

II.

NOTE ON THE CURACH AND AMMIR IN ROSS-SHIRE. BY REV. J. M. JOASS, LL.D., CORR. MEM. S.A. SCOT. IN A LETTER TO DR ARTHUR MITCHELL, SECRETARY.

In the Dunrobin Library there is a series of MS. volumes on the Topography of Scotland (L.A. 2). They consist of letters addressed to George Chalmers, Esq., Board of Trade, Whitehall (author of *Caledonia*), written chiefly by clergymen, and of MS. lists of queries sent to and answered by them. In the volume for Sutherland is a note by the late duke stating that these were purchased at Mr Chalmers's sale. In the said volume the letters range in date from 1798 to 1802, and in one of those from Dornoch, written by Dr John Bethune, then minister of that Parish, and dated Dornoch 22d May 1798, occurs the following :—

“No. 28. *Poull-chourich*, this is the name of the Bason just mentioned” (an inlet of the sea near Skibo). “The first division of this compound is a *Pool*. The other is from *Courich*, a Vehicle formerly used in the Highlands to serve the purpose of a *Ferry-boat* ; only, however, on *Rivers* and small *Creeks*. It was constructed of a round form and of a Sort of Wicker-work, for the greater Buoyancy, and covered outwardly with green Hides. Two or three passengers, according to its Size, entered into it, and paddled forward as they cou'd. The whole Bay goes now by this name, but properly and originally it belonged to a particular part, where the water is still and deep, and the passage narrow, between the North side of the *ferry-point* and the opposite shore of *Pulrossie*. In the West Highlands of Ross-shire, where I was born, the *Courich* was very commonly used, and I have known some People who had seen it, tho' it had been disused before my Time. In my Day it had given place to a sort of *Canoe* called *Ammir*, *i.e.*, *Trough*. This was nothing more than the hollowed Trunk of a great Tree ; and even this, I believe, is now laid

aside. I have been Passenger crossing a River in the *Ammir* tho' I did not much covet the Situation. It was also employed in fishing the Rivers, and in it I have seen the fearless and dextrous Highlander, from his ticklish footing, flinging the Spear out of his hands to a considerable distance, and arresting the Salmon which was darting along with great Swiftness! The man standing in the *Ammir* holds the Oar by the middle; and with it, paddling on each Side, alternately; proceeds with Surprising velocity."