts, because the fish have changed their rout, from whatever cause, I cannot take upon me to determine. But the perils of the fisheries have increased in proportion, on account of the furious and sudden gusts of wind, even in summer in these latitudes; and if the lines are employed at this time, the fishers must resolve to perish, or cut them; which sacrifice involves them in great difficulties, to procure a new set of implements; such is their reluctance to part with them, however for saving their lives, that some have been seen to prefer dying at their lines. Many adventurers from the South, have for several years past, fished on those coasts with uncommon success, and greatly improved this important branch of trade. They arrive on the coast in small vessels of sixty or seventy tons; and after purchasing

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chasing their boats in the country, and hiring their fishers by the month or season, maintainance included; they put three boats, commonly with five men in each, under the care of one vessel; the most experienced man in every boat is made patron or skipper, and has charge of the hooks, lines, &c. after receiving all the necessaries for fishing, and bait being provided, commonly the black pollock; they proceed to what distance these skippers direct, towing their boats with proper ropes placed in such a manner that they do not run foul of one another at any time during the passage. The first day the men in each boat assist in baiting the lines, and have them all ready for the night's fishing. When they are about to throw their lines, the vessels bring to, and the boats are manned; each of them being provided with a bottle of spirits, commonly gin or fenel spirit, and some biscuit; they then put off together from the vessel, rowing different

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different ways from each other, on a certain point of the compass, with which each boat is supplied; and when they come to the designed spot, they cast their first buoy, paying out the lines till they are all laid. After the last buoy is thrown, they immediately steer for the first, by sailing on the opposite point of the compass and never fail to find it. These buoys are made of anker kegs, a pole of a certain length is put through the body of the anker at the bung, and comes out at the opposite side, where it is made water tight. On the top is a bundle of heath, or a vane so contrived by the flinging, that by fixing the rope centrally, to the lower part in the water, it is always uppermost, and in full view. The lines are commonly laid two hours before sun-set, I mean the first set, and always taken into the boats before midnight.

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The skipper hauls the lines, which requires great dexterity for fear any hooks should fix in the rocks, and this frequently happens, thereby occasioning the loss of the lines. The fish when brought up to the gunwail of the boats are taken in, by what they call a hieff, or hook fixed at the end of a stick of a convenient length; and after their throats are cut, they are thrown by to bleed. The hieff should always be stuck in the head or gills of the fish, and never in the body, as that place will never take salt. After the lines are baited again, and the ground shifted, a second trial is made, and no more in one night.

While the boats are fishing, the couring vessels run round them, telling the hour of the night, keeping close to the filers, and cheering them to support their spirits, in this dangerous and fatiguing business. About an hour after sunrise they

they begin to take in the lines, and when that is done they return to the ships, where they throw their fish on board, and moor their boats properly a stern, at necessary intervals. The different crews after having refreshed themselves and taken some rest, return to their fish about noon, and vie with each other who shall cure them best. It would be proper to confer a small premium on this occasion, as well as for cutting the throats of the fish. The importance of the latter process is obvious, and requires no comment.

They gut the fish and head them, except those for home consumption that are cured with the heads on, as they are certainly more inviting to the eye of the purchaser in this condition; after which they throw the livers in the cask prepared to receive them, six or seven hundred weight each.

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The tongues, cheeks, and sounds are to be kept, as they are always worth a guinea a firkin, or the sounds may be sold separately for the isinglass manufactory in London. The skipper splits and salts the fish, only enough to preserve them till the Saturday, when the vessels return to port. Then the fish is sent on shore, to be cured by the proper salter, and managed afterwards agreeable to the method herewith annexed. Every nights fishing is regularly inserted in a book kept by the master of the vessels, shewing the quantity and quality, and then it is deposited in a temporary vat on board, which prevents the vessels leaving the fishing spot; but many of the natives who have no succouring ships, are obliged to return to shore often during the week, whereby much time is lost in the short season of their fishing, which is irretrievable. To prevent any demand from shore in that short and precious space, the men belonging to each crew

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crew lay a line in day time, furnished with old baits which have been preserved from the over-nights fishing. This line consists only of ten or twelve score of hooks, with which the sailors never fail catching hollybut and cole fish, with cod in abundance. The remainder of the fish left after baiting the lines, serve for food to the crews. The fishers all this time take their rest, and must not be awakened on any account whatsoever, before their usual time, as upon their health and spirits depend the success of their voyage. By what I have so far said concerning this improved plan, of succouring the boats with vessels, the great advantages resulting from such a method, are self evident; and several proprietors who have adopted it, have felt its happy consequences. Many small vessels from Scotland have of late been employed in assisting the fishing boats, for which they received every third fish. Their gain is obvious, as they have

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the fish thrown at no expence, besides the fishers assisting voluntarily in the curing of them, after which there remains nothing to do but to finish the process by drying, and this performed by a Beechman on shore.

I hope the reader will not be offended at the prolixity of all these details, as the most minute circumstances on this important subject are essential. I would therefore advise the superintendant frequently to inspect the number of hooks allotted to each boat, as the men are apt to be remiss and neglectful in this necessary point, and often do not respect truth to indulge their indolence in that respect. The writer has been an eye witness to it during a whole season; where his expectations of an abundant cargo was nearly frustrated in consequence; but detecting the imposition, he put an effectual stop to it.

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The general number of hooks to each line, with which the boats are to be supplied, should be from twenty to twenty-five score, ranging them at the distance of three and a half fathoms from each other; the snouds one fathom and a half in length; the buoys and buoy ropes of proper lengths suited to the depth of the water, which is commonly left to the judgement of the fishers, hieffs, &c. The hooks should be counted at least three times a week for the reason above stated. As sometimes the most trifling circumstances might impede a successful fishing: I mean to obviate every thing that might prevent it.

A few years ago, the commissioners in Scotland, appointed for the improvement of fisheries, &c. sent a gentleman of the name of Cobb, to the Shetlands, and there he made several pertinent observations upon this subject. Amongst others he fixed a small piece of cork, within a certain

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distance of the hook, perhaps a foot or less, which suspended and floated the bait so as to prevent its falling on the ground, by which method it was more immediately seen by the fish, as being in a various and constant motion by the influx of the tide, &c. besides the bait always appeared alive to them, and consequently tempted them the more. By this device, a great saving of bait followed, which is an article of great importance. In the old way, the bait was not only covered with sea weed, but destroyed by star fish, flat fish, &c. This same gentleman made very successful trials, to ascertain the superiority of this new mode, for the information of the fishers; he fixed every third hook with proper bait; upon this principle, having the others as usual. The hooks so fixed, were two times more successful than the others; but the fishers attached to the old method by their early prejudices, returned to it after Mr. Cobb had left them, though they

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they seemed at first convinced, that the new one was greatly preferable.

This suspension of the hook, by a piece of cork, answered another great purpose, that of preventing the hooks sticking in the rocks, which frequently happens, when thrown in the ordinary way, and endangers the loss of the lines. Mr. Cobb also invented a drag to prove the more eligible fishing ground; it was not unlike the mouth of a Highlander's pouch, made of strong tin, with a bag of canvas sewed to it, slung on each side with great exactness, ending in the middle by a small grummet; a line was fixed in the grummet, when the bag was dropped to the bottom, with a common hand lead to keep it down; the boat then rowed gently till the bag was supposed to be full. If upon examination it was found to be sand, the fishers would not lay their lines there, expecting no valuable fish; but if it was a corally

corally bottom, the branches of which when broken contains a kind of small worm, found in both ling and tusk, it was deemed a favourable omen.

The lines are always laid across the tide, for if the tide is upon the end of the line, it will force the hooks together, and by which the whole nights fishing is irrevocably lost. The night is always the only time for the ling and tusk fishing, as in the day time there is scarce any to be caught. A most important point is to secure the lines properly; for this purpose, the fishers take a parcel of barrel hoops crossing them with rope yarns, or old lines in the form of a net; and upon this they place their lines, untying them at every fifty fathoms, called by the natives *boughts*; after their being coiled in this manner, they are also secured at the top with yarns, that they may not slip or fall out. I now proceed to explain the manner of curing the fish,

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in case of any being brought in that is not split, which should never happen; it ought to be carried on shore with all convenient speed, as the fish cannot be too soon salted; then it must be delivered to the charge of the beechman for drying. In splitting the fish the greatest care ought to be taken, not to ruffle it by frequent and repeated cuttings, which is disagreeable to the eye ever after. Great care must also be had to the cleansing away the blood from that part of the bone where it is divided, and where it lodges; this is done with pricklers and brushes tenderly used. Previous to the salting and curing the fish, there must be a number of vats made of the best materials, and by able carpenters. The boards for the sides and heads are to be Bergen double deals in their full lengths, and let the covers be of the same kind of deal, observing, that over the vats when covered, a tarpauling must always be laid for fear the rain should mix

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with the pickle. These boards must be dove-tailed together, laid face to face, and chintzed with white oakum as in ship building, paying the vat all over in the outside, and admitting no tar in the inside, as it tastes the fish for ever after, and spoils its sale. At each of the corners and bottom, must be placed chemps of iron for strength, because the pressure of a large quantity of fish in the vats would force it asunder without such precaution; at the centre, near the bottom, are placed a spigot and foffet for drawing off the foul pickle. The vats are placed on the beach with a gentle descent, not only for the running off the pickle, but also for cleaning them, which must be often done by scrubbing them with brooms and hot water, drying them well afterwards.

The salter who takes charge of the fish, must be a man of great experience and knowledge as well as probity, for a great deal

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deal depends upon him as to the success of the operation; the particulars of which we shall here lay down. The bottom of the vat is covered with a thin springle of salt, upon which is placed a layer of ling, tusk, cod, &c. taking care to lay them at their greatest length, without any lapping, as this would spoil the look of the fish. If it is intended for exportation, it must be cured with foreign or home salt on debenture; if for home consumption, the same, the proprietor making oath that the duty has been paid. The layers of fish are to be continued to the top, in the same way until the vat is filled. The salter's skill appears not only by the length of time he employs in this process, but also by the precise quantity of salt he makes use of and no more. It is evident that the higher he advances in filling the vat, the greater quantity of salt must be used, for those that lie high have but a short time to be cured, when compared to those layers first placed

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placed, that have the benefit of the pickle formed from the upper layers, and descending to the bottom. The falter must therefore move the undermost layers when he judges them cured, placing those above in their rooms till they are also cured, and filling the remainder of the vat with green fish.

The fish cured for home consumption, lie much longer in the vats on account of the difference in the strength of the salts. The time for curing the fish, is left to the judgement of the falter; and if he miscarries in this nice point, it can never be remedied, as too much salt corrodes the fish, and burns it as it were. This is called by the natives salt burning, which is certainly a proper term. On the contrary, if properly cured, the fish retains a beautiful bloom or green hue, which indicates its superior quality. The mistakes of the falter are punished by some abatement

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ment in his wages. As to the drying of the fish, the following particulars may be useful. A number of boys are employed in washing the fish, as it is thrown from the vats after salting; they are commonly engaged by the falter, for a small gratuity a day. The fish after being washed in salt water, which is close to every drying place, is laid in heaps to drain, and after spread on the beaches, where the said boys are on the watch night and day; for should they be absent in day time, and a rain come on, as it is often the case, the fish would be spoiled, and contract a disagreeable yellow hue.

Their attendance in the night is equally necessary, to prevent its being stolen, which frequently happens. When it threatens rain, the fish is turned the skin part uppermost, till it is over.

When

When the evening approaches, it is laid by the boys with the greatest attention in pyramids, under the direction of the falter; all the heads, if any, being outermost, with the skin sides most exposed to the weather. The fish thus stacked is to be covered with mats, or tarpaulines, which not only preserves them from rain, but from the heavy dews that fall in the heat of the summer. The drying continues from the beginning of June to the middle of September, especially for the fish taken at the latter end of the season, the rest being stored as it is dried. It frequently happens that part of the fish is not fit altogether to be shipped; in this case great caution is necessary, for if it is taken up when wet, or even damp and thrown together, it will heat and spoil. Private adventurers however, are not over nice in this delicate circumstance, on account of their being obliged to return home; in which case, they should spread
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the fish thin upon mats in the hold of the ship, keeping the hatches open as often as possible, and airing it on all occasions, till they arrive at their market. The fish for exportation, both stored and that on board, is all weighed by the Kings scales, and a certificate thereof given by the revenue officers, which entitles the exporter to the bounty of three shillings per quintal, or gross hundred.

Bounties.

Dried ling and cod, called haberdines,	
per cwt.	£. 0 3 0
Wet ling and cod, the barrel, of thirty-two gallons	0 2 0
White herrings, the barrel, of thirty-two gallons	0 2 8
Red herrings, the barrel, of thirty-two gallons	0 1 9

N. B. They must be cured with English or foreign salt, which has paid duty, of which the proprietor must make oath.

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When the fundry fishings are successful, these debentures become very considerable. The country vessels at their return from market, bring back the necessary implements for the succeeding year's fishing, as hooks, leads, lines, spirits, &c. from Hamburgh, and other parts in the North; all which articles might be supplied on the spot, as will be seen in the sequel. May I be permitted to promote another branch of this trade, likely to be very lucrative if properly carried on? I mean the cole or seath fish in the months of April and May, previous to the grand fishing; the Shetlanders on the South-west of Mainland, take a great number of them, chiefly at some distance from the most capital promontory in the country called *Sumborough Head*; they are found in a very strong tide way, called *Sumborough Roast*. These kinds of fish have a great deal of oil in their livers, and though their flesh is coarse, it finds a very good market at

Leith

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Leith or Newcastle, where they sell from sixpence to eightpence a piece. Skeat is also very valuable, and will fetch a greater price. I do not mention other species equally marketable. I would recommend that the men should cut the fish off the hook, upon the gunwail, after extracting the livers, for the reasons before stated, and which has been often practised. This fishery has this peculiar advantage, that it could be cured without any expence to the intended fund, which may be clearly proved; the pickle that would be otherwise thrown away after the preferable fish is cured, should be kept in a vat appropriated solely for curing this inferior sort, as also the tongues, cheeks, and sounds; though these parts might be salted at any time in the common vats. This saving may seem of little importance; but I beg leave to observe, that several articles apparently trifling, have their weight when they affect the fund, designed for that great national

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concern.

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concern. As the method for fishing for coles must be quite new to most of my readers, I shall therefore particularize it in this place.

The small boats Norway builds, contains three and sometimes four men for the cole fishery. Each of the boats are rowed by two men; the others are placed one at the stern, and another at the head, with floating lines thrown out on the tide side; the hook being baited with the whitest part of the belly of the cole, cut nearest to the size of a herring. The rowers direct the boat as close to the edge of the broken water, as they can with safety; for where they to fall into the tide, they must perish, as no assistance could be given them. They exert their utmost strength on this occasion, to keep the hook always on the surface, whilst the fishers fix their eye on the bait, as the more the water is raised by the force of the

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the tide, the more successful the fishing proves, as the deceit is better concealed. Whenever the coles come to the surface of the water, they are then in quest of herrings, and if the fishers find any in their stomachs, they deem it a treasure, and applies small pieces of it over the other bait. When the tide is run and the fish follows, he drags for it, by putting to the line a lead or *sinker*, which is commonly a pound and a half weight; this being let down into the water to the depth of twenty fathoms or more, he hauls it up with all quickness possible. Thus the deception takes place most powerfully, and the fish aiming at the herring in motion, and seemingly running away, is the more easily taken. This species always plunges deeper into the water, in proportion as the tide wears weak.

Having hitherto sufficiently considered the state and nature of the fisheries on the

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coasts of Shetland, I will now turn to the Hebrides. These islands are many, and several of them very large and well inhabited, but very little known with respect to their advantageous situation, for carrying on a profitable trade of the same kind already described. The inhabitants can take in the winter and the spring, an immense quantity of herrings, which set for shelter into their accessible lochs. They can also take at this period, vast numbers of cod, ling, &c. which constantly pursue the herrings, attached by the shining glos of that fish, and the excellence of the food.

In the island of Lewis are many convenient harbours that abound with the said ling, &c. besides plenty of cockles, muscles, limpets, razor-fish, &c. all which make excellent bait. The fresh-water lakes are full of trouts, salmon, &c. each river having a lake of its own running
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into the sea, and plentifully stored with them, and of the best quality. This kind of fish taken in Scotland, is commonly sent to the Straits; and the greatest care is taken in the barrelling of them, as they are caught at a time when they are very fat, and consequently more easily spoiled. In the island of North Uist is an excellent harbour called *Cochmaddy*, where four hundred sail of vessels are said to have loaded in one season.

In short, the Hebrides have many convenient harbours for an abundant fishery, besides the other most singular advantages, that attend their situation. The most proper plan for the fisheries to be followed in the Hebrides, is the same as in the Shetlands for the summer. In the winter and spring they are preferably situated, by their being surrounded with mountains and rocks, of a stupendous height, which prevents impending storms, or boisterous
M 4 winds

winds from interrupting their fishing; the great depth of water close to the rocks where the fish are caught, with long and hand lines, is also a great advantage. The natives have plenty of mutilated herrings for bait, especially those bit by the dog fish, which are numerous, and very destructive to the nets. The method of salting and curing the fish has been already described, under the head of the Shetland fishing. Before I proceed farther on this subject, I beg leave to throw a hint concerning the cutters, luggers, vessels of larger size, and even boats that are seized by the revenue officers; They are cut up and serve for fuel, or other trifling purpose, whereas they might be given by government for the use of the fisheries, and save a great expence to the fund. But at the same time to clear all suspicion of their being employed again in an illicit trade, a bond or obligation should

should be required of those that receive them.

I now come to state the exclusive share the Orkney islands had, in affitting and carrying on the late *Royal White Herring Fishery*. But as I have already made some observations on the matter, I shall content myself with giving some ideas that may be improved afterwards. It is known that the nets were made and backed in the country; why might not the other necessary articles be manufactured there also, such as lines, snouds, for the great, and hand lines that would be sufficient in quantity and superior in quality to any imported from abroad? The twine for the nets might be laid, spun, and tanned in the Orkney's, as also the smith's work, leads, hooks, &c. even the white ropes of all sizes, with every other species of cordage equally good; casks, knives for the gippers, coopers' tools, &c. might be provided

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provided at Kirkwall, Lerwick, and the Western Islands; thus diffusing reciprocal advantages to all parts of the country.

I may be considered as too sanguine in all these hints, but I must still contend, that they would be attended with a great saving to the general fund, for carrying on the fisheries on account of the cheapness of labour, provisions, &c. and that saving would amount to more than half of the general expence.

The most expensive requisites for the fisheries, cannot be procured in any of the places above mentioned, I mean buffes, smacks, cutters, &c.; these should be built in the different parts of England, most distinguished for their knowledge in modelling such vessels for fast sailing, which is a material point, as will be seen hereafter. Castle-hole, near Folkestone, Dover, Cowes in the Isle of Wight, Bridport, in

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in Dorsetshire, &c. are remarkable places in that respect, and the builders never fail satisfying their employers. The buffes especially, may be made at North Yarmouth, South Wold, &c. There is no dexterity required in their construction, but to consult conveniency. The principal reason why the cutters, smacks, &c. should be built with so much attention, is to rival the Dutch, or any other foreigners, with regard to their great expedition, and to arrive first at the proper markets; that is, the different parts of Germany, where new herrings have been often sold at the extravagant rate of a dollar a piece, till a glut of this commodity reduced the sale to a medium price. The Dutch, our great rivals in this branch, have always their smacks at hand; the first night they shoot their nets, and in the morning they run from bufs to bufs, collecting their barrels, a dozen of which is considered as a very lucrative cargo, and then they set

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set off in contention, with adverse winds and weather; but having their principal stimulus, gain, in view, they persevere, and accomplish their purpose. They have been frequently prevented by the competition of our vessels going on the same errand, by the superiority of their construction, and our superior seamanship, which must always take the lead of all nations in Europe; as our coal and coasting trade, together with our fisheries, form that hardy race of men, such as our sailors are; they range the seas in coasting at all seasons in the year, directing with superior skill, their respective vessels, by their knowledge of piloting, and their nautical manœuvres amongst those shelves, rocks, and dangerous sands, with which our coasts are surrounded. The manner of curing herrings by the Orkney salters, was found to be equal, if not superior to that of the Dutch, which was proved by the

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the preference given to our fish at the markets.

The busses having prepared every thing for their fishing; they sail for Lerwick in Shetland, and arrive there before the 22d of June, which is the day fixed by act of parliament to wet their nets and not before; all foreign adventurers are also obliged to comply with the above disposition, which proves the acknowledging of our sovereignty on these coasts. All the busses, whether English, Dutch, Hamburgers, or Prussians, set out for the fishing spot on the same day; as soon as they are come at the distance they propose, they bring to and put out their nets, the number of which is fixed by the master of the buss. These nets are cast at some distance from the buss rope, that is suspended by proper buoys, placed at certain intervals, and made for the purpose. The length of the buss-rope, nets and buoys, rides

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rides the vessel as if she was at anchor; which evinces what I formerly remarked, that if the meshes did not hang square in the water, no fish could be caught. They continue riding at their nets, which they throw out about an hour before sun-set, till two or three before sun-rise, when all hands turn out to heave them in; every thing they want being previously provided, and placed in regular order upon the deck. The men must be very attentive in barreling the fish as fast as possible, before the sun-rises; for the moment the sun peeps above the horizon, were there twenty lasts upon deck, they must be all thrown overboard, as the skippers are sworn to do in imitation of the Dutch. The reason assigned for this measure is, that the herrings being very fat, and the sun in great force at this season, the fish could not so readily take salt, if it did at all. As this is a most material point, and the very essence of the voyage, too great cau-

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tion cannot be used to preserve our credit in the markets; especially when we consider the interested spirit and veins of our competitors, who will take every advantage of our ignorance or neglect. It frequently happens that there is a prodigious glut of fish in the nets, which is known by the growing of the bufs rope, the weight sinking the buoys under water. In that case, they must be thrown in sooner in the night, that a greater number of barrels may be packed on the occasion. Upon the nets being taken in, the fish salted, the decks cleared, and a particular attention being paid to the placing of the nets in such a manner, that they may not heat by lying together; the vessel is brought by the wind, and all the men except the watch go to rest, till they take their nourishment; after which they prepare for the succeeding night's fishing. In case of an extraordinary success, the buffes, smacks, and cutters, that are always employed,

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employed, lead in their turns from the storehouses, and run to what markets the superintendant directs. By these exports as fast as the herrings are taken, but few barrels are left to supply our home consumption. But I am confident that we might carry this plan to a prodigious extent; though some will say, where shall we find a market; Strange Argument! are we less expert in sea affairs than the Dutch, who point to us their very marts? Have we not an equal chance of vending our commodities with these human *Automatons*? we are certainly superior to them, and to all the world, in navigation, and why not in policy. But as our home consumption might suffer by extensive exports, I beg leave to propose, that every keeper of houses of entertainment should be invited to take a barrel of herrings at a fair price. There would be little opposition to this plan, as the purchase would evidently return three times its value, besides

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besides the advantage of indulging the frequenters of those places, in feeding luxuriously on *British Herrings*; this would be a great market for our home consumption, exclusive of the fishmongers, hucksters, private families, &c. It is exceeding probable that every subject would, through national emulation, strive to encourage that important branch of commerce. If there should be a considerable overplus for exportation, are not our numerous West-India islands, now fed by foreigners, open to us, &c.? in short, the fisheries may be carried to an immense extent, employ thousands who are now plunged in misery, enrich the state and the managers of the plan, and provide for our navy a constant supply of able and hardy seamen. As to the details of the fisheries, great care must be taken in choosing the superintendants. Their characters should be unexceptionable, and their knowledge extensive, without which, the fishers will overreach

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them, and so materially hurt or demolish the plan in its infancy.

There is another collateral branch of fishing, which may be carried on with great advantage, and without interfering with the general design. What I shall say on this point is founded on my own observations, and the best informations I could obtain from professional men: Whilst the nets are at work, the men are idle, or unprofitably employed in catching *kettle fish*, as they call them. During this time, however, any quantity of the very best white fish might be taken with broken herrings for bait. As the men have nothing to do at that period, till the nets are hoven, they would cheerfully employ that leisure for a small premium; in catching the said fish, from sun-set till that hour in the morning, when they are summoned to attend their respective duties; for this purpose, all the men should be supplied with

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with two lines, leads, &c. and every one directed to fish at the same time, when he that took the most, which might be known by his delivering the tongues of the fish he caught, should have an allowance of grog, besides his premium, at the discretion of the master. By this method, an immense number of valuable fish might be obtained in the course of so many months, employed according to the general plan. During the late herring fishery, all this time was wantonly lost, as the men were sworn never to take any fish for salting, under the idle supposition, that they might be tempted to purloin the company's salt only for eating.

But as it frequently happened that the herring fishery was unsuccessful, the adventurers should have at least the best of the occasion; and the white fish would have amply indemnified them. This fish may be cured in the same manner as on

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shore; as there are temporary vats, one on each side, abaft, this profitable branch would never interfere in the least with the principal. Moreover, the buffes being obliged to go into Lerwick, the white fish might be always carried to the drying beaches.

Some years ago, numbers of wherries came to fish on the distant coasts of Shetland, and had an amazing success. The method they followed was this; their lines contained one thousand hooks on one end; they examined the direction of the stream by a lead and line, with a buoy affixed to it; when the buoy rose up they knew how the tide ran; observe that the current must always be in the bight of the line. The first buoy was thrown and the line paid out, whilst the vessel was steering, either by the wind or otherwise, upon a particular point of the compass, till the last buoy was cast, when they tacked and steered

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steered upon the opposite point, and never failed to find the first buoy.

By this mode, they frequently took some hundred valuable fish at one set, and in places much more distant from the coasts than ever had been known or attempted by the Shetland fishers. Their lines were remarkably strong, which indeed is necessary, on account of the apparent way the vessel may have in the water. Their bait was pickled herrings, or the smaller kind of lamprey eels, &c. but the vessel's way is easily stopped, by the dexterity of the fishers in managing their wherries, or cutters, that will lie to as if they were at anchor. One of these wherries put into Shetland, with a number of exceeding fine ling and turks salted; but the men unadvisedly bringing them on shore to dry, they were seized to the value of one hundred pounds, which so chagrined them, that they would not

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come any more. I have a notion that the same plan might be followed on the Highland coasts with very great success.

Of the Basking Shark, or Sail Fish.

Numbers of *Basking Sharks*, called by the inhabitants *Hoe-mother*, frequent the bays, creeks, and coasts of the Orknies, as well as the Hebrides. They appear in the latter end of May, six or seven at a time, continuing until the month of September, when they disappear. They are sometimes caught by being stabbed with old swords, spits, and such like weapons; which are but badly calculated to answer a regular plan of taking them; as this might justly be deemed useful in our improvement of fisheries; I would propose, that the several places where they more commonly frequent, that the natives should be furnished with harpoons, lances, and proper ropes always ready; and one man out of the crew of each boat should

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taught the throwing the harpoon, as in whale catching, also the use of the lance. By this method, hundreds might be caught annually to the great emolument of the inhabitants. And, on purpose to stimulate them in the execution of the regular plan above stated, I beg leave to give a description of this fish, as set forth by naturalists. They are in length from forty to twenty feet long; the tail consists of two unequal lobes, the upper five feet long, the lower three, the circumference of the body is very great, the skin cineritious and rough, the upper jaw much larger than the lower, the teeth minute, disposed in numbers along the jaws, the eyes placed at only fourteen inches distant from the tip of the nose, the apertures to the gills very long, and furnished with strainers of the substance of whale bone. They are inoffensive fish feeding on exanquious marine animals, or an algæ; they swim very deliberately

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with their fins above water, and seem as if asleep. They are very tame or very stupid, for they will suffer a boat to follow them, without accelerating their motion, till it comes almost in contact, when a harpooner strikes his weapon into the fish, as near the gills as possible; but they are often so insensible, as not to move until the united strength of two men has forced in the harpoon deeper; as soon as they perceive themselves wounded, they fling up their tail, and plunge headlong to the bottom, and frequently coil the rope round in their agonies; attempting to disengage themselves from the weapon, by rolling on the ground.

As soon as they discover their efforts are vain, they swim away with amazing violence and rapidity; they sometimes run off with two hundred fathoms of line, with two harpoons in them; and will find employment for the fishers for twelve, and

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and sometimes twenty-four hours, before they are subdued. When killed, the liver is taken out and melted into oil, in vessels provided for that purpose. A large fish will yield eight or nine barrels of oil, and two of sediment. The commissioners, says the same author, of forfeited estates, were at a considerable expence in encouraging this species of fishery; but the person they confided in, shamefully abused his trust; so that at present it is only attempted casually. The skin when carefully taken off, is deemed valuable for covering cases, for jewellery, lancet cases, &c. and the fins for cabinet makers, &c.

Such are my thoughts on our fisheries, the thoughts of an honest man, entirely devoted to the interest of his country. Had I been possessed of abilities to write these sheets with that brilliancy and elegance which characterize the productions of the age, and often present only a heap
of

of pompous and bombastic words, instead of argument, and sound information, I would have declined it. My ambition, the ambition of my heart, was not to move in such a lofty sphere, but to expose, in a plain and simple style, useful hints upon a subject that so nearly concerns the interest and welfare of the whole empire; especially at a period when every motive urges us to extend and improve the sources of industry, and to dispute the superiority of commerce amongst the European states.

We see that all nations round us stretch every where to multiply their resources. Thus circumstanced, our interest, and perhaps our political existence, requires the greatest exertions; and that we should pursue such a line of conduct, as will put it beyond the power of fortune, or the shock of events, to destroy, or even impair our rank and consequence in the scale of nations.

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