nald, king or lord of the Iſles, and chief of the nume­rous clan of Macdonalds, who are counted the moſt warlike of all the Highlanders. Sky is part of the ſhire of Inverneſs, and formerly belonged to the dioceſe of the Iſles : on the ſouth it is parted from the main land by a channel three leagues in breadth ; tho’, at the ferry of Glenelly, it is ſo narrow that a man may be heard calling for the boat from one side to the other. Sky is well provided with a variety of excellent bays and harbours.

The face of the country is roughened with moun­tains, ſome of which are ſo high as to be covered with ſnow on the top at midſummer ; in general, their ſides are clothed with heath and graſs, which afford good paſturage for ſheep and black cattle. Between the mountains there are ſome fertile valleys, and the greater part of the land towards the ſea-coaſt is plain and arable. The iſland is well watered with a great num­ber of rivers, above 30 of which afford ſalmon ; and ſome of them produce black muſcles in which pearls are bred, particularly the rivers Kilmartin and Ord : Martin was aſſured by the proprietor of the former, that a pearl hath been found in it valued at 20 l. Ster­ling. Here is alſo a conſiderable number of freſh- water lakes well ſtored with trout and eels. The largeſt of theſe lakes takes its denomination from St Colum­ba, to whom is dedicated a chapel that ſtands upon a ſmall iſle in the middle of the lake. Sky likewiſe af­fords ſeveral cataracts, that roar down the rocks with great impetuoſity. That the iſland has been formerly covered with woods, appears from the large trunks of fir and other trees daily dug out of the bogs and peat- marſhes in every part of this country.

@@From the height of the hills, and proximity of the ſea, the air ſeldom continues long of the ſame tempera­ture ; ſometimes it is dry, oftener moiſt, and in the lat­ter end of winter and beginning of ſpring cold and pier­cing ; at an average, three days in twelve throughout the year ſcarcely free from rain, far leſs from clouds. Theſe, attracted by the hills, ſometimes break in uſeful and refreſhing ſhowers ; at other times ſuddenly burſting, pour down their contents with tremendous noiſe, in impetuous torrents that deluge the plains below, and render the ſmalleſt rivulet impaſſable ; which, together with the ſtormy winds ſo common in this country in the months of Auguſt and September, frequently blaſt the hopes, and diſappoint the expectations, of the husbandman. Snow has been often known to lie on the ground from three to ſeven weeks ; and on the higheſt hills, even in the middle of June, ſome ſpots of it are to be ſeen. To this various temperature of the air, and uncertainty of weather, the fevers and agues, head­ache, rheumatiſms, colds, and dyſenteries, which are the prevailing diſtempers, may be aſcribed. That it is far, however, from being unwholeſome, is ſufficiently evin­ced by experience ; for the inhabitants are, in gene­ral, as ſtrong and healthy, and arrive at as advanced an age, as thoſe who live in milder climates, and under a ſerener ſky. The gout is ſcarcely known in this iſland.

The soil is generally black, though it likewiſe affords clay of different colours ; ſuch as white, red, and blue, and in ſome places fuller’s earth. It is, however, much leſs adapted for agriculture than for paſture, and ſel­dom, unleſs in very good years, ſupplies **itſelf** with a ſufficiency of provisions. Yet, though the soil is **not ve­**ry fertile or rich, it might with proper management be made to produce more plentiful crops. But the gene­rality of the farmers are ſo prejudiced in favour of old cuſtoms, and indeed ſo little inclined to induſtry, that they will not eaſily be prevailed on to change them for better ; eſpecially if the alteration or amendment propoſed be attended with expence. Therefore, with reſpect to improvements in agriculture, they are ſtill much in the ſame ſtate as they were 20 or 30 years ago. Ploughs, on a new and improved model, that in compariſon to the advantages derived from them might be had at a moderate expence, have lately been intro­duced into ſeveral diſtricts around, where their good ef­fects are manifeſt, in improving the crops and diminishing the labour of man and beaſt ; but the laird of Raaſay and one other gentleman are the only perſons in Portree that have uſed them. The *caſcroim,* a crooked kind of ſpade, is almoſt the only inſtrument for labouring the ground uſed among the ordinary claſs of tenants. The average crops of corn are 8000 bolls.

When Mr Knox viſited this iſland in 1786, the number of inhabitants amounted to 15,000 : but ſome gentlemen who reſided there affirmed there were 16,000. It is divided into eight pariſhes, in each of which there is a ſchool, beſides three charity-ſchools in different places.

The minerals found here are lead and iron ore, which, however, have never been wrought to any ad­vantage. Near the village of Sartle, the natives find black and white marcaſites, and variegated pebbles. The Appleſglen, in the neighbourhood oſ Loch-fallart, produces beautiful agates of different ſizes and colours; ſtones of a purple hue are, after great rains, found in the rivulets: cryſtal, of different colours and forms, abounds in ſeveral parts of the iſland, as well as black and white marble, free-ſtone, lime-ſtone, and talc: ſmall red and white coral is found on the ſouthern and weſtern coaſts in great abundance. The fuel conſiſts chiefly of peat and turf, which are impregnated with iron ore and ſaltpetre ; and coal has been diſcovered in ſeveral di­ſtricts.

The wild birds of all forts moſt common in the coun­try are, ſolan geeſe, gulls, cormorants, cranes, wild geeſe, and wild ducks ; eagles, crows, ravens, rooks, cuc­koos, rails, woodcocks, moor-fowl, partridges, plover, wild pigeons, and blackbirds, owls, hawks, ſnipes, and a variety of ſmall birds. In mild ſeaſons, the cuckoo and rail appear in the latter end of April ; the former disappears always before the end of June; the latter ſometimes not till September. The woodcock comes in October, and frequently remains till March. The tame sorts oſ fowl are geeſe, ducks, turkeys, cocks, pul­lets, and tame pigeons.

The black cattle are here expoſed to all the rigours of the ſevere winter, without any other provender than the tops of the heath and the alga marina ; ſo that they appear like mere ſkeletons in the ſpring ; though, as the graſs grows up, they ſoon become plump and juicy, the beef being ſweet, tender, and finely interlarded.— The amphibious animals are ſeals and otters. Among the reptiles they reckon vipers, aſps, weaſels, frogs, toads, and three different kinds of ſerpents ; the firſt ſpotted black and white, and very poiſonous ; the ſecond yel­-

@@@[mu] Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. xvi. p. 140.