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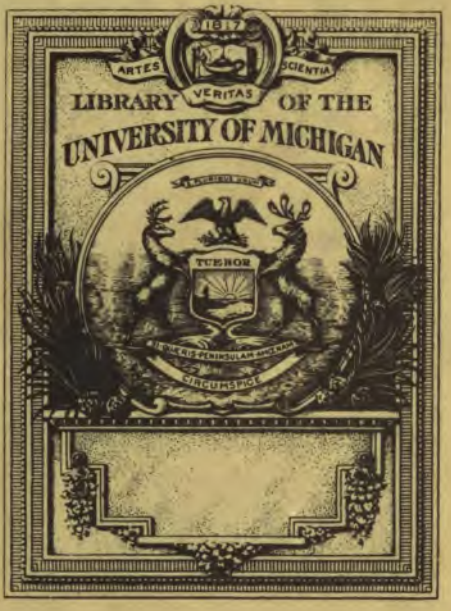
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LETTERS FROM THE HIGHLANDS;

OR,

THE FAMINE OF 1847.

BY ROBERT SOMERS.

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PREFACE.

THIS volume is the result of a Tour of Inquiry in the Highlands during the autumn of last year. The severe distress in which the population of the north-western districts of Scotland were involved by the loss of the potato crop of 1846, had excited a great deal of attention to the social condition of that part of the kingdom; and it was the intention of the Author, as early as the spring, to take a journey through the Highland counties, with the view of personally investigating the state and circumstances of a race in whose cause he had taken a lively interest for some years. For several reasons, however, his purpose was delayed till the middle of October; and, with the exception of some inquiries made in the district of Lochaber at the time of the Queen's visit to Loch Laggan, the facts contained in these Letters were collected during that and the subsequent month.

The Letters were published *seriatim* in the NORTH BRITISH DAILY MAIL, a journal which, since its commencement, has taken a marked interest in every question affecting the condition and prospects of the Highlands. They appeared in the same order in which they are printed in this volume, with the exception of Letters XXVI., XXVII.,

and XXVIII., which were written and published in September, a fact which will explain some allusions contained in them.

Letters XXV., XXIX., XXX., and XXXI., are now submitted to the public for the first time.

The Author has little apology to offer for obtruding upon the public, in a new form, productions, the greater part of which have already been made patent through the columns of a widely-circulated paper. It was suggested to him by several warm friends of the Highlands, that the publication of the Letters in a collected shape would be calculated to promote the cause which they had at heart, and the idea was too congenial to his wishes to be resisted. An intelligent public will forgive the literary imperfections of sketches, most of which were written hurriedly, in the intervals of wearisome journeys, and without access to the usual sources of information; for, though the Author has carefully revised them, it has been impossible to alter materially their original structure. To help forward the cause of the suffering Highlanders was the prime object for which they were written, and to that cause they are dedicated anew.

GLASGOW, April, 1848.

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I LEFT Edinburgh on Wednesday, the 13th October, by the newly-opened Edinburgh and Northern Railway, expecting to reach Blairgowrie the same evening—a district which, a few days before, had been the scene of a destructive inundation. Travelling in Fife and Forfarshire, however, is still a very chequered and uncertain operation. What with unfinished railways, firths too wide to be spanned by arches, and lumbering omnibuses drawn by hacks in the last stage of penury, I found the journey from the Lothians to Strathmore to be one of extraordinary vicissitude. I am not sure but Dr. Johnson, who traversed these parts in 1773, and found the roads both smooth and commodious, without any of the "dirt" which he afterwards took occasion to describe as one of the chief characteristics of Scotland, had a much more comfortable ride than the traveller who makes the same passage in this present autumn of 1847. The modern tourist may move with somewhat greater velocity, and at less expense; but the Lexicographer in his chaise could beat him hollow in so far as regards ease and dignity. The shifting from railway to steam-boat, from steam-boat to omnibus, and from omnibus back again to railway, is perpetual and perplexing; and the anxiety which at first is naturally felt for the safety of one's luggage amid so

much tossing about, soon gives way to care of a more closely personal description.

At Dundee, I took my seat on the Newtyle Railroad, which is a curiosity in its way. Like the public roads some two centuries ago, this railway is remarkable for avoiding the hollows, and climbing over the tops of the hills. The trains are swung, by means of fixed engines, from one height to another, in the most playful fashion imaginable; and on reaching the top of one of these ascents, where you expect to breathe a little more freely, you are suddenly jerked round a corner into a tunnel of the tightest fit, the smoke and darkness of which realise to the flurried imagination the fabled terrors of Tartarus. It is with sincere thankfulness you find yourself safely landed at Newtyle, though here I was doomed to meet with a disappointment. The guide-books—with the publishers of which the railway companies ought, for the sake of their customers, to cherish the most friendly intimacy—had led me to expect that "passenger carriages run right through between Cupar-Angus and Dundee with all the trains." This, I believe, had been the rule until a few days before, when the directors resolved that passengers should be carried no farther than Newtyle; and, as if to make the inconvenience greater, they send off their afternoon train from Dundee fifteen minutes exactly before the arrival of the passengers who leave Edinburgh at half-past ten, A.M., and who, consequently, find it impossible to catch the Blairgowrie omnibus, which leaves Newtyle at four o'clock, P.M. These unexpected arrangements prevented me from reaching Blairgowrie on Wednesday night. A little concert between the directors of railways communicating with each other, and a little more painstaking and expense in advertising changes in the hours of arrival and departure of trains, would do away with many absurd misarrangements, and prevent an immense deal of disappointment to passengers; though to me the delay at Newtyle was not without its advantages, as it compelled me to loiter in a district rich both in natural resources and historic associations.

Strathmore, as its name imports, is a wide and extensive valley, and its beauty and fertility are fully as remarkable as its size. The road from Newtyle to Cupar-Angus passes through large farms, containing the best arable soil, and cultivated by tenants who live in the style of country gentlemen. The houses occupied by these farmers are commodious and elegant; many of them are

surrounded with fine old massive trees, which seem to intimate that, in a former age, they were the seats of small resident proprietors; and to most of them are attached, at a respectful distance, substantial quadrangular offices. Agriculture on these large farms is carried on in a spirited and enlightened manner; but the immense proportion of soil lying in pasture is a feature which must strike every observer. The grazing and feeding of cattle are carried on to a great extent; and large droves are brought down from the Highlands by the farmers to stock their grass fields. If the Highland valleys were cultivated, so as to produce green crops to fatten the cattle which are reared there, there would be little necessity for this round-about traffic, and the grass parks of Strathmore might be turned to their natural use, and yield abundant crops of corn to the advantage both of the district and the nation at large.

I found that, in order to bring about the present disposal of the soil, the clearance system was as necessary, and had been as vigorously though more warily prosecuted, in the Howe of Angus as in Strathnaver or Glencalvie. Tracts of land now occupied by single tenants were formerly possessed by twenty or thirty small farmers. Some of these had one, and others two plough-gates of land each; and if the tradition of the district can be relied upon, they were deficient neither in ability to pay their rents nor in skill to cultivate the soil. Three or four hamlets, now reduced to skeleton proportions, or entirely swept away, were named over to me as having been flourishing within the last thirty years in all the bloom of agricultural industry and population. There cannot be any doubt that the rural parts of Strathmore have suffered considerable depopulation. The number of inhabitants in the parish of Kettins in 1801 was 1,207, and in 1831 it was 1,193, being a decrease of fourteen. Some active influences must have been at work to prevent the inhabitants of such a parish as Kettins from increasing considerably in the course of thirty years; and, could we carry our comparison back to a more ancient date, the reverses of population would appear still more striking. In addition to the village of Kettins, there are six hamlets in the parish, and each of these, in old times, was the seat of a subordinate chaplainry—a fact which argues that they must have been a great deal more densely peopled than they are now, when the parish church is amply sufficient to accommodate the whole parish. At the beginning of the present century the population of the rural

part of the parish of Cupar-Angus was 812; while in 1831 it had dwindled down to 415. These are two examples: the same results have, no doubt, occurred in other parishes; and it is by no means difficult to perceive where the people, thus expelled from the soil, have taken refuge. Dundee has increased in thirty years from 40,000 to 70,000; and Cupar-Angus, in the same period, from 1,604 to 2,200. The increase of the towns is not to be regretted; but Dundee would have multiplied as well, if not as rapidly, though Strathmore had retained its inhabitants; and it is impossible to look back on the extirpation of the small farmers without regret. In comfort, in independence, and in practical intelligence, they were far superior to the depressed and miserable race of labourers to which the residue of them have been reduced.

The demand for labour on the railways has had the effect of raising the wages of ploughmen and farm-servants; but the food, houses, and apparel, of these sons of toil, are still of an inferior description; and the oppressions and impurities of the bothy system are rife among this class in Forfarshire as in some other counties of Scotland. It was observed by Cobbett, that the condition of the labourer was worse on the rich than on the poorer lands; and the condition of the farm-servants in Strathmore does not contradict that theory. The worst feature in the circumstances of the agricultural labourer is the hopelessness of his lot. The destruction of the small farms has swept away from his eyes all prospect of rising above his servile condition: it has made a breach in the social ladder which he finds it impossible to surmount.

At Cupar-Angus, the site of an abbey is still visible, which is said to have been founded by Malcolm IV., in 1164. A small corner of one of the walls, covered with ivy, is all that remains of this ancient building, which, in common with other religious houses, fell a prey to the fury of the populace at the Reformation. It has been even more unfortunate than many other Roman Catholic edifices, for its very stones have been carried away. The parish church, and a considerable part of Cupar, are built with the ruins of the abbey; and it is not unusual to see the lions, coats of arms, and other carved work that adorned its walls, sticking grotesquely in the fronts of houses, side by side with sign-boards, which inform the public that the inmates sell British and foreign spirits, or tea, sugar, and tobacco.

Pampered for centuries by the Hays of Errol, but chiefly by the Scottish kings, this abbey came at length to be richly endowed. In 1561 its money revenues amounted to £1,238 14s. 9d., which was equal to £8000 or £9000 of our present money; while its corn revenues were upwards of 200 chalders—a pretty handsome income for a few idle monks, and, if not gluttonously gormandised or superstitiously misapplied, capable of dispensing an immense amount of education and charity over the neighbouring territory. What prodigies of good might not be accomplished by so rich a treasury in the present day! But, alas! alas! the dispersion of the abbey stones is not more complete than the dispersion of the abbey revenues. The abbacy was erected by James VI. into a temporal lordship, in favour of a younger son of Lord Balmerino. Some of the waste lands remained common, till, rising in value, they were appropriated, bit by bit, by the surrounding heritors, and a churchyard, crowded with the graves of the dead, is all that has fallen to the people out of this public and princely estate.

The people of Cupar-Angus are now suffering the severe effects of this Royal favouritism and private appropriation. With the exception of the adherents of the Establishment, the inhabitants have to build and repair their churches, and pay their own ministers and schoolmasters, and to these burdens, which bear specially on Dissenters, has lately been added the maintenance of the poor, which is common to all sects. House-property in Cupar-Angus is assessed at 1s. 10d. per pound, while landed property in the parish only pays 11d. per pound! Keeping the abbey and its revenues out of sight altogether, it is a most unjust arrangement to tax houses, which are a very perishable kind of property, twice as heavily as land, which is the most stable of all possessions; but when the abbey lands, and the hands into which they fell, are considered, the wrong, of course, becomes all the more outrageous, and it must require an extraordinary sweetness of temper on the part of the people of Cupar-Angus to submit to it. The poor cannot be properly cared for when the principle of the assessment is so unequal; for a sense of wrong extinguishes the feeling of charity, and the interests of the poor are forgotten amid the squabbles between the towns-people and the lairds.

In addition to this irritating question of the poor, the social atmosphere of Cupar-Angus is embittered by a full share of that religious dissension which is now so prevalent in Scotland. There

were lately five, and there are still four, Presbyterian denominations, and one Episcopal body, in this small town, each of which has a separate place of worship. This variety of sects, of course, is not peculiar to Cupar-Angus. It is, unfortunately, a national characteristic. The separation of Presbyterians and Episcopalians is natural, for between these denominations there are broad and palpable grounds of difference; but the division of Presbyterians themselves into so many conflicting sects betrays a lamentable weakness of judgment, or an aggravated spirit of prejudice and faction, from which I would fain hope the Christian people of Scotland are rapidly emerging.

LETTER II.

Destructive Floods—Loss of Farm Produce—Damage to Flax Mills—Fall of Blairgowrie Bridge—The Bridge Question—Importance of Blairgowrie as a Seat of Manufactures—Outcast Condition of Burghs of Barony—Baron-Bailies—Necessity for a better Organization.

Upon leaving Cupar-Angus, I began to discover traces of the floods which had occasioned so much consternation and loss to the inhabitants. About a mile from that village the road to Blairgowrie passes over the Isla, a river of considerable size, which there flows through a spacious and undulating hollow, well cultivated, and, consequently, containing many well-filled farm-yards. Some few miles farther up, the Isla receives the waters of the Ericht, the designation which is given to the Ardle and the Shee after their confluence with Blairgowrie. These streams take their rise amid the Grampians, and in wet seasons bring down the torrents which pour from the sides and summits of these pathless mountains. On the late occasion they were flooded beyond all former experience, and upon falling into the Isla, swelled that river to an alarming height. Embankments have been raised in several places as a protection against such phenomena, which are of annual occurrence; but the flood on this occasion rose so high above all previous water-marks that these barriers were of little service, the water swelling far above them, and sweeping over places which had hitherto been considered

secure from inundation. Houses were flooded; hay and corn stacks floated from the barn-yards, and were left stranded in the haughs, or, if carried into the current of the river, were scattered and swept down into the Tay. When I passed, the *disjecta membra* of the flood were gathered in heaps in the fields, and all the operations of harvest—binding, stooking, carting, and stacking—have had to be renewed on a small scale. The hedges, hundreds of yards from the edge of the river, were filled with the straw and sand carried down by the torrent, and, together with the water-marks, still traceable, afforded sufficient evidence of the appalling character of the scene. The public road on both sides of the bridge was immersed over a considerable space, and in some parts to so great a depth that the horses of the Blairgowrie omnibus, in passing through, were oliged to swim for their lives. It is fit matter of wonder and gratitude that no human lives have been lost by this extensive deluge. It is impossible to give anything like an estimate of the loss of property in the vicinity of the Isla. Fortunately, the farmers in that district are generally able to sustain a misfortune of this kind; and the reports which have appeared exaggerate the damage rather than understate it.

Floods of this destructive kind are usually occasioned by the rapid melting of snow on the hills; but this could not be the cause in autumn, and a new interpretation has to be sought for the inundation in this case. A tract of dry weather immediately preceded the fall of unusually heavy rains, which, instead of being drunk up by the pores of the mountains, poured over their hardened surface; and hence, it is supposed, the sudden and voluminous deluge which swept over the low grounds.

At Blairgowrie the devastation was also very extensive. The village itself was protected by its elevated position from the ravages of the flood; but the numerous flax-mills situated on the sides of the river suffered severely, and the workers, comprising a large proportion of the population of the village, have in consequence been thrown into a state of temporary non-employment. The Ericht, for a considerable distance north of Blairgowrie, flows between immense walls of rocks, which confine its impetuous waters within narrow compass. Most of the mills are perched among these rocks a good way above the usual flood-marks—the wheel-houses being the only parts of the buildings that are touched by the stream. Had they occupied a lower foundation, the destruction of machinery and materials might have been enor-

mous. As it is, the damage was chiefly confined to the lades—the dykes and sluices of which have been swept away, and the channels choked up with sand and rubbish. In the majority of cases, ten days will suffice to put the works in a state of efficient repair. Adamson and Leadbetter's factory, which is the most extensive, is situated below Blairgowrie, on a piece of haugh-land close to the edge of the river. It was consequently more exposed to the action of the flood. The bleachfield, lying between the factory and the river, was entirely overturned, and great quantities of thread destroyed. A wooden shed, containing 2000 spindles of flax, was torn open; and another erection of the same kind, luckily filled with less valuable materials, was completely swept away. A considerable portion of the flax carried off by the water became entangled in the adjoining bushes, and has since been recovered, but of course in a damaged condition. The lade was also much dilapidated, and fifty labourers have been engaged in clearing out the masses of sand and dirt accumulated in the channel. Four hundred people are employed in this factory, to whom even a temporary cessation of employment is no ordinary inconvenience; but by the spirited exertions which are being made to restore matters to their wonted state, it is expected that this mill, in common with the others, will resume operations in ten days from the disastrous occurrence.

As the flood increased, carrying down with it trees, gates, and similar heavy materials, it was apprehended that the old bridge at the end of the village would scarcely be able to keep its feet against so furious an onset. It was observed once or twice to totter; and at last a huge sluice-gate from one of the mills struck the centre pillar with tremendous fury, and, rebounding, it struck it again and again, till great part of two arches toppled down into the raging stream.

I found all Blairgowrie agitated with the bridge question. A meeting of road trustees was held two or three days before, to consider what was to be done. Whether should they repair the old bridge, or build a new one? And if the latter course was agreed to, at what point should the new bridge be erected? These were the grave questions which challenged the wits of this assembly. There were two rival interests on the carpet—the village interest and the landed interest. The former demanded that the new bridge, like the old one, should be built in the immediate vicinity of Blairgowrie, while the latter preferred to have it a

mile or two farther up the river. The more directly selfish motives couched under this latter proposal were covered by certain specious pretexts of a public character, such as, that the erection of a bridge at Blairgowrie, where the stream is broad, would be a great deal more expensive than at a point higher up, where one small arch is all that is required to connect the natural pillars of rock which flank both sides of the river. The proverbial advantage of building upon a rock was also expected to have some weight. The village interest, however, was inexorable; and it was agreed, by mutual consent, to take the opinion of Mr. Leslie, engineer, Dundee. The old bridge has been examined by that gentleman; and, I believe, at his recommendation, it will be repaired, with the view of affording time to determine the locality of the new erection. The villagers have undoubtedly the best end of the argument. Rattray, a village of nearly a thousand inhabitants, is situated close to Blairgowrie, on the opposite side of the stream. What a rending of affections and interests would it be to deprive two such communities of the ready intercourse which has hitherto been afforded them by their bridge! Moreover, how would the factory-workers get access to Adamson and Leadbetter's mill?

Blairgowrie is a rising place, and its interests should not be lightly esteemed. It is already the seat of important manufactures, and if it gets fair play, may speedily swell into a populous town. Its houses are laid out in a style which denotes that it is not altogether void of pretensions of this kind. It has its streets, its squares, its crescents, its lanes, and its rows. Like most Highland towns, it is rather more dirty than there is any need for; and the sanatory movement might be introduced with the greatest advantage. There is a lamentable deficiency in the organization of rural towns like Blairgowrie. Your burghs of barony, with obsolete charters granted by the obsolete Stuarts, are a species of urban outcasts for which there is no one to care. In their early infancy they were committed to the tender mercies of a termagant nurse, called a baron-bailie, whose discipline had often a strong tinge of "Jeddart justice;" but as this personage was appointed by the lord of the manor, his authority fell with the feudal influence of his master, and the burghs of barony have been allowed to run helter-skelter ever since. It would be a laudable thing to raise a board of rulers in the midst of them, to punish offences against public order, and to promote

taste and cleanliness among the inhabitants. The improvement of a country, and especially such a country as the Highlands, depends materially on the prosperity and decorum of its villages, which operate as centres of influence over the surrounding territory.

The impassable state of the roads, occasioned by the fall of several bridges, prevented me from tracing the ravages of the flood farther up the river than the flax-mills of Blairgowrie. I therefore set out for Blair Atholl, by Dunkeld, passing along the edge of several pretty lakes, and through deep woods, abounding with squirrels, rather a rare animal to a Lowlander. Dunkeld itself, with its venerable cathedral, its stately pines, its soaring mountains, and its majestic stream, is worth a long journey to see; while in the plain of Atholl romantic scenery and ducal folly combine to give ample exercise to both head and heart.

LETTER III.

Scenery of Blair-Atholl—Decrease of Population—The Clearance System—Its Results—Condition of Day-Labourers—Effect of Railway Works upon Wages—Desire for Small Allotments—Condition of Paupers—Distribution of the Queen's Donation to the Poor—Persecution of Free Church.

It would be superfluous to describe minutely the diversified scenery of Blair-Atholl. Traversed from end to end by the great Highland Road, and forming annually a favourite resort of hundreds of tourists, the natural attractions of this parish must be familiarly and widely known. The famous pass of Killiecrankie ushers you from the south into the plain of Atholl—a level stripe of land stretching along the left bank of the river Garry, and gradually widening as you proceed, till it swells into a spacious arena of great fertility, surrounded with verdant hills, and thickly filled with woods, houses, parks, streams, and every necessary element of a lovely rural scene. The peopled industry of a gigantic parish is compressed into this Atholl garden, three or four miles long, and half as many broad. Conspicuous in the crowd of objects stands Blair Castle, the seat of the Duke of Atholl, engrossing in its ample park full three-fourths of the choicest acres of the plain. On a hill-side close by the castle, the mansion of James Patrick M'Inroy occupies a rather proud position, but mo-

destly veils itself with fir from the jealous glance of its ducal neighbour. The cottages and inns, composing the new village of Blair, straggle at irregular intervals along the public road; and farm-dwellings, from the two-storied house to the lowly mud hut, fill up the landscape, some along the edge of the Garry, some on the shoulders of the hills, and others cleaving like swallows' nests to the steep mountain-side. This busy plain is the general terminus of half-a-dozen long glens, which shoot away up among the Grampians, taking with them, into these wild regions, varying portions of the fertility in which they have their source. The principal of these are, first, Glen Tilt, a very rich and beautiful glen, stretching from the Blair Atholl policies in an easterly direction, to which I will devote a separate chapter; secondly, Glen Bruar, running northward, and famous chiefly for its falls; and, thirdly, Glen Garry, which takes a westerly course, and forms the pathway through which the Highland Road effects its passage of the Grampians. These great glens are intersected by smaller valleys, watered by rivulets, and presenting every variety of aspect, from the rich fertile carse to the bleak barren moorland. Such is a general outline of the landscape characteristics of Blair Atholl.

Like most Highland parishes, Blair-Atholl has witnessed a rapid and steady decrease of its population. The clearance system was begun here long before it was thought of in many other parishes. Whatever merit Mr. James Loch and Mr. Patrick Sellars may take to themselves for expelling the people from the straths of Sutherlandshire, they cannot claim the merit of originality. They were merely imitators of Dukes of Atholl and other heroes of their cause, who lived before them. Glen Tilt was cleared of its inhabitants by the present Duke of Atholl's grandfather, twenty or thirty years before the burnings and ejectments of Sutherland were heard of. The expulsion of the people from that delightful valley commenced more than sixty years ago; and before the present century began, the last family in it had rouped off, and bade farewell to a scene which they and their fathers for generations had called their home. I will enter upon this topic more minutely when I come to write of Glen Tilt; but I mention now the fact of its clearance sixty years ago, in order to prove that Blair-Atholl had been considerably depopulated even before the commencement of the present century. The decrease of people in the parish since that period can be shown by authentic

public returns. In 1801, the population of Blair-Atholl is given at 2,848; in 1831, it was 2,384—showing a decrease of nearly 500 in the course of thirty years. And at the census of 1841, the population of the parish was 2,231—being 153 less than in 1831. The consolidation of small farms is proceeding steadily. When leases expire, and a new tenant can be obtained, no scruple is entertained against turning out half-a-dozen, twenty, and sometimes thirty families, to make room for one. This is, and has been, the practice on nearly all the estates in the parish. The clearance and dispersion of the people is pursued by the proprietors as a settled principle, as an agricultural necessity, just as trees and brushwood are cleared from the wastes of America or Australia; and the operation goes on in a quiet, business-like way, that neither excites the remorse of the perpetrators, nor attracts the sympathy of the public.

Let us try to comprehend the results of this policy. Every clearance produces misery and pauperism. It lessens the amount of work to be done in a parish, because the large farmers turn extensive tracts of soil into grass, on which the small tenants used to grow corn, turnips, and potatoes. And while it diminishes the work to be done, it increases the number of those who can only subsist by hiring themselves to do it. It grinds down small farmers into day-labourers. Occupiers of seven, ten, and twenty acres of land, owning several cows, and a score or two of sheep, and deriving their livelihood from their own resources, subordinate to no contingency except the influences of the weather, are suddenly converted into dependent labourers, without land, without property of any kind, and without any surer safeguard against starvation than the precarious demand which other men may have for their labour. This, of course, is not the fate of all the small farmers. Some who have saved a little money go to a foreign land, and some may strive, for a time, to maintain themselves by the profits of petty trading; but both of these resources are beyond the reach of a considerable number, who have no other alternative than to fall into the labour market. If this artificial increase of day-labourers were accompanied by any great industrial operations, either manufacturing or agricultural, it would lead to little absolute suffering. The first pangs of removal over, the small farmers would settle down into their new position, and, under a life of more constant exertion, would find few of their former comforts curtailed. But, on the contrary, the

addition constantly made to the labouring class is not merely the concomitant, but the result of a system which, as I have stated, diminishes the amount of industry and the demand for employment; and, by the operation of these two concurrent circumstances—a truly "ill-matched pair"—it is easy to perceive how inevitably a wretched and impoverished race of labourers is created by the clearances. Pauperism flows as certainly from the same source. When a small farmer was disabled by accident or sickness, the culture of his land went on as before, and his corn grew, and his cows gave milk as plentifully; but the same man, when reduced to the position of a labourer, has no resource, when disabled, but the parish roll. And the old infirm people, who share the produce of the small farms occupied by their sons and daughters, necessarily become chargeable as paupers on the charity of the parish, when the small farms are broken up, and their offspring reduced to poverty and dependence.

In a parish, therefore, which, like Blair-Atholl, has been extensively cleared, it is always important to inquire how it fares with the labourers and paupers. The condition of the large farmers presents only the fair side of the picture; but in the circumstances of those who have been displaced to make room for all that fine glitter, we discover the real character of the clearings. The day-labourers of Blair-Atholl are enjoying a degree of prosperity at present which, I fear, is not to be regarded as permanent. The railway operations have raised wages here, as in other parts of the country; and, in one sense, the severe distress of last winter may be said to have improved their condition. The Central Relief Board very properly refused to send supplies into Blair-Atholl, on the ground that the proprietors were capable of doing all that was necessary themselves. The labourers were threatened with the greatest extremities. Employment was scarce, and food was selling at a famine price. In this emergency, the Duke of Atholl gave work in his woods and pleasure-grounds to a considerable number, at the rate of 10s. and 12s. a-week. This employment is still continued, and wages continue at the same rate as during the dearth. In conversation with one of the labourers, I said, in a half interrogatory way—"Wages are pretty good here; 9s. a-week, I dare say?" "More than that," replied he; "some of us have 12s. a-week." "Indeed; that is a good wage." To this opinion, however, the man scarcely assented; and, with a knowing look, referred me to wages on

the railways. "Yes," said I, "that is true—wages on the railways, I believe, are 18s. and 21s. a-week." "Weel, then," said the labourer, effectually clinching his argument, "what for no should we tak' less than 12s. here?" The railway operations have thus, like an immense lever-power, raised the poor man's lot, not merely in the neighbourhoods in which they are carried on, but to the farthest and most inaccessible corners of the country. But should a pause occur in the march of railway industry, or should an arbitrary stop be put to the works during the present winter, on account of the monetary pressure, it is fearful to what a point of depression such a rebound might plunge the poor labourers of a parish like Blair-Atholl. There is nothing to sustain them in such a crisis. The employment given them by the Duke is entirely ornamental, and, like all industry of that sort, is exhaustive and temporary.

Much anxiety is manifested by the labourers to get an acre or two of land; but only a very few enjoy this privilege; and as these few are sub-tenants of the large farmers, they pay dearly for it. Their object in having land is to rear as much turnip and straw as will feed a cow during winter, the advantage of which, to a poor family, can scarcely be over-estimated. Were the proprietors to give allotments sufficient for this purpose to all the day-labourers, their condition would be greatly improved. As it is, their lot is one of hardship and vicissitude.

There are about seventy persons in the parish receiving parochial relief, and nothing can be more meagre and inadequate than the allowance doled out to them. The general aliment is 6d. a-week! Some who enjoy the special favour of the Duke are well treated by his Grace; but the great majority would be literally starved except for the charity of their neighbours. An application was made to the Board of Supervision last year by one of the poor people for an increase of aliment, but it was refused. There is no legal assessment, and the poor are managed by the heritors and kirk-session.* The Queen, during her visit to Blair-Atholl, gave a donation of £100 for the benefit of destitute people in the parish; and great complaints are made of the way in which the kirk-session dealt with her Majesty's bounty. Two years elapsed before it was finally distributed. It was given

* See Appendix, No. I.

out in sums of 5s. from time to time, and was a relief to the heritors rather than the poor, as it was practically substituted for the allowance which the poor should have received from the parochial fund. The administration of the Poor-law in rural parishes generally is partial and defective; and the Central Board seems unwilling to exercise the necessary control. An entire change is desirable, as it is most unreasonable that proprietors, who clear the people off their estates for what they consider their own private advantage, and thereby reduce the aged and infirm to pauperism, should be permitted to evade the burdens entailed by their own system.

The Free Church body are strong in Blair-Atholl; but they have been very oppressively treated by nearly all the proprietors. No permanent site has been obtained for either church or manse within the bounds of the parish; and this and other acts of persecution have been borne by the minister and people with the most uncomplaining patience. A marked change has taken place of late years in the moral and religious condition of the population; and, had rural industry and the means of social improvement been encouraged by the heritors, Blair-Atholl would have been as well cultivated and as comfortable a parish as any in Scotland.

LETTER IV.

Visit to Glen Tilt—The Duke's Tickets of Admission—Labyrinth of Roads—A Surprise—Old Blair—Demeanour of Duke's Labourers—Description of the Glen—The Old Roads—Duke's New Drive—Shooting Lodge—Expected Encounter with the Duke—No Interruption offered—Right of Way through the Glen—Necessity of Establishing it in a Court of Law—Clearance of Glen Tilt from 1780 to 1790—Duke's Pretext for Banishing the People—His violent Measures to raise a Regiment—Proposal to Sell the Soldiers—His Defeat and Revenge—Glen Tilt a Desert—Its Capabilities.

On Monday morning, the 18th October, I set out on foot from Blair-Atholl Inn to visit the far-famed Glen Tilt. It was with some anxiety and trepidation I entered that beautiful but precarious pass, guarded from public intrusion by an impetuous Duke and some score or two of stalwart hill-men. I could not avoid reflecting on my solitary and defenceless condition, and how easy

it would be for the Duke, in a fit of feudal rage, to immure me in the dungeon of his castle, or bury me fathoms deep in some dark pool of the Tilt. A dream I had had, before waking, of a fierce encounter with a hawk, was little calculated to allay these anxious thoughts; as it seemed to augur an approaching collision with some feathered biped, that was just as likely to be a Highland chief as any less rational denizen of the forest.

I had been told at the village that the Duke granted tickets of admission to the glen when these were politely asked by respectable people; and one obliging person even proposed to procure me one of these precious documents, not much inferior in their magic powers to the "Open Sesame" of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. But I had also heard another story, which was to the effect that, from time immemorial, the public had enjoyed right of way through the glen—that all the old people in the parish, and many of the young ones, had exercised this right oftener than they could count, and were prepared to swear that they had seen with their own eyes the beaten track which they and their fathers trode; and, finally, that passengers were still in the practice, almost daily, of making their way through the glen in equal contempt of ducal prohibition and ducal leave. Facts like these, it is obvious, were calculated to damage the credit of the Duke's tickets very considerably. They depreciated the value of these flattering pieces of paper in much the same way as the stoppage of a bank depreciates its "promises to pay." In both cases the granters promise what is not theirs to give, and it is impossible to accept their favours without losing by them. Tickets from the Duke of Atholl, permitting access to Glen Tilt, are not unlike the black-mail which Highland caterans levied upon Lowland cowards for restoring the cattle which they had stolen from them—with this difference, that, in days when law and right are strong, it would be trebly disgraceful to yield to any such imposture. Accordingly I declined the obliging offer that was made to me, and, mustering courage, resolved to try the fortunes of the day, unarmed with any other weapons than a just cause and a moderate-sized walking-staff.

The morning was grey and misty. It had rained heavily all night, and the fallen leaves, that lay thick and soaked with wet upon the roads, spoke in saddening terms of the rapidly-declining year. The time was ill chosen for a good view of the glen; but the object of my mission was not to admire its scenery, but

to learn its history, its capabilities, and its present uses, this was a matter of less consequence.

The road leading into the glen passes for a short distance along the left bank of the Tilt, and is screened by a fir plantation from Blair Castle, situated in its spacious park on the opposite side of the river. Ten minutes' walk brings you to a small hamlet, at which you have a choice of two different routes. One of these climbs the hill to the right, and, passing along the brow of the glen for a mile or two, gradually descends again to the edge of the stream. The other crosses the old bridge of Tilt on the left, a crazy erection, shrouded with trees, and leading through a half-ruined archway into the policies of Blair. I chose this latter path, and in a minute or two found myself in a new labyrinth. Three roads were offered me—one, which was closed with a gate, not locked, passed through a wood, and, as I afterwards learned, forms part of the new drive which the Duke has made through the glen; another penetrated the same wood in a different direction; and a third, surmounted by an old grey arch, led the passenger along what seemed to be a garden-wall. Knocking at the door of a cottage that was close by the entrance of the last-named way, I inquired the road to the village of Old Blair, which I had been informed lay upon my road, and at which I expected to find some old people to converse with about the glen. "Dat's it," said an old woman, sharply, who answered my appeal, and, pointing through the old arch, vanished before I had time to examine her features, or put any further queries. However, I followed her direction, and on issuing from under cover of the garden-wall, found myself within a few hundred yards of the front of the Duke's castle. This, after all, thought I at the moment, is rather too close a bearding of the lion in his den, and the "pop! pop!" of a double-barrelled rifle in the vicinity of the Big House startled me, as if they had been the warning growls of the monarch of the forest. But in a moment all was peaceful. Several Highland bullocks browsed in the park, and at a greater distance a herd of deer was seen slowly retiring from the open grounds into the cover of the woods. A few paces brought me to a party of labourers, whom I accosted. "How far is it to Old Blair?" "This is Old Blair," said one of the men; and, looking round, there, sure enough, stood ten or a dozen cottages, which I had taken for the peat-sheds and lumber-rooms of the castle. Pointing to a fine avenue of trees which had evidently seen better

days, I inquired what that had been in old times. "That is the old public road," said my informer; "and the white house you passed round the corner there, with the garden in front, and the cherry-trees climbing up the walls, in which the Duke's factor lives, was once the old village inn." This intelligence gave me fresh confidence. If the village and the old high-road were so very near, it was impossible I could be far from the place where the public had enjoyed a right of entrance to the glen. The few houses of which the old village of Blair now consists are inhabited by the Duke's labourers, and one or two old people who live on his Grace's bounty—parties very unlikely to give any information that might militate against their patron's authority. On conversing with them about the closing of the glen, they adopted an apologetic tone in regard to the late proceedings of the Duke; and the collision between his Grace and Dr. Gregory and his party—of which they seemed heartily ashamed—was attributed to an officious hill-man, who posted down to the castle, and inflamed the Duke's wrath by a cock-and-bull story about the forcible entrance which a body of tourists had made into the grounds. No attempt was made to deny that the public had hitherto enjoyed free access through Glen Tilt to Braemar; and being informed that the road I was on led into the valley, I proceeded on my journey.

At the entrance of the glen, the hills recede on both sides, and flattening down their summits, round themselves into natural and easy union with the plain. As you scale the slopes, nothing can exceed the picturesque beauty of the view. The plain of Atholl lies stretched below you in the utmost magnificence—its numerous objects displaying themselves more minutely, and assuming a greater charm the higher you ascend. A few arable farms, of which the Duke's home farm of Blair-Walker is the principal, fill the mouth of the glen with rural plenty. The few houses on the opposite side seem so near that you may almost converse with their inmates; while down in the bottom of the glen, a profusion of wood covers the course of the Tilt, known at this point only by the noise of its waters among the rocks, and the thin line of spray which rises above the trees. Ben-y-gloe and the higher mountains were capped with clouds, but there stood their mighty though veiled forms like landmarks, teaching the passenger of the glen what a long and devious route he has to tread. The road alternately dips into the shadow of

deep woods, and emerges into open glades; and at length guides you down to the bottom of the valley, where you must be content with a narrower prospect and less inspiring views. The Duke's drive passes close along the edges of the Tilt, and crossing from one side to the other by means of substantial bridges, as the course of the stream and the conformation of the glen require. In old times there seem to have been no bridges; and to avoid the danger of crossing fords, a road had passed along both sides of the river, till the shallowness of the stream rendered more than one unnecessary. These old roads take an elevated route, but where the sides of the hills become steep or rugged, they drop down to the bottom of the glen, and are merged for a short distance in the new drive. It is perfectly easy, however, to trace them from one end of the glen to the other; and, at one time, they have been passable to wheeled machines over a distance of twelve or fourteen miles. Were a stranger told that trespass could be committed in the glen, he would conclude that it must be upon these old roads, which long disuse has allowed to overgrow with grass; and as they are crossed in some places by impetuous cataracts, and torn up in others by the bursting of water springs, he would naturally prefer the Duke's drive, which is very level, well gravelled, and exceedingly inviting.

I took some delight in traversing the old roads, and in tracing out the sites of the numerous dwelling-places with which the glen has at one time been thickly studded. Formerly a seat of rural townships, Glen Tilt is now a scene of utter desolation. The Duke's Lodge, two or three cottages inhabited by gamekeepers, and one empty and fast-decaying farm-house, which is said to have sheltered under its roof seven of the crowned heads of Europe, are the only human residences remaining in a glen which must, at one time, have contained 400 or 500 people. A gamekeeper or a gillie hurried past me occasionally, at the jog-trot peculiar to hill-men, as if despatched on some mission of importance from the Castle; and from them I learned that the Duke was expected to visit the Lodge in the course of the day. Not the slightest hint was given, however, that the glen was too small to contain both his Grace and me; and the few words about the shutting of the road that I was able to extract from these kilted guardians of the forest, ran in the same humble and apologising vein that I had remarked among the villagers of Old Blair. Three hours' walking brought me to the Duke's

shooting lodge, a plain building of one story, situated lengthwise across the glen, and ornamented with evergreens, in the form of half-a-dozen square yards of Scotch kail. Here the new drive ends, and the traveller to Braemar is conducted for the rest of his journey along what is known in the Highlands as a good bridle-road. As I had no desire to penetrate the wilds of the Grampians, I paused soon after passing the Lodge, and soliloquising in the terms of Henry of Richmond—

> "Thus far into the bowels of the *glen*
> Have we marched on without impediment," &c. &c.

I began to retrace my steps to the plain of Atholl. It would be tedious to narrate all the particulars of my journey downwards. It is sufficient to say that I returned in the same unmolested way that I had gone, without receiving an uncivil word from any one, and without encountering either hawk or chief. The Duke either slept too long that morning, or I may have missed him among the diverse roads and woods that occur at the entrance of the glen.

From this narrative it will be perceived that the Duke is now backing-out of the high position which he had taken up against the public right of way through Glen Tilt. For, however adroitly his dependants may attempt to throw the blame of some late proceedings upon subordinates, there cannot be the smallest doubt that his Grace issued positive orders that the glen should be strictly blockaded against passengers. Had not these orders been recently countermanded, they would, no doubt, have been executed against me by the hill-men, with whom I repeatedly came in contact. Numerous stories are told of the encounters which the Duke has had with travellers in the glen; and I believe it can be well authenticated, that on one occasion he presented his gun to two gentlemen, who were attempting to force their way on horseback, in opposition to his threats. A steady attempt has been making for years to propagate the idea that the public have no right of access to the glen without the Duke's permission; and the stealthy progress of an opinion of this kind is more to be dreaded than those acts of violence into which the Duke is occasionally betrayed. The rebukes lately administered to his Grace will probably have the effect of putting him upon his guard; and, for the future, he may attempt, by an artful policy, what cannot be so easily accomplished by force.

But it would be prudent to strike the iron while it is hot. There can be little difficulty in establishing in a court of law the right of the public to free access to Glen Tilt. The old roads are there to speak for themselves. Many travellers, now in their graves, have left, in works that have survived them, glowing narratives of journeys which they made along a beaten track from Braemar to Blair-Atholl; and hundreds of living tourists could be found to bear similar and more recent testimony. But, above all, the tradition and practice of the people in the district itself would afford overwhelming evidence of the prescriptive right of way which the public have acquired through this convenient mountain-pass. That there are some difficulties in the question may be readily admitted. It is urged, for example, that the Duke made the new road, and built the bridges at his own expense; and that, if the public assert their right to pass through the glen, he can, at least, deprive them of the conveniences which are his exclusive property. Certainly, if this view were sound, the Duke might succeed in rendering Glen Tilt an irksome and dangerous pass; but what is the real state of the case? The Duke's new drive traverses the old road in many parts; and if his Grace thus takes from the public part of their way, it is reasonable that he should yield to them a share of his. It is also to be borne in mind that, by the old Roman law of way, which is the foundation of the law of Scotland, it was declared that, where the public had a right of way over a man's property, they were entitled, when the road was out of repair, to go over any part of his land they pleased.*

The inconvenience that would accrue to tourists and men of science from the closing of Glen Tilt has been much descanted upon, and will be widely sympathised with; but the injury which such a despotic step would entail upon the people of the district would be infinitely greater. It is only through the glens which intersect the mountain ranges of the Highlands that the people of one district can communicate with another. Glen Tilt connects Blair-Atholl with Braemar, and is the direct channel of intercourse between the eastern parts of Aberdeenshire and the northern and central parts of Perthshire. Allow Glen Tilt to be closed, and the journey from Blair-Atholl to Braemar, now about twenty-five miles long, could only be accomplished by a circuit of fifty or sixty miles.

* Blackstone's Commentaries, book ii., chap. 3.

It is in the clearance of the people from Glen Tilt that we must look for the foundation both of the attempt which has been made to destroy the public right of way through it, and of any difficulty there may be in placing that right beyond the reach of danger. Had Glen Tilt been suffered to retain its population, any attempt to put it in a state of blockade would not only have been unsuccessful, but it would have been literally impossible. So far as I can gather, the depopulation of Glen Tilt was effected between 1780 and 1790. This glen was occupied in the same way as other Highland valleys, each family possessing a piece of arable land, while the hill was held in common. The people enjoyed full liberty to fish in the Tilt, an excellent salmon river; and the pleasures and profits of the chace were nearly as free to them as to their chief. Three or four pounds a-year was all the rent paid for possessions capable of supplying a family with abundance, but which, owing to the idle habits, the slovenly agriculture, and the imperfect commerce of the period, were of infinitely less value than they would be now, or than they might have been even then. The present Duke's grandfather acquired a taste for deer. The people were accustomed to take their cattle in the summer season to a higher glen that is watered by the Tarff; but a large dyke was built at the head of Glen Tilt, and they were forbidden to trespass, or suffer their stock to trespass, beyond it. The outer region was consigned to the undisturbed possession of the deer. These light-hearted creatures increased in number, and paid no respect to their marches. They leaped over the enclosure, and destroyed the poor people's crops. The Duke, observing this, gratified their roving propensities, and added a few thousand acres more to their grazing grounds at the expense of the people, who now began to be peeled of their possessions like one of their elms of its leaves by an October storm. Gradually the forest ground was extended, and gradually the marks of cultivation were effaced, till the last man left the glen, and the last cottage became a heap of ruins. The same devastation which William the Conqueror, and the early Norman kings, spread over the plains of Hampshire, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, was thus reproduced, at the end of the eighteenth, in this quiet Highland valley.

An event occurred at this period which afforded a pretext to the Duke for this heartless extirpation of his people. Highland chiefs were exhibiting their patriotism by raising regiments to

serve in the American war; and the Duke of Atholl could not be indifferent in such a cause. Great efforts were made to enlist the Glen Tilt people, who are still remembered in the district as a strong athletic race. Perpetual possession of their lands, at the then existing rents, was promised them, if they would only raise a contingent equal to a man from each family. Some consented, but the majority, with a praiseworthy resolution not to be dragged at the tail of a Chief into a war of which they knew neither the beginning nor the end, refused. The Duke flew into a rage; and press-gangs were sent up the Glen to carry off the young men by force. One of these companies seized a cripple tailor, who lived at the foot of Ben-y-gloe, and afraid lest he might carry intelligence of their approach up the glen, they bound him hand and foot, and left him lying on the cold hill-side, where he contracted disease, from which he never recovered. By impressment and violence the regiment was at length raised; and when peace was proclaimed, instead of restoring the soldiers to their friends and their homes, the Duke, as if he had been a trafficker in slaves, was only prevented from selling them to the East India Company by the rising mutiny of the regiment! He afterwards pretended great offence at the Glen Tilt people for their obstinacy in refusing to enlist, *and*—it may now be added—*to be sold;* and their conduct in this affair was given out as the reason why he cleared them from the glen—an excuse which, in the present day, may increase our admiration of the people, but can never palliate the heartlessness of his conduct. His ireful policy, however, has taken full effect. The romantic Glen Tilt, with its fertile holms and verdant steeps, is little better than a desert. The very deer rarely visit it, and the wasted grass is burned like heather at the beginning of the year to make room for the new verdure. To Lowlanders this may appear a singular statement; but when I mention that I measured grass in Glen Tilt a yard and a half long, they will be able to understand how pasture may require to be burned. On the spot where I found the grass most luxuriant I traced the seats of thirty cottages, and have no hesitation in saying, that under the skill, the industrious habits, and the agricultural facilities of the present day, the land once occupied by the tenants of Glen Tilt is capable of mantaining a thousand people, and leave a large proportion of sheep and cattle for exportation besides. In the meantime, it serves no better purpose than the occasional playground of a Duke.

LETTER V.

A Glance at the Deer Forests—Their Rapid Extension—Modern Nimrods—Clearances of Sheep to make room for Deer—Effects upon the People—Motives of the Lairds—The Sheep Farmer outbidden by the Sportsman—An Historical Parallel—A Crisis approaching in the Highlands.

"Proud Nimrod first the bloody chase began,
A mighty hunter—and his prey was man.
Our haughty Norman boasts the barbarous name,
And makes his trembling slaves the royal game.
The fields are ravished from industrious swains,
From men their cities, and from gods their fanes.
In vain kind seasons swell the teeming grain,
Soft showers distill'd and suns grow warm in vain;
The swain, with tears, his frustrate labours yields,
And, famish'd, dies amidst his ripening fields.
What wonder then a beast or subject slain,
Were equal crimes in a despotic reign?
Both, doomed alike, for sportive tyrants bled;
But, while the subject starved, the beast was fed."—Pope.

Before leaving the vicinity of the Grampians, it may be well to glance for a few minutes at the deer forests, of which this mountainous region is the great centre, and which, after yielding to the advances of agriculture and civilization, are rapidly re-extending their limits. Gaick, where this letter is dated, is one of the few remains of the ancient Caledonian Forest which seem never to have been invaded by the march of industry, either agricultural or pastoral. The Braemar and Atholl forests, and some others in the wilder fastnesses of the Monad-leah, and other mountain ranges, may be ranked in the same category. The vast solitudes that lie in the centre of these Alpine heights are well adapted for deer retreats; but the same qualities which fit them for deer would also fit them for the rearing and pasturing of sheep, and at periods when the passion for hunting was weak, there can be no doubt that even these old forests were partially occupied by farm stock. In this utilitarian age one would expect to find the forest ground of Scotland rapidly decreasing. But in the Highlands the order of nature is reversed. The Highlands is an outer kingdom, that moves under an entirely different law of progress from that of Great Britain and Ireland. Here the Nimrods of England and of half the world have made a desperate rally. As they have seen their privileges falling one after one by the blows of public opinion, and their parks and game preserves invaded and ruined by the rise of towns, factories, railways, and similar democratic nuisances, the sons of a mighty ancestor appear to have cast their eyes to the far north, and by a universal reign

in that quarter, have resolved to make up for all that they have lost. Like the ancient Caledonians, our modern wild men of the woods have retired to the Grampians, and, secure amid their fastnesses, bid defiance to the whole host of Romans who are cutting forests, digging mines, and making roads in the plains. The gigantic scale of their operations is incredible. New forests are rising up like mushrooms. Here, on one side of Gaick, you have the new forest of Glenfeshie; and there, on the other, you have the new forest of Ardverikie. In the same line you have the Black Mount—an immense waste also recently erected. From east to west—from the neighbourhood of Aberdeen to the crags of Oban—you have now a continuous line of forest; while in other parts of the Highlands there are the new forests of Loch Archaig, Glengarry, Glenmoriston, Glenstrathfarar, and others, whose number and unpronounceable names would only weary the reader. In some cases large tracts of soil are now consigned to deer, which, I believe, never formed part of the old Caledonian Forest, not even in the halcyon days of King Fergus, when that venerable institution was in its zenith. The beauty and fertility of Glen Tilt, for example, would preserve it in the rudest times as a chosen seat of population. But in all cases the preparatory steps are the same. Whether the old forest is simply revived, or whether new regions are brought within that mystic circle for the first time, the same devastation precedes the completion of the enterprise. Houses, roads, enclosures, cattle, men,—every work of time and of progress—the valuable creations of labour and the slow changes of centuries—are all extirpated by a word, in order that deer may enjoy the luxury of solitude, and sportsmen monopolise the pleasures of the chase.

The clearances which have taken place within the last few years, to make room for these new deer-forests, have made little noise in the country, simply because they were clearances of sheep and not of people. A sheep-farmer is usually a man of capital. It gives him little trouble to remove from one part of the country to another. He sells off at the notice of his laird, and looks for new walks without a grumble; while his few shepherds merge into foresters with pretty much the same ease. Hence the clearance of a sheep-farm is a much quieter proceeding than the clearance of a township. But it is not less a clearance on that account. It devotes land to private pleasure, the produce of which was formerly so much gain to the commonwealth; and

even in its direct bearings upon the small tenants, it is attended with effects not much less injurious than a positive ejectment. It is curious, though painful, to trace the perversity with which the Highland people are pursued from bad to worse, and from worse to worse again. In the first place, sheep were introduced into glens which had been the seats of communities of small farmers; and the latter were driven to seek subsistence on coarser and more sterile tracts of soil. Now, again, deer are supplanting sheep; and these are once more dispossessing the small tenants, who will necessarily be driven down upon still coarser land, and to more grinding penury. Or, to speak more truly, the deer-forests and the people cannot co-exist. One or other of the two must yield. Let the forests be increased in number and extent during the next quarter of a century, as they have been in the last, and the Gael will perish from their native soil.

It is unnecessary to inquire at much length into the causes which have impelled the Highland proprietors into this new movement. With some it is a matter of ambition. A deer-forest is beginning to be considered as a necessary appendage of an estate. If it want that, it wants dignity; and forests, accordingly, are introduced in much the same spirit as powdered wigs and four-wheeled carriages at the beginning and the end of last century. With some, again, the love of sport is the actuating motive; while others, of a more practical cast, follow the trade in deer with an eye solely to profit. For it is a fact, that a mountain range laid out in forest is, in many cases, more profitable to the proprietor than when let as a sheep-walk. It is not more profitable to the tacksman or to the country, but it yields more rent to the owner; and if he be either a needy or a greedy man, that one fact is sufficient to decide the disposal of it. The huntsman who wants a deer-forest limits his offers by no other calculation than the extent of his purse. In any circumstances it will be a loss to him. He expects no pecuniary return; his object is simply to spend his money; and if his means, therefore, be capacious enough, he can, and he will, outbid every opponent. With the farmer it is entirely different. Every farthing he pays for rent, for stock, for seed, or for labour, he must bring out of the soil again with a profit. The rent, therefore, which he can afford to pay, is a strictly limited quantity, being regulated entirely by the capabilities of the land; and it is obvious that he must ever be a weak opponent when brought into contest

with wealthy sportsmen, who regard the forest as a luxury, and are prepared to pay for it as such. This is the most discouraging feature of the case; for how, in these circumstances, are you to check the erection of forests, and the consequent sufferings of the people?

The discussion of this question, if followed up, would lead us into all the difficult problems connected with the origin, rights, and conditions of property—a field of speculation that is beyond my present purpose, which is rather to gather facts than to conduct profound arguments. I may be allowed, however, to allude to an historical parallel. After the Conquest, the Norman kings afforested large portions of the soil of England in much the same way as the landholders are now doing in the Highlands. To such an extent was this practice carried, that an historian informs us, that in the reign of King John, "the greatest part of the kingdom" was turned into forest, and that so multiform and oppressive were the forest laws, that it was impossible for any man who lived within the boundaries to escape the danger of falling a victim to them. To prepare the ground for these forests, the people required to be driven out; and, notwithstanding what Voltaire has said to the contrary, I believe it was done. Cultivated land was laid waste, villages were destroyed, and the inhabitants extirpated. Distress ensued, and discontent followed as a natural consequence. But the Norman kings did all this in virtue of their feudal supremacy; and, in point of law and right, were better entitled to do it than the Highland lairds are to imitate their example in the present day. Was it, however, to be tolerated? Were the people to groan for ever under this oppression? The barons gave a practical reply to these questions at Runnymede, which it is unnecessary to detail. King John was compelled to disafforest the land, and restore it to its natural and appropriate use; and the record of that great day's proceedings is universally esteemed one of the brightest pages in English history.

With this great example before their eyes, let the most conservative pause before they yield implicit faith to the doctrine, that every man may do what he likes with his own. The fundamental principles of land-tenure are unchanged since the days of Magna Charta; and, however much the tendency of modern ideas may have cast these principles into oblivion, they are still deeply graven in the constitution, and, if necessity called, would be

found as strong and operative in the present day as they were five centuries ago. If the barons could compel the Sovereign to open his forests, the Sovereign may still more orderly compel the barons to open theirs; and there is a power behind the throne which impels and governs all. These are deep questions, which will only be stirred in this country in the midst of great extremities. But it is impossible for any one to travel in the Highlands, and cast his eyes about him, without feeling inwardly that such a crisis is approaching more rapidly than he cares to express or to believe. Sufferings have been inflicted in the Highlands scarcely less severe than those occasioned by the policy of the Norman kings. Deer have received extended ranges, while men have been hunted within a narrower and still narrower circle. The strong man has fainted in the race for life. The old and tender have been left to die. One after one, the liberties of the people have been cloven down. To kill a fish in the stream, or a wild beast upon the hills, is a transportable offence. If churches have not been destroyed as by the Norman Conqueror, sites have been refused on which to build them. Even to travel through the fenceless forests is a crime; and paths, which have linked hamlets with hamlets for ages past, have been shut and barred. These oppressions are daily on the increase; and if pushed much further, it is obvious that the sufferings of the people will reach a pitch when action will be the plainest duty and the most sacred instinct.

LETTER VI.

External Appearance of Badenoch—The Duchess of Gordon—Improvements and Increase of Population—Emigration—Military Farmers—Their Ill Success—Villages of Kingussie and Newtonmore—Condition of Crofters—Inferiority to the Small Farmers under the Old System—Relief Operations—A Word to the Central Board.

THE district of Badenoch, when first seen from the descents of the Grampians, gives promise of a much wider diffusion of comfort than a minute investigation realises. The plain is extensive, being frequently flooded in winter by the Spey, great part of its of meadow, and rich arable land, reclaimed from the

water by means of artificial embankments. The woods growing around the gentlemen's houses, and in spots where they have been planted of late years for purposes of improvement, have a warm and flourishing appearance. Most of the farm-houses are substantial stone fabrics; few of the black heather bothies are seen, which are the usual accompaniment of Highland misery; and the villages are modern and cleanly in their aspect. To the eye, in short, are presented all the characteristics of a thriving Lowland district. But a close inspection convinces the inquirer that a deep stratum of wretchedness lies under this fair exterior; and numerous families, in very poor and distressed circumstances, are found living in houses which have evidently been erected when the prosperity of the district was greater, and the people in much higher spirits than they are now.

About fifty years ago, the Duke and Duchess of Gordon were the leading magnates of this district; and for a time the population shared the benefits of the princely expenditure of that family. The Duchess, who was a woman of extraordinary spirit and capacity, employed herself in organising and recruiting her husband's regiment of Highlanders; and at her beautiful cottage of Kinrara her Grace entertained, during five months every year, a large circle both of Scotch and English nobility. The improvement of the soil began to attract attention about the same period. Moorland was brought into cultivation, embankments were raised along the Spey, improved systems of farming were introduced, and better houses were erected. Under the excitement of these operations, Kingussie, of which scarcely a nucleus existed sixty years ago, grew rapidly into a considerable village; and the population of the parish of the same name increased steadily up till the census of 1831. At the date of the old Statistical Account, the population of this parish was 1,803; and in 1831 it was 2,080. But at this latter period the tide began to ebb, and in 1841 the population had receded to 2,047. Mr. Shepherd, the parish minister, now of the Free Church, states, in his evidence before the Poor-law Commissioners, that one hundred individuals left the parish for Australia in one year. As education is widely diffused in this parish, the people emigrate voluntarily rather than settle down in a state of degrading wretchedness; but, like other Highlanders, they are strongly attached to their native country; and the extensive emigration which has taken place may be taken as an index of the pressure which has been operating upon them of late years.

In Badenoch, a great proportion of the large farms are occupied by gentlemen who were at one time connected with the army. A stranger is amazed at the majors, and captains, and lieutenants, with whom he finds a peaceable country so thickly planted; and as they are all Macphersons or Macintoshes, he is apt to get completely bewildered in attempting to preserve their respective identities. These gentlemen are officers who received their commissions from the Duchess of Gordon, and who, on returning home from the wars, founded upon their services in the field a claim to a comfortable agricultural settlement. Their demand was allowed; but these military farmers, generally speaking, have not been successful. It is said they offered too high rents; and we may be sure that, however expert they might be in disposing a body of men on a battle-field, they would find (as a large grazier in the North, who thinks himself as great a man as the Duke of Wellington, has already intimated) that, to place a few hundred scores of sheep upon a market-field to good purpose is quite a different operation, and one that requires a different, if not a higher, genius. Many of them have long since become bankrupt, and one of them, at least, is at present in the same melancholy predicament. To make room for these gentlemen of the army, the small farmers were pushed to the wall. While the village of Kingussie was in a growing state, it offered an asylum to the people thus cleared from the land; and when its population began to run over, a smaller village, called Newtonmore, received its refuse. In these two villages, and in a few small crofts scattered over the barren spots of the parish, have been deposited the dregs of wretchedness, which here, as elsewhere, have been produced by extensive clearances.

The villagers of Kingussie have small lots of land attached to their houses, which they cultivate in a very spirited way. Last year, Mr. Baillie, who is now the principal proprietor, reclaimed twenty-five acres of waste, which are also to be assigned to the people of the village. Where there is no trade to give the people constant employment, the occupation of land is the only resource; and this timeous boon on the part of Mr. Baillie, by enabling the villagers to employ their spare time and eke out their limited incomes, may be the means of saving Kingussie from a decay as rapid as its rise. Bankruptcies are frequent among the shopkeepers of the village, occasioned by the ruinous system of long credit, commonly entailed upon small dealers by a poor population.

Newtonmore is smaller, in point of population, and much lower in point of comfort, than Kingussie. Here the propertyless, the dependant, and the wretched of the parish, are gathered. Small pieces of land are attached to most of the houses; but few of them are larger than ordinary village gardens; while the only external support given to the trade of the place is derived from a number of small crofters, who are located on a rocky acclivity that stretches back behind the hamlet. These crofters pay from £3 to £7 of rent, and are far from being comfortable in their circumstances—the nakedness of the soil giving the labour of the poor people no chance of adequate reward. It is a prevalent notion that it is small crofters, such as these, extracting a miserable crop of corn and barley from a few acres of barren land, that the clearance system removed from the glens. But the very opposite is the truth. The small tenants of this class are in fact creations of the clearance system. It would have been impossible to have found in the Highlands a collection of poverty like this Newtonmore, before that system was introduced. The small farmers who were cleared were greatly superior in their possessions and their condition to the crofters of the present day. They were people who owned six or seven cows, two horses, and three or four score of sheep. It is said that with all this show of wealth, they were subject to periodical visitations of distress, amounting sometimes to famine. And I admit there is some truth in this. Under the old system the people were sometimes very badly off. Their system of farming was barbarous; they neglected their stock and they neglected their crops; and, while both were going to ruin, they indulged in savage indolence. Such conduct was sure, occasionally, to entail severe suffering. But there was this wide difference: the distress of the small farmers under the old system arose entirely from their own bad management, while that of the small crofters, under the new system, springs from the essential defectiveness of their circumstances. In the one class you had all the materials of gradual and steady improvement; but in the other you have dilapidated means and a broken spirit, conjoined with a want of land, that renders improvement scarcely possible by any measure short of a new distribution of the soil.

A relief committee was formed here last winter in connection with the Central Board. A sum of £150 was put into their hands, which they divided in meal to the most destitute of the population. In return for relief, the recipients were required to do some little

work, chiefly in their own gardens and lots. With the exception of some planting on the late Major M'Pherson's property of Glen Truim, I could hear of no improvements on the part of the proprietors by which employment will be afforded to the people during winter, and it is feared that many families will again be placed in difficulties. Now is the time for the Central Relief Board to prepare and digest its future measures. Let the crofts be immediately examined—let the improvements be marked out which are necessary to put them in a good arable condition—and let stipulations be made with the crofters, by which sums will be paid over to them, in some cases as direct grants, and in others as loans, for the full value of the work done by them in a proper time, and according to the directions of an efficient inspector. Let them be entreated, encouraged, and impelled to shake off their apathy, and commence a new battle. Where their leases are already long enough, the benefit of the improvements will, of course, be secured to them; and where their leases are near expiry, or where they have no leases at all, let the influence of the Board be employed to obtain from the landlord an adequate tenant-right to them, and a treble good will be accomplished. Great and lasting service may also be done by reclaiming waste land, to be afterwards laid out in allotments to labourers who presently have no land, and who distinguish themselves by good working, during the process of reclamation. The Board should, of course, have long leases of such waste land; and to prevent mismanagement, the work should be done through the medium of contractors. It is by such means, leisurely and deliberately resolved upon, that the Central Relief Board may expect to do good in the Highlands. To rush into a district in the hour of pressure with supplies of meal, to be divided in famine quantities, is the worst possible system of relief. It is the means of making their own livelihood, and not the pauper's dole, that the able-bodied people of the Highlands require.

LETTER VII.

Strathspey—Amalgamation of Parishes—External Aspect—Waste Land—The Earl of Seafield—The "Blue Book"—Obstacles to Improvement—A Primitive Factor—New Set of the Farms—Increase of Rents—Day-Labourers—Inequality of Poor Assessment—Exemption of Sportsmen.

FROM Kingussie I proceeded to Grantown—the market-town of a district which popular usage has distinguished by the name of the Spey, though that river only waters it in common with the Strath of Badenoch, and other valleys equally entitled to its appellation. Strathspey, commonly so called, comprehends the three parishes of Cromdale, Duthil, and Abernethy; and these again embrace in their bounds other four old parochial divisions, the names of which are rapidly falling into oblivion. The amalgamation of parishes has been carried to an enormous extent in the Highlands. Go where you will, there are two things you are always sure to find—a great many small farms turned into one large one, and a great many small parishes ditto. The latter practice has had the same bad effect upon the moral as the former upon the physical condition of the people; for it has placed large masses of the population beyond the reach of churches and schools. It may have saved some thousands annually to the owners of land, in the shape of ministers' stipends and schoolmasters' salaries, but it has unquestionably robbed and deteriorated the people.

The external aspect of Strathspey is rather peculiar. The eminences wear a gloomy covering of ling, while the hollows are clothed in the more lively garb of cultivation. As these varieties of surface are minutely intermingled, and are not gradually blended the one into the other by any intermediate verdure, corn and heather, fertility and barrenness, are here seen in closer contiguity than in other districts. The stranger is apt at first view to suppose that the reclamation of land has been carried to its farthest limits; and that even the few tracts of soil that are already arable can only have been made so by an expenditure of labour which their shallow and stony qualities hold out little prospect of ever adequately repaying. But a better acquaintance with the facts speedily dissipates such notions. A great proportion of the cultivated part of Strathspey was at one time as thickly covered with heather, and

as obdurately unproductive, as the parts which are still in that condition. If the one has been reclaimed with success, so also may the other; and the well-filled barn-yards, the increased rental, and the increasing exportation of grain, prove that past improvements, so far from ruining any one, have enriched the farmer, the proprietor, and the public. Strathspey is certainly one of the finest districts for the profitable reclamation of waste land that is anywhere to be met with. The "New Statistical Account" observes, in reference to the parish of Cromdale alone, that "above 1000 acres might be added to the cultivated part of the parish with a profitable application of capital." Taking this estimate as correct, what an immense field for exertion does the reclamation of even a thousand acres afford to a parish of little more than 3,000 souls! How weak and foolish does the cry of over-population become when viewed in conjunction with a fact like this! The population of Strathspey has steadily increased during the bygone part of the century; and, under a system of vigorous improvement, it may yet be doubled without reducing the comforts of a single family.

Of this extensive field for agricultural enterprise the Earl of Seafield is the sole proprietor. His Lordship, like too many Highland lairds, can scarcely be expected to do much by personal outlay to reclaim and fertilize the wastes of Strathspey. His property in this district being unentailed, he might do good by giving it a chance of finding an owner more capable of coping with its necessities. Or, choosing from a natural feeling to retain in his possession an estate that has been the property of his ancestors for 500 years, he might at least render valuable assistance to his tenants by means of capital raised under the Drainage Act. But the Earl of Seafield neither chooses to sell his land, nor to take a loan of Government money for its improvement. In both of these respects his Lordship, of course, is entitled to a certain liberty of action. There is another sphere, however, in which a landlord's right to do as he likes with his own is more circumscribed. A landlord who has not the means of improving his soil, and who will neither sell that soil nor take the use of public money, at one-third or one-fourth the usual rate of interest, to accomplish what he has not money of his own to do, is bound, by every principle of equity, to frame the laws of his estate on such principles as will facilitate, so far as mere laws can facilitate, the work of improvement on the part of his tenants. Should

his regulations by any chance, directly or indirectly, discourage his tenants from improving, he has committed a blunder or a crime against which the public have the clearest title to remonstrate.

The estate of Strathspey, like most other Highland properties, has its own peculiar code of laws. These petty systems of jurisprudence, which, in nine cases out of ten, may be described as dry lawyer-like histories of what the landlord *may* do, and what the tenants *may not* do, are in some instances written, while in others they are simply traditional. The baronial law of the Chief of the Grants is written, printed, and registered in the books of Council and Session. It circulates among the tenants in a blue cover, from which it has acquired the rather expressive soubriquet of "the blue book." I do not intend to enter upon a minute examination of this serious document; but in so far as it affects the reclamation of the soil, it is well worth a few observations.

Among other regulations, it is enacted that the proprietor and his heirs "do oblige themselves to pay to the tenants for every Scots acre of land so improved [brought into culture for the first time], and left under the proper rotation of the farm at the expiry of their leases, the sum of £5 sterling at said term, over and above melioration for enclosing the same." This appears exceedingly fair on paper, but it operates otherwise in practice. It will be observed that it is only when the land is "left" by the tenant, at the expiry of his lease, that he becomes entitled to the compensation for improvement; and this has been interpreted as signifying when he is either ejected by the landlord, or retires from the farm of his own accord. In such a case, the obligation is faithfully implemented, and nothing can be more equitable than thus to allow tenants to take away with them an equivalent for the capital which they have buried to good purpose in the soil. But what is the consequence if the tenant wishes to renew his lease, which is almost universally the case? He is deprived of the compensation for his past improvements; and, moreover, these improvements are thrown into the scale against him in adjusting the terms of his new lease. Instead of getting £5 for every new acre he has added to his farm, he gets his rent well raised. The more he loses on the side of compensation, the more is he called upon to pay on the side of rent. His candle is thus burned at both ends. What semblance of equity is there in such an arrangement? By agreeing to pay the compensation

money if the tenant removes, the Earl of Seafield virtually admits that there is a certain part of the farm of which that tenant is the rightful owner. It must be his when he stays as clearly as when he removes; and to require him to pay rent for it without first purchasing his admitted right over it, is literally to exact interest for the use of his own capital. It is inconceivable to how great an extent a law of this nature retards the reclamation of the soil, and how widely it operates as an excuse for indolence.

Nor is this the only barrier to improvement in Strathspey. The same clause of the blue book which I have quoted concludes with a warning to the effect, that all improvements for which compensation is expected must be made "with the approbation, in writing, of Sir James Grant, or his foresaids, or their factor." The proprietor or the factor is thus enabled at any time to curb the most enterprising tenants; and I believe a written authority from the factor on the Strathspey estate to improve, is about as difficult to obtain as a ticket of admission to the presence-chamber of the Grand Turk. The respectable old gentleman who fills this office is unfortunately a farmer of a very old school. His creed is, that every shilling laid out in reclaiming or improving land might nearly as well be thrown into the bottom of the sea; and this antiquated agriculturist faithfully practises what he believes. He cuts down his corn with a curved saw, thrashes it with a flail, and waits for a stormy day to blow away the chaff. Your Highland societies and farmers' clubs are considered by him to be a parcel of very foolish children; while trenching, draining, subsoiling, paring, grubbing, and all the modern jargon of agricultural science, invariably throws him into fits of laughter. As a sort of geological fossil, supplying the deficiencies of history, and exhibiting to a hair the kind of men who inhabited the moors of Scotland in the days of Malcolm Canmore, this venerable person might be very amusing and very instructive; but as a factor, invested with authority, in the nineteenth century, to say what is to be done over three parishes, it is easy to perceive what a heavy drag he must be upon the wheels of improvement.

These and other causes have retarded the reclamation of waste land in Strathspey during the last few years. There are symptoms, however, that a new era is about to commence. The leases of nearly all the tenants are just expiring, and a few days ago there was a new set of the lands. The two or three last years of a tack are usually years of sluggishness, so far as improvement is

concerned, and in this instance there was a special reason operating to increase that general tendency. The Earl of Seafield has exhibited a rather mysterious hostility to the Free Church cause in Strathspey. He has granted sites on other parts of his property, but in Strathspey that privilege has been steadily refused; and as a large proportion of his tenants are Free Churchmen, it was generally feared that the same influence that had been powerful enough to prevail upon his Lordship to make an exception of Strathspey in the matter of sites, would also prove strong enough to deprive the adherents of the Free Church of their farms, though such an unreasonable clearance formed no part of his Lordship's ordinary system. This apprehension was entertained up to the day on which the new set took place; when, to the satisfaction of all, it was found that the farms were re-let with the utmost impartiality, and without any regard to religious opinions. The marches were squared off anew, which occasioned the dispossession of some twenty or thirty occupiers; but this operation was conducted solely with a view to the improvement of the farms. The cleared tenants will generally be permitted to use their old lots till some new resource opens up to them; and as there is plenty of unoccupied land, it is to be hoped that a year or two hence they will be comfortably located on new farms. The new leases have restored the confidence of the people; and with the necessary encouragement on the part of the proprietor, and the alteration of some injurious regulations on the estate, I have not the smallest doubt that a most important career of improvement would now commence in Strathspey. A considerable increase which has been effected in the rents, if not just carried too far, so as to trench too deeply on the produce of the smaller farms, may possibly also tend to stimulate the tenants to greater exertions. The rents of farms on this estate vary from £5 to £150 per annum; and in the majority of cases the increase has been about one-third. It is supposed that the rental of Strathspey, formerly £9,000, will now be about £12,000.

There is a more numerous body of day-labourers in Strathspey than can find adequate employment in the district; but they are generally persevering in their search for labour, and, when provisions are moderate, succeed in securing a comfortable livelihood. The advantages of extended cultivation were well exemplified during last year's distress in Strathspey, which, notwithstanding its large cottar population, contributed to the relief fund, but refused

to take any share of its distribution. There is an eager desire here, as in other parishes I have visited, on the part of the labourers, to have field-gardens allotted them; and if these are made just large enough to occupy the surplus industry of a family without seducing the attention of its head from the main element of their subsistence—daily wages—I believe the effect of such allotments are in every instance highly beneficial to this class of the people.

In the parish of Cromdale there are two hundred poor persons on the parochial roll, whose allowances vary from 6d. to 1s. per week, which every one must admit to be a very meagre aliment. Yet loud complaints are made of the assessment, which is at present 2s. per pound on land, and 2s. 10½d. on house property. The rate, in each case, is shared equally by the proprietor and tenant. There can be no doubt that this mode of assessment presses very unjustly on the latter class; for, supposing that a small farmer does produce an income out of his land equal to the rent he pays to the landlord, is it to be tolerated that a poor man, extracting £10 or £20 a-year by hard labour from the soil, shall pay the same amount of tax for the poor as the landlord, who pockets an equal sum out of the fruits of his toil without any exertion whatever? But the grossest injustice of this kind I have yet heard of is the exemption of sportsmen from assessment for the poor. Upwards of £2,000 of the rental of Strathspey is paid by this class, but not a single farthing of poor's money do they pay; and I learn that this season it has been seriously proposed to form a league to resist the payment of assessments for the poor to the last extremity. I am unable to conceive on what grounds this extraordinary claim for exemption is founded. The sums paid by sportsmen for liberty to shoot and appropriate game form part of the rent of land. If game was not separated from the ordinary produce of the soil, for their use, the land would be worth more to the farmer, who would consequently pay a larger rent for it, and be liable for a larger assessment for the poor. Why, therefore, should the poor be deprived of this larger assessment, or the poor-rate increased upon all other classes, for the special convenience of sportsmen? Game-preserving, by injuring crops, and retaining large tracts of land in a state of waste, is one of the principal sources of pauperism; and instead of exempting sportsmen from the burden of the poor, it would be more reasonable and politic to assess them double.

LETTER VIII.

Beauly—Origin of its Name—Lord Lovat—His Improvements—Size of Farms—Two Extremes—Great Proportion of Small Holdings—Dependence of Crofters upon Day-labour—Consequent Depression of Wages—Effects of the Potato System—Necessity of increasing the Crofts—Lord Lovat's Deer-Forest—Attempt to Restore the Priory—Retaliation—State of the Chisholm's Property—Village of Beauly.

BEFORE proceeding to the west coast, I resolved to spend a day at Beauly, attracted both by the richness of the country and the spirited improvements of Lord Lovat. The beauty of this fertile district is said to be denoted by its name; and its name has been traced, with the usual fondness of local tradition, to no less a personage than Mary, Queen of Scots. History, if I remember right, gives no account of a Royal visit to Beauly in the sixteenth century; but we are left to conjecture that Mary, when at Inverness, had taken a gallop over to Beauly during night, to inspect the venerable priory, and receive the blessing of the disciples of St. Bennet. On looking out in the morning from the windows of the priests' house, in which she was entertained, the Queen was struck with the grandeur of the scene, and very naturally exclaimed, in her familiar French, *C'est un beau lieu*. Hence the name Beauly. Whatever may be thought of the truth of this tradition, it must be confessed that Beauly is fully worthy of all the honour which it confers upon it. In every sense of the term it is "*un beau lieu*." A rich and extensive plain in a high state of cultivation is a rare sight in the Highlands; and when this is associated, as at Beauly, with all the grander characteristics of Highland scenery—a winding stream and romantic water-falls, deep woods, a spacious firth, and mountains with towering snow-clad peaks—a spectacle is presented that is as rarely to be met with in more favoured regions.

Beauly is in the parish of Kilmorack, of which Lord Lovat and the Chisholm are the sole proprietors. The former has also large possessions in the adjoining parishes of Kiltarlity and Kirkhill, as well as in more distant parts of Inverness-shire. His Lordship is a vigorous improver, and deeply imbued with those ideas of cultivation on which I have so frequently insisted in these letters on the condition of the Highlands. He perceives that the rents

of his sheep-farms are stationary, and that on account of the deterioration of soil arising from the rapid spread of fog, heather, and rushes, the probability is that they will ultimately decrease. As a matter of self-interest, therefore, as well as of public good, Lord Lovat feels the necessity of introducing a better and improved system. He urges the sheep-farmers to turn their attention to green crops, both as affording superior feeding to their stock, and as a means of fertilising the soil. His Lordship made application for £12,000 under the Drainage Act; and this sum has been allowed, under condition that it be all expended in the course of three years. £1,000 have been laid out during the last year in improvements in the parish of Kilmorack, and similar sums in other parts of his Lordship's property. The works will be prosecuted with the same spirit this year and the next, till the £12,000 be exhausted. The crofters are sharing the benefits of this immense loan as well as the large farmers. The crofts in the neighbourhood of Beauly are ranged along the brow of a hill, which stretches back into a wide tract of moor. The soil has good capabilities, though at one time it must have been in a great measure useless. The poor people, however, are rapidly covering it with fertility; and, in walking over their crofts, I observed the most cheering marks of improvement and progress. In some places the plough had passed through a field of whins for the first time; in others, draining and trenching had just been completed, and the stones dug up by these operations lay in heaps on the new land; and in others, lime had been laid down to stimulate dead soil into life and productiveness. All wore an air of activity and enterprise. The tenants pay 6½ per cent. for the money laid out on their holdings, which is the annual payment required from the proprietor by the Government; so that Lord Lovat has all these improvements carried on without any outlay on his part, or any burden save the personal trouble and risk attending such numerous undertakings. He employs a surveyor in addition to his factor; and the improvements are planned and conducted in that deliberate business-like fashion which scarcely ever fails to ensure success.

It is a principle of Lord Lovat to have farms of all sizes upon his estates. His rents, accordingly, vary from 10s. to £1,000. A very splendid farm in the neighbourhood of Beauly yields a rent of nearly £1,100; and, strange to say, it is not a sheep-walk, but consists chiefly of rich arable soil, cultivated in the highest order.

This farm, if divided into two, would, perhaps, be much more useful. I do not say it would be better managed under any arrangement than it is at present; but a farmer paying £500 of rent would exercise as salutary and civilising an influence upon society as one paying £1,000, and two such farmers would necessarily produce a much wider and deeper effect upon the habits of the population and the mode of culture. There would also be this important difference: the labouring-classes would have two employers instead of one. The amount of work might not be increased, but in the competition of two employers the labourers would virtually have a wider range of employment, and a better chance of securing adequate remuneration. A tract of deep fertile soil is by no means so common in the Highlands as to afford to be monopolised; and where it does occur, the proprietor is doubly bound to make it tell with as much power as possible on the comfort and well-being of society.

There are two things which the Highlands stand specially in need of—a more numerous middle-class, and a higher rate of wages for labour; and it is obvious that both are retarded by the excessive consolidation of farms, even when these are thoroughly cultivated.

Too great amalgamation, and too great subdivision of farms, are each attended with its own evils; and Lord Lovat's estate is not clear of the last any more than of the first of these extremes. If his Lordship's graduated scale of rents rises too high in some instances, it also sinks too low in others. The small crofters form three-fourths of the whole population; and the most common rents paid by this class are £3 and £4 per annum. The cottars are not so numerous here as on most Highland estates, as Lord Lovat is averse to giving houses, or stances for houses, without attaching pieces of land to them. The consequence is, that labourers, tradesmen, and the majority, in short, of all classes, are occupiers of land, for which they pay, on an average, such rents as I have mentioned. It is obvious that crofts of this small value can yield only a fragment of the subsistence of a family. The holders are therefore dependent on other sources of support. They are all obliged to look for something to do besides the management of their own land. The unskilled crofter must have day-labour, and the mason or the carpenter seeks casual employment at his trade. This constant hovering of a multitude of crofters upon the skirts of the labour market widens the range and in-

creases the power of the employer; just as the too great enlargement of farms, on the other hand, contracts the range, and diminishes the power, of the labourer. Under this double pressure, the exchangeable value of labour, of course, sinks. The labourer or the tradesman who has no land finds it almost impossible to live under such a system. He is pressed down to the lowest possibility of existence. His competitor—the crofter—feels that, with his cow or two, and his two or three bolls of barley and oatmeal, he can afford to give his work for smaller wages than he could live upon, without these appurtenances; and so he either cuts down the remuneration of the cottar, or cuts him out altogether. When potatoes were the chief production of the small crofters, this depression of wages was greater than it is now likely to be; but at the same time it was not attended with such fatal results. A croft laid out in potatoes yielded fully three times more subsistence than it does in oats; and in proportion as his family were thus provided for, so much cheaper was the crofter enabled to sell his surplus labour. The facility with which the cottar also obtained a supply of potatoes enabled him to submit to the lower wages, struck by the competition of the crofters. The depreciation of labour had thus full scope. There was no force to resist the downward tendency, and the result was a wretchedness of living among the population of the Highlands, compared with which, the subsistence of savage life is luxury itself.

But the potato system had one advantage: under it the people could not absolutely starve. Their usual stock of potatoes once secured, the Highland crofters and cottars could bid defiance to the decline of trade, the fall of wages, and the loss of employment, so far as the mere support of existence was concerned. Their position is now very different. It is only by plenty of work and good wages that they can possibly exist with their present allotments; and should the abundant employment presently afforded at Beauly happen some day to cease, I apprehend that with such a numerous body of small crofters, deriving only a few months' subsistence from the soil, Lord Lovat would find his position to be one of difficulty and peril. To give solidity and security to the social system of the Highlands, it is indispensably necessary that the crofter be furnished with land sufficient to occupy his whole time, and to yield the entire subsistence of his family. The average rent of this class ought to be £10, instead of £3 or £4 per annum. Holders of farms of this extent might occasionally em-

ploy labour; they could seldom offer their own labour for hire. The labour market would thus be relieved of a dead weight which oppresses it—labour would rise to something like its proper value —and crofters and cottars be equally elevated in the scale of comfort and independence.

I do not pretend that these remarks are necessary for the enlightenment of Lord Lovat. Residing constantly on his estate, and devoting his time and attention to the improvement of the people, it is impossible that his Lordship can be blind to the measures required in the present exigencies of the Highlands. The change to which I have alluded, moreover, is one which cannot be accomplished in a day; and the present reclamation of the waste parts of the crofts on Lord Lovat's property is assuredly a step in the right direction. The enlargement of the crofts is in many cases a work of considerable difficulty. To dispossess any considerable number of those who have hitherto occupied small allotments of land, would be a very unpopular, and, I believe, in the end, a very impolitic proceeding. It will be much easier to make small farmers of the present crofters than to provide employment for them, or dispose of them beneficially in any way without land. The size of the crofts can only be increased, therefore, by bringing in new land, which is a work of time; or by taking a slice off the overgrown farms, which can only be done at the expiry of leases. Then again, to raise a crofter from a holding of £3 to one of £10, requires an increase of stock and implements which can only be the fruit of patient industry and generous economy on the part of both proprietor and tenant. So vast an improvement cannot be called into existence by a word or a law. The most we can expect is, that the policy of the proprietors be directed to this result; that a beginning be made, and that the work be prosecuted with vigour and perseverance to the end.

Lord Lovat, like many Highland proprietors of less merit, has lately erected part of his estate into a deer-forest. The country chosen for this purpose is the western extremity of the glens, which open out towards the east in the rich and fertile plain of Beauly. These beautiful retirements were always natural haunts of the deer; but it is only within the last few years that Lord Lovat has turned his attention to the preservation of these animals, and devoted a range of country to their exclusive use. I am sorry to find that some other of his Lordship's recent proceedings have tended to weaken the public favour, so well merited by

his agricultural improvements. Lord Lovat is a Roman Catholic, and it is natural that he should venerate the ruins of the priory. But the priory, like other religious houses, was the property of Church and State, or to speak less allegorically, of the nation, though originally founded by a proprietor of Lovat. The nation determined, at the Reformation, in what way its priory should be disposed of; and the ground on which the building stands, if not its materials, has since become the prescriptive property of the parishioners, who have been in the practice, for generations back, of burying their dead within its precincts. Heedless of these considerations, however, Lord Lovat put forth a claim some while ago to this ancient structure, and began to repair and extend its walls, as if it had been his own property. His object, it is said, was to make a grand new Roman Catholic priory of it. Public zeal was inflamed; and some, who believed that their rights were violated by his Lordship's procedure, commenced an action against him at law. After considerable litigation, and its usual penalty —expense—his Lordship was obliged to stop his repairs, and abandon his scheme of Catholic restitution. But Lord Lovat took his revenge. If the Presbyterians would yield nothing to Lord Lovat's Romanism, why should Lord Lovat yield anything to their Protestantism? The Free Church wanted sites for a manse and a school. Both were refused, except upon impossible conditions—these being, first, that the site for the manse should be held on a lease for twenty-eight years; and, secondly, that the school should not be opened or closed with prayer. These offers were of course rejected; and the effect upon his Lordship's popularity, among a Protestant population, may be easily conceived. It is with the best feeling towards Lord Lovat that I allude to these matters, for it is matter of regret that his Lordship's influence should be diminished, and his schemes of improvement retarded, by measures which, without conferring any real benefit upon himself, are certain to excite opposition and distrust in a population differing so widely from him in religious belief.

Of the proprietorship of Lord Lovat's neighbour, it is rather more difficult to speak. The Chisholm is both good and bad—the former, it may be, intentionally, the latter unintentionally. Rents are, perhaps, lower on the Chisholm's property than on any other estate in the Highlands; and a clearance is an affair from which that gentleman, I presume, would turn with intense aversion. But the Chisholm is an absentee, takes little interest in his people,

and allows things to take their course. It is not to be expected, therefore, that matters can be in the best condition under so very mild a reign. The Highlands and the Highlanders are not quite so far advanced in learning yet as to be able to finish their education without the aid of a master; and to let alone is with them only another phrase for leaving to destruction. Very probably Lord Lovat's reputation as a "kind landlord" may be many degrees lower than the Chisholm's; yet it is a fact, to which I can testify, that the Chisholm's side of the moor presents far fewer signs of improvement than his Lordship's. The Chisholm, indeed, has a wide field for reclamation and improvement; and as he has applied for upwards of £3,000, under the Drainage Act, there is some reason to believe that he is about to turn over a new leaf in landlordism. Once smitten with a love of improvement, once tasting its fruits, it is impossible to tell how far an ardent-hearted Highland Chief may not go. A productive estate, and the affections of a grateful people, are surely no bad retreats, even for a man enamoured of town-life, to repose upon, in a period of commercial difficulty or when the heats of a London season are exhausted.

The population of the village of Beauly has increased some hundreds since the census of 1841. The houses have been almost entirely rebuilt in that period. The building operations gave employment, and afforded room for an increased population, and an influx of strangers was attracted from other localities. The centres of prosperity are so few in the Highlands, that, when one arises, it is pretty sure to be inundated with the victims of ejectment from less-favoured parts of the country. This immigration frequently presses very severely on the rising spirit of Highland towns, though this can scarcely be said in regard to Beauly. Situated in the centre of a country capable of high cultivation, surrounded with extensive woods, and washed by a river that is navigable to goodly-sized vessels to its doors, there are few villages which possess so many elements of prosperity.

LETTER IX.

County Meeting at Dingwall—The Town Clock—The Scribes and the Publicans—Preliminary Questions—Want of Roads in Gairloch and Lochbroom—Proposals of the Relief Board—The Debate—Victory of Easter Ross—The Moral.

On the 26th October I had an opportunity of attending a meeting at Dingwall of the Commissioners of Supply of Ross-shire. It was the usual half-yearly meeting of the county; but it had been advertised that special business was to come before the Commissioners in the form of a proposal from the Central Relief Board, in reference to the making of certain roads in the districts of Gairloch and Lochbroom. I was naturally desirous of learning the particulars of this proposal, the manner in which it might be received by the lairds, and the destitution of roads, and other necessaries of life, in the districts to which it referred; and moreover, might not a Highland county meeting be expected, of all assemblies in the world, to afford most information respecting the mysterious soporifics which have kept the Highlands winking and dozing in the broad daylight of civilization? To such rural parliaments are committed the numerous questions affecting the local improvement, organization, and progress of their respective districts; and seated, therefore, in a meeting of the gentlemen of Ross-shire, I might expect to find myself thrown at once into the thick of the battle which these provincial Solons had been waging for half a century with the barbarian difficulties of a Highland county.

Accordingly I repaired to the County Hall, not exactly at the time appointed, but a good while after that; for I had observed that the Dingwall clock was exactly three quarters of an hour behind my Lowland time. How long that cadaverous old time-piece may have told its fib to the people I cannot say; but it seemed to me not so inappropriate after all, that the Dingwall clock should be three quarters of an hour too slow, seeing that the county was that day to assemble for the purpose of considering whether they should commence to do certain works which ought to have been accomplished three quarters of a century ago. One old man insisted that the slowness of the clock was entirely the effect of the climate, which, by a curious coincidence, is exactly the same

reason given by a sheep-farmer for growing those very valuable and remunerative vegetables—fog and heather. Town-clocks, it would appear, won't keep time in the Highlands, on the same principle as corn and turnips are said to refuse to grow. To me there is something suspicious in the philosophy which deals in such sweeping generalities; and I am rather disposed to believe that the slow time of the Dingwall clock is nothing more or less than a sly sarcasm played off against the snail-paced improvement of the county by that cunning old wag of a machine.

But to return to the county meeting. Upon entering the hall, I found about a dozen people assembled, in the middle of whom a few spirit-dealers and two or three clerks were engaged in a preliminary skirmish about certain forms, which the latter said ought to have been observed, and the former that they ought not. It was the old Hebrew contention about the paying of "tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin," to the omission of the weightier matters of the law. The noise of the combatants was increasing to a rather alarming pitch, when two or three gentlemen of aristocratic appearance entered the room, and taking their seats at the table, reduced the Babel to more moderate limits. Business now went on; and, after a good deal of cross-talking, in course of which there were seldom more than four or five speaking at a time, the licenses were renewed, and past differences adjusted, to the apparent satisfaction of both scribes and publicans.

The meeting, by this time, had received considerable accessions. The principal esquires, generals, and majors of Ross-shire, a few minors, and several factors, had arrived and taken their places at the council board. Mr. Davidson, of Tulloch, in philabeg and plaid, at length ascended the rostrum, and formally opened the proceedings of the day. Preliminary matters, however, had still to be disposed of. Long and grave discussions ensued upon certain difficult points of law, connected chiefly with the late meal riots; whether military brought into one party of a county should be paid by that part or by the whole; whether the destruction of a meal cart, by popular violence, is included in the damages to be recovered from the public; and what the true intent might be of a certain act of George IV., which seems to have been passed for the very purpose of enlightening the counties upon these and other points. Such were a few of the hard problems to be solved by a company of gentlemen fresh from the bucolic ease and felicities of their country seats. The change was too

abrupt, and the task too severe. The opinions of counsel, which had accumulated in the archives of the county for years, were read and appealed to in vain. The Commissioners only sank into a deeper slough of perplexity; and though their deliberations were assisted, and might have been safely guided by the sagacious interpretations of Sheriff Cameron, they only saved themselves from an interminable puzzle by resolving to appoint a small committee to take the opinion of counsel on the various controverted points, and report to next half-yearly meeting. Though not a very satisfactory, this was certainly a more facile termination of the difficulty than could at one time have been anticipated. And now, thought I, for the roads; when up rose a thin-faced gentleman, whom I learned to be Major Robertson, of Glencalvie notoriety, and, in a slow and tremulous voice, propounded the following question:—"Gentlemen, since you have appointed me convener of this committee, may I ask what the duties of a convener are?" There was another Gordian knot to be untied; and immediately the whole pack of debaters pounced upon it with unwearied zest. Some contended that a convener was chairman as well as convener, and others that a convener was simply a convener. It is difficult to say how deep the collective wisdom of the county might have floundered amid the nice and abstruse distinctions of this new controversy, had not a burly chieftain from the retreats of the west coast, to whom, probably, the opening of a road to within several miles of his own house was a much more grateful theme than the precise jurisdiction of Convener Robertson of Kindeace, suggested, in a tone of capital raillery, that the opinion of counsel might be taken on this point, at the same time as on the other questions that had been already referred to that tribunal. This timely stroke of ridicule smashed the question of convenership, and the noise of the talkers was effectually quenched in a burst of laughter.

The question of the roads was at length broached. I should here premise that Gairloch and Lochbroom are two parishes of immense size—the former being forty miles long, and, in some parts, thirty miles broad; while the latter is thirty-six miles long and twenty broad. Together, they contain a population, according to the last census, of 9,679. At the period when roads were constructed through other parts of the Highlands by grants from the public treasury, Gairloch and Lochbroom, through some neglect on the part of the parliamentary commissioners or of the local

authorities, were entirely overlooked. Many attempts have since been made to supply the omission, but always without effect—the magnitude of the work entailing an expense which the local proprietors were either unable or unwilling to undertake. These wide districts are consequently to this day in nearly as wretched a condition with respect to means of communication, as other parts of the Highlands previous to the military operations occasioned by the two rebellions. There are literally no means of access from one point of these parishes to another except such as Nature and the occasional tread of footsteps have provided. Two roads traverse the parishes from east to west, by which the villages of Ullapool in the one, and Poolewe in the other, are connected with Dingwall; but these roads can only be reached from the intermediate districts by the sea or through the rough passes of the mountains. It may easily be conceived how immensely such a state of things must retard the improvement and comfort of the population. Not only is social intercourse obstructed, but many of the first necessaries of life can only be obtained by the most painful and unprofitable drudgery. The people are obliged the whole year to carry their peats upon their backs from distant and almost inaccessible mosses; and frequent loss of life, as well as perpetual waste of labour, must be numbered among the injuries entailed by the impassability of this wide district of country. From documents read to the meeting on the 26th Oct., it appeared that this subject has for some time occupied the attention of the Relief Board. The construction of roads through so destitute a district seemed a rational and a beneficial enterprise; and if, by coming forward with some pecuniary assistance, the Board could stimulate the county to undertake the work, relief would be afforded during winter to the unemployed men on the west coast, and a foundation be laid at the same time for permanent improvement. The project was warmly seconded by the proprietors of the district in which the roads were required; and definite propositions were accordingly prepared. It was proposed that four roads should be made, embracing a total length of 40 miles. The cost was estimated at £5,000. Of this sum the Board agreed to pay one-third, leaving with the county the responsibility of supplying the other two-thirds. The local supporters of the measure had arranged that the proprietors of Gairloch and Lochbroom should contribute one of these thirds, and that the other should be levied upon the general property of the county. Such was the form in which the

proposition was submitted to the meeting of commissioners; and the various letters and documents being disposed of, the discussion commenced with a formality which intimated what could scarcely have been anticipated—opposition.

Tulloch, as chairman of the meeting, spoke first. He supported the proposition on the grounds of justice, humanity, and policy. The proprietors of Gairloch and Lochbroom had long borne their share of the county taxes, while their peculiar condition with respect to roads had deprived them of a due participation in their advantages. The want of means of communication exposed the people of these parishes to the most pitiful calamities. Patients frequently perished before medical aid could be brought to their bed-sides in so inaccessible a country. And the labouring classes were threatened during winter with severe privations. Their store of potatoes would be exhausted before Christmas. The corn crops had been vitally injured by heavy rains; they yielded plenty of straw but very little good food. Would it not be an act of charity to extend to people so situated the means of employment and subsistence? Such a course would be advantageous to themselves, as well as just and humane to others. The opening up of an extensive district by means of good roads would enrich the county at large; and, after the discussions they had been engaged in that day, on the subject of meal riots, he need not remind them that the peace and good order which abundant employment was the best means of preserving throughout the county, were advantages in which all would participate. Such were the cogent arguments by which Tulloch enforced the acceptance of the overtures made by the Relief Board, and on which he expatiated with a fervour which his small proprietary interest in the districts could not deprive of its claim to disinterestedness.

Dundonell followed. He described himself as the only resident heritor on the west coast. No one could doubt his competence to speak of the deplorable condition of that district. The people, he said, were exceedingly peaceable; but they had no motives to exertion—they had no law—and no access to churches or schools. A population of 1,400 in his own neighbourhood were absolutely without the means of education. There was no road within many miles of his own house. The potato crop was already gone. It had entirely failed during the last three weeks; and a calamity of this kind was rendered doubly severe, because the people could not supply themselves with cheap meal for want

of the usual means of communication. The speaker concluded by a strong appeal to the pity and humanity of the meeting.

Dr. M'Kenzie of Eilaneach, who is carrying on some interesting experiments among the small crofters in Gairloch, said a few words on the same side, enforcing the adoption of the scheme chiefly on the ground of its expediency.

Now came the time for the opposite side to speak out. Who could they possibly be? I had begun by this time to observe that the gentlemen who occupied the east end of the table generally took one view of a question, while those at the west end stood by another. These were the gentlemen respectively of Easter and Wester Ross—in short, the Government and the Opposition, the ins and the outs, of this grand county palaver. From Easter Ross, of course, proceeded the opposition to the subsidy for the construction of the roads. The gentlemen of this party live on the east coast; but Gairloch and Lochbroom lie upon the west coast. What possible interest, therefore, could they have in making roads so far away from their own doors? The same gentlemen, be it remembered, were urging a few minutes before, with great vehemence, that the rations served out to the military who had been called in to preserve the peace of their district, ought to be paid for out of the common purse of the county. But the main strength of their cause consisted in a huge document of figures and statistical calculations, an attempt to read which nearly emptied the hall, and completely broke down the voice of a rather asthmatic gentleman on whom the task was very cruelly inflicted. It was almost impossible to catch the import of the few pages of this monster paper that were read; but my impression is, that it was an elaborate attempt to show how much Easter Ross has paid for road-making from somewhere about the commencement of the post-diluvian era down to the present day. The sum total, calculated at compound interest, I have no doubt, is very incredible; and in the hands, or rather in the mouth, of a more stentorian orator, it might have produced a very lively sensation. As it was, its effect was completely lost; and whatever they might do at the division, it was impossible not to feel that Easter Ross had been beaten hollow in argument.

The rival parties now came to close quarters. They wrote out and tabled their motions as a pair of draught-players push forward their last men. The closing scene was at hand. Tulloch proposed, in substance, that that meeting recommend the heritors of

the county to assess themselves to the amount of £1,600, and that this sum discharge all claims upon them for the roads to be constructed in Gairloch and Lochbroom. To this the Easter Ross gentlemen opposed a direct negative; and on the list being read over and the votes recorded, they were declared victorious by a majority of four. Thus fared the generous offer of the Relief Board —thus fell the high hopes of Gairloch and Lochbroom.

I have heard but one opinion in the district of the result of this meeting, and it is one of unmingled censure of the shabby and selfish course adopted by the heritors of Easter Ross. The vote of these Ross-shire gentlemen exhibits clearly what a difficult task awaits the Relief Board in its negotiations with the Highland lairds, and how careful it would need to be in the schemes adopted for the expenditure of its remaining funds. There can be no doubt, that hitherto the distribution of these funds, though it has been the means of saving numerous lives, has relieved the Highland proprietors of responsibilities which ought justly and legally to have been borne by them; and a distribution on the same principles for the future will be characterised by the same general effect. Better, I would almost say, that a few hundred people should starve, than that these men should be encouraged in their cold indifference and open hostility to the duties which divine and human law have equally attached to their position. The valued rental of Ross-shire, exclusive of Gairloch and Lochbroom, may be set down in round figures at £150,000. To raise the sum of £1,600, therefore, would only have entailed a tax of 2½d. per pound upon the heritors of Ross-shire; yet, rather than pay this trifling cess, a majority of them resolved to sweep the bread out of the mouths of hundreds of their fellow-creatures, and to consign to helpless barbarism a large portion of their own county and their own kinsmen. This Ross-shire meeting is full of meaning. In that petty feud between Easter and Wester Ross, that incompetence for business, that ceaseless appealing to the opinions of counsel, that want of spirit, that unwillingness to sacrifice for the public good, that deafness to the claims of duty and the appeals of justice, so conspicuous in the proceedings of this county meeting, we have the true secret of Highland poverty and destitution.

LETTER X.

Macleod's Stage Coach—Scenery of West Highlands—Lochcarron—Club Tenants —Their Condition—Imperfect System of Farming—Necessity for New Offices and Inclosures—The Two Parties—Improvement in the Management of Sheep Stock—An Inference—Sheep Farms of Tullach and New Kelso.

THANKS to Macleod of Macleod, the journey from the east to the west coast, through the moors and mountains of Ross-shire, is much easier and more expeditious than the porer over maps and guide-books could anticipate. This gentleman runs a handsome stage-coach, three times a-week, from Inverness to the gates of his own castle at Dunvegan; and, except when boisterous weather obstructs the passage of the ferries between Skye and the mainland, this long journey of 144½ miles is accomplished in little more than twenty hours. Taking a seat at Dingwall in this admirable conveyance, I was carried with unexpected rapidity to what, properly speaking, are the distressed districts of the Highlands. Our route lay through Strathpeffer, famous for its mineral waters; and Strathgarve and Strathbran, remarkable for nothing that I could learn, save the bleakness of their scenery and the scantiness of their population. As you approach the west coast, the aspect of the country becomes more thoroughly Highland. The valleys grow narrower and deeper—the mountains higher, rounder, and more verdant. Wide sweeping corries, the misty recesses of which are the homes of the red deer, straggling remains of pine forests, trackless ravines, worn in the mountain's side by the rain and the tempest, and water-courses innumerable, that alternately dwindle into rills and swell into cataracts, are the principal characteristics of this Alpine territory. The road passes along the edge of quiet lochs, that are fringed with considerable tracts of fertile, but sadly-neglected soil. To the neighbourhood of Loch Doule, in particular, I would call the attention of Applecross, the proprietor, and of the Central Relief Board, as a spot where hundreds of good acres are entirely wasted, and where a judicious outlay in draining and trenching would be certain to yield the most valuable returns. All along, indeed, from this point to the shores of Lochcarron, there is a large extent of reclaimable soil, for which the hand of art has hitherto done as little as for the most unoccupied wastes of Australia.

The district to which I am alluding is rented partly by small club-tenants, and partly by large sheep-farmers. The former pay from £10 to £15 of rent each; and, in addition to their arable land, have a goodly stock of cows and sheep. Only one, I believe, of these club-tenants found it necessary to ask assistance from the Relief Fund last season, and that one had been reduced by sickness and other misfortunes to a state of great poverty. The club-tenants are everywhere a much more substantial class than the crofters, their stock forming a resource on which they can fall back in a period of calamity. But it needs but a single glance at their system of farming to see that they are far from being so comfortable as their means and opportunities might make them. Their great object is to wring as much corn crop from their farm as possible, by which they expect two advantages—oatmeal for their families, and straw for the cattle during winter. But everybody knows that cows cannot milk well if fed upon dry straw; and as they are kept roaming over the hill for pasture during a great part of the year, their manure is also lost, so that the people have not the necessary means of recruiting the soil, impoverished by the corn crops on which they place so much value. These crops are frequently so poor as to yield little more than the seed; but even with this miserable return the people are not altogether dissatisfied, providing that the yield of straw is sufficient to carry their cattle over winter. It is evident, therefore, that this system fails in supplying the families with meal, which is one object of it; and though it provides straw, which is another, yet this is such inferior feeding for cows that it is impossible they can thrive, or yield the amount of produce which they would do if well fed. If these club-tenants were prevailed upon to lay out fully one-half of their arable land yearly in clover, turnips, rape, vetches, and cabbages, they would, in the first place, have crops more suitable to their climate than white crop; in the second place, they would have an abundance of good juicy food for their cows the whole year, without turning them out to the hill at all, except for a short airing; in the third place, the cows being fed in the house, and the straw which they formerly ate, but would now lie down upon, being permitted to go to the dung-heap, an abundance of manure would be provided to keep the land in good heart, the effect of which would be, that the smaller breadth of soil sown with white crop would yield a larger supply of better meal than is obtained under the present system; and in the fourth place,

the cows, well fed and warmly bedded, would be a great deal more productive of milk and butter. The superiority of this system is so obvious, has been so frequently tested, and is so well understood, that it may well be wondered why the Highland proprietors have not long ere this introduced it upon their estates. The matter is certainly a little mysterious; but listen, good reader, and I will tell you my version of the story. Before this system could be adopted, a good stone dyke would need to be built between the hill and the arable part of the farms, fences would also need to be erected between each of the tenants' lots, and each lot would require to be separated by another fence into at least two divisions. Moreover, better houses would have to be erected for the reception of the cows than many of the people have at present for themselves. But new cow-houses, and new dykes and fences, cannot be built without money, and money is a commodity in which Highland lairds happen to be scarce, most of them requiring all they can get, and sometimes a deal more than they can get, for certain patriotic purposes, such as election contests, deer-forests, residence in town during "the season," and many other items equally necessary for the honour and glory of the chiefdoms. If you could rid the Highland lairds of these cruel burdens, you might have new cow-houses, new inclosures, a new system, and a new era; but while these are permitted to swallow up the rental, things must remain *in statu quo*. It is here where the real difficulty lies. To accuse the prejudices and the slothfulness of the people, is to display much ignorance of the question. It is true, the people know very little about your green-cropping, your house-feeding, and manure-making. They speak the Gaelic, and do not understand Professor Johnston's lectures, whether delivered from the platform or through the pages of the *Agricultural Journal*. They are not inspired men. They cannot drink in agricultural theories from the clouds. A few of them, indeed, are said to have the second sight; but these are a very limited number. For the great body of the Highlanders, as for the great body of mankind, there is no royal road to knowledge. And even supposing that these poor Gaelic-speaking farmers were as deeply versed in the mysteries of agriculture as the most ardent improver could desire, still it would be impossible for them to move a step out of their old ways without the buildings and inclosures to which I have alluded.

In these Highland townships there are two conflicting parties at work—the party of the old men, and the party of the young

men. In an agricultural sense, the former are conservative, while the latter are revolutionary. The old men cling rigidly to the old system of cattle-rearing; whereas, the young men are for diminishing the number of cattle and increasing the stock of sheep. A great deal must depend on the nature of the pasture, and I do not say but the old men may occasionally be right; but the odds are certainly in favour of the sheep. Now, observe what a sheep-farmer in this district, who certainly has no high opinion of the Celtic character, confesses in reference to the progress made by the club-tenants of Lochcarron. He admits that a great improvement has lately taken place in the management of their stock. They both keep a greater number of sheep, and tend what they have a great deal more judiciously. Formerly they used to hunt this part of their stock with dogs to the tops of the highest hills, where great numbers perished of cold and hunger. Now, however, there is a shepherd on every farm, "and I cannot say," quoth the grazier, "but their sheep stock is every bit as well managed as my own." Now, what does this prove but that, notwithstanding the proverbial influence of the patriarchs in Celtic society, the young men, "the new generation," as Mr. D'Israeli would call them, are nevertheless making steady advances against old prejudices and old follies, and that in the Highlands, as elsewhere, there is a vigorous element of improvability struggling for development. The matter is easily explained. The graziers of the south have gone in among these people, and, so far as the management of sheep is concerned, have shown them the best possible example. The young Celts have mingled with their shepherds, and imbibed the new ideas; while to the duller sense of the old Highlanders, the superiority of the new system has been exhibited in the substantial returns of the wool and flesh markets. It is not in human nature, whether Saxon, Celtic, or Hindoo, to resist a demonstration of this kind; and, accordingly, the prejudices of the club-tenants of Lochcarron have given way, and the change for the better has taken place. Will any person say that the same process which has succeeded in effecting this improvement in the management of sheep-stock, would not be equally successful in producing a still more salutary change in the mode of keeping cows, and of cropping and manuring the soil? There can be no doubt on this point; but the evil is, that the process is never applied in this direction. The graziers, though excellent teachers of sheep-rearing, are the worst possible instructors in every other branch of husbandry.

In reclaiming waste or cultivating good land, in growing crops, whether green or white, in feeding cows, or in husbanding manure, in weeding or in draining—in every operation requiring patience, capital, and labour, the sheep-farmers are as slovenly, as lazy, and as unskilled, as the poorest and most intractable Celts can possibly be. Their monopoly of the soil, moreover, prevents the rise of a more enterprising and energetic class of large farmers; and agricultural industry is stationary because there is no *experimentum crucis*, or no pioneers to lead the way.

Tullach and New Kelso are the names of the two principal sheep-farms on Lochcarron. The latter was at one time the seat of a factory originated by Government after the Rebellion for the purpose of employing and pacifying the people. A manager was brought to it from Kelso, and hence it was called New Kelso. The undertaking, however, did not prosper, and no vestige now remains of this intended seat of trade but the name. The tacksman of Tullach takes considerable credit for covering many parts of his farm with grass, which were black and heathy when he came to it. This has been done by shaking a quantity of shell-sand over the soil—a material which answers all the purposes of lime, and which is carried in herring-boats a distance of twenty or thirty miles by the Janetown crofters for 10s. per boat-load. A field was also drained on this farm last season, and was sown with turnips, but at too late a period to secure a good crop. The tacksman has no hope, and apparently no desire, of making arable land out of any part of his farm, but his neighbour in New Kelso seems to have a different opinion. A contractor and a few labourers are at present employed in trenching and draining parts of his land, and it may be presumed that cultivation will here, at all events, have a fair trial. Both of these gentlemen send their hogs every winter to the east coast—a distance of 80 and 90 miles—to turnip feeding. This costs Tullach alone an expense of from £200 to £250 annually. Every acre of turnips grown at home would save a part of this outlay to the farmer, and at the same time afford employment and subsistence to the people.

A little beyond the farm-houses of New Kelso and Tullach, you pass in succession the parish-church, the burying-ground, and the manse; and rounding a corner, there before you, close along the edge of the Loch, stands the fishing village of Janetown, its numerous and wretched population requiring more deliberate notice than can be given at the fag-end of a letter.

LETTER XI.

Village of Janetown—Size and Produce of Lots—Failure of the Herring-Fishing—Danger of Famine—Population Facts.

JANETOWN consists of a single row, fully a mile long, of mean-looking cottages. A large inn bearing the Mackenzie Arms, and having for its Boniface the biggest and jolliest Highlandman I have ever seen, is apt to give you an inflated opinion of the comfort and importance of the city into which you have entered; but walking a few paces round the corner, that long monotony of miserable hovels speedily informs you of your whereabouts. One or two houses occupied as shops, and a few cottages with larger windows and whiter and higher walls than the rest, bespeak a degree of tolerable comfort; but, with these exceptions, the entire village presents the same low level of poverty and wretchedness. And the tattered garments and wan faces of the children that dabble about the shore, and of the women, that cast half-frightened glances at you past the dirty rags stuffed in the broken windows, are quite in keeping with the miserable aspect of the dwellings. You are at no loss to perceive that famine has been at work upon those shrivelled forms, and that the life to which they have been doomed is one of hardship and privation even at the best.

The land attached to the village of Janetown consists of thirty-four lots, paying a rent of £4 per annum each. Each of these lots has a grazing for two cows, and when the arable part is laid out in corn crops, as it was almost entirely this year, yields about four bolls of meal. This meal and the produce of the cows, after deducting rent, constitutes the whole subsistence derived from land by a villager in possession of a full lot. But the lots have been greatly subdivided; and a large proportion of the population have no holdings of any size. Of forty-seven families whom I visited, twenty-two occupied full lots, five had half lots, eight occupied patches for which they paid 30s., one paid 9s., and eleven had no land of any extent. Those who have half-lots usually keep one cow each; but many of those occupying smaller portions have no privilege of grazing, and if they keep a cow, require to pay the lotters for her admittance to the common. The lotters

in former years usually planted from six to ten barrels of potatoes. This year they planted about half-a-barrel each, and of these they have only been able to make partial use on account of the ravages of the disease. From these facts the reader will perceive the amount of subsistence which the people of Janetown derive this year from the soil; and meagre as this is, I am sorry to say that the other great source of their maintenance—herring-fishing—had, up to the period of my visit, been still more unproductive and unpromising. Each of the lotters generally owns a fishing-boat, which is manned by two of the smaller occupiers, or those having no land, besides himself. The largest fishing I have heard of is two barrels to one of these boats; and of this I know of only one instance. Some fishermen have 200 herrings each, some have 100, and others have consumed all that they have caught. The fishing continues in this quarter till Christmas, and the people appear to have some hope that the herrings will yet visit the Loch, and that they may still be able, seeing that the fish bring a good price this year, to retrieve the bad success which has hitherto befallen them. I hope it may be so; but, in the meantime, their prospect of remuneration from the herring-fishing is anything but encouraging.

The young men go to the east coast fishing during the months of July and August, and, after paying expenses, usually bring home £7 10s. each. Even this resource has comparatively failed this year, and many who agreed to take payment according to the quantity of fish they caught, instead of hiring their services, as a few did, for a fixed wage of £6, have returned nearly as poor as they went.

From these facts the condition of the people of Janetown during winter and spring may be easily conjectured. Poor in all seasons, they are totally unprepared for the calamities of this year. Some families spent £20 last year for meal, but that heavy drain exhausted the savings of years. No similar resource remains to meet the new pressure, and unless the herring-fishing take a favourable turn or employment at fair wages be opened up without delay, it is plain that, long before another harvest, the population of this village will be struggling with famine.

I found that nineteen married couples in Janetown have sixty-two children in all, being a little more than three on an average to each couple. All had children except two; two had seven children each; and two had six each. I also found that fifteen unmarried men were the main support of aged or widowed parents

as well as of their sisters and younger brothers. I visited one family consisting of twelve brothers and sisters, without father or mother. Two of the boys are dumb, and so also are two of the girls. This family has two fishing-boats, and a lot of land; and, judging from external appearances, I would say they form one of the most industrious and comfortable households in the village. Though there has been the same consolidation of farms in Lochcarron as in other Highland parishes, the population has increased during the present century. This is attributed in the statistical account of the parish to "the division of land into lots." The people ejected from the glens were permitted to squat along the margin of the Loch, which, in the palmy days of the herring-fishing, offered a convenient means of subsistence. Janetown, from a nucleus of three families, has risen rapidly to a population of five or six hundred souls.

LETTER XII.

Distribution of Relief—Defects of the System—Requisite Amendments—The Poor-Law—A Case of Improvement under the Drainage Act—Loss to the Proprietor, and the Reason—A Successful Employer of Highland Labour.

THE relief transmitted to Lochcarron during the recent distress, as nearly as I can gather from the reports of the Central Relief Board, amounts to 875 bolls of oat, Indian, and wheat meal. I have endeavoured to discover the system on which these supplies were distributed; and, from the complicated and contradictory explanations given by those best qualified to know, I am convinced that very considerable confusion, and a great deal of wrong principle, have reigned over the relief proceedings in this quarter. Generally speaking, the order of the Central Board to exact work for relief was enforced by the local committee. An able-bodied man was allowed 7 lbs. of meal for a day's work; and as most of the men had families to provide for besides themselves, they were restricted to a certain quantity of meal per week, which seems, at one time, to have been 14 lbs., and, at another, 10 lbs. The women were restricted to 5 lbs. a-week each, and children to smaller quantities, according to their ages. The people were

thus limited both in their work and in their allowance of food; while upon the local committee devolved the onerous and invidious task of gauging the gastronomical capabilities of families, and of resolving hours of labour into pounds of meal. Along with these arrangements for the local distribution of relief, every effort was made to prevail upon the young and able-bodied to seek employment in the south, and considerable numbers availed themselves of the facilities afforded for this purpose. These drafts thinned the ranks of the dependents upon the Relief Board of all the ablest and best workers, while it left them burdened with the halt, the maimed, and the weak. Efficient labour was not to be expected from this class under any system, but still less under the pauperised and pauperising system of the Relief Board. The weekly dole of meal wore all the appearance, and had all the effect, of a charity allowance. On the one hand, the people felt it to be really and truly a gift; while, upon the other, the committee were possessed with the idea that the exaction of labour was a pretence. The former did their duty reluctantly, and the latter were slovenly in discharging theirs. Moreover, the meal was actually unsuitable. It preserved life, but it injured health. A perpetual round of gruel to people who had been accustomed with a vegetable diet, was not only badly adapted to enable men to work well, but it told with injurious effect upon their constitutions, and engendered severe maladies. The spread of disease aggravated all the evils inherent in the disposition of the people, the negligence of the committee, or the system of relief. No one work was done vigorously, none was done well, and none was completed. The people were set to improve their crofts, but I cannot find one croft that can be said to be in a good crop-bearing condition. Their attention was next turned to the erection of a pier, but no further progress has been made in this very necessary undertaking than the laying down of a few heaps of loose stones within tide-mark, where they will be rapidly scattered by the surge, or appropriated to other purposes.

I do not intend by these observations to cast any reflections upon the Central Relief Board, or upon the local committee of Lochcarron. They were suddenly called upon to deal with a famine, and they are entitled to lenient judgments if, in the hurry and novelty of the emergency, their proceedings were not characterised with all the wisdom and foresight that are desirable. It is entirely with a view to the rectification of future operations that

I point out the errors of the past. All idea of distributing relief in the form of meal ought to be immediately abandoned. This system is unprofitable to the givers, and degrading to the receivers. Let the people be employed at fair living wages, and they will buy food for themselves infinitely better than any Board can supply them with it. In districts where the ordinary means of purchase and sale are deficient, or where the provision trade is monopolised, it might be advisable to open a store for the sale of articles of food; but such a concern should be kept entirely distinct from the employment department. Let it be remembered that it is with able-bodied men that the Board has to do. The Poor-law gives a right to "needful sustentation" to all "poor, aged, sick, and impotent persons;" and in parishes where this beneficent regulation has not taken effect, it ought to be enforced. There is still no assessment in Lochcarron. A destitute person, if a female, gets a stone of meal in the four weeks, and if a male, a stone in the three weeks. The whole sum expended on the poor from the 1st February, 1845, to 1st February, 1846, was £20 12s., in a parish with a population of 1,960, and yielding £2,889 5s. 11d. of annual rent. It is impossible to distribute meal in such a parish without literally putting the contributions of the public into the pockets of the heritors. The Board has therefore an important duty to discharge in relation to the Poor-law. A total separation must be made between those entitled to parochial relief and those who need nothing but remunerative employment. The Board must exert itself to place the burden of the former upon the proper parties; and should its representations on this subject to the parochial boards, and the Central Board of Supervision, fail in producing the desired effect, let the poor then be fed by it, and the expense of doing so recovered from the parishes, as it can be, and has been recovered, in similar cases, in the courts of law. No false delicacy should restrain the Board from these indispensable measures. They have a fund to spend, and a work to do, for the manner of spending and doing which they are responsible to the public; and if there be any agents of the Highland lairds in their number who cannot agree, in consistency with the interests of their clients, to measures essential to prevent the misappropriation of the public contributions, and to secure the administration of one of the most important laws of the country, an ordinary sense of propriety, I should think, will be sufficient to teach such persons that it is their duty either to be silent or to retire. The infirm and dis-

abled poor thus provided for, the path of the Board will be clear. "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work" need then be its only motto, and its only concern. The more closely the Board assumes the character and position of an ordinary employer of labour, its operations will become the easier and more satisfactory to itself, while they will cease to be injurious, and become wholly beneficial to the Highlanders. But to be a successful employer of labour, the Board must use the same means as other employers of labour. Profitable undertakings must be diligently sought for and wisely planned. Costs must be counted and terms adjusted. Inspectors must be appointed, contractors engaged, and labourers organised. All these preliminary steps are necessary to secure a successful speculation; and they are equally necessary to secure the efficiency of future relief operations in the Highlands.

The following case is narrated to me as an example of the difficulties which attend the employment of the Highland people. Mr. Mackenzie, of Applecross, is a borrower under the Drainage Act. He proposed to one of the sheep-farmers, in the course of last season, to drain a certain field of his with part of the Government money. The grazier, of course, had no particular desire to manufacture arable land; but, in consideration of the distress of the people, he at last consented to go into the undertaking on these conditions: that he should have nothing to do with the execution of the works, that Applecross should employ and pay the labourers, that a regular valuation should be made of the improvement after it was finished, and that he should be only charged 5 per cent. on the amount so valued. Even supposing that the valuation turned out equal to the cost of improvement, Applecross would still be a loser, for he was obliged to pay 6½ per cent. to the Government. It is usual, in similar cases, for the tenant to pay 6½ per cent. upon the expenditure; but in this instance the tenant was able to get off with 5 per cent., and that not upon the expenditure, but on the valued worth of the improvement. That is the way in which the sheep-farmers bargain with the lairds. However, it was not a time to higgle; the people were starving; and so the work commenced. It was agreed by the factor that the labourers should be supplied with 1s. worth of meal per day. This was thought to be the minimum value of their labour, and any balance in their favour could be handed over to them at the end of the job. At length the works were finished, and one of the Government inspectors was brought to value them. To make the concern as

good as possible to the poor people in so severe a year, the factor prevailed on the farmer to allow the drains to be valued at 1s. per rood, instead of 10½d., the usual rate. The valuation was accordingly struck at £97; and, to the amazement of the factor, it was found that, while making these £97 worth of drains, the labourers had consumed in meal £240, some odd shillings!

This is a crack story for those who harp on the incurable laziness and impracticability of the Highlanders; but I extract a very different moral from it. There was a great fault, in the first place, on the part of the overseer. He was warned to keep the people working in small companies or squads; and while he observed this rule, the work went on as well as could be wished, and the workers were observed to earn 1s. 6d. a-day. But gradually he allowed the ranks to fall into confusion; the labourers got crowded together on one spot, and every man hindered his neighbour. And, in the second place, there was a fault on the part of the proprietor and his factor, neither of whom was on the spot to correct this mischief when it began. When a proprietor chooses to be an absentee, one might naturally expect that he would take care to place a competent agriculturist on his property to act in his stead; but even this very ordinary precaution is one which the Highland absentees seldom observe. A sheep-farmer and factor on an extensive estate in Skye acts also as factor in Lochcarron. A finite being, even though a Highland grazier, cannot attend to sheep in the islands, and look after men on the mainland at once; and so the Lochcarron labourers ate meal and idled away their time, while their employer and his agent were engaged, perhaps not much more profitably, somewhere else. I ask any Lowland farmer, if he were to pick out the best labourers in a country-side, and set them to do a piece of work with an incompetent foreman at their head, and leave them to do exactly as they pleased, what other result would he expect than just such a one as happened in this case—a large eating of meal and a very small performance of work. A different system is pursued on the farm adjoining that on which this exploit occurred. Drains are there made by contract, and the contractor, who cannot afford to throw away meal unprofitably, works himself at the head of a small body of men, whom he can thoroughly manage and oversee. When his labourers are disposed to waste their time in foolish talking, or in nonsense of any kind, he treats them to a quiet lecture on his own experience. He tells them that he has been trained to labour hard from his boyhood,

that he knows what a day's work is, that he does a day's work himself, that he requires them to do no more than he does, and that though he cannot permit idling during work hours, yet when these are over, he will have no objection to talk, sing, tell a story, or play the fiddle with the best of them. And he keeps his word, for when the pick and the shovel are laid aside, he revives the wearied spirits of his men with the strains of his violin. There are no complaints in this case. It is true that the Highlanders are not yet thoroughly formed to habits of industry, and on this account require greater tact and management than more experienced labourers; but that there is any natural spirit of laziness adhering to them is a palpable fiction, contrived to conceal the incompetence of the lairds, the negligence of agents, and the depopulating designs of the sheep-farmers.

LETTER XIII.

Constitution of Relief Committees—Elements of Highland Society—Two Classes—Difficulty of Organising a Local Relief Agency—Captain Elliot's Revolution—Its Effects—Future Relief Measures for Lochcarron.

The change that was made in the constitution of the relief committee of Lochcarron, by Captain Elliot, during his tour through Wester Ross in May last, is worthy of some notice; and the more especially as a similar proceeding was adopted about the same time, both by that gentleman and Dr. Boyter in other districts. I have no doubt that the same general features characterise all the cases; but the remarks I am about to make are founded upon my observations and inquiries in Lochcarron, and must be understood as having a special reference to that parish.

To understand the matter well, it is necessary to keep in mind the peculiar construction of Highland society, the classes of which it consists, and the principles and objects with which these classes are respectively actuated. Here in Lochcarron there are only two ranks of people—a higher rank and a lower rank—the former consisting of a few large tenants all occupying nearly the same level; and the latter consisting of a dense body of small lotters and fishermen, all equally uniform in their circumstances and con-

dition. The one class has wealth on its side, the other class has numbers. The proverbial enmity of rich and poor in all societies has received peculiar development in this simple social structure of the Highlands. The clearances laid the foundation of a bitter animosity between the sheep-farmers and the lotters; and as these violent changes were executed by the authority of the lairds, they also snapped the tie which had previously, amid all reverses, united the people and their chiefs. One link still bound the extremities of society in formal, if not in spiritual, union. The parish church was a common centre where all classes met; and though the minister was frequently a nominee and a partisan of the laird, he could not but regard the victims of the clearances as a portion of his flock, and extend to them the amenities of his office. But even religion, "the source of all comfort," was converted at the Disruption into a new fountain of bitterness. The social wrongs of the lower class inclined their minds to the doctrine of non-intrusion; and when the crisis came, the instantaneous unanimity with which this class turned their backs upon the Establishment, showed with what ease they could rend the last badge which recommended them to the smile and the sympathy of their superiors. The parish churches, in Ross-shire particularly, have been literally emptied. When examined by the Poor Law Commissioners, in 1843, Mr. Mackenzie, then and still the established minister of Lochcarron, admitted that "almost all the lower classes had seceded in his parish." They continue seceders still, while the sheep-farmers, or upper class, adhere to the Establishment. There is thus a double point of collision between the two ranks—an ecclesiastical as well as an agrarian enmity. The proprietor, the minister, the schoolmaster, and the large tacksmen—all who used to act as the leaders of the people, and to manage the public business of the parish—are ranged together on one side and in one cause; while the people are as unanimously and determinedly united on another side and in an entirely opposite cause. It is, consequently, almost impossible to find an individual in the upper rank who has not a grudge against the people, either on the score of their Free-Churchism, or on the score of their hostility to the sheep-walk system; and though this feeling is, doubtless, returned in full by the people, their position manifestly renders them infinitely less capable of giving effect to it than their opponents.

Such are the peculiar elements out of which the Central Relief Board required to form a local agency for the distribution of its

supplies. The task was certainly a difficult one. To draw out a constitution for a good working relief committee in a Highland parish was a work worthy of the genius of an Abbé Sieyes. If you chose your members out of the upper rank, you were sure to have a committee actuated by bitter hostility to the very class to whom you wished to discharge certain charitable offices; and if, on the other hand, you took your materials from the lower rank, you might expect to have the anomaly of members of your committee voting supplies and dispensing relief to themselves. It was just a new phase of the old difficulty which had puzzled constitution-makers and political philosophers from the beginning of the world—how to guard against tyranny on the one hand, and licentiousness on the other. Captain Elliot, on his tour, found the problem solved in the only way in which it ever has been solved. He found the committees composed of both parties, and the one acting as a check upon the other. The balance of power might not be properly adjusted, but to see whether it were, and to make it so, was really all that a wary inspector would have attempted. Captain Elliot, however, took another course. He looked round at all the fine houses in the parish, and called upon this and the other sheep-farmer, from whom, of course, he heard the same tale about the indolence and worthlessness of the people, and how poor ignorant lotters were sitting in the committee distributing meal to themselves. The bait was exceedingly plausible, and the Captain, hearing nothing else, swallowed it. A great reform was immediately resolved upon. None but respectable men—men well-to-do in the world—were, from that time, to have seats in the committee; and, accordingly, every poor man, and, as a necessary consequence, every Free-Churchman, except one or two very harmless individuals of that species, were expelled from the Board, and the entire sway handed over to the upper and anti-popular party. The effect was deplorable. Wittingly or unwittingly, Captain Elliot lent himself to the achievement of a party triumph which embittered tenfold the bad feeling previously existing between the two classes, and rendered impossible anything like an harmonious co-operation between the distributors and the receivers of relief. If the local committees of other parishes are one-half as exclusive as that of Lochcarron, the Central Board never took a wiser step than when it resolved to dispense with the services of these bodies altogether, and conduct their operations through the agency of individual inspectors.

The peculiar state of society, which I have endeavoured to explain, is a matter of prospective concern; for it is calculated to prove a great barrier to every effort made to promote the permanent improvement of the Highlands. In mixed and wealthy communities, political and religious divisions seldom retard any social enterprise, as there are generally a sufficient number of neutral persons to form a link between opposite parties in all undertakings requiring united effort; and each party is usually furnished with individuals fully qualified to conduct its separate projects. But in a small and simple community, division of every kind is disastrous; because every member of such a community, and still more every class, is absolutely needed to produce any effective result. The intelligence, wealth, and influence of the upper classes are useless when these classes have lost their hold over the affections of the people; and what, on the other hand, can the people do without leaders? It is to the breaking down of the sheep-walks and a more equitable allotment of the soil, and to such a remodelling of the parochial system as will remove all causes of sectarian jealousy, that we must look for the restoration of that union and co-operation to Highland parishes, which are certainly not the least essential elements of their social improvement.

Before closing my observations on the Lochcarron district, it may be proper to consider what is best to be done for the relief of this district during the coming year. It will scarcely be disputed that the works which have been commenced by the Central Board ought, if possible, to be finished. Nothing can be more profitless than a half-made road, or an incomplete pier. To construct a thorough good pier at Janetown would require a few thousand pounds; and if a work of this magnitude was resolved upon, part of the expense ought, in common fairness, to be borne by the proprietor. The pier for which part of the stones have been laid down, is planned on a much smaller scale; and as it would be chiefly advantageous to the fishermen, the Board need have no scruples in erecting it upon their own responsibility, if the necessary co-operation cannot be obtained for a more extensive work. The people's crofts, likewise, offer a profitable field for expenditure. Many of them need draining, and all of them would be a vast deal the better of trenching. But these, and other land improvements, must first be made the subject of negociation with the proprietor, with the view of obtaining for the people such a security of tenure as will give the Board a reasonable prospect of

repayment for its outlay. Let the crofters have leases, and they will be able to offer a per-centage to the Board upon the improvement made at its expense upon their lands. By a careful selection of its undertakings, and a little tact and prudence in the preliminary arrangements, the Board may in the majority of cases recover its expenditure, and thus preserve a fund for stimulating industry and improvement for many years to come. The appointment of an efficient agriculturist in this district, not only to inspect and superintend the works, but also to instruct the people in husbandry, and to direct them during the coming year into an enlightened and scientific cultivation of their crofts, would be attended with the most beneficial results.

The people of Janetown, as well as those scattered along the shore of Lochcarron, are fishers as well as cultivators of the soil; but it is in the latter capacity that they are most susceptible of improvement, and most capable, if an opportunity were given them, of earning a comfortable livelihood. They never have been fishermen in the proper sense of the term. The sea offers as certain, and perhaps a more abundant income to the industrious than the soil itself; but only on condition that its treasures be steadily, perseveringly, and constantly pursued. This the Lochcarron crofters have never learned to do. They only fish during two or three months in the year. Herring is the only kind of fish they pay attention to; and it is only in the lochs that they even fish for herring. Their boats and fishing-tackle are not adapted for anything more. The Janetown boats measure 16 feet in keel, and 7 feet in breadth. For deep-sea fishing-boats fully twice as large, as well as nets and lines of corresponding extent, would be necessary; and I need scarcely say that these are materials which the people in their present circumstances have no means whatever of acquiring. If suitable boats and materials could be provided for prosecuting all kinds of fishing, and if all the young men and others having no land, or very little land, were employed from year's end to year's end in excavating the riches of the deep; and if those, at the same time, who remained on shore, had their crofts enlarged, and their energies were as constantly and perseveringly applied to develop the resources of the soil, I do not say but a very gratifying change would be immediately observable, nor do I doubt that as brave fishermen and as skilful farmers would be found in Lochcarron as in any other part of her Majesty's dominions. But till these arrangements can be made there seems to be no available,

no immediate remedy, except in the better cultivation of such land as the people have.

LETTER XIV.

Plockton—Symptoms of Trading Activity—Produce of Lots—Relative amount of Nutriment derived from a Crop of Potatoes and a Crop of Oats or Barley—Repeated Failure of Potatoes—Number and Produce of Cows—Improvements effected under Relief Committee—State of Crofts—Injurious System of Manuring and Tilling—Necessary Changes.

From Janetown I passed over to Plockton, another fishing village, situated on the opposite shore of Lochcarron. Plockton is the principal seat of population in the *quoad civilia* parish of Lochalsh, and is the property of Mr. Lillingston, a resident heritor, to whom the other parts of that parish, and part of the adjoining parish of Kintail, also belong. The census of 1841 gave this village a population of 537. The houses, of which several are two storeys high and slated, are erected behind a craggy promontory that runs out into the Loch, answering all the purposes of a break-water pier, and forming a fine natural harbour, in which the small fishing-vessels of the villagers ride in perfect security from storms. Plockton seems well adapted by its position for a fishing-station, and the population has made some slight advances to a state of trading activity. In addition to the ordinary fishing-boats, which are here about the same calibre as at Janetown, and fitted only for loch-fishing, there are several small sloops, capable of trading with the Clyde. These vessels give a stimulus to the herring-fishing, and protect the people—especially those who have the good fortune to share in their ownership—from extortion, both in the sale of their produce and the purchase of materials. By means of these smacks they are enabled to carry their herrings to Greenock and Glasgow, where they realise the highest market-price, and where they can also supply themselves with salt and other materials at prime cost. Villages not so well circumstanced in this respect are obliged to deal with strangers, who visit their lochs for that purpose, and who bring with them a cargo of salt, which they barter for herrings, taking care to appropriate a good profit off both ends of the transaction. In the case of the poor villagers the free-trade

maxim is thus completely reversed, for they sell in the cheapest market and buy in the dearest. I am told that Mr. Lillingston assisted the Plockton people in purchasing their small sailing-vessels; and, certainly, no step more commendable could have been adopted by a proprietor of one of these helpless poverty-stricken fishing villages. The great want in these communities is the formation of small capitals, with which fishing, and the various arts connected with it, may be prosecuted with greater vigour, constancy, and completeness. Though labour is the source of capital, it is by the profits of trading that capital is usually accumulated in the hands of individuals; and, therefore, vessels, by creating a trading class, and fostering commercial dealings, are directly calculated to lay the foundations of wealth, and elevate the people above their present level of wretched dependence.

The advantages of ship-owning, however, have not been sufficiently developed in Plockton to save the mass of the people from the general features which characterise the condition of similar populations on the west coast. There is here, as elsewhere, the same reluctance on the part of the people, and the same inability for want of means, to throw themselves boldly on the resources of the sea; the same shrinking dependence upon land, and the same deficiency of land to yield more than a tithe of their subsistence. There are thirty families in the village who have no allotments of any size. Those who do occupy land pay rents varying from 12s. to £5 per annum. About 24s. per acre is charged for the best land. These patches were of considerable advantage to the families so long as they were planted with potatoes; but sown with corn or with barley, their produce is extremely insignificant. This season they were sown almost wholly with barley; and on one of the best managed lots, I find that a piece of land which used to yield twelve bolls of potatoes, has returned four bolls of barleymeal. This must not be taken, however, as an average specimen; for three bolls of barleymeal, or two bolls of oatmeal, for twelve bolls of potatoes, is a much more common return. The difference, in point of utility to a family, between the two crops may be easily estimated. A boll of meal is 140 lbs. in weight; a boll of potatoes is four cwt., or 448 lbs. Five pounds of potatoes are considered equal in point of nourishment to one pound of oatmeal; and from these facts it follows, as any one who chooses to run over a simple arithmetical process may demonstrate, that the life-sustaining power of two bolls of oatmeal bears the same proportion to that of twelve bolls of pota-

toes, as 1,400 does to 5,376, or some fractions less than one to four. It is difficult to determine the precise quantity of nourishment necessary to maintain a human being in health and vigour, but I believe a family of five—two adults and three children—will live as the Highlanders live, that is, they will not die suddenly of starvation, upon five pounds of oatmeal per day, or twenty-five pounds of potatoes. And so the further conclusion to which these figures bring us, arithmetically, is, that while twelve bolls of potatoes would sustain a family of five during thirty weeks and five days, the two bolls of oatmeal which the Highland crofters have reaped this year, as a substitute, are only sufficient to sustain such a family during eight weeks. The greater the amount of potatoes formerly grown by a Highland crofter, the greater, of course, is the gap now made in his usual means of subsistence, and *vice versa;* but these calculations will show how it happens that distress will be nearly as rampant this year as last, and how impossible it is that there ever can be anything else but distress in the Highlands so long as the present system continues. The restoration of the potato is now a forlorn hope, which the people themselves have begun to abandon. It is calculated that two-thirds of the small stock of potatoes in Plockton are already destroyed; it will be impossible to preserve the remainder for seed; and though the people made a great effort to procure a few potatoes last spring, at an exorbitant price, that is a process which will not be generally repeated. The disuse of potatoes, except as a garden vegetable, is not to be regretted by any true friend of the Highlanders. Without these prolific but innutritious roots, the proprietors could never have reduced the people to live on such miserable patches of land; and without them it will be equally impossible to perpetuate the system. But unless immediate remedies be applied, it is obvious that the people will be exposed to severe sufferings during the period of transition to a more substantial system.

A grazing for eighty-one cows is attached to the crofts at Plockton, and is fully stocked. Supposing each family to consist on an average of five individuals, the population of 1841 gives 107 as the total number of families in the village. There would thus be twenty-six families who have no cows, even though no family kept more than one; but the number must be considerably greater, as some families have two cows. Cows giving milk are fed with straw and hay in winter; while farrow cows are left out night and day on the hill. The excellent *quality* of Highland milk is well known, but

it is not to be expected that, from cows on such poor feeding, the *quantity* can be equally gratifying. Besides supporting her calf, a cow in Plockton gives two Scotch pints of milk per day, and this, of course, only during part of the year. Two Scotch pints a-day would be no extravagant allowance for a family of five individuals, to whom milk was one of the main articles of diet; but as there are only three cows in Plockton for every four families, and these only give milk, on an average, during one-half of the year, it follows that the allowance of milk to each family is not more than three-quarters of a pint per day. The Rev. Mr. M'Donald, in his evidence before the Poor-law Commissioners, classes milk along with herrings as the sole accompaniments of the potatoes and oatmeal, which form the diet of able-bodied persons in Plockton; but from this statement it plainly appears that even in this very necessary article the people are extremely stinted.

The relief distribution in Plockton amounted to upwards of 400 bolls of meal. The results of the labour exacted by the Relief Committee in return for these supplies are much more palpable at Plockton than at Janetown. New stone and feal fences have been built round the crofts to the extent of 3,853 yards, and 1,366 yards of old fences have been repaired. The arable land is now completely enclosed from the hill, which is a matter of the highest importance. Some falling cottages were repaired, a boat-quay was made, a quantity of hemp was spun, and some stockings knitted; and when the relief operations were suspended, the people were engaged in widening a very perilous pathway on which the women go to milk the cows on the hill. All these works are highly useful and necessary; but the erection of the enclosures is the most extensive and important—and the energy and unity of design with which it was carried on to a state of completion reflect the highest credit on the Relief Committee of Plockton. This valuable work lays the way open for those agricultural improvements which the loss of the potato renders indispensable, and the introduction of which is, I believe, the most beneficial undertaking to which the Relief Board can address itself.

The production of the crofts is far below what it might be under a proper and enlightened system of cultivation. From time immemorial the land has been manured with sea-ware, a substance possessed of stimulating properties, and exceedingly useful if applied sparingly, or if laid for a year or two on reclaimed moss. But sea-ware does not add substance to the soil. It does not even

restore the materials extracted from it by successive crops. Consequently, instead of growing richer and deeper, the soil becomes shallower and poorer every year. This mischief has been greatly aggravated by the sameness of the crops. Everywhere in the Highlands you find some attempt at a rotation of crops; but the greater productiveness of the potato has given it a marked preference over all other kinds of food. Many spots of ground have grown little else than potatoes since they were first brought into culture; and this continual potato-cropping, by always extracting the same materials from the soil, while the manure failed to restore them, has necessarily exhausted the elements of fertility, and, in my opinion, has operated as one very powerful cause in weakening the potato itself. If you pump the air out of an apartment in which an animal is confined, immediate death is the consequence. In like manner the effect of sea-ware and perpetual potato-crops has been to suck the materials out of the soil on which the potato feeds, till at last the vegetable sickens and dies of inanition. Wherever I find sea-ware used as a constant manure, the soil has a bleached and impoverished appearance, as if every particle of vegetable mould were washed out of it. Had the people been careful to collect ordinary dung-heaps, and used sea-ware sparingly, as one ingredient of a compost, very different results would have ensued. The waste of soil would have been annually repaired. The constant addition of new materials would even have made a soil on the poorest and most barren spots, and the land, instead of deteriorating, would have improved by cropping.

Another great evil exists in the prevalent system of tilling the land. In Plockton, and all along the west coast, the soil is turned over with the crooked spade—an implement consisting of a blade of iron about twelve inches long and three inches broad, fixed upon a twisted shaft in such a fashion that the labourer can stand erect while he presses it with his foot into the soil. This instrument saves the labourer the pain of stooping, but it does no manner of justice to his land. Four or five inches is the utmost depth to which it penetrates, and below this shallow surface there is a stiff *pan* or crust, which has never been broken up by trenching, and which the crooked spade may harden, but never loosens. I meet with persons who say that the crooked spade is well adapted for shallow soils; but it is precisely because the soil is shallow that it ought to be thrown aside. The thinner the surface soil, the more necessary it is that the subsoil should be stirred and broken into

particles, so as to increase and deepen the earth available for the sustenance of the crops. Such process of deepening can never take place with the crooked spade, for, passing obliquely into the soil, it merely turns over what is already loose, and leaves the subsoil entirely untouched. If the system of manuring fails to enrich the soil from above, this process of tilling is equally incapable of enriching it from below. The land is thus starved on both sides, and a rapid decay of fertility is the consequence. Loud complaints are made of the wetness of the climate. Well, observe how this operates. The rain comes down in torrents, and as it cannot sink through the hard subsoil, it lies in pools on the surface. Vegetation is immediately stopped, and before dry weather ensues, lasting injury may be done to the seed or plant, whatever it may be. And, on the other hand, when a tract of hot weather sets in, the water thus lodged in the surface suddenly evaporates, leaving the soil and its seeds as likely to be injured by too little moisture as they were formerly by too much. If the subsoil were thoroughly broken up, the rain would penetrate down as it fell, and when the hot weather came, would be slowly exhaled back through the surface soil in moderate and beneficial moisture, and the land be consequently enabled to resist for a longer period the scorching effects of the sun. Rain and heat would thus be made subservient to the purposes of vegetation; but under the present imperfect system of tillage, the evil effects of both are tenfold increased.

Such are a few of the more obvious defects in the management of the soil at Plockton. Let a wiser and more efficient system of culture be introduced, and a large and immediate addition will be made to the subsistence and comforts of the people. The first step to be taken is to trench the allotments. The use of the crooked spade may not be easily abolished; but under a system of thorough and periodical trenching, that implement would be much less injurious, and we may trust to the force of example and experience for its gradual disuse. A change of manure may not be practicable, to a great extent, during the first year; but a system of cropping and general management ought to be adopted, by which this and other requisites will be secured for the future. The cows require to be better fed to make them worth keeping; and for this purpose, as well as for the purpose of providing a greater abundance of food to the people, let the land be laid out in green crops —turnips, cabbages, rape, vetches, pease, beans, carrots—every variety of vegetable, in short, for which the soil is adapted, and

which promises to be useful. These crops will afford a great deal of house-feeding for the cows. If the cows are fed in-doors, some other use may be made of the hill pasture; and I would have sheep put upon it, the flesh of which, accompanied with the vegetables grown upon their allotments, would be a much more savoury and nutritious diet for the people than the perpetual herrings and potatoes to which they have hitherto been condemned. I have left oats and barley out of the list of crops, because, as I have already stated, nearly the whole of the lots were sown last year with these grains, and a change is necessary; but it is obvious, that under a proper rotation and system of cultivation as I propose, the soil would yield much more abundant returns of meal than at present. If cultivated as a garden is cultivated, the Plockton lots may do a great deal towards the maintenance of the people; but on any other plan they will prove little better than "a mockery, a delusion, and a snare."

LETTER XV.

A Resident Proprietor—Rental and Produce of Lochalsh—Distribution of Soil—Two Facts—An Ecclesiastical Sinecure—Deficiency of the Means of Education.

WHATEVER steps may be taken in Lochalsh by the Central Relief Board, the co-operation of a resident and improving landlord is one advantage at least that may be relied upon. Captain Elliot, in one of his reports, names Mr. Lillingston as one of the few Highland proprietors who, in the late famine, gave "their untiring personal services, in addition to their sympathy and their money;" and, from all I can learn, the eulogium is not over-coloured. This gentleman resides constantly on his property; and residence, I find, in nine cases out of ten, is only another term for zeal and liberality in promoting the interests of the people. However kind-hearted the absentee may naturally be, it is impossible he can take the deep interest in the improvement of his property and his people that is felt by the resident proprietor; and even his subscription to a relief fund, however liberal, is rendered comparatively valueless for want of the constant personal inspection and encouragement

which it is in the power of a resident landlord to give to the industrial operations of his labourers and tenants. In a thinly-populated Highland parish, the proprietor is the only individual who has the power and the interest to devote himself to the material improvement of the people, just as rent is the only capital by which the resources of the soil can be developed. If a proprietor, therefore, carries both his talents and his rents to another country, the cause of improvement in such a parish is robbed of its only sheet-anchor, and society is inevitably doomed to poverty and barbarism.

Mr. Lillingston manifested the utmost anxiety for the people during the recent distress, and did all in his power, both by employment and gratuitous assistance, to alleviate the calamities of the crisis. He sent large supplies of turnips to Plockton and other places, by means of which the injurious effects of the perpetual meal diet distributed by the Relief Board were counteracted, and the people saved from the disease which broke out in other districts. I was much pleased to observe fields of excellent cabbages in the neighbourhood of this gentleman's house, as they evince an enlightened appreciation of the system of husbandry best adapted for the climate of the west coast, as well as for the new and unexpected difficulties of the people. The land occupied by Mr. Lillingston is of superior quality, but a large proportion of it requires drainage, and in this and other improvements Mr. Lillingston is actively engaged. The annual rental of the parish is £3,097 2s. The population at last census was 2,597, having steadily increased from 1,606 in 1801. The total yearly value of raw produce raised in the parish, including fisheries, is given in the New Statistical Account at £5,841 4s. It thus appears that the rental is more than one-half the entire produce of the soil—a fact which shows how essentially the prosperity of the Highlands depends on a right expenditure of rent, and how much the Government and the country are entitled to expect at the hands of the proprietors. It is also shown by these figures that, after paying the landlord's rent, only £2,744 2s. worth of raw produce remains to a population of 2,597 souls, or £1 1s. 1½d. on an average to each individual. As there are no manufactures in the parish to form a means of support, it follows incontestibly that the population must be excessively poor —so poor, that a considerable number must depend to a great extent upon employment in other parts of the country. If the landlord were to spend the entire rental in the employment of the

people, still an average dividend of only £2 4s. 7d. would be all that could fall to the share of each individual in the parish—an income which would certainly not ensure a very comfortable standard of subsistence. It is vain, therefore, to expect that the best and most enterprising landlord can immediately raise such a population above the danger of want. It is only by a long waste of resources that a parish can have been brought to so poor a condition; and in like manner it will require years of liberal expenditure, and patient and persevering industry, on the part of both proprietor and people, to raise the annual produce to an amount commensurate with the wants of the population.

In Lochalsh, as in every other Highland parish I have yet visited, there is ample scope for agricultural improvement. It will be much easier, and in every respect more satisfactory, to raise up the annual produce of the parish to a level with the population, than to reduce the population down by emigration or otherwise to a level with the annual produce. The area of the parish is divided chiefly into large sheep-farms, on which there is the same waste of soil and the same indolent system of management which prevail on other sheep-walks. It is with the greatest difficulty that the graziers can be prevailed upon to grow an acre or two of turnips, though they send scores of sheep every winter eighty or ninety miles to turnip-feeding. The same statistical authority, to which I have already referred, gives the following as the distribution of land in Lochalsh:—

Arable land,	1,477.056 acres.
Green pasture,	2,889.139 —
Hill pasture,	44,730.463 —
Moss,	778.472 —
Underwood,	2,147.578 —

The "arable land" is mostly all cultivated in the defective way which I described in my last letter; and I may safely appeal to any one acquainted with the management of soil, whether by means of draining, trenching, and more skilful manuring and cropping, the produce of these 1,477.056 acres may not, at the lowest calculation, be doubled. The "green pasture," as distinguished from "hill pasture," consists chiefly of land which the sheep-walks have thrown out of cultivation, but which is as capable of growing crops as any of the acres designated "arable." Let it be observed that there are twice as many acres in "green pasture" as there are "arable." Some parts of the 778.472 acres of moss have already been re-

claimed, but it may be safely said, that 200 or 300 acres of moss may be profitably converted into good crop-bearing land. Such are the agricultural resources of Lochalsh. The proprietor and the Relief Board have only to set to work—they have only to improve judiciously and vigorously—and the produce of the parish will annually increase, and the people be raised to a state of affluence compared with their present poor and destitute condition.

It will doubtless be urged, in opposition to all these facts, that the people are indolent, prejudiced, obstinate, and that it will be impossible to prevail on them to adopt a new system. I will just mention two facts which have come under my observation. Before this year there were only four gardens in Plockton with vegetables. Last spring Mr. Lillingston purchased seeds and distributed them to the people, and the result is, that every patch of garden-ground in Plockton is filled with excellent crops of carrots, turnips, onions, cabbages, &c. At the Kirkton of Lochalsh I had my attention drawn to eight or nine corn stacks belonging to the villagers. Some years ago there were only three or four stacks where these now stand; and I was assured that the increase is mainly the result of the greater skill and industry with which the villagers cultivate their patches of land. I infer from these facts, that when a fair opportunity is offered them, the people will be found willing and able to do their part.

There is a notable example at Plockton of the disorder which has crept into our parochial and ecclesiastical establishments. In 1833, Plockton was erected into a *quoad sacra* parish. A parliamentary church was built, and an annual stipend of £120 was voted for the minister out of the public purse. At the Disruption the people all but universally adhered to the Free Church, and a meeting-house has been built in connexion with that body, in which stated ministrations take place. In opposition to the strenuous objections of the people, a minister was settled in the parliamentary church some time ago. The reverend gentleman who has been called to this office has four hearers, it is said, and one of these is a waverer. Such is the rumour of the village. There can be no doubt that the congregation is an exceedingly select party, that the great body of the people are Free Church adherents, and that the office of parliamentary minister is a sinecure. Is there no honest Scotchman in the House of Commons who will rise and move that this parliamentary church be converted into a public school, and the minister's stipend into an endowment for male and female teachers?

One of the most grievous wants of the Highlands is an efficient system of instruction; and it is disgraceful to allow the public money to be wasted on such a needless institution as this parliamentary church. There is a Free Church school in Plockton, but both teacher and scholars have very inferior accommodation. In the neighbouring village of Kishorn, with 400 or 500 people, there is absolutely no school whatever. There is also no school in the village of Shieldag, and the parish school itself, of Applecross, is entirely deserted. From the want of schools, and the poverty of the people together, it is only a small proportion of the Highland children who enjoy the advantages of the most elementary education. Crowds of boys and girls are seen everywhere running about in idleness and ignorance; and thus, in the very spring of their young natures, are implanted the seeds of those vices for which the adult Highlanders are so loudly blamed. If the adults are irreclaimable, why not commence the work of reformation with the young? Why not establish good schools in every hamlet, where the young would not only be taught to read and write, but where the boys would also be taught to cultivate the soil, and the girls to knit, sew, cook, and keep a house clean? It is folly to talk of such schools being established by voluntary means. Education in the Highlands ought to be taken up as a Government work; and the teinds and property of every parish should be charged with the expense of its completion. Through the agency of well-endowed schools, ideas and habits of order, cleanliness, industry, and civilization, may be carried at once into the darkest and most destitute districts of the Highlands.

LETTER XVI.

Fishing-Villages of Dornie and Bundalloch—Cry for More Land—Proper Sphere of Relief Board—Rise and Progress of Towns—Contrast of Highland Villages—Their Defects and Natural Resources—A Schoolmaster at Work.

A FERRY over a narrow arm of the sea, called Loch-Long, connects Lochalsh with Kintail. On both sides of the Loch there is a collection of wretched-looking huts, inhabited by poor cottars and fishermen. On the Lochalsh side the cottages are scattered

irregularly along the shore, and back over a tract of swampy ground, on which all the evils of subdivision and squatting run riot. On the Kintail side, the houses are more numerous and concentrated, forming two goodly-sized villages, called Dornie and Bundalloch. The former has a few substantial slated houses, but the general aspect of the place is one of poverty and wretchedness. When I reached the ferry, the dropping rain, and the black clouds rolling wildly in the wind, gave indication of a wet and stormy night. A few minutes placed me on the small quay of Dornie. About a dozen stout men were standing against a corner, crouching together in the rain and cold, and looking wistfully down on the rising turmoil of the fickle waves. A bad herring fishing was written legibly in the long grave faces of the poor fellows. There had been a settlement that very day, and a dividend of 10s. to each man was the whole return of a fortnight's fishing. Two or three months of herring fishing are expected, after clearing expenses, to pay the landlord's rent, and purchase four or five months' supply of meal. But a few more fortnights like this last, and the fishermen of Dornie will find themselves without a penny, their nets worn, their rents unpaid, and nothing but the operations of the Relief Board between them and starvation during spring and summer. There is no fish-curing establishment in Dornie. The people sell their herrings to the small sloops that visit the lochs during the fishing season, a great number of which, I observed, had taken refuge under the shadow of a lofty mountain on the opposite shore of Loch Duich. These vessels were giving 15s. per cran for good herrings.

It would be tedious repetition to describe minutely the resources and condition of Dornie and Bundalloch. The fishing villages of the west coast are too much alike to admit of separate detail. Some are wretched in the positive, some in the comparative, and some in the superlative degree; but all are wretched. Dornie is, if possible, more miserable than either Janetown or Plockton. One-half the people here have no land, and the other-half have, on an average, about an acre each. The failure of the potatoes last year, coupled with the low price of herrings, plunged the village into extreme distress. Some idea may be formed of the extent of the pressure, as well as the uniform poverty of the people, from the fact, that, out of a population of 690, only ten individuals were exempted from the relief list. Eighteen bolls of meal were distributed weekly. The people were employed by the Relief Committee in building fences round their lots, and in making a road to

the adjoining village of Bundalloch, which has been left unfinished. The women span wool and knitted stockings. Supplies were also allowed while the people were laying down their crops and casting peats. Oats and barley were grown this year instead of potatoes; but a very promising crop was deeply injured by six weeks of heavy and almost incessant rain in harvest. The common opinion is, that distress will be as severe and prevalent this year as last; and a little consideration of the facts of the case may convince any one that without some unusual and extraneous means of support, the people must be exposed to deplorable hardships.

There is only one specific for the chronic destitution of Dornie and its companions in misery, and that is land, land, land. It would baffle the most skilful physician to prescribe anything one-half so remedial as a good dose of mother earth. The cry of the people themselves is "more land, more land!" and it must be re-echoed by their benefactors till the vast arena of opinion resound with the demand. There is no remedy but the cultivation of the soil. The famished people cling to their patches of land with the desperation of wrecked mariners to their last plank. Like the plank, these patches are too narrow for them to stand upon, and they are like to be overwhelmed in the yawning gulph; but give them wider space—a broader deck—and they will breast the billows.

The Relief Board may do a great deal of good at Dornie by the same measures as I have already recommended at Janetown and Plockton. The completion of such works as have been commenced, and the draining and trenching of the lands, are undertakings which are always worthy of the outlay. They will afford present employment and relief, increase the produce of the allotments, and lessen the destitution of a future year, while they will inure the people to harder labour and to more skilful modes of cultivation, and thus prepare them for the juster distribution of the soil, which, sooner or later, must be conceded. But the Relief Board cannot aim at more than partial and temporary remedies. There is a radical defect in these fishing-villages, which no extrinsic aid can supply. They are rotten at the foundation, and can only be permanently improved by taking them down and erecting them on a new and more solid basis.

Dr. Adam Smith has ably described the rise and progress of towns. A few poor hawkers, who went about the country with their goods, and paid a tax to the King or the great lords for liberty to trade in their demesnes, were permitted to live together in one place,

and form one community. Gradually their privileges increased. They were allowed to have magistrates and a council, first to farm, and ultimately to impose their own taxes, to form themselves into a militia for self-defence, and to sue and be sued in their own courts of justice. They were hated by the barons, but patronised by the Crown. The peasants of the adjoining country offered a ready market for their wares, and the towns in their turn gave the peasants a demand for the surplus produce of their lands. The country stimulated the industry of the towns, and the towns the industry of the country—and both grew and were strengthened. Such is a miniature history of those great corporations, which now dazzle the world with their wealth, their numbers, and their power. An eminent economist of the present day has likewise pourtrayed the small beginnings and the steady growth of a modern Saxon village. A substantial change-house on one of our high-roads, with its waiters, hostlers, and ploughmen, forms the nucleus of the future town. By-and-bye, a smithy is required, in which to shoe the horses stabled at the inn, and this adds a blacksmith and his family to the embryo population. The innkeeper and the blacksmith, and their dependants, must have shoes for their feet, and clothing for their backs, and so up starts a shoemaker, and next a tailor. By this time the demand for tea, and sugar, and tobacco, has become too large to be supplied conveniently from the nearest market-town; and, accordingly, the young village must have its own grocer. Disease breaks out, and this occasions the residence of a surgeon; and thus, step by step, man by man, the organization of the community proceeds. Every man comes when there is need for him—every man brings with him the means of his support—every man takes his proper place—and slowly and surely the village rises into being, solid and symmetrical as a piece of masonry. Such is the account given of the small rural towns which form so important an element both of English society and English landscape. But no political economist has yet written the history of such towns as Janetown, Plockton, and Dornie. The Highland fishing-villages form a distinct species of the genus *urbs*. Alone in their misery, they are equally unique in their rise, progress, and decline. Their growth has not been the growth of the oak—slow, solid, and enduring; but the growth of the mushroom, which raises its ponderous fungus in a night, and in a night falls prostrate in decay. On some fatal Martinmas or Whitsunday term, the forefathers of these wretched villagers were hunted out from

the glens, and pressed together in crowds on barren stripes along the margins of the lochs. They had no arts, no manufactures, no goods to sell. And even supposing that they had been adepts in trade, there was no rural population behind them to give a demand for their products, and no corn to take in exchange; for the same process which huddled them in helpless misery on the shore, cleared the country of its peasants, and extinguished cultivation. The two essential requisites to the prosperity of embryo towns were wanting—artisans to manufacture goods, and an agricultural population to give food in exchange for them. The mutual reaction of country upon town, and town upon country, the advantages of which are so ably displayed by Adam Smith, could never come into play in the case of these fishing-villages; but yet a population sufficiently large to make a good town were there on the beach, and somehow they must live. The land allotted them was too narrow and too barren to keep them alive; but here is the sea—why not dip for herrings in the tide, and scratch limpets from the rocks? They became amphibious, lived half on land and half on water, and, after all, did not half live upon both. The spirit of the people sank under that first fearful collision between the clamant wants of their nature and the rugged novelties of their position; and for half a century the shock has fallen yearly in stunning blows upon their desolate hearts. Population has increased, but no progress has been made to a higher state of organization. There are still no manufacturers, no trade, no capital, no middle-class. A few shoemakers, tailors, and weavers, are the only artisans in the fishing-villages; and these are the worst paid and the most destitute of all. No arrangement is made for the interchange of the most essential commodities. While I was at Plockton, a number of the villagers travelled half-a-dozen miles to buy a little meal, and were obliged to return home without it. So destitute are these villages of the machinery of trade, that an article of first necessity cannot be purchased without the greatest difficulty, even when the people have the money to give for it. It is evident that this disorganised imbecility has no foundation in any want of natural resources. Villages may be as prosperous, as full of industry, and as substantial in the Highlands as anywhere else. The Highland seas are eminently adapted for fishing; and fishing carries a long list of arts in its train. Numerous boats are required, and the building of these gives employment to sawyers, carpenters, and smiths. Boats must have lines, nets, and sails; and these require

spinners, weavers, and sailmakers. Then you need fishermen, gutters, packers, coopers, and salt-dealers. A vigorous prosecution of the single trade of fishing involves an immense variety of employments, all of which might be carried on in the fishing-villages of the Highlands. But to conduct these branches of industry thoroughly and successfully, capital is indispensable; and capital, unless derived from extrinsic sources, can only grow up in small rural towns when their trade is stimulated and sustained by peopled and cultivated neighbourhoods. This can never take place in the fishing-villages of the Highlands under the existing distribution of the soil; so that, though somewhat paradoxical, it is still strictly true, that before these accumulations of misery can be improved, they must first be overturned—before they can organise, they must be dispersed—before they can develop the riches of the sea, they must occupy and fertilise the land.

There is a Roman Catholic but no Presbyterian Church in Dornie. The Established Kirk is at the opposite end of the parish, which at one time was, no doubt, the most populous end, but the clearances have changed the locality of the population, and so, among other losses, have deprived the people of convenient access to religious instruction. It is not unworthy of notice, that, on visiting the school-house at Dornie, I found it filled with a crop of pease, and the teacher, a very decent and intelligent man, busily engaged at thrashing. It was vacation time, and he took this opportunity of housing and thrashing the produce of his croft. It is no disparagement to any man to handle the flail; but it is a significant commentary on the poor remuneration of Highland teachers, that an individual, charged with the instruction of a village of 600 inhabitants, should find it either necessary or profitable to submit to so severe manual toil.

LETTER XVII.

Contrast between the Scenery and Social Condition of the Highlands—Population of Glenshiel—Great Increase of Rents—Its Causes—Omissions of the Legislature—Thraldom of the Cottars.

I TOOK a boat at Dornie, and passing close under the grey ruins of Castle Donan, the ancient seat of the Mackenzies of Seaforth,

entire parish of Glenshiel was under trust in consequence of the pecuniary embarrassments of the proprietors.

It is very common to complain of "too many people" as the main cause of distress in the Highlands; and, in proof of this, we are told that in some districts there is a human being for every pound of rent paid to the proprietors. I am aware that this fact applies to some parishes; but population and rent are on a different footing in Glenshiel. The former, as I have already stated, is 745; while the latter in 1843 was £3,014 1s. 7d. Yet in this thinly-peopled parish the marks of poverty and wretchedness are as visible as where population is densest. There are here the same miserable and filthy huts, the same potato and gruel diet, and the same scanty and tattered clothing as in other districts of the West Highlands. The cottars are in as miserable a condition as it is possible to conceive. This wretched class are allowed as much ground in the sheep-farms as plant five or six barrels of potatoes; and for this poor privilege—a privilege which in many parts of the Lowlands is granted freely to all who choose to lay down the necessary manure—the cottars of Glenshiel are bound to work for the tacksman as often as he chooses to call upon them from one end of the year to the other. These poor labourers are literally *thirled* to the farms on which they reside. In seed-time, in hay-time, in the peat-cutting season, and in harvest—in every period of the year when they might hope to get employment at daily wages—these slaves of the soil are obliged to give their labour to the sheep-farmers. On some farms it is customary to give the cottars a meal or two per day during the time they are employed; but this appears to be optional, as one farm was pointed out to me where the patch of potato ground is the only remuneration given by the tacksman for the mortgage held by him over the bones and sinews of his cottars. Each of the sheep-farms has six or eight of these bondmen attached to it; so that, the wages of the shepherds excepted, a large grazier seldom pays a farthing for the labour done upon his land. Slave-labour, it is said, is dearer than free labour, and one reason of that must be, that the slave, conscious that he is plundered of the fruits of his toil, refuses to apply himself with energy and vigour to his work. But if this is the effect produced upon a slave, who is well fed and well clad at his master's cost, how natural must it be for the Highland cottar to hate and detest labour, when he feels himself bound hand and foot for the petty privilege of planting a few barrels of

potatoes! It is vain to talk about the indolence and laziness of the Highlanders so long as such a system continues. To the Highland cottar labour has hitherto been synonymous with robbery and oppression. He has never known its value—he has never tasted its rewards; and how can it be otherwise than that he should feel averse to it, and prefer to resort to more easy and more questionable means of livelihood? The serfdom of the cottars in Glenshiel is rapidly undermining their morals. Smuggling used to be a favourite occupation, but this is giving place to an unlicensed sale of intoxicating liquors in private houses. During the fishing season, drinking-parties frequently meet in the cottars' huts, and spend the night in carousals, from which the cottars exact a profit, but only at a fearful cost of demoralization to their customers and their families. Here is surely a fine field for those philanthropists who have wept so long and sorrowfully for the sable African. It is preposterous to talk of slavery being abolished in the British dominions. The Highland cottars groan under a bondage as oppressive and degrading as the feudal serf of the middle ages, or the negro slave of present times.

LETTER XVIII.

Recipients of Relief in Glenshiel—Evasion of the Poor-Law—Rate of Assessment—Miserable Condition of Paupers and Cottars—Glenelg Proper—Improvability of the Soil—Sheep-Farms—The Kirkton—Mr. Baillie—A new Species of Bankruptcy.

The distribution of the Relief Board in Glenshiel, during the spring and summer, varied from ten to twenty bolls of meal weekly. The recipients were employed in banking streams and making landing places for the fishing boats. The females were engaged in making nets and stockings, which are sold out by the local inspector at a price which pays little more than the cost of materials. There are still about twenty persons on the relief list, notwithstanding the resolution of the Board to suspend its operations. These consist of frail people three and four score years of age, widows with young families, and cottars reduced to starvation. I will venture to say that two-thirds of those still receiv-

ing the public meal are persons legally entitled to parochial relief; and that the remaining third are individuals in a state of bondage to the sheep-farmers. Though in every respect deserving objects of relief, it is utterly inexcusable to place such persons on a public fund. The rental is amply able to bear the burden of maintaining every legal object of relief in the parish; and the graziers should be compelled to sustain their own labourers or to contribute to a tax for their employment in some other way. Mr. Baillie of Kingussie and Mr. Matheson of Ardross have lately become extensive proprietors in this parish, both of whom are wealthy men, and fully capable of discharging the responsibilities which the law has entailed upon them. The assessment of the poor has hitherto been only 1½d. per pound, and at a late meeting of the Poor's Board it was resolved to raise it to 2½d.—a proposition which deeply provoked the ire of some of the large tenants. Indeed, it is with this class, more even than the proprietors, that the opposition to the just claims of the poor proceeds; and with the utmost justice they may be placed in the same dishonourable list with the poor-rate repudiators of the Irish Unions, with the exception that they have not poverty to plead as an apology, like many of the defaulting rate-payers on the other side of the Channel. While thousands of their fellow-countrymen are paying two, three, and four shillings per pound for the relief of the poor, these Glenshiel graziers, who have been raised to a position of wealth and indolence over the necks of the people, and whose elevation has been a direct cause of pauperism, complain and murmur when called upon to pay a petty assessment of 2½d. per pound, one-half of which is refunded by the proprietor. Such unblushing selfishness deserves no quarter, and the Relief Board will render itself most justly liable to public censure if it do not take immediate steps to place the burden of all its recipients who are entitled to parochial relief upon the proper parties. The allowances to the poor in Glenshiel are quite inadequate to provide subsistence. A widow, with two children, gets from £2 to £3 per annum. The highest allowance is £5. The cottars are in as destitute and pitiable a condition as the paupers; for the small quantities of barley which they grew this year instead of potatoes are already done, and, without work at day-wages, they must starve. It is expected that Mr. Matheson will give employment shortly in embanking and straightening the course of the Croe river; but it is obvious that, instead of leaving a question of life or death to

thousands of human beings to depend upon the option of proprietors, the Legislature ought to institute some public measure that will secure employment, and at the same time open up a path by which the enthralled cottars may raise themselves to a state of freedom and independence.

In addition to recent purchases in Glenshiel, Mr. Baillie has also become the owner of a large proportion of the neighbouring parish of Glenelg. The whole of the beautiful and fertile strath called Glenelg Proper, anciently the property of the M'Leod, now belongs to this successful Bristol merchant. The parliamentary road from Inverness to the Isle of Skye passes through his property, connecting Glenshiel with Glenelg by crossing the lofty hills which divide the two parishes. Leaving Sheil Inn, I proceeded to climb this stupendous pass. The road winds slowly round the shoulders and recesses of the mountain, spanning numerous ravines and streams by means of substantial bridges, and giving a more commanding and romantic view of Loch Duich and the adjacent heights, the higher it ascends. On reaching the summit, I found myself looking down upon one of the most spacious and improvable glens I had yet seen in the Highlands. Glenelg Proper is famed for the richness of its pasture. To near the tops of the hills, the green grass feels smooth and soft under the tread as a luxuriant carpet. A hood of dark heather covers the summits, and I could observe that stripes of the same material are gradually stretching down the fertile slopes of the mountains. Lower down still, in spots where the heather has not yet penetrated, the verdure lies hid and wasted under thick crops of withering breckans; while, in the bottom of the glen, which is wide and level, but in which, for many long years, there has been a total cessation of the agricultural operations necessary to clean and dry the soil, large tracts of ground lie soaked with water, and covered with fog and rushes, and every weed and abomination usually engendered by a marshy waste. This rich but neglected and deteriorating glen is eight or nine miles long. Its soil is loam, and is unquestionably adapted for growing heavy crops. The writer in the "New Statistical Account" mentions that in this parish, notwithstanding the wetness of the climate, "it is no unusual thing for the common *bear* or *big* to weigh fifty pounds imperial bushel, and Flemish oats forty-eight pounds." Yet you may travel miles through the richest parts of Glenelg without seeing acorn field. At the head of Glenelg Proper there is Scalsaig, a grazing farm, with about 3,000 sheep. Further

down I passed Beolary, another sheep-farm, with a stock of 4,000. Two or three acres of turnips were the only marks of cultivation I could discover on either of these large farms. I came next to Immergraden, a club farm, with four tenants, who pay £120 of rent, and cultivate on the old system—keeping eight or nine cows each, and only a few sheep. Farther on a little I passed the manse, with its glebe of nearly 400 acres, about one-eighth of which is arable; and, about a mile on, I at length reached the village or Kirkton of Glenelg, its population penned as usual along the sea-coast, and struggling to support existence by a half-and-half dependence upon the resources of land and water. Of the 148 families in the village of Glenelg, fifty-seven have no land; the remaining ninety-one have lots varying from half an acre to two acres each. The herring fishing is expected to eke out the inadequate produce of the soil, and as it has failed, so far, at least, as the season has yet gone, all that I have reported of the wretchedness and destitution of other fishing villages may be repeated with equal accuracy respecting Glenelg.

It can surely not be any advantage to a proprietor to have fertile land lying waste at one end of a glen and people starving at another. Mr. Baillie enjoys an enviable opportunity in Glenelg of solving a vital and important problem. No proprietor in the Highlands is more capable of trying an experiment than he. If it failed, he can well afford to lose the outlay; if it succeeded, he would have the proud satisfaction of saving his fellow-creatures, while he gained fame and honour to himself. Why should not Mr. Baillie take one of his sheep-farms, and, choosing out a number of the overcrowded villagers, place the two together, and see for once what results land and labour are capable of producing? Mr. Baillie is not responsible for the revolution which swept the people out of the glen, and left them stranded in misery on the shore. The minute subdivision of the crofts into acres and half-acres was even accomplished before his time; and I am told that he prefers to give three or four acres instead of one. Why not extend his principle to the point necessary to secure a comfortable subsistence to the crofters? It would be a good thing if the Highland proprietors could be brought to feel, that it is a personal disgrace to fail in providing for their people, when the resources of their estates are amply sufficient to secure that end. Mr. Baillie is a merchant, who enjoys a capital reputation on the Exchange, and would shrink from the idea of insolvency as from

the cholera or the plague. Yet to be owner of an uncultivated and undeveloped estate, like Glenelg Proper, and at the same time have hundreds of people upon it destitute of food, and dragging out existence by a miserable dependence on the charitable offerings of the British public, is a species of bankruptcy not less dishonourable than a downright stoppage of payments.

LETTER XIX.

Kyle Rhea—Lord Macdonald's Property—Stoppage of Works by Relief Board—Highland Factors—Parochial Relief—Grand View—A Little Ireland.

CROSSING the ferry of Kyle Rhea, I found myself safely landed on a district of the Isle of Skye, belonging to Lord Macdonald. Here I was at once introduced to a scene of misery, which gave me an ominous foresight of the degradation and wretchedness that awaited me in other parts of the island. About a score of huts are scattered irregularly over a piece of mossy ground, at a little distance from the shore. These habitations bear every indication of extreme discomfort; and the narrow patches of soil to which they are attached speak in palpable terms of the slender resources and the scanty food of their inmates. I found that on this spot there are no fewer than twelve lots of land, for which the occupants pay 25s. per annum each. Subdivision has been carried to its farthest limits, and eight or nine of the cottagers are consequently obliged to live without lots of any size. Among these destitution had already commenced. Up to the time when the Relief Board suspended its operations, they worked at the Glenelg pier, on the opposite side of the ferry, and, in return, obtained the regulated allowance of meal. But the stoppage of the works threw them at once into idleness and privation, inasmuch as they had no crops of their own to reap and consume, and no other employment by which to earn a subsistence. The same impolicy which has characterised some other of the Board's proceedings is observable in this. The pier at Glenelg has been left unfinished, and, in all probability, is rapidly going to waste and ruin; while the disbanded cottars, who would gladly have toiled away till its comple-

tion had placed it beyond the reach of devastation, are suffering hardships of every kind for want of employment and wages. It will be impossible to regenerate the Highlands by regulations emanating from a central authority in Edinburgh or Glasgow. The adaptation of general rules to particular circumstances, and of means to ends, can only proceed from local bodies. The Highlanders, in short, must be called upon and required to do their own business. The cottars at Kyle Rhea who have land are supporting existence in the meantime on the scanty produce of their lots, which, on an average, does not exceed a boll and a half of meal. When this petty store is exhausted, they will be involved in the same destitution as those who have no land, and no man will be in a position to assist his neighbour.

It is deplorable to think that, scanty as the produce of the lots must always be, it has this year been rendered still more inadequate by a defect which it ought to have been the first object of the proprietor and his agents to supply. Last spring found the people at Kyle Rhea without sufficient seed to sow their ground. The factor at last offered some for their use, but it was too late, and parts of the lots remained unsown. I cannot say whether the delay in this case was the fault of the proprietor or the factor; but it cannot be wrong to mention that the same gentleman who acts in the latter capacity on Lord Macdonald's property in Skye, is also factor on the estate of Applecross in Ross-shire, and fills many other offices besides, so that it is not improbable that the same multiplicity of engagements which prevented him from checking the ruinous expense of a draining experiment at Lochcarron, alluded to in a former letter, may have also been the reason why the seed corn was not sent to Kyle Rhea till it was too late. In no department is the incapacity of the Highland lairds more conspicuous than in the appointment of their factors. If they do not entrust the management of their estates to a writer in the county town or some accountant in Edinburgh, neither of whom visits the tenantry except on rent-days, they are pretty sure to appoint a person whose jurisdiction extends over tracts of country which it is impossible for any single individual to superintend. In both cases lasting injury is done to the cause of progress and improvement. In the Highlands, where the very rudiments of rural industry have yet to be acquired, every factor should be a missionary of agriculture; and to render his services in this capacity efficient, it is necessary that his sphere should be as well defined and

as thoroughly manageable as the parish minister's or the parish schoolmaster's.

Paupers in the district of Kyle Rhea get a stone of meal if females, and a stone and a half if males, every three weeks. There is no assessment for the poor; but it is said that one will be instituted immediately. The factor (who is inspector of the poor, it seems, as well as agent of the landlord) has intimated to the innkeeper that he will have to pay £3 on a rent of £40. Supposing that the proprietor is to be assessed at the same rate, the total produce of the tax (the annual value of real property in the parish of Sleat being £2,097) will amount to £314 11s., or fully 12 times more than the whole sum expended on the poor in the year ending February, 1846. This would certainly evince a vigorous determination to improve the administration of the Poor Law; but it is evident that the mode in which the assessment is divided between the proprietor and the people requires to be very narrowly watched where the poor's board is so exclusively in the interest of the former as in Sleat.

The road from Kyle Rhea to Broadford winds along a steep pass of the dark moss-clad hill which at this point divides the parishes of Sleat and Strath. When near the top of this weary ascent, I found myself treated to one of those magnificent views which so frequently arise to animate and console the traveller in the Highlands. Opposite me lay the wide green valley of Glenelg, with a battery of mountains rising tier above tier beside and behind it, its brilliant verdure, irradiated with the rays of a gorgeous setting sun, contrasting strongly with the bleak and barren precipice on which I stood, rendered still more gloomy by the black shadow of a thunder-cloud, and the yellings of the wind which rushed down the narrow pass as if it had been chased by a thousand fiends. It seemed as if summer and winter, the torrid and the frigid zone, stood face to face, separated only by the narrow sound of Sleat, which lay gleaming in the distance like another Milky Way. In the contemplation of such a scene as this, the imagination delights to find relief and solace amidst the perpetual pictures of distress presented by the condition of the people; but a long journey and a short day left me little time for landscape dalliance, and so turning my back upon the gilded radiance of Glenelg, I pursued my way across the moor. The road lay for some miles through a bleak tract of heather, and by the side of a noisy rollicking stream, and then dropping down by

a rapid descent to the sea-shore, passed through a narrow stripe of cultivated land, studded thick with cottages, with little plots of kail before their doors, and two or three very little stacks of corn at their ends. The lean, smoke-dyed women that looked out from the loophole windows, the little pale-faced ragged children that shivered about the doors, the ditches that ran along the sides of the road and separated every little plot of land, the old straw harness of the small shaggy horses, and the noisome dung-heaps that lay smoking close beside, or at the very entrance of the huts, constituted an Irish rather than a Highland picture. Yet there was nothing truly Irish there—neither the people, nor the country, nor anything, except, perhaps, the Irish title of Lord Macdonald. I could observe from the soil that very few potatoes had been planted, and that corn or barley had been the predominating crop. Considerable patches of ground lay red and covered with heavy stones. These had been trenched and drained by the proprietor, with money borrowed under the Drainage Act; but the improvement was not finished, and no advantage in the way of an increased supply of food has consequently been reaped from it during the present season. At the end of this little Ireland stands Broadford Inn, where I found excellent quarters; and, as the Dunvegan coach, which was expected that evening, was prevented by a storm from crossing Kyle-Akin ferry till far on next morning, I had ample opportunity of completing my inquiries into the condition of Strath.

LETTER XX.

Crofters and Cottars in Strath—Refusal of Leases—The True Reason of this Policy—Emigration - Poor-Rate—Loss of Rent to Proprietor—Stoppage of Operations under Drainage Act.

THERE is a numerous body of small crofters in the parish of Strath. The rents paid to the proprietor by this class vary from 10s. to £10 per annum; but in few instances do they reach the higher sum. The crofts, too small at first, have been subdivided to such an extent that three and four families frequently occupy the piece of

land that was formerly intended for one. Yet it is very common to find a cottar and his family attached to one of these small possessions of the crofters. The parish minister informed me that the families of the cottars, or persons without holdings, amount to 800 souls in Strath alone; and these are scattered over the large farms of the tacksmen, or huddled among the already impoverished and overburdened crofters. A more unsolid system of society, or one more calculated to engender misery and pauperism, could not possibly be constructed, even though the arch-enemy of human happiness himself were to exert his ingenuity to develop the principles of social disorder by which he could best accomplish his ends. And hence arises an important query. Lord Macdonald grants no leases to his crofters. He is determinedly opposed to every regulation tending to confer upon the people a certainty of tenure in the soil which they cultivate; and the reason alleged for pursuing this course is, that by keeping the crofts under yearly control, his Lordship is enabled to check the evil tendencies of the system. But he and his predecessors having retained this control from the very origin of the croft system, how does it happen that matters have come to their present miserable predicament? Had the people been the owners of their crofts, or had they been invested with such security of tenure as left them free to do their own pleasure with the soil, they alone would have been to blame for the subdivision and the wretchedness in which the experiment has issued. But by repudiating leases, and insisting upon keeping the crofts and the crofters under strict annual control, Lord Macdonald and others similarly situated have really made themselves responsible for the present deplorable position of the people; and to this dilemma we are fully entitled to reduce them. They have refused leases on the plea that they might have power to check the evil tendencies of a system of small holdings, and yet these evil tendencies have been allowed to grow to an extreme of mischief which could scarcely have been anticipated by the most sensitive alarmist. This is a matter of which the lease-refusing proprietors are bound to render an account.

The truth is, we must look for some better explanation of the theory of lease-refusing than is advanced by the apologists of the Highland lairds. When the croft system was introduced, it was never intended that the people should prosper on the soil. The object nearest the landlords' hearts was to clear them from the soil, and if possible to sweep them from the country. If their

purses had been as capacious as their hostility to the people, they would never have stayed their hand till every man, woman, and child had been shipped to a foreign shore. But the expense of emigration, even upon the Duke of Argyle's low estimate of 40s. per head, was too much for their slender means, and the project had to be abandoned. The croft system was then introduced, as a temporary expedient to facilitate the clearances, and to afford a refuge to the outcasts till an opportunity should arise of transporting them to their allotted homes in Australian or Canadian wildernesses. From that day to this the idea of emigration has never been relinquished by the Highland lairds. There is a lurking expectation in the minds of nearly all of them that they will yet be able, by the help of Government or public money, to ship away the miserable population which swarms along their shores. In order that the favourable moment may be seized when it comes, it is necessary that the people hang loosely upon the soil. Leases would be very awkward barriers. The people must not be permitted to forget that the Highlands are not their home—that they are only pilgrims—pilgrims from the interior glens of their native country to the wilds of foreign lands—and that they are merely camping for a little while on the shore, till the ships come, and the winds blow, that are to carry them to their destined places of abode. They must keep their lamps trimmed, and be ready on an hour's warning to set out on a long journey to the other side of the world. Why attempt to ward off the evil tendency of a system which is already doomed? Why make any effort to improve the condition of people who are on their march to another hemisphere, and from whom we have nothing either to hope or fear? Leave them to themselves. Let them marry, subdivide, and multiply, till they are ready to eat each other up in the struggle for existence. When things are at the worst they will mend. The more deplorable and hopeless the extremity to which matters come, the more cogent the reasons for wholesale expatriation, and the more urgent the necessity for Government to interfere, so that when the night is darkest then will come the dawn. These are the silent cogitations and the secret hankerings in the minds of the Highland lairds, which paralyse improvement, which wither up the soul of enterprise, and which undermine every humane and every patriotic resolution. The chiefs do not believe in the improvability of the people. They suspect, distrust, and throw contempt upon their own blood. They want faith—faith, which

is the mainspring of all success—faith in that God who has made of one blood all the nations of the earth, and who has infused into our common nature the inextinguishable elements of improvement and progression. The refusal of leases is the sign of neglect, and not of control. Leases are covenants of duties, as well as of rights. While they secure the tenant's right to the fruits of his toil, they require him to be skilful, industrious, provident, and generous. When a landlord wishes to improve, and to bind down his tenants to a course of improvement, he grants leases, and gives expression and effect to his principles through their conditions. But when a landlord is indifferent and reckless he refuses leases, and stands up for tenancy-at-will; and this is the course which has found favour with the Highland lairds.

In point of subdivision of the crofts and what is commonly called over-population (by which term it is always safe to understand an excess of population beyond the resources of a given part, and not of the whole, of the soil), the Isle of Skye is in a still worse condition than any of the districts of the mainland which I have visited. The population of Strath, with the exception of the cottars, whom I have represented as numbering 800 souls, are all holders of land; and yet though amounting in 1841 to 3,150, the annual value of real property in 1843 was only £3,026 1s. 9d. But it may show how little this annual rental, small as it is, is endangered by the poor-rates—which one would naturally expect to find as an accompaniment of so large a population—to state that the whole sum expended on the poor in the year ending February, 1846, was only £17 13s. 10d.* It must not be supposed, however, that there is no pauperism in the parish. The amount of pauperism is truly enormous; but it is relieved in another way than by poor-rates, and the saving to the rental by the exemption from poor assessment is far more than balanced by the cost at which that exemption is purchased. Lord Macdonald lets part of his land to sheep-graziers, whose system of husbandry cannot afford to pay the amount of rent which the soil would yield under a thorough cultivation of its resources; and he lets another part of it to crofters, whose rents are irregularly and sometimes never paid, and who are consequently paupers in disguise. He thus loses in two ways to a large though an uncalculated amount, while his

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* See Appendix, No. II.

whole gain consists in the difference of a few pounds per cent. in the amount of his poor's tax. The Highland proprietors cannot both support the poor by assessment and throw their rents away upon indolent graziers and pauperised crofters; so that as soon as the poor law is enforced upon them, they will be compelled to alter the whole system. With so small a distribution of parochial relief, and so poor a population, the calls upon the Central Relief Board last season was necessarily immense. Two thousand bolls of meal were distributed in the parish, and I can see no grounds to expect that the necessity may not be equally great before next harvest, and every succeeding year, so long as the present allocation and management of the soil are persisted in. Here, as at Kyle Rhea, some small parcels of land remained unsown for want of seed. Lord Macdonald commenced in spring to reclaim considerable tracts of waste moor under the Drainage Act, by which it is proposed to increase the size of the small holdings; but the works in the meantime are suspended, and it is uncertain when they may be resumed, on account, it is said, of some difficulty in getting the necessary advances from the Government. The Drainage Act requires that the works be advanced to a certain stage before the money is sent down from the Treasury; and it would appear that the improvements in Skye have been spread over a larger surface than the capital at command can overtake, and matters have consequently come to a fix—the Government refusing to advance, because the works are standing still, and the works standing still because the Government refuses to advance.

LETTER XXI.

Want of Plantations in Skye—Profits of the Kelp Manufacture—Extravagance of the Highland Chiefs—Its Results.

THE reproach of nakedness which Dr. Johnson brought against the Hebrides may still be applied with equal truth, and, at this advanced day, with much more reason, to a large part of Skye. I travelled from Broadford to Portree without seeing a single plantation, though there is an immense deal of ground that cannot be

turned to a profitable use in any other way. The climate—that scapegoat which has to bear the weight of so many Highland sins —is also blamed for the want of wood. Trees, it is said, do not thrive in Skye. But, in opposition to this pretext, we have the most unexceptionable evidence. The minister of Strath writes, in the "New Statistical Account," that "all the varieties of planted timber thrive well *when duly fenced and preserved*." In the same work it is stated in reference to Duirinish, one of the most exposed parishes in Skye, that "the larch is the most congenial tree to the soil and climate; but a great variety of other trees, such as oak, ash, plane, beech, alder, and birch, are found to thrive pretty well, notwithstanding the violence of the sea-blast to which they are constantly exposed." It is evident, moreover, from the trunks of trees which are found embedded in the mosses, that the island was not always so bare of wood as at the present day; and there is just sufficient wood growing in the present day to prove that no alteration has taken place in the climate to prevent the island from being as well stocked with timber as ever it was. At Portree there are several beautiful and thriving plantations, in reference to which the minister, writing in 1841, observes: "The greater part of these plantations are only a few years old, and therefore the trees cannot be of any great size. At Raasay, however, there are old trees of considerable size, such as are seen in the vicinity of towns, castles, and in forests, either in the Highlands or in the low country of Scotland." And after expressing his opinion that "no improvement whatever could be more profitable, or of greater advantage, both to proprietors and tenants, than the planting of wood," he naively concludes, that "this, however, *under existing circumstances*, is a matter more to be wished for than expected." Truly, where capital has not been spared to trench and drain the soil—improvements which yield an immediate return—it is hopeless to expect that any outlay will be made on planting, the fruits of which can only be reaped after the lapse of fifteen or twenty years. Planting is the slowest of all speculations. No man can engage in it who has not money which he can afford to leave to his heirs. Numerous plantations are therefore one of the surest signs of opulence; and the straitened means and biting poverty of Skye could not be more clearly proved or more vividly pictured than by the peeled and naked aspect of its treeless soil.

When Dr. Johnson visited the Hebrides, the lairds were only beginning to draw money-rents from their estates. A proprietor

of one of the islands declared to him that "he should be very rich if he could set his land at 2½d. an acre." Every one knows how very different it is now. Since then rents have undergone a four-fold, a six-fold, and even a ten-fold increase, and the Highland proprietors have reaped the benefit of the kelp manufacture, the profits of which far exceeded, in many cases, the rental of the land itself. We have heard of Highland proprietors receiving £10,000, and some £12,000 and £14,000 a-year from kelp alone. This golden tide might have borne along with it into feudal castles the mercantile idea of accumulation, and with accumulation there would have been the power and the opportunity of making large investments in the improvement of the soil. If Skye has not been extensively planted with trees since Dr. Johnson's visit, the fault is the lairds'; though it is not so clear that blame could be attached to them at a period when their meagre rents were paid in lambs and black cattle.

There is no more interesting passage in Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations" than that in which he describes how commerce and manufactures gradually broke down the power of the feudal barons, and promoted the improvement and cultivation of the country. In rude times a landed proprietor could find no way of consuming his revenue but by sharing it with a multitude of retainers, who were necessarily always at his command, whether in peace or war. But when commerce and manufactures arose, they spread before his eyes numerous articles of curious workmanship and dazzling material, the enjoyment of which could be lavished entirely upon himself. His vanity was tickled; and for a diamond buckle, or a gilded coach, he bartered the produce which would have maintained 1,000 men for a year. His revenue was now dispersed among tradesmen and artificers, who were not directly paid by him, who did not derive from him a thousandth part, perhaps, of their subsistence, and who, consequently, cared little either for his frowns or his smiles. Thus fell the power of the feudal barons; and the inhabitants, relieved from the insecurity and extortion inflicted upon industry by their perpetual feuds, applied themselves with greater ardour to the cultivation and improvement of the soil.

Towards the close of last century, the rise of rents and the profits of kelp brought the Highland chiefs within the reach of the same temptations to which the English and Lowland barons had yielded a century earlier. They introduced them into the splendid warehouses and saloons of London, filled with the richest

handiwork and the rarest and costliest luxuries which the ingenuity of man could devise, or the unwearied energies of commerce could collect. There, too, were the English aristocracy, with their princely equipages and their glittering wealth, to excite emulation and to ruffle pride. The effect was the same as when a hawker of the backwoods spreads out his toys, and trinkets, and fire-waters, before a tribe of Indians. The vanity of the Highland chiefs was intoxicated, and the solid advantages which the new tide in their affairs had opened up to them were bartered for the merest baubles. There is a staircase-window in Lord Macdonald's mansion in Skye which is said to have cost £500. In residences, dress, furniture, equipages, pleasures, and style of living, the Highland chiefs copied the English model; and while they necessarily lost their power by this new way of life, the only resources by which their rugged country and its untutored inhabitants could have been brought into a cultivated and civilised condition, were wasted in the vain attempt to rival the magnificence of an aristocracy who possessed much richer domains and larger revenues. The decay of the kelp manufacture completed the ruin which personal extravagance had begun; and the men who had long reaped the profits of this lucrative trade passed from the scene, leaving their estates as unimproved as they had found them, a numerous population starving, and rentals reduced far below their nominal amount by the annual charges of their mortgages. The heirs of this poor inheritance occupy a difficult and painful position. They are entitled to sympathy and indulgence. There is only one way by which they can hope to gain their lost ground, to improve their estates, or even to transmit them, in a state worth possessing, to their children. They must forsake the world, forswear pomp and fashion, retire to their country seats, live penuriously, and spend in the improvement of their properties the last farthing of their rentals which they can spare from the consumption of their families. A generation of economy may possibly repair the disasters of a generation of waste.

The want of timber in Skye is an obstacle to the most necessary improvements. The people cannot build better cottages, or even repair the wretched ones in which they live.* The erection

* The mode in which the hovels in the Highlands are built is thus described in the statistical account of Duirinish:—"The walls are uncommonly broad, in some instances six or even seven feet. Properly speaking, there are

of farm-offices and the enclosure of the fields are also made more difficult of attainment than they would be were there plenty of woods. As a matter of utility, as well as of ornament, therefore, plantations are one of the prime necessities of Skye.

LETTER XXII.

The Feeble Character of Agriculture in Skye—Exceptions—An Extensive Moor—Great Extent of Waste Land in Duirinish—The Macleod—Social Condition of the People—Habits of the Women—Remedies—Macleod's Store—Monopolies of the Rich.

A STRANGER accustomed to the well-ploughed fields, the straight deep furrows, the trim hedge-rows, and the busy farm-yards of the Lowlands, cannot fail to be struck with the contrast presented by the rural exterior of Skye. Had war or pestilence swept over the island eight or ten years ago, cutting down all the strong and the able bodied, and leaving none but little boys and old women to do the labour of the fields, Skye, in these circumstances, would have been much the same in its external appearance as under its present alleged redundancy of population. An immense proportion of the soil fit for tillage lies in all the rude waste of nature. Every object wears the desolate aspect of a place deserted by the hand of industry. Land unploughed and unenclosed; houses bare, dila-

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two walls, built at the distance of eighteen inches or two feet from each other. This vacant space is filled up with earth, and the whole covered over at the top with green sod. The rafters are rested on the inner edge of the inner wall, instead of being placed on the outer edge, as in other places; consequently there is a considerable breadth of the wall left completely exposed, and the rain, of course, enters here, and continually deluges the house. But the people, while they are anxious to exclude the wind, seem to have no dread of damp. I have seen two sheep grazing abreast on the top of one of these walls, and they might easily give room to a third. Two men might walk round on some of them, without any danger of falling off." The people of Tiree turned the tops of their walls to a new use this last season. Those of them who were scarce of land sowed the garden-seeds sent them by the Ladies' Association round the roofs of their huts. I am told that the cottages, surmounted with rows of cabbages, have a very singular and grotesque appearance.

pidated, and unapproached by roads or foot-paths; ditches chokefull of weeds and stagnant water; huge mosses and heathy uplands, relieved only by dreary tracts of withered and whitened pasture, from which the few remaining traces of former tillage are rapidly disappearing, and only make the desolation more striking by calling up the remembrance of busier and happier times. Man, instead of conquering the difficulties of the soil, has here permitted the difficulties of the soil to conquer him. The very furrows are bent and twisted in accommodation to every little piece of rocky or marshy ground; and in the feeble and crooked character of these plough-marks you may read as distinctly as if it had been inscribed in letters the weak and timorous spirit of the cultivators. You look in vain for any signs of a firm, bold, masterly dominion of the soil. There is none of that Titan energy which drains swamps, levels heights, fills up hollows, grinds the very rocks, and stamps images of power, order, and beauty, upon the face of Nature. The agriculture of Skye, on the contrary, is feeble as the feebleness of infancy—more indeed like the puny scratching of savages than the powerful agriculture of civilised life.

To this general character there are some honourable exceptions. In the neighbourhood of Portree, I had the satisfaction of seeing a fine green crop growing upon a piece of land, which two or three years ago was a dangerous quagmire. The thorough trenching to which this marsh was subjected was the means of exhuming the skeleton of a horse belonging to a pedlar, who, while plying his vocation within doors, allowed the poor animal to stray about outside till it sank irretrievably in the bog. Yet, coarse and almost hopeless as this piece of ground was, the improver considers that he was repaid for his outlay by his first crop. Cases of this kind deserve to be noticed, both in justice to those who are acting as the pioneers of improvement, and also because they are exceptions which prove the rule—successful examples of that agricultural enterprise, the want of which I have been censuring in others.

On approaching Dunvegan from Portree, I passed through a moor of great extent and very peculiar appearance. As far as the eye could reach on every side, heights and hollows were equally covered with a thick coat of mossy substance, producing a luxuriance of bent grass which waved and glistened like a crop of flax. Soil which puts forth bent so abundantly might reasonably be expected, by means of draining, to yield more useful crops; but it is pro-

bable that the very extent of this wilderness has prevented the idea of its improvement. And amidst the loud and numerous complaints that are made of over-population, it is truly cheering to know that in Duirinish there is even little necessity, for the present at least, of falling back upon this moor, inviting as it seems. Of the land of this parish the "New Statistical Account" gives the following information:—

"There are 1,900 acres now [1841] in cultivation, and upwards of 3,000 which were once cultivated, but are now in pasture. There are about 40,000 acres which have always remained waste. There are 12,000 of these that might be brought into tillage, 4,000 of which would probably yield a good return for the expense. The remainder, however, would require a greater outlay of capital than it would be prudent to expend upon them."

It is delightful to observe the gradation of resources which Nature has here provided to meet the wants of an expanding population. Three thousand acres once cultivated, but now in pasture—4,000 acres of waste that will yield "a good return" for the expense of cultivation—8,000 acres more capable of being brought into tillage by an outlay which appears scarcely prudent, according to the present agricultural notions of Skye—and lastly, a residue of 28,000 acres, of which, intractable as they may seem in the present infancy of improvement, it is difficult to say what opinion may be formed in the mature age of agricultural science —form, it must be confessed, a very pleasing succession of territory to which the population may retreat as they find their numbers pressing upon the limits of subsistence. Last year the trying position of Macleod of Macleod excited general sympathy, and drew forth substantial aid. It will gratify the friends of the Macleod to know that the battle in which he is engaged is not a hopeless one, but that in the vicinity of his Castle of Dunvegan there is an abundance of waste lands to employ the labour and supply the wants of his people for a century at least. The population of Duirinish was 3,227 in 1811, and 4,983 in 1841. These figures neither exhibit a large population in proportion to the natural resources of the parish, nor a large increase in proportion to the average increase of other parts of the kingdom. The same remarks will hold true of Skye in general, which cannot be so justly accused of having increased its population too rapidly as of having improved its lands and increased its means of subsistence too slowly.

Of the population of Duirinish, 3,000 are poor: that is, sup-

porting themselves with difficulty in the best times, and, under an affliction like that of last year, dependent upon all kinds of relief funds for the support of a wretched existence. In the adjoining parish of Bracadale, the whole of which is the property of Macleod, there are 1,500 in a similar condition. The same system of large sheep-walks and petty crofts prevails in this as in other districts of Skye. The people eke out the produce of their patches of land by fishing for cod and ling, which are said to be caught with great ease in the Minch. To encourage this branch of industry as much as possible, Macleod buys the fish from the people, which he cures and sends into market on his own account. It is observed that the crofters who fish diligently pay their rents with punctuality, while those who are negligent in this respect are in arrears and in misery. The clothing, furniture, and hovels of the people bear every mark of extreme poverty; the children are pale and emaciated; and the dirty and slovenly habits which characterise many of the women serve to aggravate the discomforts entailed by narrow means. Domestic order, economy, and cleanliness, are ideas which seem never to have entered into the minds of a large proportion of the female population. To boil a pot of potatoes, or mix a brose of meal and water, is their highest attainment in the art of cookery; and you can see, from their dirty and ragged clothing, that in the operations of washing, dressing, and mending, they are equally deficient. A few pieces of cast-off dress are dabbled occasionally in the nearest stream, and spread out on the green bank, with a heavy stone on the top of each to prevent them from being lifted by the wind, and there left to bleach and dry, and sometimes to rot, as the natural changes of the weather may dictate. Of the interior of the cottages it is needless to speak, so long as these consist, for the most part, of only one apartment, in which the family and the cattle find the same accommodation. The first requisites of cleanliness and of decency are wanting. The women manage their cows very negligently, though they keep them under the same roof with themselves. Regularity in the hours of milking is seldom observed. Poor Crummie is sometimes relieved of her treasure at an early hour in the morning, and sometimes not till mid-day, as the wants of the family happen to be more or less pressing; and thus one of the main elements of subsistence is rendered much less productive than it would be by a little care and attention. It is necessary to allude to these matters, because it is impossible that any change for the better can take place with

the present habits of the female population. The improvement of the homes of the people must precede, or at least be coeval with, the improvement of the crofts. The Highland women are not without some good qualities, and they are free from many of the vices which too frequently stain the female character in other parts of the country. During the whole of my inquiries in the Highlands I have never seen or heard of a drunken woman. Their defects in household duties are the result of want of training and experience, and of the necessity entailed upon them of working in the crofts while their husbands are engaged from home at day-labour; and not of any acquired vices to which the same defects are generally traceable in more artificial states of society. The true remedy, therefore, will be found in the establishment of industrial schools, combined with requisite improvements in the construction of the cottages and in the size and culture of the crofts. To effect a complete revolution in the manners of the adult women may be an impossible task, but the young are susceptible of any ideas and habits which you choose to impress upon them; and if the civilization of the Highlands be really a work which the Government believes itself bound either to undertake or promote, one of its first steps should be to plant in every hamlet a thoroughly equipped school, in which, in addition to the usual branches of education, the young of both sexes would be drilled in every exercise necessary to prepare them for their respective departments of the business of life.

The Macleod has established, at Dunvegan, a public store for retailing groceries and articles of general consumption. This practice is not uncommon in the Highlands on the part of the landed proprietors; and it is worthy of consideration how far so unusual a step is becoming or advisable. In remote Highland districts there is necessarily great difficulty in establishing good retail shops; and the want of them proves a serious obstacle to the comfort and even the improvement of the population. In this light the introduction of shops is well worthy of the attention of a landlord. But shops established and carried on by proprietors, and necessarily dealing with their own tenants and labourers, bear a strong resemblance to the truck system; and we should not be surprised to find them attended with some of its evils. Complaints are made at Dunvegan of the high prices charged at the laird's store; and, upon inquiry, they seemed to me to be considerably above the prices common in rural villages. But it does not follow that Macleod is

making inordinate gains by his shop-keeping. He requires to commit the management of his store to paid servants, whose wages must come off the first of the profits, and who cannot be expected to apply the same care and economy to the business which a man usually devotes to his own concerns. A gentleman, moreover, of Macleod's standing, is not likely to buy his goods so cheaply in the wholesale market as a tradesman with perhaps equal command of cash, but much humbler pretensions; and I should also suppose that he will sell at equal disadvantage. His position as landlord and superior over a poor population will naturally expose him to losses, which an ordinary tradesman can avoid. In these circumstances, he *must* sell his goods at high prices; and nothing is more likely than that his shop-keeping will expose him to loud complaints from his customers, without doing any good for himself. Had Macleod selected a man out of the common walks of life in whom he had confidence, and assisted him by his credit in procuring a supply of goods till he was able to stand upon his own footing, he would have done all the good which he intends, without incurring any of the evil.

Macleod is also a sheep-farmer, an innkeeper, a coach-proprietor, and a shipowner; and, by this multiplicity of engagements, he only fulfils what seems to be an essential condition of rank and importance in Skye. In every part of the island you find the most multifarious and incongruous professions conjoined in the same person. The sheep-graziers are also cloth-merchants, factors, meal-mongers, and inspectors of the poor; and the very ministers of the sanctuary are seen chaffering as store-farmers in the wool and the flesh markets. This system is injurious in every respect. It divides society into two extreme classes, one of which it exalts and the other it humiliates. In Skye the rich monopolise all profits and emoluments, while the reins of social oppression are tightened to the utmost stretch of endurance over the necks of the poor.

LETTER XXIII.

The Skye Memorial in favour of Emigration—Inconsistency of its Facts and Conclusions—Wants of the Population—Capabilities of the Island—Scheme for the Employment of the People at Home—Its Practicability—Its Advantages—Wholesale Emigration an Expensive and Endless Remedy.

DURING the distress of last year, the gentlemen of Skye presented a memorial to Government, remarkable for the contrariety of its premises and its conclusion. This curious document, which is safely deposited in the Home Office, though never submitted to the public, commences by showing how the people may all be profitably employed and comfortably subsisted at home, and ends by recommending, as the only effectual remedy for destitution, a wholesale system for carrying them abroad. According to this memorial, there are 16,000 acres of arable land in Skye, of which 6,000 are in the hands of large graziers, and 10,000 in the hands of crofters and other small occupiers. There are supposed to be about 5,000 families, one-half of whom have land, and the other half have none. The average amount of arable land, therefore, in the possession of each of the small occupiers, is about four acres. There are thirty large tenants in all, each of whom have consequently, on an average, 200 acres of arable. The extent of improvable land—land reclaimable from a state of waste, or nearly waste—is set down at 20,000 acres. Such are the facts with which the proprietors and sheep-farmers of Skye have thought proper to preface their prayer for emigration. It is not to be supposed that these figures are correct in every particular. They are evidently rough calculations; but still they are calculations by individuals who have the best means of ascertaining and proving the truth of their suppositions. I have heard it doubted that the large farmers have each on an average 200 acres of arable land. I, for my part, could perceive no traces of cultivation to this extent on the sheep-farms, and can only account for this estimate, and that not very satisfactorily, by supposing that it may include the patches of potato land sublet to shepherds and cottars, and forming part of the wages of these parties for service to the graziers. The extent of improvable land is evidently under-rated at 20,000 acres. It was shown, in my last letter, that there are 15,000 acres of

pasture and waste, admitted by a competent authority to be capable of tillage, in the parish of Duirinish alone. Of these, 3,000 acres are grazing, which were once cultivated; and, taking Duirinish as an average specimen of the extent to which arable land has been converted into pasture, I would say that there is not much short of 20,000 acres of this description of land alone in Skye, without including a rood of the reclaimable mosses, moors, and swamps, which fall more properly under the designation of waste lands. I do not wish, however, to disturb the statistics of the memorial. I am content to take them as they stand, and to prove to the gentlemen of Skye, that, upon their own showing, there is no necessity for that expatriation of the people for which they crave the assistance of the public purse, but that the resources of the island are amply sufficient to supply the wants of its population—merely asking the reader to remember that the data on which I proceed are the data, not of agricultural enthusiasts, but of men who had every inducement to under-estimate the capability of the soil, and to exclude from consideration every acre which was not manifestly susceptible of profitable improvement.

The great practical problem to be wrought out in Skye is, to provide constant employment to the families who have no land, and to raise those who have land to a position in which they will be able to pay rent and maintain themselves out of the produce of their farms. Of the former class there is said to be 2,500 families, and I believe that six months' labour per annum, in addition to their existing sources of employment, will be necessary to place these families above the reach of want. Harvest work at home or abroad, herring-fishing, and the ordinary labour of the island, may be fairly supposed to occupy six months of the year. When potatoes were in vogue, the remaining six could be spent in idleness without exposing the family to want of food; but the loss of potatoes renders labour at day-wages during that period indispensable to their subsistence. To employ 2,500 heads of families at 1s. 6d. per day for six months would cost £29,250; and remunerative labour to this amount requires to be provided annually in order to place the non-occupiers of land in Skye in a position of independence and safety. Of the second class there are also supposed to be 2,500 families. Some of these are already in a self-supporting position—others are not. All who pay rents of £10 and upwards are of the first class; while those whose rents are under £10 are dependent more or less upon day-labour to com-

plete their means of subsistence. I calculate that 1,500, or three-fifths of the land-occupying class, require employment during three months of the year; and this, at 1s. 6d. per day, will cost £8,775. Whence, it follows, that the population of Skye can only be maintained at home by employment to the amount of £38,125 annually, and to be continued annually till such time as, by the acquisition of new land, or other means, they become independent of day-labour. The question, therefore, is, can additional productive employment to this amount be provided in Skye?

It is admitted to us, in the first place, that there are 20,000 acres of waste capable of being reclaimed and cultivated; and I do not suppose that a single doubt can remain on the mind of any one that land to this extent may be selected from the uncultivated wastes of Skye, every acre of which would afford a most eligible investment for capital. Waste land is reclaimed at an expense varying from £5 to £20 per acre, according to the nature of the soil and the circumstances of its position. The latter sum is about the maximum at which land can be reclaimed profitably in districts where, as in Skye, the climate and other drawbacks render land of less value when it is reclaimed than in more fertile districts. It is difficult to ascertain the rent of arable land in Skye, on account of its being let along with pasture; but it is not above the mark to state it at £1 or 30s. per acre. Land, which yielded 30s. when reclaimed, would repay an expenditure of £20 per acre in its reclamation; but I will take the average expense of improving the 20,000 acres in Skye at £10 per acre, for which a rent of only £1 per acre would be a return of 10 per cent. The reclamation of 20,000 acres, at the rate of £10 per acre, would give employment to the extent of £200,000, or, in other words, afford the productive labour requisite to maintain the 2,500 families who have no land for a period of nearly seven years. Then, in addition to these 20,000 acres of reclaimable waste, there are 16,000 acres of arable land, on which many improvements are necessary. A large extent of it requires draining; some part of it would repay the expense of trenching; and on many of the small possessions, cultivation is at a stand for want of enclosures. It will not be denied by any one acquainted with the condition of the arable land in Skye, that it will bear an average outlay of £2 per acre with the greatest advantage both to landlord and tenant. The improvement of 16,000 acres at £2 per acre would cost £32,000, and afford the requisite employment for

upwards of three years and a-half to the 1,500 occupiers of land whom I have supposed to be dependent for day-labour during three months of the year. Let it be supposed, therefore, that the two classes are set respectively to work—the non-occupiers of land reclaiming the 20,000 acres of waste, and the 1,500 occupiers improving their own arable lands and the arable lands of the large tenants. The latter will have employment for upwards of three years; and, by the end of this period, the former will have a sufficient extent of new land reclaimed to increase the holdings of the small occupiers to the point, and above the point, at which they are capable of affording full employment and maintenance to a family. The non-occupiers will still have three years' work before them, and at the end of this period they will have brought the remaining half of the 20,000 acres into tillage, by means of which one-half of them may be raised to the position of occupiers of land, no longer dependent upon day-labour for subsistence. If 2,500 families find employment for six months of the year in the present condition of things, it is not unreasonable to expect that 1,250 families could find full employment at day-labour after 20,000 acres have been added to the cultivated land of the island, and 16,000 raised to a higher state of improvement. The grand result of the operation would be, that the non-occupiers of land would be reduced one-half as effectually as if they had been reduced by emigration; and, at the same time, the arable land of the small occupiers would be increased from an average of four to an average of eight acres each.

The great difficulty in the eyes of some will, no doubt, be to procure the capital necessary to put these improvements in operation. But a little consideration will show that this difficulty is not so formidable as it at first sight appears. The total cost of the improvements is £232,000, but it is not necessary that a capital of this amount be raised, for the obvious reason that capital expended in the improvement of the soil rapidly reproduces itself. The outlay upon the arable lands would very nearly be replaced by the first crop; and it is a charge which may be met without much difficulty by the landlords and tenants themselves. The large tenants have means enough to effect their own improvements, and many of the smaller occupiers may also relieve the proprietors of part, at least, of the expenditure. The annual outlay is proposed to be £8,775, for three years and a-half. The valued rental of Skye is £23,079 4s. 8d. The annual burden of the poor, ac-

cording to the latest returns, is only £364 19s. 10½d. Other rent charges are equally light, and it seems no very hard matter that proprietors, in these circumstances, and in an emergency when great exertions and great sacrifices are indispensable, should apply for a few years some fourth or fifth part of their annual income to improvements which directly increase the value of their property, and would yield an interest the first year of the outlay. As to the other part of the undertaking, I admit that the necessary funds are not to be found in Skye. We will look in vain to this island for a capital capable of reclaiming 20,000 acres of land, in a period of six or seven years. But it does not follow that the resources of Skye are not sufficient to meet the wants of its population. Its resources have been wasted, and the necessity of calling in the aid of extrinsic capital is the result and the penalty of that extravagance. These waste acres ought to have been gradually reclaimed as the population increased, at the expense of the annual rental. But the annual rental was exhausted upon personal luxury, the work of cultivation was put off while the population multiplied, and now the evil day has come when works must be accomplished in six or seven, which ought to have been spread over thirty or forty years. It is not to be wondered that the power of the Government, the charity of the public, or the self-interest of the capitalist, should have to be appealed to in such a dilemma. It is rather matter of wonder that the amount of assistance required is so moderate and practicable as it is. Nominally it is £200,000; but practically it is a great deal less. Waste land can only be reclaimed by gradual steps. The improvement of every acre must necessarily be spread over three years; and each year it should be made to bear a crop. Crop-bearing is an essential part of the process of reclamation. The first year's crop in Skye would not do more perhaps than repay the expense of seed and manure. The second year would, in all probability, return the seed and manure, and one-half the expense of labour. And the third year would certainly repay the entire outlay. When part of the land was thus fully reclaimed, it would be let to tenants at an annual rent of, say £1 per acre; and this rental might be applied as part of the capital necessary to reclaim the remainder. According to these calculations (as any one who chooses to run over the account will find), 20,000 acres of waste land may be reclaimed in six years, at an expense of £10 per acre, by means of a capital of little more than £100,000, £20,000 or £30,000 of which would be returned

at the end of the sixth year, thus leaving only £70,000 or £80,000 for permanent investment. Is the redemption of a populous island like Skye worth an outlay of £80,000? The Government gave £10,000,000 to feed the Irish during a period of temporary starvation, on the equivocal condition that one-half should be repaid by the landlords when they are able. The British public subscribed last year nearly £150,000 as a clear donation to the starving Highlanders, for which they never expected to receive any return. I cannot imagine how, in the face of these munificent displays of public and private generosity, it can be doubted for a moment that £100,000 would be readily advanced for an undertaking which would give permanent relief to Skye, and, at the same time, reward the donors with the usual business returns.

In making these calculations I have taken the safe side in every particular. I have assumed the acreage and population exactly as the gentlemen of Skye have given them. I have shown how the whole 5,000 families may be provided for, without making any deduction for those employed as shepherds and servants on the large farms, and as tailors, weavers, shoemakers, grocers, &c., in the villages. The extensive improvements I have suggested, by giving employment and wages to the mass of the population, would increase the demand for every description of handicraftsmen; and when the reclamation of land was completed, a new field of employment would be opened, both for tradesmen and labourers, in the construction of the dwelling-houses and offices which the increased cultivation would render indispensable. The annual rental, doubled in amount, would be more capable than ever of accomplishing these permanent works; and, with improved buildings, the husbandry, morality, and social manners of the island would all take a step in advance.

This scheme is not incompatible with large farms. The sheep-farmers would still retain their 200 acres of arable land; and their immense ranges of pasture would be undiminished except by the 20,000 acres of reclaimed land, and the necessary quantity of hill ground to lay out these 20,000 acres into complete farms. These changes would certainly make inroads upon the cherished solitude of the sheep-walks; but it would still leave the large tenants in possession of farms large enough to satisfy any moderate ambition.

I appeal to the gentlemen of Skye if such a scheme as I have rapidly sketched be not preferable, in every point of view, to any system of forced and wholesale emigration. If it be objected that

the people are too indolent to undergo the labour of such an undertaking, the same objection may be brought against emigration; for the emigrants must submit to still greater hardships in clearing and reclaiming the wastes of a foreign land, without that love of country to animate and sustain them which would find powerful play in restoring the waste places of their native island. If they would increase the demand for our manufactures in some colonial settlement, they would be still more certain to become good customers if well employed in Skye, and, as well as a source of trade, they would there prove an important element of national defence. Even upon the ground of expense, home colonization is preferable to foreign. Emigration, to be effectual, must carry off the 2,500 families who have no land; and, in order to make a prosperous settlement, each of these families should have cash sufficient to pay their freight, to purchase a piece of land, and to support themselves till they are able to reap their first crop. They could not leave our shores with less than £20 for each family, without exposing themselves to inevitable disaster; and even this would require a sum of £50,000, or one-half the capital necessary to provide for them permanently at home. This sum, moreover, would be lost to the country as irretrievably as if it were thrown into the sea. Skye would remain as much a wilderness as ever, and in a few years the rebound of population would revive the old difficulty. From August, 1771, to October, 1790, eight large transports sailed from Skye with 2,400 emigrants, with £2,400, freight included. The same process has been frequently repeated since, but still the cry is "emigration!" The task to which the gentlemen of Skye have invited the Government would be as endless and as fruitless as the rolling of Sisyphus' stone. But employ the people at home, train them to industry, raise their standard of comfort, increase their intelligence, and, with the proper checks upon the subdivision of land, you may safely trust to that natural and voluntary egress which preserves the balance of population and subsistence in other districts of the country.

LETTER XXIV.

Arisaig—Highland Inquisitiveness—A Woollen Weaver—Condition of Tradesmen—Destitution of Crofters and Cottars—Heartless Conduct of Lord Cranstoun—Functions of Rent—Waste Land—Educational Destitution.

I SAILED from Portree by one of the Glasgow steamers, and landed on the mainland at Arisaig, which will be remembered as one of the districts that suffered most severely last season. Arisaig forms part of the huge parish of Ardnamurchan, and is included within the bounds of Inverness-shire, though Ardnamurchan Proper belongs to the county of Argyle. A bay of the sea, guarded at its mouth by a ledge of sunk rocks, flows into the heart of the populated part of the estate. At the head of this bay stands Arisaig House, sheltered by extensive plantations; and at a little distance from its north-eastern shore are the inn, the Roman Catholic chapel, the school-house, the shops, and the few straggling houses, which are all that Arisaig has to show in the form of a village. The place has an air of romantic beauty. I went ashore on the north side of the bay, and directed my steps to a solitary cottage, the inmate of which came to the door to inquire my errand, where I belonged to, whither I was going, and what news I had brought from the last place I had left. The proverbial inquisitiveness of the Highlanders, which has given so much annoyance to some, has always been a source of great advantage to me. I wanted information: so did they. It was therefore our mutual interest to be communicative; and I never scrupled to satisfy their curiosity, upon the equitable condition, that for every question that was put to me they should answer one of mine. The queries of the cottager at Arisaig gave me a key to such information as he could give. I learned that he was a woollen weaver, very ill employed, worse paid, and in much distress. I was asked at length to step into the interior of the cottage. At one end stood the loom, and at the other a fire of brushwood burned weakly on the earthen floor. A deal-board resting upon a few large stones, and serving the purposes of a bed, and a dresser containing a few bowls and plates, formed the only furniture of the apartment. The floor was very cleanly swept, and the poor man's wife had evidently done everything in her power to make things comfortable; but the bare stone

walls, and the large smoke-hole in the roof, through which the wind swirled in cold draughts, gave the house a very desolate appearance. This family had a cow, but the pressure of the famine compelled them to part with her. They had also been warned to remove, and upon asking the husband for what reason, he said he could not tell, unless it was because he had not paid the rent of last year's potato-ground. I inquired why he had not paid it, and he replied that an act of Parliament was passed, exempting poor people from paying rent for potato-ground when the potatoes failed. An attempt, he said, had been made to turn him out by force; but he had barred his door, for there was another act of Parliament which did not allow a poor man's door to be broken up. There was much delusion in these remarks; but they reveal a dependence upon the arm of the law for protection, which is infinitely better than that distrust of the law which characterises a similar class of people in the sister island—a dependence which the Legislature, I would hope, will be wise enough not to disappoint.

I have found everywhere in the Highlands that tradesmen are the most destitute class of the population. Where the mass of the people are so poor, food is the only necessary of life. Shoes and articles of clothing are luxuries; and when a pinch comes, the tailor, the shoemaker, and the weaver, are the first to find no demand for their labour. This poor weaver showed me a piece of cloth which had remained with him all summer, because the owner was too poor to pay him for his work upon it.

There are sixty-eight families in Arisaig who pay rent to the proprietor; eighteen families are sub-tenants; and forty are without any land. The size and mode of cultivating the crofts are the same as I have described in other districts. Formerly nothing but potatoes were grown, and a planting of six barrels has been known to yield as many as a hundred. This last season corn was grown instead, and a return of four or five bolls of meal is all which most of the crofters have to maintain their families upon till another harvest. There is no necessity of speculating as to the time when destitution will begin in this district. The forty families who have no land are perpetually in destitution; and the crofters will be equally wretched as soon as their two or three months' supply of meal is exhausted. There is no work whatever going on upon the estate. Lord Cranstoun and his factor are both absentees. The one lifts the rent, and the other carries it off and consumes it; and this comprehends the whole of the relation between landlord and

tenant in Arisaig. It was with much ado Lord Cranstoun was prevailed upon to employ fifteen or sixteen men for a few weeks, when the destitution was at its height, in trenching a field attached to the mansion-house; and the work was commenced so late in the year that no crop could be raised—a quantity of human food being thus lost by sheer mismanagement, which would have considerably mitigated the distress of this winter. Except for the supplies of meal sent into the district by the Central Relief Board, many would have inevitably perished of hunger last season in Arisaig. The Board as usual exacted work as the condition of relief, and road-making was the occupation to which the people were applied. But very little progress was made. The workers were principally old men; and to make matters worse, Lord Cranstoun, with incomprehensible unfeelingness, refused even to supply them with the necessary tools! Such examples of obstinate indifference on the part of proprietors may well shake the faith of the country in any remedy short of a compulsory law in behalf of the unemployed.

The land rental of Arisaig is somewhere about £1,200 per annum. The population is 1,250. A pound per head is the relative proportion of rent and population in Skye, and some of the most destitute districts of the West Highlands. The population must necessarily be very poor on an estate where there is a human being for every pound which goes into the pocket of the landlord. Very probably Lord Cranstoun receives a larger share of the annual produce of Arisaig than the whole 1,250 souls put together. To make up his rent the people toil, and save, and stint themselves—living upon the scantiest and poorest fare, and scraping together every farthing they can lay their fingers upon, from one year's end to another. It must be obvious to the most superficial thinker, that a fund accumulated by so many hands, and at the expense of so many sacrifices, must be designed to discharge some very important functions, and that the prosperity of the district in which it is raised must depend very essentially upon the manner in which it is expended. A wise and reflecting landlord would feel an awful responsibility as that tribute was laid term after term upon his rent-table. He would see in it the laborious savings of the people, and in himself the banker to whose trust these savings were committed, to be laid out in a way by which they would both be made available for the relief and employment of the people, and be returned periodically with interest to his coffers. It is only by viewing rent in this light, and ap-

plying it accordingly, that the proprietor of such a place as Arisaig can discharge his duty, or the population be saved from distress. Rent, in such a community, forms the whole of that surplus produce, of which Malthus has observed, that it is "the great source of national power and happiness." There is no surplus produce in any other hands than the landlord's. The people consume all that remains of the annual produce above the landlord's rent, and would consume a great deal more if it could be obtained. Rent is therefore the only saving, the only capital, by which employment can be given in addition to what is already going on, and, consequently, by which the present population can either be relieved from their difficulties, or provision be made for the natural increase of their numbers. Lord Cranstoun had every inducement to bend to these unpalatable but wholesome truths in his management of Arisaig. He gave for that estate no equivalent purchase-money. It did not even descend to him as a patrimonial inheritance. He received it as a gift. Arisaig, with its £1,200 a-year, was a windfall to Lord Cranstoun, an unexpected addition to his wealth, for which he never toiled, nor lost a sixpence. The coldest heart might have warmed into generosity under this brilliant gleam of fortune. But Lord Cranstoun looked upon the matter in a different light. He regarded his Highland estate as simply entitling him to a wider round of pleasure; and in the fashionable saloons of London this English nobleman has squandered in a few hours of luxury, without a grudge, the hundreds which cost the poor people of Arisaig a year of toil and privation to collect.*

Far as population has been allowed to outstrip the means of subsistence, the condition of Arisaig is still perfectly manageable. There is a fine reclaimable moss quite contiguous to the crofts. A stream runs through it, affording every facility for drainage. The subsoil, I believe, is sand; and the shore is close at hand with abundant supplies of seaware. This moss is rented by Mr. M'Callum, Presbyterian minister of the district, who caused ten or twelve acres to be trenched some while ago; but the improvement in some way or other was mismanaged. He purposes to trench it again, and expects to take a crop from it during the coming year. It is admitted that 300 acres of excellent land may be reclaimed

* Since the above was written, I learn that Lord Cranstoun has sold the estate of Arisaig to Mr. Mackay of Bighouse.

from this moss alone, which would be amply sufficient to increase the crofts to the sustaining point.

The population of Arisaig are chiefly Roman Catholics. A new chapel is in course of erection, which is estimated to cost £2,000. It may give some idea of the educational destitution of the Highlands to state, that there is no school in North Morar, none in South Morar, none in Moydart, and only one in Arisaig. Each of these districts would form a large Lowland parish in point of area, and even of population; and yet there is but one school in the whole.

LETTER XXV.

Glenfinnan—Prince Charles' Monument—The Inscription—The Lochiel Country—Disappearance of the Old Celtic Polity—Distressed Condition of the Crofters—Malthusian Regulations—A Crofter's Suggestion to the Central Relief Board—Lochiel's Qualities as a Landlord.

THERE is an excellent road from Arisaig to Fort-William, through a tract of country characterised by the grandest features of Highland scenery, and memorable by events which are deeply engraven upon the page of history. A few miles from Arisaig, you pass the mansion of Borrodale, where Prince Charles Edward first landed on his arrival in Scotland, in the '45. This plain, but substantial, and not inelegant building, is occupied by Mr. Macdonald, of Glenaladale, whose ancestor was one of the first of the Highland chiefs to declare his adherence to the cause of the Prince. The road here winds round Loch Aylort, and at length passes the head of Loch Shiel, where three or four narrow valleys open out into the circular and mountain-girt plain of Glenfinnan. In this lonely and secluded spot, on a piece of level sward, commanding the beautiful vista of Loch Shiel, the standard of rebellion was unfurled on the 19th of August, 1745. No place could be better adapted for the preliminary movements of an insurgent army. Barricaded on all sides by huge hills, and at that period unapproached by roads, Glenfinnan was completely concealed from the eye of the Government; and along the narrow and shadowy defiles which issue from

it, messengers might be despatched to all parts of the Highlands, and armed forces gathered together and marshalled, in the utmost silence and secrecy. The sound of footsteps, and the clattering of arms, would be equally unheard. A monument has been raised on the spot, to commemorate the eventful scene of which it was the witness. It consists of a plain round tower, overtopped by a statue of the Prince, and surrounded by a low octagonal wall. Though possessed of little architectural beauty, the wild and solitary place in which it stands gives it a striking effect; and it is with considerable difficulty that one drags himself away from a scene hallowed by such stirring memories. An inscription, breathing a hearty Jacobite spirit, appears on various parts of the monument, in Gaelic, Latin, and English.*

After passing through Glenfinnan, you find yourself in the Lochiel country, the first characteristics of which are an extensive but improvable morass, skirted by natural forests, of which birch

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* I took the trouble, before leaving Glenfinnan, of copying the inscription, and have been much surprised, since my return to the south, in discovering that some very incorrect copies have found their way into publications from which the utmost exactitude in matters of this kind might be expected. The English inscription is as follows:—

"On this spot, where
Prince Charles Edward Stuart
first planted his Standard,
on the 19th day of August, 1745,
when he made the *noble and gallant* attempt
to recover a throne lost by his ancestors,
this column was erected by
Alexander Macdonald, Esq., of Glenaladale,
to commemorate the generous zeal,
the undaunted bravery, and the inviolable fidelity
of his forefathers, and the rest of those
who fought and bled in that
arduous and unfortunate enterprise."

In the copy which is given in Fullarton & Co.'s "Gazetteer of Scotland," the words "daring and romantic" are substituted for "noble and gallant," which I have printed in italics in the above; and the simple statement in the following line, that the object of the Prince was to recover "a throne lost by his ancestors," is altered into "a throne lost by *the imprudence of* his ancestors." A discreditable attempt has thus been made to obliterate the Jacobitical sentiment embodied in the monument itself, as well as in the inscription, and to cast a slur upon the cause which both were intended to commemorate. The respectable publishers of the valuable work referred to may be readily supposed to be entirely free of blame in this matter. The misrepresentation is more likely to have originated with some local scribe, of snobbish propensities, who feels ashamed of the honest opinions of his forefathers.

is the predominating material. For many miles there is a total absence of any signs of population. In one of the glades of the woods I spied a newly-built cottage, and upon entering it, found it inhabited by the family of a Highland shepherd, who had recently lost his employment. One of the adjacent sheep-farms had fallen into the hands of a south-country grazier, who had supplanted the Highland shepherds by men from his own district. Lochiel had allotted three or four acres of ground to this family, as a means of support in their new circumstances, but the roughness of the ground must render cultivation very difficult to a poor cottar without means for some years to come. There was no appearance of want, however, in the cottage; and the mistress informed me that her husband was assisting a neighbouring farmer to smear, for which he was receiving day-wages. A mile or two farther on, the road passes close along the edge of Loch Eil; and here population becomes more numerous, as is usually the case on the margin of the Highland bays. There are here several groups of club-tenants, paying about £7 of rent per family. I found that turnips had been grown on some of these small farms for the first time last season, and the people expressed themselves fully satisfied with the result. But the most noticeable object on the road is the old mansion of Fassifern, long occupied by the ancestors of the present Sir Duncan Cameron, but now giving its name to a huge sheep-walk, which has swallowed up nearly one-half of the Lochiel estate. The shepherds were busy smearing in the out-houses as I passed the place; and from one of them I learned, incidentally, that the stock of Fassifern amounts to 20,000. Another sheep-walk, the name of which I have not retained, is said to have a larger stock than Fassifern; and the two together embrace the whole of Glen Arkeg and its adjoining valleys, many of which are very beautiful and fertile. The clearances in the country of the Camerons have been complete and unsparing in their character. Not one of the old tacksmen of the clan remain upon the estate—the Chief himself is an absentee; and the only remains of the devastation which has overtaken the old Celtic polity in this once famous land of broadswords, may be traced in the swarm of crofters along the margins of the Loch and the Caledonian Canal.

A century ago the rental of Lochiel probably did not exceed £500 a-year, and yet the Chief of the day was able to carry a body of 800 men into the rebellion of 1745. Matters are now completely reversed. The Lochiel of the present day pockets an

annual rent of £6000 or £7000, but could not command the military service of eighty men either for or against the cause of his Sovereign. The old ballads of the district speak of "two hundred swords from Loch Arkeg side" leaping from their scabbards at the voice of Lochiel—a statement which implies that the beautiful and spacious glen in which that sheet of water is found must at one time have contained a population little short of 1000 souls. With the exception of Achnacary, the family-mansion of Lochiel, scarcely a dwelling-house has been left in the glen. The people have long since disappeared from "Loch Arkeg side;" and so great is the solitude to which this once busy spot is consigned, that though considered by many to equal, if not excel, the most picturesque of our Scottish lakes, it is seldom visited, and almost unknown.

The rents of the crofts on the canal side vary from £3 to £5 per annum. The crofters generally keep two cows, fifteen sheep, and a pony. The cultivated land formerly yielded as many potatoes as maintained the families and the cattle during nine months of the year. This last year, however, the produce of each croft would scarcely average two bolls of meal, after feeding cattle and supplying seed. The pressure of distress is, therefore, much felt among the crofters; and their difficulties are greatly increased by the cessation of employment. The canal works, when going on, kept the people all well employed, and for many years this was probably one of the most prosperous districts in the Highlands. Even during last spring, some thousands were spent by the commissioners; but the canal is now fully completed, and nothing has started up to fill up the vacuum thus created in the means of employment. Some of the people spent £20 last year for subsistence to supplement the blighted potato crops. Their money, however, is now done; and great numbers are daily making the most heart-rending applications for work to the canal overseers without success.

There has been a good deal of subdivision of the crofts in some parts of the Lochiel estate. Two crofts have in many instances been converted into three; but this occurred principally in the time of the former Lochiel. The present proprietor is enlarging rather than subdividing, and his regulations against the increase of population are of the most stringent and Malthusian character. Two families are strictly prohibited from living upon one croft. If one of a family marries, he must leave the croft; and a case has even been brought under my notice, in which the only son of a widow, who is in joint possession of a croft with his mother, has been told

that if he marries he will be compelled to leave the estate. Severe penalties are also threatened against the keeping of lodgers. The unlucky crofter who takes a friend under his roof, without first obtaining the consent of Lochiel, must pay for the first offence a fine of £1; and for the second, shall be removed from the estate. It does not even appear that the duties of hospitality are held sacred from the ban of this terrific ukase. There must be something extremely "rotten in the state of Denmark," when such unnatural regulations are required to keep population within the limits of subsistence.

There is a considerable quantity of unreclaimed land on the crofts, which, if brought into cultivation, would tend materially to mitigate the existing distress. But no encouragement is given to reclaim. The crofters have no leases, and many of them are too poor to subsist themselves and their families while employed in the process of reclamation. On mentioning to a crofter the difficulty which the Relief Board had in laying out the public money on land, of which the tenants had no leases, he very ingeniously suggested that this need be no difficulty, for if the landlord was unwilling to give leases, he could easily come under an obligation to the Board to pay back a reasonable proportion of the increased rent drawn from the croft in consequence of the Board's improvements. This repayment could, of course, be made as well under one tenant as another, so that the landlord would retain his power of removal, and the Board at the same time secure its funds from misappropriation. The idea had never occurred to me, and I readily accepted it as a novel and useful solution of a difficulty which has hitherto been one of the greatest stumbling-blocks in the path of the Relief Board.

Conflicting opinions are entertained of Lochiel's qualities as a landlord. I have already said that he is an absentee; but I should mention that he is so more from considerations of health than of pleasure. The mists of Lochaber are not congenial to his constitution, which is said to be weak and debilitated. He bears a general character of clemency, kindness, and indulgence to the crofters; but it is universally remarked that a great change has taken place upon him of late, which dates its commencement from some time about the passing of the Scotch Poor Law Amendment Act. One part of his policy during the late severe year does not give a very exalted idea of his generous-heartedness. Last spring he very considerately distributed from a boll to a boll and a-half of corn

for seed to each of his crofters; but before the June market at Fort-William, and before the seed had well begun to sprout in the ground, his grieve went round the crofts and bought up all the young cattle, retaining the value of the seed-corn from the price. This, it must be confessed, considering all the circumstances, was rather sharp practice. But the great fault of Lochiel is, that he is not an improver, not an employer of labour, nor an encourager of other employers of labour, which is the *sine qua non* of good landlordism in the Highlands. I visited the small farm of Torr Castle, which lies between the Lochy and the canal, a mile or two above the locks. There are about fifteen acres of arable ground on this farm, and as many more could be added to it with the greatest ease. But Lochiel gives no encouragement. The tenant has a lease; but the ordinary duration of a lease is insufficient to protect a farmer if he has to reclaim land from a state of nature, and erect the fences and buildings which the increased cultivation renders necessary. There is a profusion of woods on the Lochiel estate, and the proprietor might at least supply timber, free of cost, to such of the tenants as were disposed to inclose their fields, or put up out-houses. But even this boon is refused: the farmers must pay for the materials as well as the labour of improvement; and, as a necessary consequence, the spirit of enterprise is chilled, and the hand of industry falls powerless in despair.

LETTER XXVI.

Estate of Inverlochy—Its Boundaries—Solitude of the Sheep Walks—The Crofts—Farm of Torlundy—Its Waste Condition—Farm of Auchandaul—Successful Improvements—The Gamekeeper and the Cottar—Population the Great Improver—Entails and the Game-Laws—Leases of the Crofters—Injustice of the Laws of the Estate—An Old Soldier—Lord Abinger a Site-Refuser.

Crossing Lochy Ferry, you pass from the property of Lochiel to the interesting estate of Inverlochy, belonging to Lord Abinger. This estate formed part of the extensive possessions of the Gordon family; but, upon the insolvency of the Marquis of Huntly, it was purchased by the late Lord Abinger, a well-known English judge, upon whose death it became the property of the present owner, the heir of his title and estates. It is, without exception, the finest

subject for improvement I met with in the whole course of my inquiries in the Highlands; and for this reason, as well as for some others which are stated elsewhere,* I was induced to give it a very minute investigation.

Inverlochy is surrounded by natural and well-defined boundaries. The Ben Nevis range of mountains skirt it on the south—the northern sides of the hills forming part of the estate. The rivers Spean and Lochy inclose it on the east and north; and the Lochy and the Nevis form its western and southern boundaries. The reader may trace out the property on a common map with the greatest distinctness. Two parallel lines of hilly ground run through the estate from east to west, and, together with the Ben Nevis mountains, form three separate straths, and three separate ranges of hill-pasture. I propose to take the reader with me through each of these natural divisions, so that he may have a clear idea of the entire property—how it is divided, what uses the various parts are devoted to, and the condition, physically and socially, of the people who reside and labour upon it. I have no wish to reflect unduly upon Lord Abinger. I do not imagine that there is anything very peculiar in his case. The estate of Inverlochy is only a graphic example of the management of landed property throughout the Highlands generally; and Lord Abinger's share of the common crime simply is, that he has kept his property in the same bad state in which he got it; and as land usually gets worse when left to itself, there is reason to believe that this fine estate is quietly falling, under his management, into a more waste condition than under any of his predecessors.

Entering the Ben Nevis side of the property from Fort-William, the first farm you come to is Claggain, which stretches up Glen Nevis, and is rented by a sheep-farmer, who devotes it exclusively to pasture. Then you have the old farms of Dhonie and Drumfure, both of which are occupied by Lord Abinger, and are annexed to his Lordship's home-farm of Torlundy, which I will notice by-and-bye. These farms are rough and stony; but several fertile patches occur between the knowes and along the edge of the stream, which, if cultivated, would afford good winter-feeding for sheep or cattle. The only trace of population I could discover on these farms was an old hut, with its roof half fallen in, and tenanted by no liv-

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* See Appendix, No. III.

ing creature save a dozen of very timid hens! Some old woman—the last of her clan, I fancied to myself—may possibly have died here, or been smothered by the falling roof; and these are her stock of fowls, still clinging with natural affection to the spot where they had been reared and fed. A few blackcocks, a score or two of Highland stirks, and these dozen hens, live at ease, without paying rent, on the produce of Dhonie and Drumfure. As you proceed up the strath, the prospect widens, and assumes a greener and softer aspect. The sides of the Ben Nevis mountains descend in broad, smooth, grassy declivities, some of which are elegantly dotted with natural wood. The heights on the other side spread out in wide marshy flats; while the intermediate ground gradually offers a more expansive and appropriate field for the spade and the plough. First you have the sheep department of the farm of Auchandaul, a very extensive tract; and next there is the large farm of Leanachan, which, with the exception of a few fields in the neighbourhood of the dwelling-house, is devoted exclusively to pasture. The solitary and deserted appearance of these sheep-walks strikes a stranger at once. No human being is seen as you stretch your eye along the strath. The very sheep, at this season of the year, hide themselves on the tops of the hills. No dikes, or fences, or any other trace of labour, announce to you that man has been here. No living voice, or hum of industry, is heard; and as the listening ear catches the distant plash of the mountain torrent, or the dreary rustle of the wind as it sweeps over the long grass, a feeling is awakened akin to that experienced by eastern travellers when standing amidst the solitude of some fallen Babylon, or some deserted Shinar, stricken by the curse of God. An old Highlandman, who has frequently topped Ben Nevis and his numerous satellites, pointed out to me, without moving a foot, the spots where, in his day, stood six hamlets, each containing ten or twelve families. Scarcely a stone of the cottages are left; and, except for the small circular gardens, which are still preserved to the eye by the remains of their feal enclosures, it would be impossible to discover the slightest trace of these homes of former generations. Further up the strath, you have Carychoilly and Dalnabee, another sheep-walk, occupied by Mr. Cameron, one of the most extensive graziers in the north. It is said that this gentleman clips 40,000 sheep yearly. The farm of Killichonat, which is still devoted to arable purposes, and yields excellent crops, brings you to the Spean, or north-eastern boundary of Lord Abinger's possessions.

The soil along the banks of the Spean and the Lochy is, with few exceptions, rough and barren. It descends abruptly to the water's edge in ledges of rock, or in irregular terraces of deep, coarse moss. It seems as if nature, in addition to the two noble streams which may be supposed to act the part of moats, had raised a rugged rampart of moss, stones, and brawny heather, round the north-eastern and north-western boundaries of the estate, as a protection to the fine alluvial soil which covers the interior straths. In olden times such a rampart would be of singular service in warding off the encroachments of predatory clans. In the present day it serves a somewhat different purpose; for it is here where Lord Abinger disposes of his redundant population. This outer stripe of coarse mossy ground is laid out in successive clusters of small crofts. First you have the crofts of Unachan, twenty-five in number, marching with the sheep-farm of Leanachan, and stretching along the edge of the Spean to the top of the second hilly ridge, which I have described as running through the estate. On the other side of the hill you find the crofts of Brachlatter, rather picturesquely situated, and commanding a fine view of the entrance of the Caledonian Canal to Loch Lochy. Directly below Brachlatter, on the edge of the river Lochy, there is another cluster bearing the name of the parish, and extending over a tract of more level land than any of the other groups. But this advantage is, perhaps, counterbalanced by the smaller size of the crofts. Brachlatter and Kilmonivaig consist of thirteen crofts each, which are occupied by as many families. They were laid out in crofts about forty years ago, under the proprietorship of the Duke of Gordon. Previously they were occupied by one tacksman, and yielded a rent of about £25; but Lord Abinger draws four or five times that sum from the present tenants. The scenery along the bank of the river is full of interest. The Lochy itself, as it sweeps rapidly down its course, is rather a majestic object; and the line of sloops and steamers which glide along the Caledonian Canal, on the opposite bank of the river, revives the idea of commerce and population amid the solitude of a wild and sequestered glen. The lofty hills of Lochiel, green to their summits, and speckled with the corn fields of an army of crofters, contrast with the black mosses and dark heather braes of Inverlochy. After Kilmonivaig, you have the farm of Camisky, partly arable and partly pastoral, but containing an enormous quantity of waste land, the excellent qualities of which, and the immediate vicinity of the river, hold out every possible induce-

ment to improve. Passing over the west end of the hill, you come upon another group of crofts, called Tommacharrich, overlooking the farm of Torlundy, and evidently wrested by sheer labour from the dominion of the surrounding barrenness. A little farther south there is another small cluster of crofts, on a place called Dalavenve. There may be about a dozen crofts in the two places, and these complete the whole of this class of allotments on Lord Abinger's estate.

This brings us back to the point whence we set out, namely, the east end of the estate in the neighbourhood of Fort-William; but we have still the middle strath to glance at, which is the more easily done as the public road to Loch Laggan and Badenoch passes directly through the midst of it.

In the immediate vicinity of Fort-William there is a piece of land called the Black Park, which is let out in small allotments to the villagers; and another piece attached to the Ben Nevis distillery. Respecting these there is nothing particular to be noticed. The tenants pay a good rent for them, and, I have no doubt, receive considerable advantage from them in return. One fact, however, is worthy of being recorded. A short time ago, a gentleman, then residing in Fort-William, applied to Lord Abinger for a part of the moss in lease, for improvement and cultivation. His Lordship did not directly refuse a lease, but he offered one on preposterous conditions. He would not extend the duration of the lease beyond seven years, during which time the tenant was to pay an annual rent of £1 per acre. The applicant, of course, declined the offer. The moss, accordingly, remained waste, and the gentleman transferred his capital and his enterprise to another part of the country. This is a specimen of the way in which improvement is scared away from the Highlands.

The next farm is Torlundy, occupied by Lord Abinger himself, and consisting principally of a dreary tract of moss, which fills the whole strath from side to side, and stretches up the declivities of the hills. A rich alluvial soil lies at the depth of one, two, and three feet from the surface. The mossy substance itself is qualified with soil; and the acclivitous formation of the ground affords the utmost facility for draining the stagnant water into a stream, which runs along the lower edge of the moss. Yet with all these advantages, so tempting to the agricultural capitalist, this immense and beautiful tract of country lies in a state of what I will call artificial sterility. With the exception of a few roods which have

been newly trenched round Torlundy House, there is no appearance of an attempt being made to relieve this fine tract of soil of its noxious covering of moss. It seems to have been entirely given over to the breeding of game. For this purpose it is, no doubt, well adapted; and, as the shootings are annually let to sportsmen, it may possibly, as a game-preserve, pay Lord Abinger as well as he desires. His Lordship's interest may thus be satisfied, but the land was not made for the landlords alone, but for the sustenance and employment of the people; and the interests of the latter are directly destroyed by the state in which it has pleased Lord Abinger to keep this fine Lochaber property. Torlundy moss is a public nuisance. The cold vapours which continually exhale from it fall in mildew upon the neighbours' corn-fields, and blast in a single night the hopes of a whole year. It artificially deteriorates a climate which is bad enough by nature. It robs man, moreover, of his birthright—his right to toil and live. There is now no excuse for leaving such a waste as Torlundy moss unimproved, for if the proprietor is poor, the Government offers to supply the necessary capital.

The natural fertility of the soil, and its facilities of improvement, are well illustrated by one or two examples in the immediate neighbourhood of Lord Abinger's home-farm. Passing Torlundy, you come to a fine farm called Auchandaul, tenanted by Mr. M'Donald, banker, Fort-William. This farm was let out for cultivation by the Marquis of Huntly, some years previous to the sale of his estates. On condition that the tenant should improve, the Marquis gave a nineteen years' lease, and built a very superior stone fence round the arable part of the farm. Mr. M'Donald, accordingly, commenced to drain, burn, lime, and cultivate his moss. The operation has been completely successful. Finer corn, turnips, and potato crops, are nowhere to be seen than on Auchandaul; and such of them as came under my notice had attained the average ripeness observable at the same season of the year in other parts of the country. Such has been the result of capital and labour combined; but there are one or two examples of the effect of labour alone which are not unworthy of notice. Lord Abinger's shepherd has a small allotment in the heart of the moss; and here also, by mere spade work, the russet hues of the heather have given way to the green and yellow emblems of plenty. Another small allotment is cultivated with great success, so far as good crops are concerned, by a poor woman, whose husband is

a disabled cottar on Auchandaul. This family live in a wretched heather hut on the roadside; and directly opposite, on the hill, stands the gamekeeper's cottage and offices, presenting a most comfortable appearance, and provoking dangerous comparisons with the poor cottar's hut. They seem to say to the passer-by, upon the authority of Lord Abinger, that he who devotes himself to the gratification of aristocratic pleasure will have a good house to live in, and plenty to eat and wear; but that the poor simpleton, who devotes his energies upon the altar of all-hallowing labour, will be doomed to stretch his limbs in damp and falling hovels, to subsist on the poorest fare, and die a hungered pauper. Thus Lord Abinger not only keeps the soil in a state of barrenness while he lives, but the system he pursues is calculated to perpetuate the evil by infusing a hatred of industry into the very nature of the people. Happily, the soil itself is much kinder to the sons of labour than its titled owners. Mrs. M'Diarmid's crops are most exuberant. Her corn and potatoes challenge comparison with any on the farm of Auchandaul; and she can boast a few rows of beans which would be creditable to the best carse land in Scotland. But these cultivated portions of the moss are mere specks compared with the thousands of acres which lie in a state of waste. They merely show what can be done—what stuff the soil is made of—and how easy it would be for the owner to spread fertility and plenty over a poverty-stricken portion of the country. But all these demonstrations are in vain. Lord Abinger has not reclaimed a single acre; nor does he give the smallest indication of an intention to reclaim; and this extraordinary policy is pursued at a time when population is decaying, when thousands are torn yearly from their native glens for sheer want of land to live upon, and when a bad harvest or potato failure plunges the entire Highlands into a state of famine.

A melancholy interest is excited by a few green spots scattered here and there over the moss, and bearing undeniable traces of having once been seats of population and industry. The old furrows are still visible amid the fern; and a grey cairn of stones, with an aged tree or a scraggy thorn near by, points out the homes in which former generations lived and died. Some of these venerable plots still keep the heather and the fern at bay, and the few sheep and cattle which have been sent adrift over the moss are sure to be seen grazing on these spots, or clustered somewhere near them—the very beasts thus doing all that their dumb natures

enable them to teach lordly man the true secret of fertility. Population, after all, is the great improver. Wherever you plant men, there you are sure to have a cultivated soil and a chastened climate. The policy of extirpating the people pursued by the Highland proprietors is literally a policy of barrenness and barbarism.

But the reader will naturally ask, what is to be done with the Lord Abingers who infest and sterilise the Highlands? The question is not very easy to answer, but it is clear that it is one to which a solution must very soon be given. Many would abolish the law of entail, and that measure would certainly be attended with the most cheering results. But it would not do all that is necessary. It would but very indirectly touch such a case as this Lochaber moss. The Marquis of Huntly, as I have stated, had granted an improving lease of Auchandaul previous to the property passing out of his hands. Auchandaul was clearly an experiment; and, had the moss remained in the Marquis's possession, there would doubtless have been many more Auchandauls erected by this time on Torlundy. But the Marquis's bankruptcy put a stop to his improvements, and did to the moss what the abolition of entails would do in the case of many other estates—it brought it into the market. The sequel is known—it fell into the hands of a game-preserving nobleman. How many more Lord Abingers are there in England? And what are we to hope from a measure which will bring estates into the market, to be bought up by a crowd of men who would gladly convert Scotland into moor and forest? Luxuries always sell at a high price. A man who wants an estate for hunting and shooting will be sure to outbid another who wishes to purchase it for the investment and increase of capital. The game laws, therefore, as well as the entail laws, lie at the root of the evil.

I have thus gone over the whole of Lord Abinger's estate; and I may safely leave the reader to adopt his own opinion respecting the manner in which the property is laid off, and the uses to which it is applied. But this letter would be manifestly incomplete, did I not give some more special information regarding the condition of the crofters, and the manner in which they are dealt with by their landlord.

Unachan, which is the most extensive and the most modern group of crofts, is divided into twenty-five allotments, of about five acres each. These allotments are occupied by twenty-three heads of families, two of whom hold two crofts each. Each croft

pays a rent of £5 per annum, with the exception of five, which, on account of being all under moss, or in a state of waste at the time of entry, pay from £2 to £3 of annual rent. It is calculated that, when the crofters entered, there were about two acres in each croft, with the exception already mentioned, ready for growing crops—the remaining three acres being coarse bog. There is a range of hill pasture attached to the allotments, on which the crofters' cows graze in common. The people entered on this ground at Whitsunday, 1835, under a nineteen years' lease, which, together with the printed regulations of the estate, will be found in Appendix No. III., for the leisurely study of such as may be interested in the amenities of Highland landlordism. It would be impossible in one or half a dozen letters to expose the one-sided and injurious character of these documents. I can only indicate a few of their bearings upon the condition of the crofters.

The lease binds each of the crofters "to convert in a proper and sufficient manner at least one half acre of the waste ground and moss into arable land yearly, till the whole [of their respective allotments] is taken in." A careful inspection of the ground convinces me that the great depth and unmanageable nature of the moss renders the performance of this condition entirely impossible to men of such limited means as the crofters. I have already said that the crofts are scattered along the worst and coarsest parts of the estate. At Unachan this is pre-eminently the case. The moss is eight, ten, and twelve feet deep; and this huge mass is filled with the remains of heavy timber, which has once grown on the banks of the Spean, and been washed by the floods in successive tiers along the margin of the river. To bring in ground of this nature would require a series of extensive operations, spread over a large surface, and continued without intermission till fully accomplished. The abortive result of any effort which can be put forth on such land by a few crofters labouring with spades, each on his own little spot, without system, and at such irregular intervals as the necessities of their hand-to-mouth condition will permit, may be easily imagined. The produce of the crofts does not maintain the families of the crofters more than six months of the year. To pay their rents, and procure subsistence, during the remaining part of the year, the crofters must hire themselves out at day-labour. Were they to devote a fifth part of the time to the trenching and draining of the moss which would be required to bring it into an arable condition, their families must starve, they would fall into arrears of rent, and certain ruin would overtake

them. They have been obliged, therefore, to make the best of a bad bargain. They have brought in all the superior and attainable parts of the waste; and the efforts of this kind which have been made, as well as the system of culture pursued, do great credit to their industry and skill. Had Lord Abinger transferred his black-cocks to the swamps of Unachan, and the crofters to the fine soil of Torlundy, the result would have been more creditable to his benevolence and sagacity.

But bad and unpromising as the crofts of Unachan naturally are, they have been rendered still more unproductive to the poor occupants by the rules of the estate. Some of these form part of the leases, and of course were submitted to by the crofters with their eyes open; but some have been introduced at the option of the landlord, and in some instances in direct opposition to the conditions of the leases. When the crofters entered upon Unachan, there were no dwelling-houses, offices, or roads attached to the crofts. They were required to construct these for themselves; and, by way of encouraging them in this good work, it was made a condition of the leases that a crofter "should be entitled to meliorations at his removal for such dwelling-house as he might erect, provided the same is done according to a plan to be approved of by the proprietor or his factor, such allowance not to exceed the sum of £10 sterling." Now, let the reader attend to this. A dwelling-house, built according to the plan approved of by the proprietor or factor of Inverlochy, would cost from £50 to £60. Yet, the whole allowance for a house of this value, in the event of the removal of the tenant, is restricted by the leases to £10! Is it any wonder that under such a system the Highlands should be covered with those miserable bothies which are so offensive to the eye of the stranger? I could only discover two houses in Unachan built with gables and chimneys, and according to the plan of the estate; but what reason have the poor men who erected these to congratulate themselves on the civilised appearance of their premises? Here they are, with only seven years of their leases to run, at the end of which they may be ejected from their property, and sent about their business with only one-fifth its value. Their £60 would have done a great deal to improve their moss. The houses or huts of the other crofters are built in the Highland fashion; but though they would cost upwards of £10, the tenants are entitled to no compensation in the event of their removal. And what renders the matter still more ludicrously one-sided, the crofters are bound by their leases to keep the houses and offices—

built at their own expense, and taken from them without compensation—in a state of good repair, and to leave them in a state of good repair, when they remove or are ejected from the grounds!

The hill attached to the crofts is covered with heath, and, notwithstanding its extent, affords but a sorry bite to the cows. The greater part of it, however, is very improvable ground; and the heather only requires to be burned to clothe it with the sweetest pasture. Moor-burning, however, is strictly prohibited, lest damage might be done to the game. The conditions of the leases permit the heather to be burned during the lawful period; but Lord Abinger oversteps the leases, and prevents all moor-burning except by the gamekeeper. This is the law over all the groups, and the result is most injurious to the domestic comfort of the crofters, whose children literally are deprived of milk in order that the snipes and blackcocks may repose on a warm heather couch.

Crushed and oppressed in these and similar ways, the crofters, it may well be supposed, have a hard lot to endure. Their fare consists of meal, potatoes, milk, and occasionally herrings; and when any blight falls upon their crops, as was the case last year, and will again, to some extent, be the case this year, they are reduced to starvation. Unachan is the only group which enjoys, or rather suffers, under a lease. All the other crofters are tenants-at-will; but there is no special difference in their condition. While the works of the Caledonian Canal were proceeding, convenient employment was afforded to the crofters of Kilmonivaig and Brachlatter. Labour is now more scarce. There are a few pensioners in these hamlets; and at Brachlatter there is an interesting old soldier who told me that he had been servant to Brigadier-General Stuart, in the Peninsular war; and when I told him that my forefathers were buried in the churchyard which contained the dust of his master, the old man's eyes filled with tears, and grasping me by the hand, he told me a long story how he had carried the General on his back when wounded at Ferrol, shared with him the contents of his flask, and remained by his side amid a raking fire from the enemy, till rescued by the approach of the main body of the army.

Perhaps one other fact is necessary to complete this sketch of Lord Abinger and his property. His Lordship is a site-refuser, in a parish containing nearly 3,000 of a population, hundreds of square miles in extent, and containing but two places of worship—the parish church and a Roman Catholic chapel.

LETTER XXVII.

Glen Spean—Primitive Character of the Hamlets—Farming in Common—Poverty of the Club-Tenants—Defective Cultivation—Run-rig—Its injurious Effects—Attachment of the People to the Hamlets—Symptoms of Improvement—The Road-Tax—Mr. Walker and the Mackintosh.

CROSSING Spean Bridge, we are introduced into a more beautiful and better-cultivated tract of country than the mossy waste of Lord Abinger. This is Glen Spean, the river of that name flowing through it. The road takes nearly the same course as the Spean, and commands some very beautiful landscapes, in which the dark, deep pools of the stream, its roaring fall over steep rocks, or its quiet, unmurmuring flow, never fail to awaken admiration. Upon a more narrow inspection of the glen, however, it is found to be much less highly cultivated than it really seems, from the number and beauty of the woods which clothe the course of the river, and extend along the declivities of the hills. The foliage of the trees covers many wastes, and imparts a richer aspect even to the cultivated fields. There are several substantial farm-houses, indicating a high degree of comfort on the part of the occupants; but these are few in number compared with the groups of huts, black and wretched as Highland huts usually are, which appear in various quarters of the glen, each surrounded with their alternate ridges of corn and potato ground.

Glen Spean and its lateral valleys are the property of Mackintosh of Mackintosh, and Walker of Lochtreig—the former a descendant of the old hereditary chiefs of the Mackintoshes, and the latter a successful and gentlemanly Saxon from the borders. The Spean forms the boundaries of the two properties, which extend from Spean Bridge on the west to Loch Laggan on the east. Mr. Walker owns the southern bank of the river, and Mr. Mackintosh the northern. Both estates are laid out partly in large single farms, devoted exclusively to the pasture of sheep, and partly in Highland townships, each of which contains a tract of arable land and a range of hill pasture. The latter, in their mode of culture, their habits of life, and the principles of their social union, are true relics of the olden time, and may now be regarded as peculiar to the Highlands. The people, or club-tenants, as they are called, live to-

gether in small hamlets, containing ten or a dozen families each, who occupy the soil in common, and rear and divide its produce on principles which seek to harmonise individual rights with a community of interest.

I visited seven of these hamlets, bearing the names, respectively, of Bohantin (of which there are two), Bahainie, Achaluoroch, Merligar, Munessie, and Achnacoichan. To describe each of these separately would be a wearisome repetition. I will therefore confine myself to a few facts indicative of their general condition. Each township or hamlet is literally a joint-stock company of farmers, the members of which are bound, jointly and severally, to the landlord for payment of the rent. The arable part of the farm, rented by one of these clubs, or companies, is divided into ridges of equal size; and these, again, are divided equally among the members; for, as the people argue, in order to secure a fair division of the soil, it is necessary to cut it up into small sections, and set aside a section to each family consecutively, till the whole are exhausted. A family will thus have as many as six or seven ridges spread over all parts of the farm, and each of them surrounded by similar stripes belonging to his co-tenants. The hill or pasturage of the farm is held strictly in common. Every member of the hamlet contributes an equal number of the sheep and cattle necessary to stock the hill; a shepherd is employed at the common expense to tend the flocks; and one of the number, in whom the little community has confidence, is appointed annually to sell the stock requiring to be taken to market, the proceeds being applied to the payment of the rent, and the overplus, if any, divided equally among the co-tenants. The rent of the townships vary from £150 to £350 per annum, being at the rate of from £7 to £20 for each tenant. The stock of sheep range from 600 to 2000 on some farms; and each family has seldom less than three milch cows. If any of the tenants proves indolent, wasteful, and unable to pay his share of the rent, his neighbours are secured against loss by his stock; and should he turn out incorrigible, they can expel him from the club: but in the event of any one being disabled, by accident or sickness, so that he cannot cultivate his part of the farm, his co-tenants join together and do it for him gratuitously. The claims of widows in this respect particularly are respected, it being a fixed rule that no widow be put out of the club, but that all lend her a helping hand till her own family are able to take the duty off their shoulders. There is thus in these simple communities an active and benevolent co-

operation, which saves individual members from the calamities which befall poor families in more artificial states of society.

The condition of the club-tenants in Glen Spean, as elsewhere, is much more comfortable than that of the crofters. Nevertheless, I found much poverty prevailing among them, and especially where the shares have been much subdivided. The Bohantins, for example, on the property of the Mackintosh, were originally let to a company of sixteen families, but they are now occupied by double that number. It is not to be supposed that the people can be well off in these circumstances. The produce of the farm is insufficient to maintain the families upon it, and the attention of the tenants is distracted from the cultivation of the soil in a too often fruitless search for day-labour, to eke out their inadequate resources. Driving sheep to the south is a common employment for this class of men, and it takes them away from their farms at the time when their crops are arriving at maturity, and when their undivided attention is most necessary to secure the fruits of their labour from the ravages of a fickle and boisterous climate. Many of the club-tenants on Mr. Walker's property are also very poor. The people in Munessie and Achnacoichan are obliged to sell their fat ewes—a part of the stock which, in some of the other townships, is consumed by the tenants themselves—the fact being, that the poverty of these two hamlets is so great as not to admit of the luxury of butcher-meat. So inadequate, also, is the corn and potato crops, that each family has usually to purchase three or four bolls of meal every year. So true is it, that everywhere in the Highlands there is the same deplorable scarcity of land among the common people. The soil—the great means of life—is monopolised by the graziers. Two sheep-walks in Glen Roy swallow up the ground formerly possessed by nine townships such as I am describing. Hence the subdivision and crowding of families on such of the club-farms as are still permitted to exist.

But yet it must be admitted that these club-farms in Glen Spean are far from having been brought to their utmost degree of productiveness. There is much that is faulty and injurious in the system pursued by the tenants. There are no enclosures between the arable and grazing departments of the farms. Constant herding of the cattle in the summer season is therefore indispensable; and as the sheep must be brought down from the hills in winter, such crops only are grown as can be gathered-in during harvest. There is, consequently, no turnip or green crops

cultivated except potatoes; and as these are eaten by the families, there is a very scanty provision for both cows and sheep in winter. The worst or half-ripened part of the corn is thrown to the cows to prevent them being entirely starved; and though corn is the principal crop, I was informed by an old tenant in Bohantin that he does not bring home more than a boll and a half of meal from the mill annually. There is also a scarcity of manure, which, where there are so many cows, can only be the result of indolence or mismanagement. But the greatest evil of all exists in the injurious system of *run-rig*, to which the people cling with the most suicidal tenacity. A march, from eighteen inches to two feet in breadth, separates one ridge from another, and the waste of land occasioned by so many marches is out of all proportion with the breadth of soil that is cultivated. A great deal of labour is also lost in going back and forward from one ridge to another; and it is impossible that crops, spread over so many detached sections, can be so well attended to as when concentrated in one spot. Yet these are small injuries compared with the obstacles which *run-rig* raises in the way of agricultural improvement. A joint-tenant in one of these townships, however enterprising, and however strongly convinced of the necessity of new modes of culture, finds it impossible to manage his lot in his own way, until he carries his sluggish neighbours along with him. He cannot drain unless they all drain. If they choose to grow certain kinds of crops, and to pursue a certain system of rotation, his ridges are so inseparably mixed up with theirs, that he is compelled to follow their example, however self-ruinous he may feel it to be. Suppose, for instance, that he grows turnips or mangold-wurtzel for his cows on the ridges from which old habit teaches his fellow-tenants to take a second or a third crop of oats, what is the result? They cut down their corn in September, and his green crop is left exposed to the common destruction of the cows, which, for want of anything better, must be brought down to graze on the stubble. The experiment, therefore, is never made, and the minds of his co-tenants remain impervious to the idea of improvement, because the golden advantages to be reaped from it are never exhibited.

That *run-rig* secures an equal division of good and bad soil among the co-tenants is an absurd imagination, wholly inconsistent with fact. The tenants at Bahainnie occupy soil entirely different in its qualities from the soil divided among the tenants at Achaluoroch and Merligar; yet these people are on the same farm,

and pay an equal share of the rent. Even on such a farm as the Bohantins, where the arable ground is all in the same place, the rig system fails to secure the nice adjustment which it is supposed to do. There are sixteen tenants in each of the two hamlets, and each ridge may be eighteen or twenty feet wide. What possible chance is there that the sixteenth rig will be as good as the first?

By dividing the arable ground into separate and distinct lots, an equally just partition of the soil would be effected as by cutting it up into ridges. And if a tenant should get a worse lot than his neighbours, there it is before you. The degree of its inferiority may be estimated, and deducted with all desirable exactness, in pounds, shillings, and pence, from the tenant's share of the rent.

There appears to be an idea in the minds of the people that the abolition of *run-rig* involves the destruction of their hamlets, and ultimately their own clearance from the soil. The practice of some landlords has given too reasonable grounds for this suspicion. To abolish *run-rig* they have in some instances deemed it necessary to extirpate the people. But I cannot perceive in these cases any essential connexion between the disease and the remedy. The object of all true reform is to conserve what is good, to destroy only what is bad, in old systems; and in the Highland hamlet there is much to approve and admire. The fervid tenacity with which the Highland people cling to these old seats of population is worthy of sympathy and respect. They are the dwelling-places of their fathers and grandfathers—the homes of their childhood—the scenes of their loves and their joys. They are hallowed by the warm emotions of the past, and are not inconsistent with the wants and exigencies of the present. They are admirably adapted to dissipate the loneliness of rural life, and to preserve the enjoyments of society and intercourse amid the dreary solitudes of a mountain land. They are generally placed in picturesque situations. The green sward stretches to their thresholds; and from the windows of the cots the old patriarchs of the hamlet may look out upon the merry gambols of the youngsters, and the joyous labours of the haymakers. In short, a little more taste and cleanliness is all that is requisite to render these little communities the finest combination of rural beauty and simplicity to be found in any country in the world. By all means, then, let them be preserved. There is little danger of any of the crofts being so far removed from the hamlets as to give any serious inconvenience to the cultivators;

and the union of the cottages will still be a symbol of that community of interest with which their inmates have agreed to occupy and stock the hills. For with the pastoral department of their industry no fault can be found. It is only by some such system of co-operation that a poor but numerous peasantry can take possession of immense tracts of mountain pasture; and there is nothing to hinder a stock of sheep belonging to a community of small farmers from being as well managed and as productive as a stock which is the property of one large monopolising grazier.

A creditable spirit of improvement is manifest among the people in some of these hamlets. At Bahainnie the soil is wet and mossy. The tenants, however, drained it at their own expense some years ago, and are now reclaiming considerable tracts of moss. Many of the people on this farm, particularly the young men, are also convinced of the disadvantages of *run-rig;* but the fears and prejudices of a few, aided by the depressing influence of a landlord who takes no interest in his people, and refuses to lay out any expense, prevent the introduction of any better and more enlightened mode. The Mackintosh is a hard, and, what is even worse, he is an indifferent proprietor. Last Martinmas the Bahainnie people asked permission to retain £50 of the rent due, as a loan, till Whitsunday, for the purpose of buying meal for their families as a substitute for the potatoes destroyed by the blight; but this representative of an ancient line peremptorily refused the reasonable request, alleging as his excuse that he had to do so much for the poor that he could give no indulgence to his tenants. He might as well have said that he had his grocer's bill to pay, for he is as much bound to contribute his share to the maintenance of the poor as to discharge any other civil debt. The obligations of justice do not supersede, though they ought to precede, the duties of generosity.

The road-tax presses very unjustly on the Highland townships. Each family is assessed as if they were the sole occupants of the farm. Thus sixteen families in one of the Glen Spean townships pay £2 8s. of road-money, and at the same time are obliged to make and repair the roads to their hamlets. It is such imposts that breed Rebecca riots in Wales; but Donald bears fleecing as dumbly as his own sheep.

Mr. Walker is attempting to abolish *run-rig*, and to introduce a plan of separate allotments. He proposes to diminish the holdings of some of the tenants, and has on this account raised an op-

position to his scheme, which it may require time and patience to overcome. He seems to be a kind-hearted gentleman, who wishes to improve the condition of the people without resorting to cruel and repulsive methods. He resides for two or three months every year at Lochtreig, and is characterised by his uniform liberality to the poor, both on his own and neighbouring properties. Mackintosh is said not to have visited Glen Spean during the last fifteen years, though a pretty constant resident in a different quarter of the same county; and his factor is never seen except on rent-day. Several oak plantations on the estate are literally going to wreck for want of thinning and cleaning, and the most promising facilities of improvement are neglected. The population is consequently poor, unemployed, and dispirited.

LETTER XXVIII.

Want of Activity in Reaping the Crops—Wetness of the Climate—The Highlands best fitted for Green Crops—The Small Native Farmers the proper Agents of Improvement—Steam Communication between Loch Eil and the Mersey—Lean and Fat Sheep—Grievances of Fort-William—A Political Metamorphosis—Self-commemoration.

A WET and variable climate has failed to impress upon the Highland farmers the necessity of using the utmost activity and expedition in cutting and gathering-in their crops. Corn is allowed to stand long after it is ripe; and when reaping is commenced, it proceeds with very slow and languid steps. If the people basked under the steady warmth of an Italian sky, they could not be more dilatory in their harvest operations. This singular apathy is excused in some instances by a positive want of people. The population, thinned by the policy of the lairds, becomes still more sparse in harvest, when great numbers flock to the Lowlands, attracted by the higher remuneration which is there given for their labour. The result is, that hands cannot be got by the farmers in Highland districts, and they are obliged to cut down the grain in small parcels by their own hired servants, till the return of the reapers from the south enables them to secure the remainder of their weather-beaten crops. The loss occasioned by this system

is immense. The corn is scattered, mildewed, and destroyed by the wind, rain, and frost, with which these elevated regions are usually visited towards the middle and end of September. When the oats are taken to the mill, the produce in meal, of course, is meagre in the extreme; and then nothing is heard but exclamations against the badness of the soil and climate, which would be much more just if directed against the cultivators of the land themselves.

The same complaints are made in spring. Sowing is retarded by the wetness of the soil, for which the climate is also blamed. But if the fields were well drained, and the cold, wet mosses reclaimed, not only would the climate itself become more favourable, but the land would be ready much earlier, even in the worst seasons, for the reception of the seed. It is impossible to deny the wetness of the climate. This is an obvious and an unfortunate fact, which must always militate more or less against the fertility of the Highland soil. But this disadvantage should only induce man to exert himself the more, to arm himself at all points, and to put in operation those artificial resources by which he can adapt himself to the vicissitudes, and sometimes even conquer the greatest difficulties, of nature. The draining of the soil, the planting of trees, and the increase of population, would tend infallibly to modify and improve the climate; and when by these means it had been brought to its highest point of perfection, the industry of the country might assume the form for which its natural qualities render it best adapted. My own opinion is, that these high grounds would be found better fitted for green than for white crops. The present system of cultivation is marked by two opposite extremes. You have either large sheep-farms, in which the fertile straths and barren mountains are thrown into one general and indiscriminate range of pasture, or you have small crofts, which are covered with an almost unintermitting succession of white crop. Fill the bottom of the valleys with a greater profusion of green crops, with which to fatten the sheep and cattle reared on the mountains, and you will have a system more consonant with nature, and much more likely to develop the resources of the Highlands than either of these extremes.

If I am at all right in this opinion, it is to the Highland people —such people as occupy the townships described in the last letter —that we must look for a thorough and profitable occupation of the Highlands. The large graziers are generally men who have

arable farms in the south, to which they convey their flocks to be fattened; or, if not south country farmers, their frequent absence at markets in all parts of the kingdom render them incapable of giving that close attention to their farms which the cultivation of crops renders indispensable. They are, consequently, opposed to the culture of the Highland soil, and are always loud in their exclamations against the impracticability of the climate. It is different with the small native farmers. They have been accustomed from their infancy to combine a pastoral with an agricultural life. The necessities of their families demand the cultivation of every arable acre of the soil; and all their hopes and interests are centered in the complete development of the capabilities of the Highlands. Let them be more perfectly instructed in the art of agriculture, teach them how to fatten their own sheep and cattle, open up communication between their secluded valleys and the great seats of population, and I venture to predict that a tide of prosperity will flow over the Highlands, which is altogether unattainable through the agency of any other class of men.

Fort-William offers a splendid outlet for stock fattened in Glen Spean and its neighbouring valleys; and it is not unworthy of notice, that a steamer has been advertised this last season to sail at regular intervals from Loch Eil to the Mersey. The Finn MacCoul, which has plied for some years between Galloway and Lancashire, is the vessel which has the honour of opening this new communication between the Highlands and the manufacturing districts of England. I am unable to give an account of any more than her first trip. Her cargo consisted principally of seventy scores of sheep, which had been purchased in Glen Spean by Mr. Rodger, an extensive farmer in Wigtonshire. This fine flock would be fed for some time on turnips, on Mr. Rodger's farm of Penkill, near Garliestown, and, when fattened, would be conveyed to the Liverpool market. The Finn MacCoul did not succeed, therefore, in getting a cargo direct to Liverpool on her first trip; and any one who takes the trouble to travel through the extensive tract of country between Fort-William and Loch Laggan will have little difficulty in finding the real secret of the failure. Thousands of acres are lying in moss, or in a state of sheer waste, or in almost equally unprofitable pasture, which, if cultivated, would grow as luxuriant crops of turnips as any other part of Scotland. Were these wastes turned to proper account, a large proportion of the sheep reared on the mountains might be fattened in the valleys

immediately adjacent, and as a necessary consequence, the Highland farmers would receive an addition to their present returns equivalent to the difference between the price of lean, and that of fat sheep. The increase of money which would thus be brought into the Highlands, would be divided among labourers, farmers, and proprietors; and a nation of consumers would also partake largely in the common benefit, for the supply of mutton and other farm produce offered for their use would be greatly augmented. But the Highland landlords prevent all this circulation of money and interchange of advantages. To please their fancies, the land must lie in a state of waste, the sheep must grow lean on grass and heather, and at last be sold at lean prices to some south country farmer, who pockets as much for two or three months of turnip-feeding as the Highland farmer gets for the keep and trouble of as many years! Is there any wonder that under such a state of things there should be little circulation of money in the Highlands, and that the people should be poor and famine-stricken?

This ruinous system has a fatal influence on the prosperity of the Highland towns, and no place suffers more acutely from it than Fort-William. Situated in the centre of a vast sheep and cattle country, and commanding, by means of the Caledonian Canal and the western ocean, direct and rapid communication with the most secluded valleys on the one hand, and the most crowded seats of population and manufactures on the other, this village might soon become a vast depôt for the exchange and transmission of the produce peculiar to both. But as there is little stock prepared for market in the neighbourhood, there is no demand for vessels to convey it, nor for merchants and agents to effect the exchange. The flocks of lean sheep reared on the surrounding hills are sent to the south in droves, and the most retired routes are preferred. No labourers are employed in reclaiming the adjoining tracts of waste land. There is, consequently, no expenditure of wages, and no demand for goods of local manufacture. Every channel of prosperity is cut off, and, instead of increasing daily in wealth and population, Fort-William pines in the middle of an artificial wilderness. It is not even allowed room enough for the small trade which it possesses. The village is the property of Sir Duncan Cameron, of Fassifern. This old gentleman went to bed one night a Whig, and rose next morning a Tory; and because the feuars in the village could not undergo an equally rapid metamorphosis, he has subjected them to petty annoyance ever since. No new feus can be obtained

for love or money. When a person wishes to build, he must expend as much in purchasing old houses as would nearly suffice to put up the new erection; and, of course, as old houses are thus demolished, the lower classes of the population are crammed into murkier and more crowded dens. From this suffocating process there is no escape; for while Sir Duncan presses the unfortunate villagers in the centre, the Government and Lochiel pepper them on each flank. The former refuses to yield an inch of its ground, though the necessity of a fort does not seem in these days very urgent; and the latter cannot give a foot of his, because it is fettered under a deed of entail.* Both have a certain excuse, but Sir Duncan has literally none; and with an admirable consciousness that he will leave behind him no affectionate memorial in the hearts of the people, this provident old chieftain is employed, like Absalom of old, in erecting to himself a monument of stone.

LETTER XXIX.

Ardgower—Model Crofts—Colonel M'Lean—His Policy—A Sick Cottar—The Folly of Niggardly Relief—Strontian—Diminution of the Crofts—The Lead Mines—Extensive Woods—Pirn Factory at Salen—Herring Fishing—Great Amount of Reclaimable Soil.

Loch Linnhe and Loch Eil separate the estate of Ardgower, possessed by Colonel M'Lean, from the properties described in the

* The act, 10th of George III., c. 57, permits heirs of entail to grant building-leases for ninety-nine years; but restrictions are attached to this provision which render it of little practical avail. It is not allowed to grant more than five acres to any one person, and the grant must contain a condition that the lease shall be null and void if one dwelling-house at least, not under the value of £10 sterling, be not built within the space of ten years from the date of the lease for each one half acre of ground comprehended in the lease, and that the said houses shall be kept in good, tenantable, and sufficient repair. There is an insuperable objection, moreover, in Scotland to leasehold property, inasmuch as money cannot be borrowed upon it. There are few who will lay out money in building houses which are to revert to the proprietor at a limited period, even though that should be ninety-nine years. The injuries inflicted upon the soil by entails are well-known: their evil effects upon towns are equally oppressive and galling.

three last letters. My intention was to land if possible in Mull, before returning from my tour. I therefore crossed Loch Linnhe at Coran ferry, intending to pass through Ardgower and Ardnamurchan to Salen, where I might take a boat to Tobermory.

Ardgower House stands at a little distance from the ferry, and, close by the road which passes round the outside of the grounds, attention is attracted to a row of cottages, with allotments of land attached to each, which, in point of neatness, comfort, and every mark of successful industry, infinitely transcend anything of the same kind which I had seen in other parts of the Highlands. The cottages consist of two apartments—or, as they are called in Scotland, "a but and a ben;" they are lighted by glass windows; the smoke is carried up through stone chimneys in the usual civilised fashion; the outsides are very cleanly whitewashed; and little gardens, filled with vegetables, and neatly fenced, are laid out in front; while the cowhouses, dungheaps, and stackyards, are placed behind the cottages. The crofts are partly two acres, and partly four acres in extent. The occupiers of the first class keep one cow; those of the latter class generally keep two; but when the "old standards," as the tenants of long standing are called, die out, their successors are obliged to keep only one. It is a common fault among the Highland crofters to keep more cows than they can feed, than which nothing can be more unprofitable, as one good well-fed cow is better for all family purposes than half-a-dozen starved ones. By reducing the number, the Colonel expects to improve the feeding and the quality of his crofters' cows; and this is an intention which has been already to some extent realised. The cattle, and, in fact, everything else about the model-crofts to which I allude, are in a very superior condition, and give an unanswerable reply to those who are always exclaiming against the inveterate indolence and incorrigible obstinacy of the Highlanders. Colonel M'Lean has improved the condition of his people, and the same means which have been successful at Ardgower will be successful everywhere. The Colonel is a disciplinarian. He carries the spirit of a soldier into the peaceful enterprises of a country life. The size, the plan, and the construction of his cottages are announced to his crofters with the energy and precision with which a military chief would direct an attack upon the enemy, or the formation of a line of intrenchments. Nor is he guilty of the Egyptian tyranny of exacting bricks without straw. He does not, like some of his neighbours, require his poor tenants to do things which he

knows to be impossible. While he commands, he supplies the means of obedience. He provides the materials of improvement; and the people, awed by his orders, and inspirited by his example, fall readily into plans which they perceive to be no less beneficial to themselves than pleasing and satisfactory to their landlord. There is also another cause to which the improved aspect of things at Ardgower may be traced. The Colonel gives work to the crofters at fifteen-pence a-day as often as they choose to go for it. There is thus no excuse for idleness. Every man, in the intervals allowed him from his croft, gets employment within a few minutes' walk of his own door, and at wages which, however small they may seem in Lowland estimation, are of the highest consequence to a Highland labourer. The Ardgower crofters have always the means of earning their bread. They are always above the reach of despair—that nurse of indolence and of beggary. Apply the same prescription over the Highlands generally, and the gratifying results which are exhibited here on a small scale will become universal.

In one respect we cannot approve of Colonel M'Lean's policy. He has rooted out several families from his estate for no ostensible reason except their adherence to the Free Church. A little compulsion in matters affecting the cultivation of the soil and the construction of cottages may not only be forgiven, but may even be highly laudable, on the part of a Highland landlord; but when he presumes to domineer over the conscience, he obtrudes into a domain which he has no right to enter, and where he is powerful only to oppress or pollute. Colonel M'Lean cannot make conversions by such a course. The poor men who left the homes where they had long lived so happily under him and his predecessor, rather than abandon their religious convictions, prove how powerless he is over the conscience. Of these he has made martyrs, and of some who remain upon his estate he may possibly have made hypocrites; but this is the utmost extent of his achievements in the character of a religious persecutor.

I did not find the crofters in other parts of the Ardgower estate in so good a condition as in the vicinity of the mansion-house. There is little to distinguish the huts and subsistence of the cottars and crofters on the neighbouring farm of Sligachan from those of the same classes in other parts of the Highlands. The cottars get from 1s. to 1s. 2d. for a day's work. One of these poor men, whom I visited, has been for a long time in bad health, and is still able to do but very little work. He has a wife and four young

children, and the only aid he receives is 21lbs. of meal and 4d. in money weekly from the relief committee. He is in the prime of life, and, under the influence of proper restoratives, I have no doubt he would speedily recover. But his only food being oatmeal, he languishes from day to day without deriving any material accession of strength. In this case we have a striking example of the folly of a niggardly system of relief. This man, being sick and disabled, is entitled to an adequate allowance from the parish. But it does not appear that the parish board does anything for him. It is the "relief committee" from which he says he gets the meal, and which I take to be the committee in connection with the Central Relief Board. This committee cannot be blamed for giving too little relief; for, as the man has a legal claim upon the parish for necessary sustentation, they were not entitled to have given him anything. The parochial board is the real culprit. By its neglect or its greed, this poor man is kept pining in a disabled state much longer than would be necessary for his recovery under an adequate and suitable provision, and may possibly sink altogether, in which case his family will become permanent burdens. And thus, in a thousand instances, the cheese-paring economy of the poor's-boards defeats itself, and entails upon the unlucky ratepayers a much heavier burden than would have fallen on them under a more generous system.

After passing through several miles of a country of singularly wild and savage character, I arrived at length at Loch Sunart, on the shore of which is Strontian, the seat of Sir James Riddell. The Strontian district of Ardnamurchan contains a population of 940, consisting chiefly of the families of small crofters, whose huts and allotments are crowded along the side of a steep and barren hill. The people are extremely poor, and the digging and manuring of their crofts must be a task of almost superhuman drudgery. The bottom of the strath, of which the hill occupied by the crofters forms one of the sides, has a soil of considerable depth and fertility. A stream flows through the midst of it, and on the opposite side of it stands the house of Drumintorran, a fine farm, pasturing 5000 sheep. The stream was formerly the march between this farm and the land occupied by the crofters, who consequently enjoyed the advantage of the good level soil along the bank of the stream. Some time ago, however, an excambion took place between Sir James and the farmer of Drumintorran, by which the latter was put in possession of both sides of the river, and the crofters accordingly were pressed up

the side of the hill. Everywhere the invariable practice of late years has been to diminish the breadth of soil in possession of the people; but, if the Highlands are to be saved from the most deplorable evils, this policy must now be exactly reversed. The lead mines of Strontian have been the means of concentrating a greater population on this spot than could otherwise have existed. But they form at the best a very precarious source of employment. At the time of my visit forty or fifty men were employed in them; but the manager had given out that he would shortly require about 200. He complains, however, that the Highlanders are bad workers, and threatens to bring in a colony of Irish! There are about 300 acres of moss in the neighbourhood of the crofts that might be reclaimed; and along the Loch side I observed considerable plots of waste, which bore marks of having been formerly cultivated. The last are chiefly included in the farm of Drumintorran; but, to the credit of the tenant, I must observe that he is actuated by no such deadly hostility to cultivation as the sheep-farmers generally in the north. He grows turnips extensively, and is proposing to turn his attention to the fattening of bullocks.

The factor on this estate is an active and intelligent man; and I was glad to learn that he had written to Mr. Baird, the secretary of the Glasgow Board, recommending a measure which I have frequently insisted upon in the course of these letters—namely, that the people set to work by the Board be paid in money instead of meal. This gentleman also recommends that the proprietors should pay one-third of the outlay upon public works undertaken by the Board.

The extensive woods on the estate of Ardnamurchan afford a considerable amount of employment to the people. All along the side of Loch Sunart, and round the skirts of the parish generally, the sides of the hills are clothed with a profusion of birch, oak, and other natural trees. Wood-cutting is never at an end; for, when the foresters have concluded their work in one place, it is time to begin somewhere else. To promote the consumption of birch, which is the most plentiful description of timber, a pirn manufactory has been established at Salen, which works up about 1,400 tons of wood yearly. The price paid to the proprietor is 7s. 6d. per ton, laid down at the mill-door. The pirns are cut by means of machinery; but, in addition to a few men, there are twenty-six boys employed in the factory, the greater part of whom are des-

titutes from Glasgow, who are fed and clothed in return for their labour. It is said that 75,000 pirns are made daily.

The herring-fishing is pretty good this season in Loch Moidart. The men will clear about £5 each; but some have bought nets this year, which will swallow up the whole of their earnings. There is a great want of boats and nets; and as the young women are idle, it would be very advantageous, both to them and the people in general, if some suitable description of industry, such as the spinning of hemp and the manufacture of fishing-nets, was introduced and encouraged among them.

During the distress consequent upon the loss of last year's potatoes, employment was given to the people in reclaiming waste land, by means of a loan obtained by Sir James Riddell under the Drainage Act. About sixty or seventy hands were engaged in trenching and draining on the club-farm of Acharacle; and a number were also employed in the same way at the Kirkton. The rate of wages was from 1s. to 1s. 6d. per day. Sir James proposes to resume similar operations during the coming season; and, from all I can observe or learn, there is a great deal of scope for the profitable outlay of capital upon the soil. That the reader may have more than my testimony upon this point, I request his attention to the statements of an authentic and impartial authority. In the New Statistical Account there is an able and elaborate description of Ardnamurchan, and under the head of "Moss Flats" the following information is given:—

"At the west end of Lochshiel, and in close neighbourhood, there are three extensive flats of this description. The Moss of Kinkaw, extending from the west end of that lake to the sea shore, and along the eastern bank of the river Shiel, is, according to an old survey of Sir Alexander Murray, of Stanhope, fully seven square miles in area. Another, the moss of Achaneilein, with a mean breadth apparently of about three-fourths of a mile, stretches along the south side of Lochshiel for upwards of five miles from near the eastern boundary of the first. The greater part of both is a perfect quagmire, or quaking moss of unknown depth, through which progress can only be made by leaping from one tuft of stunted heather and coarse grass to another; but many hundred acres of both, especially along the margin of the lake and the sea-shore, are highly improvable; the moss, only two or three feet deep, reposing upon a bed of sand. Right opposite to the Moss of Achaneilein, on the north or Moidart side of Lochshiel, is situated the Moss of Langal, a plain of 679 acres, all capable, at a moderate expense, of being converted into highly-productive arable soil. The moss rarely exceeds three or four feet in depth; the substratum is sand, which, when brought to the surface in trenching, soon decomposes the peat. With the help of a marly shell sand, found in considerable quantities in the bed of the river Shiel, at the western end of this moss, and some sea-ware, good crops

of potatoes have been raised, although the ground was not broke up until the previous winter. On the hill-slopes to the eastward, there are 400 acres of the same description, equally susceptible of improvement."

The fine arable fields on the farm of Drumintorran were reclaimed from mosses similar to the above, some of which were as much as nine feet in depth. They were drained, trenched, and limed, at an expense of £13 5s. per English acre; and upon being planted with potatoes for the first crop, yielded twenty returns. In connexion with the above on "Moss Flats," read the following lines on the "Sands of Kintra":—

"West of the great moss flat of Kintra, situated between the sea and Lochshiel, and bounding the flat in that direction, extends the beach or sands of Kintra. This is an expanse not less than two miles square, nearly circular in form, over which the sea flows only at high water, and to no great depth, consisting of fine light-coloured sand, the debris of primitive rocks, mixed with large proportions of shell-sand, decomposed land and marine plants, some clay, and doubtlessly a great quantity of animal matter derived from the mussels, cockles, and other shell-fish with which it abounds. The sea being admitted by a narrow inlet, seems very capable of exclusion by an embankment; the streams from inland are equally susceptible of being collected into a canal for conveyance of materials to and from the very margin of the great moss. The substance of the moss and the sands affording the best manure for each other, seem placed by nature in juxtaposition for mutual improvement, and present an inviting field for the investiture of great capital."

When these mosses and beaches have been reclaimed, and are covered with luxuriant crops, as I confidently expect them one day to be, posterity will be amazed at the ignorance and folly of the generation which allowed such splendid resources to lie waste, while the population was increasing yearly in numbers and in destitution.

LETTER XXX.

Salen—A Storm—Highland Mode of Fulling Cloth—Elements of a New Arcadia—Tobermory—The Poor in their own Houses—Ejectment of Cottars—Accumulation of Misery in Towns and Villages—Massacre of the Innocents.

It was late at night when I arrived at Salen, a small scattered hamlet, situated at the head of one of the creeks of Loch Sunart. I found lodging in a little public-house, and had the mortifica-

tion of learning from the landlord, that the packet which sails weekly between Salen and Tobermory had left the creek that forenoon. My only plan was to pass down the side of the Loch next morning to a place called Laggan, where I would find a boat and rowers to take me across to Mull. Comforting myself with this assurance, I went to rest, but long before day-break, my slumbers were disturbed by a continuous roar, like the rattle of a railway train, and having its head-quarters somewhere about the chimney-top. Day-light revealed a singularly wild and tempestuous scene. The wind blew up the creek with terrific violence, driving the torrents of rain before it like sheets of smoke, and throwing the waters of the Loch into frightful commotion. To leave the house seemed for that day to be impossible, and so I resigned myself, in not the best humour, to the penance of confinement in a room some eight feet by six, in one of the bleakest and most solitary spots it is possible to conceive.

One single incident alone occurred to break the monotony of that dreary day, and as it throws some light upon the customs and industry of the people, I will give my readers the benefit of it. While I was pacing up and down my room, a wild ditty, sung by two or three voices at the other end of a long passage, broke upon my ear. It reminded me of the chorus sometimes sung by sailors when lifting their anchor, and the opening and shutting of the door of the apartment from which it proceeded, had the effect of modulating the sound, as if it had been wafted by the wind across the bosom of the sea. For a while I stood wondering what it could be, till at length the mistress of the house entered my room, and having mentioned the matter, I was kindly invited to satisfy my curiosity by paying a visit to the kitchen. Glad of an opportunity of extending my acquaintanceship, I proceeded along the passage and found myself introduced to a novel and motley scene. The apartment was characterised by all the smoke and disorder of a Highland kitchen. An old woman, of most *matriarchal* appearance, rested upon a bed; the remainder of the company were young people of both sexes, seated on stools, chests, and bundles of sticks, round the sides of the apartment, while the centre of the floor was occupied by a group of females employed in fulling cloth, and singing Gaelic airs to their work. The whole scene was worthy of the pencil of a Hogarth, but the most substantial part of it was the process of fulling, which was certainly new to me. A roll of thick blanketing was laid down in the middle of

the floor upon a frame of wicker-work. Two young women seated themselves on each side of it, facing each other, and at such a distance as to allow their feet to rest upon the cloth. Another female stood at the end, for the purpose of turning the roll, and keeping it in a proper state of moisture. When everything was ready, the leader of the band started her song, in which all the others joined, beating time with their feet upon the cloth, and growing in fervour as they became heated with the exercise. When wearied with this double labour of the voice and the feet, they rose from their seats, and a new band assumed the task, till the elderly matron announced that the cloth was sufficiently fulled. The wild shrill airs that were sung, coupled with the general aspect of the place, gave a truly savage character to the scene, and reminded me of some of Catlin's descriptions of the customs of the American Indians. The old woman informed me that such was exactly the way in which cloth was fulled in her young days, and probably at no very distant period, the practice might be common over the whole of the rural districts of Scotland. It forms, no doubt, a good fireside amusement; the young people seemed very fond of it: but it appeared to me to be incompatible with the comfort and cleanliness which should reign in a kitchen, and undoubtedly it is a slow and laborious process compared with the fulling-mills. The toil expended by the Highland women in this fashion, from which their sisters in the South are relieved by machinery, would do a great deal to put their houses in order, of which they stand much in need.

Next morning dawned in splendour. Loch Sunart, as if exhausted by the turmoil of the previous day, lay calm and motionless, mirroring in its glassy bosom the blue sky and the overhanging rocks and trees. For an instant a thin vapoury cloud would pass between the sun and the earth, and fall in light dewy showers, like the momentary blush which steals over a maiden's cheek and vanishes in tears. My road lay through a forest of natural wood, the openings of which afforded sweet glimpses of the Loch; and upon entering the more fertile glades, I was frequently surprised to find myself in the presence of a group of cottages, with plots of corn ground, enclosed from the wood by small wicker fences. Here might be seen the shepherd's hook; here also was the forest shade, the gurgling stream, and the woolly flock. I fancied to myself that if Arcadian bliss could be realised on earth, it might be here. The Highlands offer the most splendid attractions

to that class of improvers who delight in developing the poetry and romance of rural life. The external formation of the country affords the best possible opportunities for embellishment and effect; the cottages might be placed in the most beautiful and fantastic situations; the imagination of the people themselves is poetical, and would readily strike in with any scheme of improvement which was poetical in its tendencies. If the work of Highland regeneration be ever taken up with vigour and earnestness, the Highlands, without hyperbole, may become the most enchanting country, and the Highlanders the finest peasantry in the world.

On arriving at the ferry, I found that the boatmen had gone to the sheep-smearing at Glenbeg, some mile or two further down the Loch. To secure their services I should have sent them notice the previous night. I pushed on to Glenbeg, where I was at length supplied with a boat and three stout rowers, and after two hours' sailing was landed safely at Tobermory, the capital of Mull. Having much less time to spend in Mull than I had intended, and hearing that the families of cottars, ejected from the interior of the island, were taking up their abode almost daily in the village, I resolved to visit as many of the poor in their own houses as possible, as the best means of acquiring correct information; and in this duty I had the good fortune to be accompanied by a friend who well knew the condition of the people.

The first house we visited was occupied by a tailor and his family. His wife and four young children were sitting round the hearth. The poor woman told me that she had had to borrow a little meal in the morning for the children, and a halfpenny roll was all that her husband had eaten that day. The man himself at length came in. He was very emaciated in appearance, and so exhausted with hunger and despair that it was with difficulty he could articulate his words. He confirmed his wife's tale of want, and told us that he had just been down to his grocer, who refused to give him any provisions on credit, though he owed him nothing. He had several small debts due to him, but could not get payment on account of the poverty into which his customers have been thrown by the potato failure. Though this family were evidently suffering great privations, the house had some appearance of comfort, and there were many articles of furniture in it—two timepieces, for example—which, in a large town, would be deemed inconsistent with complaints of personal distress. But there are no pawnbrokers in villages like Tobermory; furniture and clothing are not convertible

into bread; and the very circumstances which elsewhere might have thrown some suspicion upon the poor man's statements formed the strongest proof of his pitiable condition. Here was a tradesman of the more respectable class, reduced suddenly to a state of starvation, unable to obtain present, or payment for past work.

The next house we entered was a miserable den, with no aperture for the admission of light except the door, and so full of smoke that a candle lighted when we went in would scarcely burn. The inmate, an old woman, informed us that she had received 5 lbs. of meal weekly from the relief committee, but this supply had been stopped five weeks before. She had been refused parochial relief on the ground that she had an able-bodied son; but this son, as the old woman told us, has a family himself, lives at a great distance from Tobermory, and in the present difficulties of the country may probably need relief himself. The inspector and parochial board of Tobermory must surely have known that the poor-law does not admit relief to be denied on any grounds whatever to a person who is actually destitute of the means of life. If they considered this poor woman's son able to support her, the law gave them ample recourse against him; and it was their duty to have given her a sufficient aliment, and prosecuted the son for reimbursement. But they throw the onus of compelling relatives upon the poor themselves, who have none to instruct or befriend them; and thus the law is evaded by the very parties appointed to administer it.

I next visited an old bedrid woman, seventy years of age, who had been blind for nineteen years. She had lived for forty years in the parish of Kilfinichen, was married, and had a family, but her husband and children are all dead. She received no parochial relief till the last two years. Her allowance the first year was 25s., which has been raised to £4. She lived with a niece, who is a widow, with two young children, and has nothing but her own industry to support her. This niece was ejected from the farm of Tiroran, on the estate of Lochbuie, last summer. She put up a small tent outside, in which she and her children caught measles, and her neighbours then took pity upon her, and gave her refuge. When she recovered, she came in to Tobermory, and rented a room, for which she pays 30s. In the meantime the old blind woman was put into the end of the house where the cow was kept, with no one to tend her, and the rain pouring down through the

roof. The factor had always promised to make provision for her; but, when the niece saw that nothing was doing, she brought her to her house at Tobermory. She had been there a month, and no aliment had been sent. The niece supposes that she must go all the way to Tiroran for it, a distance of thirty-six or thirty-eight miles; but she can scarcely leave the old woman, who can do nothing whatever for herself. The factor pretended that the neighbours were opposed to the niece being allowed to stop on the farm; but she showed me a certificate, signed by the whole of the tenants, giving her an excellent character, and testifying that her husband had held lands, and that she herself was an occupier for four years after his death. Latterly she supported herself by growing potatoes upon land given her by her neighbours, and by providing nets to a boat's crew, for the use of which she obtained a half-share of the fish caught. But all her old means of living have been overturned by her ejection; and with the world to begin anew, two children to feed, and this old aunt to look after, it is easy to conceive what a severe struggle she must have for existence.

In the same parish, the families of four cottars had been recently ejected from the farm of Ardvergnish, and two of these had taken refuge in Tobermory. I went to see them. They had taken two empty rooms in the upper flat of a back house. In one of the families there were ten children, several of whom were in the room when I entered. The mother, a woman of very respectable appearance, was making thin porridge for their supper; they had got a similar meal in the morning, and this was their whole diet. The children were very ragged, almost naked, and on this account they could not go to the Gaelic School, though admission had been offered them free of charge. In the other family there were a wife and two young children. The rooms were very bare of furniture, containing only a few things which they had carried with them over the mountains. The little infant in the second family was sleeping on the floor. The woman said that her husband had been working some time in Glasgow, that he came home last summer ill with small-pox, and had scarcely recovered when this new disaster was prepared for him. The farm on which these families lived as cottars was let at Whitsunday, soon after which time they were ejected, and their cottages pulled to the ground. For six weeks they lived in a tent during the day, but as many as could be accommodated were provided with beds by the neighbours at night. The cold of winter, however,

at length drove them out: one family had gone to Greenock, another was living with relatives, and two, as we have seen, sought shelter in Tobermory. Both of the men, at the time of my visit, were absent at the herring fishing. As soon as they had seen their families safely housed, they trudged away back to Kilfinichen, to make the most of the fishing season, which had been so rudely and cruelly interrupted by their ejectment.

The results of these evictions, in a general point of view, are injurious in the extreme. They accumulate poverty and destitution in heaps. Instead of the poor being spread over their respective parishes, they are thrown together in villages, where there is no property, no agency, no resources adequate to cope with their necessities, and where, upon any unusual pressure, there is nothing but the most appalling and unmanageable destitution. The population of Tobermory has increased, in a short time, from a few families to 1,400 souls; and this increase has probably resulted more from the influx of ejected paupers and cottars from the outlying parts of the island than from the wholesome influences of prosperity.

The effects upon the poor victims themselves are very destructive. Could we trace the history of the wretched families who are thus mercilessly thrown out upon a strange world, I feel convinced that, in the majority of cases, it would be found that they had only escaped the cruel mercies of man to fall under the relentless stroke of pestilence and death. A family, ejected from this same parish in May last, went to Glasgow. There were seven or eight children. The father, the mother, and the eldest child have all died, leaving six or seven of the youngest and tenderest without a head to guide, or an arm to support. Another family, who went lately to Greenock, has lost two of its young members. But why trace more minutely the painful ravages of death? Any one who witnessed the groups of wretched creatures who crowded into our large towns during last summer and autumn—who knows the want and privation which there awaited them—who saw hundreds of families lying night after night on the cold damp grass of Glasgow Green, or amid the still more pestilential vapours of the wynds and lanes, and who listened to the barking coughs of the infants, as if their little bosoms were about to rend, can require no statistics to satisfy their minds of the fearful destruction of human life occasioned by the ejectment of the peasantry from the parishes in which they were born and had lived, and the pro-

perty of which should have been made responsible for their sustenance in the day of famine. This country was last year the scene of a Massacre of the Innocents, which has had no equal since the days of Herod the Infanticide.

The population of Mull, at the last census, was 10,064. The annual rental, as valued in 1843, is £17,576 16s. 2d. The total number of poor persons relieved under the poor-law, in the year ending 1st July, 1847, was 365, or a little more than 3½ per cent. of the whole population. The total sum expended on the relief and management of the poor in the same year was £724 5s. 5d., or about four per cent. of the annual valued rental. In both respects the proportion is less than the average proportion over the country at large. The average proportion of poor persons relieved, in the year ending 1st July, 1847, over the whole of Scotland, was upwards of 4½ per cent. of the population; while the total sum expended on relief and management was fully 5½ per cent. of the annual rental.

LETTER XXXI.

Fishing Facilities of Mull and Skye—Potato-Planting and Herring-Fishing—Their Encouragement of Idle Habits—Their Failure—Large Capital necessary to Successful Fishing—Indolence of the Monied Classes in the Highlands.

THE shores of Mull and Skye are adapted by nature for fishing. Innumerable salt-water lochs flow into the very interior of the islands, and cast out their branches in all directions. I am not aware that the coast of either has ever been accurately measured; but if a line were taken round all the turnings of the lochs and arms of the sea, a prodigious circumference would be obtained, of which no conception could be formed from the superficial area of the islands. The consequence is, that nearly the whole population are living in the immediate neighbourhood of the coast. The lochs afford not only secure anchorage for vessels, but also safe and convenient fishing-ground in stormy weather, when deep-sea fishing would be impracticable. And when the loch fishing is over, and the weather calm, a few hours' sailing will carry the boats out

into the open sea, where there are excellent fishing-banks. There is thus scope for constant and daily exertion, and as all kinds of fish are plentiful, there is no doubt that exertion would be richly rewarded. With so many advantages, it is certainly matter of wonder that the people, since they have been debarred from making a livelihood from the soil, should have derived so little good from the treasures of their seas. Fishing has in few instances been pursued as an occupation. It has been merely regarded as an occasional and partial resource, by which they might add a little variety to their miserable fare, and a few shillings to their scanty incomes. With no higher view of fishing than this, it was natural that they should adopt the branch which gave them the best return with most ease. They have therefore confined their attention to herring-fishing in the lochs. The want of capital to procure boats and tackle fitted for deep-sea fishing, and the want of a market for their fish, without which capital could not be created, might also operate at first in contenting them with two or three months of herring-fishing at their doors; and, the practice once begun, the brief and irregular application which it requires, and the valuable return which it occasionally yields, reminding one of the precarious gains of a speculator or a gambler, have tended powerfully to confirm, if not to create, those habits of indolence which now weigh like a night-mare upon the springs of prosperity.

An ancient Highlandman was content, when setting out upon a journey or a campaign, with a small bag of oatmeal. A modern Highlandman considers himself well-off upon a diet of herring and potatoes. Let any one consider for a moment the little exertion with which a family could once be provided with an abundant supply of these articles of food, and he will cease to wonder at the indolence of the present Highland population. Potato-planting commences in March, and is continued till May; the people carrying the sea-ware from the shore, spreading it on the land, and putting in the seed as they go along. The seed is reserved from the previous year's crop. The labour of a man and his wife for two months will plant a quantity of potatoes sufficient, with the ordinary returns, to subsist a family of six for a year. Cleaning the crop while it is growing, and lifting it when it is ripe, will scarcely occupy other two months; so that, by four months of easy labour, a Highland labourer will provide his family with the main part of their subsistence for a twelvemonth. The herring-season lasts about three months; but it is only a small part of this time that the people

are actually engaged in fishing. The fish are sure to make their appearance during the three months, but nobody can tell when they will come, or how long they will stay. Their movements are uncertain; and this uncertainty is communicated to the habits of the people, who loll about the shore in anxious yet idle expectancy. Hearing that the herrings are in the loch, and seeing the evening favourable, the cottar at last launches his boat, and, taking two or three comrades with him, drops his net, and returns next morning to the shore with £5 or £6 worth of herrings—more than the whole party could have earned at common labour for a month. A night or two more of similar success, and as many herrings are secured as supply the family, and pay the rent of the potato-ground; and thus, by five or six months' work, the diet of potatoes and herrings is procured, and everything made safe for the twelvemonth. Such is the system of life among the labouring population in the distressed districts of the Highlands. The direct effect of it is to encourage idleness, to give the people a false estimate of the value of labour, to make them contented with the most miserable fare, and to indispose them to steady and constant efforts of industry. Yet this system has been going on for half-a-century; and what wonder is it that in such a period habits of indolence should have been formed?

It is rather remarkable that herring-fishing and potato-planting, which I believe to have exercised so injurious an influence upon Highland character and habits, should have both begun to manifest symptoms of failure at the same time. That the herring-fishing has diminished in productiveness to a great extent during the last ten years, is a fact to which universal testimony is given on the west coast. I have heard it in all places, and from all classes of individuals; and the same truth has found its way into authentic public records. The writer of the notice of the parish of Strath, in the New Statistical Account, states, that so great is the falling-off, "that where sixty or seventy vessels could formerly be loaded in a few weeks, one could not now be loaded in the course of a whole season." The writer of the notice of Portree "deeply regrets" the same fact, and remarks that "there is reason to fear that the herring-fishing will altogether disappear on the coast of this parish." It would be easy to multiply testimonies to the same effect with respect to Mull; but if any additional evidence is required, we have it in the miserable results of the present season, when in many places the quantity of fish caught will scarcely re-

place the wear and tear of materials. It seems as if Providence had determined to destroy the baneful system on which the population of the Highlands has so long grown poor and wretched. The old plan of herring-fishing is as ill adapted to develop the resources of the sea as the sheep-walks and potato-crofts are to develop the capabilities of the land; and the failure of both at the same period will give a fearful acceleration to the crisis which must eventuate in a new system. Successful fishings can only be established on the basis of ample capital. Some propose that the Relief Board should supply the poorest of the people with boats and fishing-gear; but all measures of this kind are fruitless attempts to build upon a bad foundation. What guarantee have you that your materials will be used—that they will not lie useless, and rot? The class of people you would wish to benefit are not intelligent or trained enough to conduct a business requiring so much hardihood and perseverance as sea-fishing. They require masters—masters to secure to them a certain remuneration, to direct their operations, and to keep them steadily and constantly at work. An individual, or company of individuals, with sufficient capital, could adapt themselves to every circumstance, and extract wealth from the very difficulties which are found to prostrate the efforts of the poor cottars. When herrings left one loch, they could follow them with their boats and fishermen to another; and when loch-fishing failed they could take to the open sea. In a bad herring-season the white-fishing would make up the loss. In purchasing boats, nets, salt, and barrels, and in curing and packing, and carrying their produce expeditiously to market—in every branch and department of the business—they would have advantages which people without capital cannot pretend to, and might raise the fisheries to a pitch of prosperity and profit which they never have attained, or ever can attain, under the present system. There are some capitals in Mull and Skye large enough to make a beginning; and if the first step were taken there it would receive sympathy and encouragement elsewhere. But, as I have often remarked, the indolence of the monied classes in the Highlands is a worse obstacle to improvement than the indolence of the poor. The same evil taint infects society from its top to its base, being the more fatal and inexcusable the higher it is found in the social scale. There are sheep-walks in the Highlands occupying capitals not short of £18,000 or £20,000. A man with a capital of £20,000 might put an immense amount of industry in motion; and were he to devote him-

self to undertakings requiring intelligence, enterprise, and great administrative talents, there can be little doubt that he would rise to distinction and affluence. £20,000, lent out at the moderate interest of 5 per cent., would even yield an annual income of £1000, and entail no further trouble upon the owner than signing a quarterly or half-yearly receipt; and yet I question much if the profits of a sheep-farm, in which the same capital is invested, much exceeds £1000 per annum. But because a sheep-farm entails little trouble, and yields a little more interest than the bank, it forms a very eligible refuge for the capitalist who has more wealth than enterprise, and more avarice than ambition. A sheep-farmer—with power, if he chose, to command an army of workmen—lounging idly at home, while his flocks roam over extensive wastes under the care of a few shepherds, is in every respect a worse picture of indolence than the poor, half-starved cottar, sitting over the fire, mumping potatoes, and looking wistfully out at the loch till its waves are so good as to bring a shoal of herrings to his door.

The same storm which delayed me a day at Salen, detained the "Tartar" steamer the same period in completing her weekly trip to Portree. This unexpected respite enabled me to take a run into the interior of Mull. The island appears to be one vast moor, relieved occasionally by green spots along the margins of lochs, and in sunny and sheltered situations. Judging, however, from the successful improvements which have been effected by the Tobermory people upon the moor adjacent to the village, I would presume that a large proportion of the moorish parts of the island are reclaimable at a moderate expense.

Upon returning to Tobermory, I found the "Tartar" steaming in the bay. I hurried on board, looked farewell for a time to the Highland hills, and after a night voyage round the Mull of Cantire, was not displeased to find myself, on the afternoon of the following day, treading the firm pavement of Greenock quay.

LETTER XXXII.

Sources of Highland Want—Waste of Land, of Manure, of Capital, of Labour, of Time—Remedies—A Liberal and Effectual Poor-Law—A Law for the Unemployed—Abolition of Entails—Greater and Better Means of Education.

I PROPOSE to devote this concluding letter to a brief review of the sources of Highland destitution, and the remedies necessary to place the Highland people in a state of permanent prosperity. These points have been constantly touched upon throughout the whole course of my inquiries; but it will form a suitable *finale*, to gather up the leading conclusions, and arrange them together by themselves, so that they may stand prominently forth as the moral of my narrative.

There is a proverb in which we have wrapped up, as in a nut-shell, both the cause and the remedy of Highland misery—"No Waste, no Want." In the Highlands there is waste, and, as a necessary consequence, there is want. It will be found that every abuse pointed out in the preceding letters resolves itself into waste of some one or other of the bounties of Providence; and that the things most wasted in the Highlands are the very elements out of which the wealth, comfort, and prosperity of communities are created. Let us specify the more striking of these sources of want.

I. WASTE OF LAND.—Land is wasted in a variety of ways. 1. It is wasted by *the system of sheep-walks*. Large tracts of country, twenty or thirty miles in length, are thrown into one farm; all fences over this vast space are removed, and the soil resigned to its own spontaneous production. All kinds of land, dry and wet, land fit for the plough and land adapted only for pasture, are thus applied to the same use, and subjected to the same treatment. The consequence is an enormous waste of productive capability. 2. Land is wasted by *deer-forests and game-preserving*. Immense ranges of ground are withdrawn from the purposes of industry, and turned into wastes for the pasturage of deer. Deer add little or nothing to the wealth of the country: they are useful merely as the source of amusement to a few privileged men; so that, with the exception of an occasional distribution of venison among the poor, the land erected into forests is literally lost to the great

purpose of supporting human life.* The breeding and fostering of winged game, which is also carried to a great extreme in the Highlands, retains extensive moors under heather. A vigorous moor-burn would clear the soil of that emblem of barrenness, and cover it with grass. But moor-burn is prohibited by the game-preservers; and so the sheep of the large graziers, as well as the cattle of the poor crofters, are deprived of an incalculable amount of nourishment. 3. A great quantity of soil is lost by *natural wastes*. The wastes to which I have been referring are entirely artificial. Good land is deliberately taken, and, by the will and hand of man, consigned to sterility and unprofitableness. But in the finest countries there are tracts of soil which are rendered useless by some defect or obstruction of Nature, and which are only brought into a productive state by a large preparatory outlay of labour on the part of man. In the Highlands, where Nature is rude and rugged, the quantity of this description of soil is necessarily large. It consists principally of mosses, swamps, sea-beaches, and the seats of old and nearly extinct forests. Two or three centuries ago, the surface of the Lowlands was scarred by similar wastes, in places where beautiful crops are now growing, because capital and labour have been applied to their reclamation. But in the Highlands Nature has been allowed to reign supreme, and the exterior of the country retains, in the middle of the nineteenth century, all the aspect of an unoccupied and savage territory. 4. Land is also wasted by *imperfect cultivation*. It is not unusual to find a field ploughed only in the middle, while the sides and corners are left untouched. In the club-farms a great deal of soil is lost by the marches made between the ridges; and the feeble scraping of the surface-soil which passes for digging may also be said to waste the ground, by allowing the subsoil to lie

* I have noticed, in a previous letter, the similarity of the rapid increase of deer-forests in the Highlands to what took place in England in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the probable necessity of resorting to a similar remedy. I have been struck with a sentence or two upon this point in a history written by Daniel, in 1650: "And 12 Knights, or legall men," says this old writer, referring to measures adopted in the reign of Henry III., "are chosen in every shire, upon their oath, to dispart the old Forrests from the new. And all such as were disafforested were disposed at their pleasure who were to possesse them. Whereupon they were layd open, plowed, and improved, to the exceeding comfort and benefit of the Subject, whereby men, in stead of wilde beasts, were sustained, and more room made for them to use their industry."

useless to the work of vegetation. Such are some of the ways in which land, the first great element of wealth, is wasted in the Highlands; and when it is borne in mind that they form the rule, and not the exception, it may be conceived how essentially instrumental they must be in diminishing the supply of food, and, consequently, in causing the poverty and hunger of the population.

II. Waste of Manure.—Manuring is the means of repairing the waste of soil occasioned by production. A waste of manure, therefore, is virtually a waste of land, and may be properly classed next to it as a source of the impoverished condition of the Highlands. No attention is paid by the crofters generally to the collection of dung-heaps. Though they have all two or three cows each, and in many instances more, there is the utmost want of manure for their small patches of arable ground. The cows spend four-fifths of their time upon the hills, and their droppings while in house are seldom cleaned out oftener than twice a-year. Plenty of bracken might be obtained for the cutting, which would make excellent bedding for the cattle; the roads about and near the crofts are covered with dirt; and the ditches, if regularly cleared, would contribute their quota to the enrichment of the soil. But all these facilities of manure-making are neglected by the crofters; and the sheep-farmers, with equal and greater advantages, frequently urge the want of manure as an excuse for keeping good arable land in pasture. Sea-ware, therefore, is almost the only manure used in the Highlands; and this material would be infinitely more beneficial than it is, if employed as an ingredient along with the ordinary materials of a dung-heap; so that its abundance neither excuses nor compensates that waste of manure which must be reckoned among the cardinal evils of the Highlands.

III. Waste of Capital.—Capital may be described as that part of the annual produce which remains over and above the annual consumption. This surplus is the beginning of capital, and the measure of its annual increase. The capital of a community is its accumulated savings. In looking at the various classes of Highland society, we are at no loss to perceive in whose hands the power of forming capital resides. Such power cannot be supposed to exist to any extent with the croft and cottar classes. Their living has been reduced to the lowest point. The most rigid economy could devise no lower scale of expense; and yet the out-

goings of these classes are so fully equal to their incomes, that the failure of the potato-crop threw them almost universally upon the charity-list. The landowners and the large farmers are clearly, therefore, the only parties whose incomes are large enough to spare a residue from consumption for the formation of capital. But how have they done it? The landlords, instead of saving a part, have consumed more than their incomes. The annual rental of the four counties of Sutherland, Ross, Inverness, and Argyle, is £597,496 18s.; but how much of this, after paying the interest of money-lenders and family incumbrances, really goes into the hands of the nominal proprietors? Perhaps a third, a fourth, or not more than a fifth. Then three-fourths of the proprietors receiving this fraction of the annual rental are absentees, and squander their incomes on personal enjoyment in foreign lands. The remnant of annual rental, which escapes the clutches of mortgagees, dowagers, and younger branches of families, requires, therefore, to be reduced to a still lower fraction, in order to represent the sum which goes into the hands of proprietors resident in the Highlands; and of this sum, small as it necessarily must be, a very insignificant portion can be saved from consumption, for the formation of capital, and for purposes of improvement. Thus a magnificent rental of upwards of half-a-million, from which it would not be too much to expect an annual saving of one or two hundred thousand pounds, is frittered away, wasted, and lost to the Highlands, by the extravagance either of present or former proprietors. As for the large farmers, they are also in a great measure an absentee class. The sheep-walks are principally held by gentlemen who have farms in the south, and who carry away with them the profits and savings accumulated in the Highlands. It was this fact which induced the Duke of Sutherland, one of the few Highland proprietors who lays out his income where it is produced, to resolve upon breaking down his grazing farms to a smaller size. That excellent nobleman saw that it was in vain that he let his farms at low rents, and expended a princely income year after year upon improvements, so long as he tolerated a class of non-resident graziers who carried away from the estate all that they produced from the soil, or could squeeze from a too liberal landlord. He therefore resolved to do what every wise man would do in the same circumstances, namely, to break down the sheep-walks to such a size as will secure the constant residence of the tenants. The absentee graziers do not waste the capital saved by them in the Highlands;

they are men who generally know what to do with their money; but they carry it out of the Highlands, and thus complete the dispersion of that surplus produce which is the life-blood of industry, the germ and the food of improvement.

IV. Waste of Labour.—In the Highlands there is a want of roads, of machinery, of implements, and of every contrivance of intellect and art, by which manual labour is assisted and facilitated. Consequently the people have to expend a great deal more bodily toil in accomplishing certain purposes than would be necessary in other parts of the country. Take the simple process of peat-making as an example. The moss may be two, three, or four miles from the hamlet or village; but for want of a road, or if there happen to be a road, for want of carts, it is generally impossible to bring home the peats after they are cut and dried. They are, therefore, built in heaps in the moss, and are carried off in back-burdens as they are needed during winter; and thus to secure a supply of fuel, which elsewhere is the work of only a few days, costs in the Highlands a great part of the labour of half the year. The want of fences, also, for example, besides obstructing a proper rotation of crops, occasions a great waste of labour in herding. The carrying of manure to the land is also a work of woeful drudgery. After the seaware has been dragged from the tide, it has to be carried in creels over rough paths, and up steep hills; and this laborious and degrading task, I regret to say, falls generally to the lot of the females. The grinding of corn is another source of trouble. When the Highlandman rises in the morning, he generally finds that he must go to the moss before he can kindle his fire, and to the mill before he can break his fast. And thus, in a hundred ways, both in the cultivation of the crofts and in the more simple concerns of the family, a great amount of precious labour is wasted, which would tell with effect upon the physical comforts of the people if economised for other and more profitable purposes.

V. Waste of Time.—The Highland people spend a great part of their time in idleness. Work is seldom commenced till a late hour in the morning, and winter is uniformly a time of almost entire cessation from labour. The Rev. Alexander Macdonald, late minister of Plockton, made a statement on this point to the Poor Law Commissioners in 1843, which still applies to many districts

of the Highlands. "I am a native of Caithness," said the reverend gentleman, "where the people are accustomed to work. When I first came here I was struck with amazement at seeing the idleness of the people. During four months of the year, in the winter season, they go about with their hands in their pockets, doing nothing; and before I came here, I scarcely thought there was so much idleness under the sun." It would be difficult to say who is most to blame for this enormous and deplorable waste of time. It is evident that the people have little to tempt them from idleness, whether voluntary or involuntary. From the period when the old military clanship was broken up, no pains have been taken to initiate them in the spirit of the new social system into which they were introduced, no encouragement has been given to industry, no means have ever been laid before the people of constant well-paid employment, and, under the laxity and neglect of the new order of things, the population have, doubtless, acquired habits of indolence which it will require time and a better system to eradicate. The ease with which potato-planting and herring-fishing supplied the means of existence had the effect of accommodating the wants of the people to habits of idleness; but now, when starvation is at every door, it is absurd to suppose that regular employment at fair wages would not have attractions sufficient to arouse the people from apathy and indolence, however deeply confirmed.

Such is the multiform waste to which I attribute Highland want. It is scarcely conceivable that any one who considers for a moment this systematic neglect of all the most precious means by which communities provide for their necessities, should wonder at the prostrate and poverty-stricken condition of the Highland people. Reverse the order of the evils to which I have alluded, and observe how plainly and completely they lay the foundation of a state of destitution and beggary. The people spend nearly one-half the year in idleness; when they do work, their labour is wasted for want of implements, and by rude and unskilful methods of industry; a large proportion of the fruits of their toil, meagre as they necessarily must be, are carried away to meet the demands of money-lenders, and defray the expenses of pleasure-hunting in England and the Continent; and the annual produce being thus cut down and frittered away, the people are consequently impoverished, and the land lies in its aboriginal state of waste and ruggedness, while population increases in numbers. Such is the

system in operation in the Highlands. Were the causes of public misery ever more numerous, more complex and inveterate, and, at the same time, so striking, so obvious, and so palpable?

It will be said, as a natural inference from these observations, that the remedy lies with the Highlanders themselves; the people have only to improve their time, and to work,—to work laboriously, ingeniously, and constantly,—and the landlords to be saving, patriotic, and enterprising, in order to introduce a total and salutary change. I have no desire to weaken the force of this view of the case. Hercules only helps those who help themselves. This is a maxim which cannot be too deeply impressed upon the Highland mind. The Temple of Plenty can only be entered through the Porch of Labour. In sunny and genial climes, where the earth sends forth her fruits in spontaneous profusion, men may eat the bread of idleness with comparative impunity; but in the Highlands, with its cold blasts, its deluges of rain, and its iron soil, life can only be sustained by hard and persevering exertion. Highlanders! this is the condition imposed by that land of mountains and storms you love so well, and it is the part of true patriotism to submit to it. If you would cling to your native country, you must labour unceasingly to improve, adorn, and replenish her waste places. You must build up her ruined walls. You must renew and re-cultivate her obliterated fields. You must drain her marshes. You must economise and develop her resources. You must work, work, work, and work as you have never worked before, till her face is irradiated with the smile of plenty, and her very deserts rejoice and blossom as the rose. It is only by hard toil and patient self-sacrifice, on the part both of the people and the chiefs, that the Highlands can be made a fit place for her numerous children to live in.

These sentiments cannot be too widely scattered abroad, or too urgently enforced. Let ministers, teachers, factors, conductors of the press, all who have access to the ears and understandings of the people, preach incessantly the lessons of labour and economy. Their efforts will not be in vain. The voice of instruction will find a grateful response in every true Highland heart.

But it would be a gross delusion to suppose that the wheels of improvement can be set in motion by any spontaneous effort of the people. The crofters and cottars of the Highlands, however deeply convinced of the value of time and the curse of idleness, cannot work more unless work be provided them; and the pro-

prietors, though willing to do their part, may be retarded and paralysed by their engagements with the graziers, by the extravagance of their predecessors, by their own poverty, their own prejudices against the people, and even by the laws; and thus the cause of improvement sticks fast in the slough of general impotence, till the Government, like the waggoner in the fable, put its shoulders to the wheel. An impulse, strong and abiding, must be given from without, before the social machine can move with freedom amid the contrarieties of interest and purpose by which it is clogged. Moreover, the case is a desperate one. Hunger is at work—hunger, which stops the ears against the voice of instruction, which breeds despair, which fosters a listless improvidence, which indisposes the heart to all those maxims with which it is most necessary that the Highland people should be imbued. The jaws of this monster must be closed. The first duty of a Government is to preserve life; and any measures which, while accomplishing this object, will, at the same time, stimulate the various classes of the community to a more vigorous discharge of their duties, and to a frugal and industrious development of their resources, would form, to my conception, the most perfect remedies for the present state of the Highlands which human ingenuity could devise. Let me request the attention of my readers to certain measures which have occurred to me as most nearly fulfilling these conditions.

I. A Liberal and Effectual Poor Law.—To begin at the base of the social edifice—the aged, infirm, and disabled poor, widows, and fatherless children, are the first to attract our attention. The Poor-Law Amendment Act of 1845 has had two effects. It has increased the public allowances of the poor, and diminished the alms distributed through the channel of private and voluntary charity; but it is questionable if the gain has compensated the loss. The Highland parochial boards, generally speaking, manifest the most determined hostility to the legal claims of the poor; and the defect of the present state of the law is, that it leaves the poor entirely powerless to assert their rights in opposition to their local oppressors. The Act of 1845 closed against them the liberty of appeal to the Court of Session; nor did it compensate them for this deprivation by referring their claims to courts of easier access; but, on the contrary, handed them over to the tender mercies of a Central Board of Supervision, sitting in secret, hearing their complaints only upon schedules, refusing them a right of re-

ply to the allegations of hostile inspectors, and giving no reasons for its decisions, though involving questions of life or death to the poor. The sheriffs of counties were even debarred from giving them justice when deprived of adequate relief. All these precautions were taken lest the poor might have power to impose upon, or tyrannise over, the parochial boards. A grosser misapprehension of the relative position and strength of the two parties could not possibly be acted upon. A Highland pauper is one of the most helpless of mortals: a Highland Poor's Board, so far as its jurisdiction extends, is all-powerful, embracing in its ranks the whole wealth and influence of a parish. If the Legislature had had any sincere intention of giving the poor a chance of justice against the self-interested prejudices of the boards, it would have thought of strengthening instead of weakening their position. But the blunder or the crime, whichever it may be, of 1845, ought now to be atoned for. Let the sheriffs be empowered to review the decisions of the parochial boards in respect to the amount of relief; let the old right of appeal, free of let or hindrance, to the Court of Session be restored; let the Board of Supervision itself be made amenable in all its acts to that supreme tribunal to which all classes and bodies of Scotchmen are accustomed to bow in respectful deference; and, in short, let every possible facility be given to the poor of stating their complaints in the courts of justice, of having their claims impartially investigated, and of obtaining decisions in accordance with the law, and not with the narrow and illiberal views of bodies which have a palpable interest in depriving them of an adequate maintenance. As for the objection that the expense of maintaining the poor would soon consume the entire rental of the Highlands, it has no foundation in facts. The total amount expended on the poor in the four counties of Sutherland, Ross, Inverness, and Argyle, during the year ending May, 1847, though embracing six months of the severe and universal distress occasioned by the failure of the potato crop, was only £37,618 11s. 7¾d., being scarcely 6½ per cent. of the valued rental. This sum may be considerably increased, without exceeding the rate of assessment in many parts of the country in ordinary years. But even supposing that the expenditure on the poor should rise to a height extremely inconvenient to the proprietors, I do not perceive that this would be disastrous. The proprietors have the means of correcting this evil in their own hands. There is no country on earth where the duty of children to support their aged and disabled parents, and the ties of kindred generally, are more

profoundly respected than in the Highlands. As long as a Highlandman has a bite and a sup, he shares it with an aged father or mother. It is only when reduced to poverty himself that he allows any of his near kindred to claim the benefit of the poor's roll. The policy of the Highland lairds for many years has been to deprive the able-bodied of their holdings of land, to reduce them to the verge of destitution, and compel them, if possible, to emigrate. The direct tendency of these measures has been to increase the number of the aged and infirm dependent upon parochial relief. The proprietors have only to reverse their policy, to keep the able-bodied at home, to lay open the soil to their industry, and to promote their comfort and independence, in order to reduce the burden of the aged and disabled poor. This is the safety-valve of a liberal and effectual Poor Law. While it would protect the poor from starvation and suffering, it would constrain the owners of property, by the bonds of self-interest, to consult the happiness of the people, to strive for their employment, and to introduce that new division and management of the soil which lie at the foundation of permanent improvement. The same considerations which induced the proprietors would dispose the sheep-farmers to submit to the new order of things.

II. A Law for the Unemployed.—I purposely separate the consideration of the case of the unemployed from the general question of the Poor Law, because, as I think, much unnecessary prejudice has been raised by confounding and mixing up the two together. It is not alms or eleemosynary relief that I ask for the able-bodied poor of the Highlands. It is work—employment—liberty to earn bread by the sweat of the brow; and if this consideration is kept steadily in view, all objections usually urged against the claims of the unemployed will be found to disappear.

The question, in my view, is exceedingly simple. A large proportion of the soil of the Highlands lies waste and uncultivated. A large proportion of the annual rent, which naturally should form the capital for reclaiming it, is also carried off, and either idly wasted, or, at all events, consumed in purposes foreign to the improvement of the Highlands. The people are consequently unemployed and impoverished. And the evil is increasing. Yearly the people are ejected from their farms, to make room for sheep-walks and deer-forests. The potato failures have brought these evils to a crisis, and the country is pressed with the alternative

of shipping off one-half the population to the colonies, or feeding them at home by means of public relief funds. It is well to bear in mind, that these are the only measures which those who set themselves against a legal recognition of the unemployed have to choose upon. In these circumstances, I propose that a law should be passed giving the able-bodied who are deprived of their lands, or cannot find work of themselves, a right to employment from their parishes. It will not be denied, that abundant employment, of a productive and remunerative character, may be procured in the Highlands. The expense of setting the unemployed to work would not be great; because, at the end of the first season, the people's labour, if applied to the cultivation of land, would yield a return of food, and these returns would annually increase. The land is there, the labour is there, and all that is wanted is the necessary funds to maintain the labourers during the initiative stage of the works. It is reasonable that the productive property of the Highlands, yielding, over four counties, an annual rental of upwards of half-a-million, should be charged with the preliminary expense of improving the remainder which is waste and unproductive. Capital, therefore, would be raised by an improvement tax levied upon property. The task of planning and organising these industrial undertakings would be committed to a Board of Works. To aid it in its operations, each parochial board should be required to appoint a committee of works. Upon complaints being lodged with this committee from labourers suffering from want of employment, intimation would be given to the Board of Works, who would send down a surveyor, who, in company with the local committee, would proceed to inspect the parish, and resolve upon the works which were most needed, and promised to be most advantageous. It should be a strict regulation, that no individual employed and paid by the Board of Works be hired out to private individuals, or labour upon private property. The unemployed, while in the pay of the public, should give their services exclusively to the public; so that when the reclamation of waste lands was resolved upon, the lands to be reclaimed would be purchased upon valuation from the proprietor, (on the same principle as land is purchased for railways, or, as it is proposed in a bill before Parliament, to purchase it for sites of churches,) and become the property of the parish, or, in other words, of those from whom the purchase-money and the expense of improvement were to be assessed. When the improvement-tax rose above a cer-

tain amount in any parish, it might be provided that the surplus should be spread over a larger district; and when it rose above a certain rate in such district, be spread over a larger still: these extra contributions to be regarded as loans advanced to the parish upon security of the works to which they were to be applied. It would be the duty of the Board of Works to see that every man was paid according to his labour, and to take such precautions as might be necessary to secure that their undertakings would be well and economically executed. Such, in few words, is an outline of what I mean by a law for the unemployed.

It would be preposterous to argue that such a system is calculated to encourage the labouring classes in habits of improvidence. A system of eleemosynary relief might have that effect: a system which merely secured them constancy of employment could never have such a tendency. On the contrary, it would strengthen the disposition to save, by giving for the first time the power of saving. Those breaks in the poor man's industry, over which he has no control, those dreary seasons of involuntary idleness to which he is doomed, keep him in a state of poverty and wretchedness in which it is impossible to be provident. But assure him that, while God blesses him with health and strength, he will never want a day's work and a day's wage, and you raise him above the enfeebling influence of despair, you give stability to his earnings—which is the first condition of accumulation—and inspire him with that buoyancy of spirit which is the mainspring of persevering exertion. Let it never be said that liberty to work for daily bread is a boon—a charity—conferred upon the labouring man by society. It is a natural right; and society is as richly blessed by its exercise as the labourer himself. In less happy times than the present, the great anxiety of the Legislature was to prevail upon the idle to labour, and some old statutes decree the most horrid penalties—such as nailing the ears to a tree, cutting them off altogether, banishing, and even hanging—against such refractory vagrants as refused to work. But now the difficulty is reversed, and the Legislature cannot be prevailed upon to provide employment for the idle. Depend upon it, these two states of things touch each other in reality, as well as in antithesis. If the unemployed have long to call for work to the Legislature in vain, the time will come when the Legislature will find it equally fruitless to call the unemployed from a life of idleness.

It would be equally out of place to argue that the proposed law

would merely transfer to public works capital which would find its way to the employment of labour through a private and more legitimate channel. The system of leaving proprietors to make what use they would of the rental of the Highlands has hitherto had full scope, and what has it led to? To the private employment of labour? No, certainly; but to absenteeism, to personal extravagance, to mortgages, to the annihilation of capital, and the ruin of labour. The proposed law would check these evils. It would transfer to productive industry funds which are at present squandered upon idle and luxurious pleasures. It would save the inheritance of labour from the clutches of usury. It would turn back the stream of rent from the aristocratic resorts of London, Paris, Naples, and Boulogne, to fructify the wastes and mosses of Scotland; and, as a necessary consequence, food, rents, and capital, would all be increased. Instead of encroaching upon the private employment of labour, it would stimulate and encourage it. When landlords perceived that the law made them liable to be taxed for the employment of the able-bodied, they would hesitate before they cleared their estates for the purpose of making deer-forests. That would be one good point gained. And when they found, still further, that, if they neglected to reclaim their waste lands and employ labourers, the law would step in and do these things for them at their cost, they would speedily learn the propriety of turning their attention to the study of agriculture and the interests of the people. It would be only when they contemned all warning, and persisted in trampling under foot the first duties of their station, that this law would step in and apply the corrective. It would be a negative check rather than a positive and aggressive system; and though, when it did come into operation, its results would be entirely beneficial, yet I believe its chief and greatest effect would be to arouse and stimulate the owners of property to pursue a course of improvement and industry.

The chief recommendations of such a law are these:—It would employ and feed the able-bodied and famished population of the Highlands. It would put an end to that system of improvised and central relief which has had to be periodically resorted to, and which, after all the thought I have given to the subject, I am convinced is both inefficient in point of relief, and deeply injurious in its effects upon the habits of the people. It would diminish pauperism, and might lead to the ultimate extinction of poor-rates. The reclaimed lands, and other public works, would be the property of the parishes,

and yield a revenue which, upon the establishment of prosperity, might go far to defray the entire expense of the poor. By placing employment within the reach of all, it would leave no excuse for idleness. Idleness, without means of self-support, might be treated as a crime against the commonwealth. The public works would afford an excellent field for drilling the Highlanders in industry, for inuring them to hard labour, and training them in those habits of steady perseverance and self-exertion upon which their permanent prosperity must depend. And if it were wished to hold out a prize to honourable ambition, the reclaimed lands might be sold in small lots, upon easy terms, to such as choose to signalise themselves by hard work and persevering economy, and the foundation be thus laid of a class of small freeholders like the peasant-proprietors who have wrought such prodigies of industry in Belgium, in Norway, in Sweden, and in Switzerland. In short, such a law for the unemployed would both relieve distress and put a series of influences in train that would effectually abolish that waste of land, capital, labour, and time, which constitutes the great source of Highland destitution.

III. Abolition of Entails.—The tendency of the preceding measures is to impose onerous obligations upon the owners of property: it is necessary that they have freedom to discharge these obligations. The Highland lairds are to be called upon to perform the duties of property; they must, therefore, be invested with its rights. They must be proprietors in deed and in truth, and not merely in name. The law of entail places the heirs in possession in a most humbling and powerless position. While it retains the privilege of administering the property in hands which have long withered in the grave, it gives its revenues to money-lenders, whose shadowy forms are equally wrapped up from public responsibility and public view. The heir in possession stands before the world as the corporeal representative of these spectre deities, without their power or their wealth, a mark to be shot at for their impunity, and the butt of general contempt. This system might live while it was optional for property to fulfil or evade its obligations; but in that state of stern and compulsory government which is necessary for the Highlands, it is totally impracticable. The true owners of property must be dragged forth from that insubstantial framework behind which they conceal themselves. There is real work to be done in the Highlands, and there must be real men to

do it. The heirs in possession must be free agents. They must have power to improve, to borrow, to sell part or the whole of their estates, to bear the burdens of their station, or, if not able, to make room for those who are. To this end, it is essential that the law of entail be entirely abolished.

IV. GREATER AND BETTER MEANS OF EDUCATION.—It is apparent, from many parts of these letters, that there is a great deficiency of the means of instruction in the Highlands. Parishes in the Highlands are as large as many English counties, and to each of these the parochial system usually gives but one school. The position of the population has also been changed of late years, so that the parochial schools are frequently very difficult of access even to the majority of the parishioners. The fishing villages, for example, are all recent creations, which were not contemplated when the sites of many of the schools were selected. It is usual to find one of these villages, with a population of 300 or 400, without a school within a distance of several miles. The number of uneducated children must necessarily be immense. I have no statistics to appeal to, adequate to give a sufficient idea of the educational destitution, later than 1833 and 1837. In the former year, the General Assembly's Committee found that, in a district embracing the islands and twenty-four mainland parishes, and containing a population of 151,053, there were no fewer than 55,718 persons, above the age of six years, unable to read in any language. In 1837, four years later, it was found by the Glasgow Destitution Committee, that in the same district, with the population increased to 154,763, the number of schools had fallen from 328 to 266, and the number of scholars from 16,891 to 13,586! An inquiry at the present day would probably fail to exhibit any more satisfactory results. The people are perishing, both temporally and spiritually, for "lack of knowledge." One of the most essential measures to the permanent improvement of the country is a comprehensive system of instruction, which will bring the means of a sound intellectual, religious, and industrial training within reach of every family. Every hamlet with two or three hundred people should have its school; and as this would entail an expenditure disproportioned to the present resources of the parishes, it is an undertaking which should receive the pecuniary aid of the Government. The districts in which the schools were established might be required to provide the ground and the materials for

erecting the necessary buildings; the Scotch teinds held by the Crown, amounting to £15,741 12s. 5d. per annum, two-thirds of which are leased out to private parties, who pay little or nothing for them, might be applied—as a temporary endowment, at least —to the teachers; and whatever more was required could be provided by a parliamentary vote. The remuneration and comforts of the teachers should be raised to a point which would secure the services of able and qualified individuals; and arrangements should be made in every school for training the female scholars in those domestic duties, and the male in those arts of industry, which are the characteristic and the pride of civilised life. A few years of such discipline would work a beautiful change upon the social aspect of the Highlands. It would form an admirable accompaniment to those measures of an industrial character which I have already suggested; and by raising the spirit and intelligence of the people, enlarging their views and hopes, and introducing them into the great community of nations, would silently, but effectively, originate and promote a remedy which I forbear to include in my list of public measures, because it is only beneficial when it springs spontaneously from the hearts of an informed and educated people. It is a well-ascertained fact, that voluntary emigration from the Highlands has been greatest in the parishes where education is the most widely diffused; and there is no doubt that, under a thorough system of instruction, and a higher standard of comfort, an egress of population would arise naturally and voluntarily, sufficient to preserve an equality between the means and the numbers of the people.

These are the measures which I consider necessary for the Highlands—necessary for their present safety, and necessary to provide for their future and permanent welfare. The exigencies of the population cannot long be neglected with impunity. They are even now a burden to the country, and if steps be not immediately taken to enable the people to support themselves in comfort and independence, an infinity of trouble and expense will be treasured up against us in the future. The Highlanders have hitherto been deplorably neglected by the Legislature. Its policy and its acts have been powerful only to destroy. By a course of coercion it has succeeded in shattering the old system of clanship; but it has overlooked the equally important and more difficult task of building up a new social edifice, in which the people might enjoy

the blessings of a more noble existence. Some antiquarian Highlanders have a notion that prosperity fled from their native hills when Malcolm Canmore removed his court to the Lowlands: let us hope that it is destined to return with the royal footsteps of Victoria. Her Majesty has given the most unequivocal tokens of her affection for the land and people of the North. That feeling is warmly reciprocated by the Highlanders towards her Majesty; and in these days of loud-tongued sedition and scarce disguised treason, it would be unpardonable impolicy to disappoint the reasonable hopes of a population who have preserved an unbroken peace, and a pure and untainted loyalty, under the most provoking wrongs and the bitterest sufferings.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

My remarks on the administration of the Poor-Law in Blair-Atholl drew forth the following letter from the Established minister of that parish to the Editor of the *North British Daily Mail*:—

Sir,—Some one has sent me your paper of the 23d instant, containing an article by your "Special Correspondent," on the state of the parish of Blair-Atholl, under the title, "Condition of the Highlands." With the greater part of his lucubrations I mean not to meddle. I have no special call to expose his mis-statements or controvert his reasonings on matters that do not concern myself personally, my time being employed more profitably, I hope, both to myself and others, than it could be in newspaper controversy.

But I feel it to be due to myself, as well as to others, to take public notice of what he says of the state of the poor in this parish; and I am obliged to say that on that subject there are nearly as many mis-statements as there are sentences in the paragraph that refers to it.

He says, "There are 70 poor in the parish receiving parochial relief." The roll is now before me, and the number of poor in the parish receiving regular and occasional aliment is 48.

He says, "The general aliment is 6d. a-week." Of the 42 paupers on the regular roll, there are just four receiving that amount, all the rest receiving more; and of these four, three have houses rent-free, and are able to earn a good deal by their own industry; the fourth, from whom no complaints have reached the parochial board, has a daughter who properly and dutifully contributes to her maintenance.

He says further, "Nothing can be more meagre and inadequate than the allowance doled out to the poor." Has he such a minute acquaintance with their circumstances, and their means of subsistence from whatever sources, as to entitle him to say so? I must take leave to say that his information upon this point is of a piece with what he gives as the amount of their allowances.

He proceeds—"The Queen, during her visit to Blair-Atholl, gave a donation of £100 for the benefit of destitute people in the parish; and great complaints are made of the way in which the kirk-session dealt with her Majesty's bounty. Two years elapsed before it was finally distributed. It was given out in sums of 5s. from time to time, and was a relief to the heritors rather

than the poor, as in many cases it was substituted for the allowance which the poor would otherwise have received from the parochial fund." This last statement is utterly unfounded. In no case was the Queen's donation substituted for the allowance which the poor would have received from the parish fund. They got their regular allowances, and their shares of the Queen's bounty in addition. It is true that this fund was distributed from time to time, and that some complaints may have been made that it was not all paid away at once. But it is no unreasonable request to make, that the managers of the poor should be allowed to know in what way a sum left at their disposal could be best bestowed for the benefit of the poor themselves; and your correspondent must deem your readers more ignorant of human nature than I do, if he expects them to believe that a large sum paid away at once would not, in many cases at least, have been grossly abused.

Your correspondent, in the next instance, proceeds to generalise in the assumed accuracy of his previous statements, and says, "the administration of the poor law, in rural parishes generally, is partial and corrupt." If, as I am led to conclude from the juxtaposition of this sweeping condemnation to the passage previously quoted, Blair-Atholl is one of those parishes, it is only left me, from the general terms of the statement, to give it a flat denial. The administration of the poor law in this parish is not partial, if by that he meant that any other rule is observed than the extent of the paupers' necessities. It is not corrupt, if by that he meant that it is conducted with any other view than the relief of the poor. I must further say, that if his charge against other parishes rests on no better foundation than his charge against this; or rather, as it certainly seems, if his charge against them rests on the case he thinks he has made out against this, no charge could be more unwarranted, or less supported by facts.

He proceeds—"An entire change is desirable, as it is most unreasonable that proprietors, who clear the people off their estates, for what they consider their own private advantage, and thereby reduce the aged and infirm to pauperism, should be permitted to evade the burthens entailed by their own system." I, too, think this unreasonable; but I deny that any evasion of the legal burthen of supporting the poor has been attempted here.

I have another charge to bring against your correspondent. He speaks of the "extremities with which the labourers were threatened" last winter, owing to the high price of provisions, and mentions, in a very ungracious fashion, the Duke of Atholl's raising the wages of his labourers, which he attributes to "the immense lever power of railways," and gives the Duke no credit for a desire to mitigate the pressure of the past trying season. But did your correspondent hear nothing of a meal fund, by which about 180 bolls of oatmeal were sold at the rate of 20s. per boll, when the market price of it ran from 30s. to 32s.? Did he not hear that 64 families of the industrious poor—none of whom were on the pauper roll—were thereby relieved, and enabled to maintain themselves with comparative ease? It is not credible that a person so minutely, however inaccurately informed on other matters affecting the poor, should be ignorant of this. What, then, is to be thought of his fairness in withholding the slightest hint of it, and, moreover, grumbling "that the Central Relief Board refused to send supplies into Blair-Atholl," when he must have known that Blair-Atholl was able to supply the wants of its own

poor, and to contribute a very large sum besides to the funds of that central board.

Whether the *suppressio veri*, as well as the *suggestio falsi*, rests with your correspondent, or (if he be a stranger to Blair-Atholl) with those who misled him, is his affair. He is responsible for what he gives to the world, and should have been careful, especially when bringing such sweeping charges, to derive his information from trustworthy sources, and not from those who are fonder of a grievance than of truth—a rule I would commend to the special observance of all southrons who undertake to enlighten the public on the "Condition of the Highlands."

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

ALEX. R. IRVINE.

The Manse, Blair-Atholl, Oct. 25.

In reply to the above, I addressed the following letter to the Editor of the *Mail*:—

SIR,—It was only on my arrival at Fort-William, a few days ago, that I learned that the parish minister of Blair-Atholl had written you a letter in contradiction of certain statements made by me in reference to the administration of the Poor-law in that parish. With your usual disinterestedness, you gave immediate publicity to that letter, though you must have been aware that a considerable time would elapse before its contents could come into my hands, and consequently before I could have an opportunity of replying to it. Mr. Irvine has no doubt begun long ere this to imagine that his letter is unanswerable; and if I now proceed to disturb the equanimity of his fancied triumph, I hope he will have the good sense to see that it is a duty which his unqualified denials render unavoidable.

Mr. Irvine denies everything, and insinuates a great deal, but he states nothing positive. He speaks of having the poor's roll of Blair-Atholl before him, and yet he keeps the curious information it contains a profound secret. He denies that 6d. a-week is the general aliment of the poor in that parish, but he takes care not to inform us what the general aliment really is. He denies that the Queen's donation was distributed as a substitute for the maintenance to which the poor are entitled from the parish, but he withholds all information calculated to overturn the strong probabilities that it was so substituted. This, it must be confessed, is a very safe mode of controversy, and one that excites very grave suspicions when employed by a person complaining so bitterly as Mr. Irvine does of the inaccurate information and the mis-statements of the correspondents of the press. If falsehoods have been told, why does not Mr. Irvine out with the truth?

It would be of little use to follow Mr. Irvine's course, and re-assert what he has denied, or to inform you what, I presume, you are very sensible of already, namely, that I never make statements without having the best grounds for believing them to be true. I will appeal to documents, whose authority will not be questioned by any, and some of which even Mr. Irvine will not be able to contradict without belying himself.

I stated in my letters from Blair-Atholl, that there are 70 poor receiving parochial relief in that parish. Mr. Irvine, on the contrary, says that there are only 48. I have three blue books in my possession—the General Assembly's

Report on the Poor in 1839, the Minutes of Evidence taken by the Poor-law Commissioners in 1843, and the First (and latest) Report of the Board of Supervision, presented to Parliament at the beginning of the present year. According to the first of these authorities, the average number of poor in Blair-Atholl in the three years, 1835-6-7, was 66. From the second it appears that the number of paupers relieved in that parish, in 1842, was 68. And the last-named document, the Blair-Atholl department of which must have been drawn up under Mr. Irvine's own inspection, if not by that gentleman himself, bears that 65 poor persons were relieved in that parish from February, 1845, to the same month in 1846. I ask if, with these authenticated facts before me, conjoined with the testimony of intelligent persons in the parish, and with the knowledge that the past year was one of extreme distress, during which the number on the poor's roll would naturally increase rather than diminish, I was not fully justified in stating that there are 70 poor receiving parochial relief in Blair-Atholl. What clearer proofs could I possibly have of the correctness of my information? But this does not content me; I like to make progress in controversies of this kind; and I ask Mr. Irvine what explanation he has to give of the discrepancy between the facts communicated by him to the Board of Supervision, and those contained in his letter to the *Mail?* Is it possible that he and the heritors of Blair-Atholl have reduced the number of poor receiving aid from the parish from 65 to 48 in the course of a single year, and that year one of the severest and most difficult to the poor that has occurred in modern times? If this be the case (and it is the only solution I can devise without impeaching Mr. Irvine's veracity), it is high time the public should be made acquainted with the grounds on which 17 recipients of relief have been suddenly cut off from a privilege so long awarded them.

In answer to my statement that the general aliment of the poor in Blair-Atholl is 6d. a-week, Mr. Irvine says that "there are just four receiving that aliment, all the rest receiving more." But how much more? If some receive 6d. and the eighth or the fourth of a farthing, can I fairly be accused of misstatement in saying generally that the aliment is 6d.? Mr. Irvine admits that I am right to a fraction in four cases; but with respect to three of these he observes that they have houses rent-free. My statement referred to aliment only, and not to lodging and clothing. It is not uncommon in rural parishes to pay the house-rents of the poor, to supply them with shoes and other articles of clothing, and sometimes to make a distribution of coals; and in calculating the amount of relief bestowed, these items are naturally included in the general allowance to the poor. But when I state that 6d. a-week is the usual aliment, it is obvious that I refer exclusively to the sum which comes into the hands of the poor for the purchase of food; and, in the absence of everything like facts from Mr. Irvine to the contrary, I still adhere to that estimate as being as closely and substantially correct as any person, not having access to the poor's-roll, could reasonably be expected to make. What say our printed authorities? I find that both Mr. Irvine and his session-clerk were examined by the Poor-law Commissioners. The latter, on being asked what the ordinary allowance was in his parish, gave the following answer: "The ordinary allowance to poor persons on the permanent roll, in Blair-Atholl, is 1s. 6d. a week, or a fortnight, *or once in the three weeks*, according to circumstances." The rapidity with which the session-clerk slides down from 1s. to 6d. a week is typical,

I presume, of the delectable uncertainty which adheres to the fate of the poor in Blair-Atholl. Yet I suppose these allowances must be understood as including all other necessaries, as well as food. Mr. Irvine, on being asked the same question, showed an equal unwillingness to strike an average; but he pitches the minimum of his sliding scale considerably higher than the session-clerk. "The ordinary allowance," says Mr. Irvine, "to the poor on the permanent roll, varies from £2 to £3 10s. a-year." Mr. Irvine seems to have always had a peculiar repugnance to 6d. a-week, and so he differs with the session-clerk, and makes the minimum 9¼d. a-week. It would be rude to pry too minutely into the respective credibility of the minister and the clerk; but, two gentlemen, who, upon oath, and with the poor's roll in their hands, gave such very different replies to the same question, should be extremely cautious in dealing out insinuations of falsehood against others. Mr. Irvine, it seems, has had great experience of the treatment of the poor in Highland parishes. He was a minister in the parishes of Dull and Fortingall, as well as Blair-Atholl; and he sums up his evidence, on the state of the poor, in the latter parish, with this remark—"The poor here are much in the same state as those in the parish of Fortingall." Turning over to the reverend gentleman's evidence on Fortingall, I find him, after detailing the miserable provision made for the poor, giving utterance to these remarkable words: "The best assistance which the poor have in Fortingall and in Highland parishes is from the kindness of their friends and neighbours!" Mr. Irvine literally swears, before a public commission, that the allowances to the poor in Highland parishes are so small and inadequate that the destitute creatures are more indebted to the private charity of their neighbours than to them for their subsistence; and when I make the very same remark respecting the poor in Blair-Atholl, this same gentleman rushes into print against me with the most sweeping denials, and the directest insinuations of misinformation and falsehood!

With respect to the distribution of the Queen's donation of £100 to the poor of Blair-Atholl, Mr. Irvine's reply to my remarks is entirely beside the point. He says that, "in no case was the Queen's donation substituted for the allowance which the poor *would* have received from the parish fund;" but the question is—Was it substituted for the allowance which they *should*, and, in law, were entitled to have received? Mr. Irvine admits that it was given out in small sums, and he does not deny that two years elapsed before it was finally distributed. He also states that it was given to those who were receiving allowance from the parish. These allowances, I maintain, fall far short of what the poor are legally entitled to; and Mr. Irvine and the kirk-session, by dribbling out the Queen's gift in small supplementary sums, gave strong occasion for the complaints rife in the parish, that her Majesty's benevolence to the poor was adroitly made a present of to the heritors. The law gives the destitute a right to "needful sustentation." If the parochial allowances in Blair-Atholl were sufficient to provide "needful sustentation" to the poor, why were these allowances supplemented for two years with a sum of which the poor should have felt the immediate advantage? Mr. Irvine and the Kirk-session of Blair-Atholl have no right to assume that the objects of her Majesty's bounty are not fit to make a good use of it, unless it be distilled through their parochial alembic.

Mr. Irvine, though complaining of misrepresentation, tries his hand at a

little of that work himself. He charges me with "grumbling that the Central Relief Board refused to send supplies into Blair-Atholl." I defy him to produce a single sentence of mine that bears any such construction. I simply stated the fact of the Board's refusal; and so far from murmuring, my feelings, indeed, were all the other way. It would have been a piece of arrant effrontery for a Duke, who could afford to make a deer-forest of Glen Tilt, to have sought assistance from a public charity fund.

Mr. Irvine concludes his letter with an injunction to "all Southrons who undertake to enlighten the public on the 'Condition of the Highlands.'" The servants of the public, among whom I am proud to be included, do not require Mr. Irvine's advices; and though they certainly cannot lay claim to the exclusive information possessed by that gentleman, they may congratulate themselves upon having dragged abuses to light that might have been kept in secrecy till doomsday, for anything that would have escaped from the nominees of the dukes and lairds.

I am, Sir,

November 17, 1847. YOUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.

Mr. Irvine took up the pen again, and the following letter, with the appended note, appeared in the *Mail*:—

SIR—I am to-day favoured with your publication of the 23d, in which I observe a letter from your "Special Correspondent," by way of answer to mine published in your paper of the 27th ult., defending the Parochial Board of this parish from the unwarrantable attack made on us by that gentleman in a previous communication.

I perfectly admit your correspondent's right to justify his statements, if he can; and beg to assure him that my equanimity is not in the least disturbed by his present attempt to do so, now that I know (what I was not certain of when I last wrote to you) that he is a stranger to this part of the country. I have further to say that I am willing to grant him every indulgence to which, on that score, he can reasonably lay claim, and to let pass, as sufficient, the excuses he offers for part of the inaccuracy contained in the article of which I complained. The gist of his defence is, that, trusting to documents he quotes, and to information he received on the spot, he thought he was correct; and I am quite willing to let it stand, to a certain extent, in proof of his desire to be so.

But even stretching this concession to the utmost, he still gets into mistakes for which it cannot be made to account. For example, in defence of his statement as to the rate of aliment given to the poor, he quotes testimony given by the former session-clerk and myself before the Poor-law Commissioners in 1843, and dwells at great length upon that, as justifying all he had stated on that head. But he suppresses the date at which that evidence was given. It referred to the state of the poor in 1843, before I became minister of this parish; but, for aught he says to the contrary, the public are left to infer that it referred to a period so long subsequent as to support his statement. Now, I submit that a "servant of the public" should be careful to inform them fully on a subject on which he volunteers to enlighten them. If he had, as in duty bound, done so, I would have left it to them to infer whether what was true in 1843 must be also necessarily true in 1847, and whether those who are ponsible for the administration of the Poor-law in the latter year are to be

held responsible for their acts, who were charged with the administration of the old law, in the former.

He tries to make a point of the seeming inconsistency between the evidence of the session-clerk and mine; but there is no real inconsistency. The fact is, there was no fixed amount of weekly or monthly aliment paid at the time when that evidence was given, so that it was impossible to say with precise accuracy what it was. That, however, was reformed very soon afterwards, and ought not, in common fairness, to have been now brought up to justify a charge against the management of the poor in this present year.

Your correspondent seems wonderstruck at my having stated that the "best assistance afforded to the poor was that derived from the kindness of their friends and neighbours," which he chooses to construe into an admission of the total inadequacy of the compulsory relief afforded them. And if it were so, what has the state of the poor in Fortingall in 1843 to do with that of the poor in Blair-Atholl in 1847? But I beg to tell him that the poor were far better off than they are now, or are likely ever to be, when there was no compulsory provision made for their support. It used to be deemed a disgrace to the recipient and his friends to be upon the parish relief roll. And my statement was not meant as a censure on any one, but as a well-merited tribute to the kindly and Christian feeling of the people. It is, as it ever has been, my opinion, that voluntary charity is a far more Christian source of support to the poor than compulsory assessment; and it is to the decay of the means or the will to afford it that is to be attributed the growth of what I consider to be both morally and economically the bad, though necessary, substitute of a legal aliment. Even now, to estimate the paupers' means of subsistence, at least in country parishes, by the amount of the aliment paid them, is an error into which none can fall but such as are entirely ignorant of the subject. But the time is fast approaching when the country will be studded with poor's houses, and when it will be quite correct to judge of the comfort of the poor by the amount of money raised by Act of Parliament for their maintenance. For the present it is not so, and they who get the smallest share of that aliment may be as well off, taking everything into account, as they who get the largest.

If it be of any consequence to the public to know, they are quite welcome to the information that the rates paid to the poor of this parish for the current year (excluding from the calculation lunatics confined in asylums at a high rate of board) varied from 6s. a-week, through the intermediate gradations of 3s. 6d., 3s., 2s. 6d., 2s., and so downwards to the rate of 6d. a-week, according to their health, age, the aid afforded by their relatives, and their other means of subsistence—a rate of aliment which, allowing for difference of habits and cost of living, your correspondent is quite welcome to compare with that which prevails at his own door.

He complains that I have misrepresented him as "grumbling because the Central Relief Board refused to send supplies into Blair-Atholl." I can assure him I had no intention to do so. But besides other good grounds for having said this, which I need not mention, I must still say that, looking at the words he uses, in the connection in which they stand, I should be of the opinion I was of before, if I had not his own assurance that he intended nothing of the kind.

I had intended to notice other parts of his communication, but I have al-

ready occupied too much of your valuable space on a matter of so little interest as compared with those to which it might be devoted. And I have, therefore, but to say that, as to the abuses which he takes credit for having dragged to light, I trust I have shown that they have been dragged only from the depths of his own imagination, or theirs who were his informants.

I take leave of the subject by saying that, to prove the true friends of the poor, it is necessary to avoid withholding from them "needful sustentation" on the one hand, and the encouragement of idleness, improvidence, and vice, on the other. And it is to be hoped that all concerned in this important duty of working the provisions of the new Poor-law will conscientiously endeavour to strike the mean between these extremes, without much caring for any ill-considered judgment to which, in any quarter, they may be subjected.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

ALEX. R. IRVINE.

The Manse, Blair-Atholl, Nov. 26, 1847.

EDITORIAL NOTE.—Our readers will observe, from the above, that Mr. Irvine still withholds all information calculated to overturn any of our correspondent's statements. He says not a word about the remarkable discrepancy between the statement made in his previous letter, relative to the number of persons receiving relief in his parish, and the report on the same subject made to Parliament, at the beginning of the present year, by the Board of Supervision. According to Mr. Irvine, there are only 48 paupers in Blair-Atholl, and, according to the Board of Supervision, there are 65. Which of these authorities are we to believe? And, though Mr. Irvine informs us that the allowances vary from 6s. to 6d. a-week, he declines to give the number of paupers receiving the higher sum, and the numbers, respectively, receiving the lower and intermediate sums, though it is only by such information that the public can ascertain what "the general aliment" is. There is only one interpretation to be put on Mr. Irvine's silence. The reverend gentleman has shown that he *would* convict our correspondent of inaccurate information if he *could;* and his refusal to produce the evidence necessary to do so proves that he has no such evidence to produce. Mr. Irvine has recourse to one very desperate expedient to make up his reply. He charges our correspondent with concealing that the evidence given by Mr. Irvine and the session-clerk was taken by the Poor-law Commissioners in 1843, and referred to the state of the poor at that time. Now, in quoting the minutes of evidence on the poor, it is expressly stated in our correspondent's letter that they were "taken by the Poor-law Commissioners in 1843." Mr. Irvine's pretended oversight of this is an artifice so unlike what might be expected from a clergyman, that we forbear to characterise it. Mr. Irvine alludes to "lunatics confined in asylums at a high rate of board." When did the Blair-Atholl lunatics happen to be confined in asylums? The report of the Board of Supervision, already referred to, states that there are six pauper lunatics in Blair-Atholl, and that these are kept "in houses with relatives or others;" and, moreover, that the Board had granted permission for them to be continued in such houses. There are so many contradictions in Mr. Irvine's letter and the publicly-authorised reports from his parish, that it occurs to us that his Parochial Board is a ripe subject for the investigation of the Board of Supervision, and to that authority we are content, in the meantime, to resign them.

No. II.

I found some difficulty in ascertaining authentically the sums expended on the poor in the parishes in which my attention was attracted to the administration of the Poor-Law. The "First Report of the Board of Supervision," which brings up the returns to the 1st February, 1846, was the latest public document that I could refer to; and, accordingly, when I have found it desirable, as in the case of Strath, to state the sum expended annually on relief of the poor, I have been obliged to take the year ending 1st February, 1846. But as the Highland parishes are in a transition state in so far as regards the Poor-Law, it is obvious that considerable changes may have taken place since the returns of the "First Report" were made up. Since the foregoing sheets have been in the hands of the printer, the "Second Annual Report of the Board of Supervision" has been published, which enables me to supply this defect by appending the following table, giving the total amount of money expended on the relief of the poor in the year ending 14th May, 1847, in the principal parishes referred to in my letters, together with the annual rental, population, and number of persons receiving relief, including occasional as well as permanent poor:—

	Total Amount Expended.	Valued Rental in 1843.	Pop. in 1841.	Poor.
Ardnamurchan,	£735 4 5	£12,310 13 4	5,581	151
Blair-Atholl,	300 0 0	11,846 10 8	2,231	55
Cromdale,	495 4 4	5,848 4 3	3,561	192
Duirinish,	342 8 4½	4,998 11 0	4,983	230
Glenelg,	278 9 4	6,642 3 1	2,729	95
Glenshiel,	81 8 0	3,014 1 7	745	24
Kilmallie,	838 4 1½	13,106 5 7	5,397	168
Kilmonivaig,	313 8 9½	12,745 7 7	2,791	141
Kilmorack,	423 15 10½	9,931 8 7	2,694	102
Mull, Kilninian,	179 4 9	7,900 6 0	4,335	140
Mull, Kilfinichen,	350 0 0	4,668 16 10	4,113	110
Kingussie,	380 18 7½	4,625 11 9	2,047	105
Kintail,	92 1 6	3,017 4 6	1,168	43
Lochalsh,	102 3 2	3,097 2 0	2,597	73
Lochcarron,	42 14 7	2,889 5 11½	1,960	44
Portree,	269 1 10	3,195 9 3	3,574	186
Strath,	245 11 7½	3,026 1 9	3,150	109

No. III.

The first notice taken by me of Lord Abinger's estate was on the occasion of the Queen's journey to Loch Laggan. A few of the large tenants took offence at the remarks which I then made; and at the instance of Mr. M'Donald, Fort-William, a meeting was called to vindicate Lord Abinger from what they were pleased to call "a very unjust and wanton attack in a certain public newspaper, called the *North British Mail*." As the result of that meeting, the following documents were published as an advertisement in some of the Edinburgh and Glasgow newspapers:—

MINUTES AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE TENANTS.

At Fort William, the 1st day of September, 1847, and at a meeting of the principal tenants on the estate of the Right Hon. Lord Abinger—

PRESENT,

John Cameron, Esq., of Corrychoillie,
John Kennedy, Esq., Leanachan,
Kenneth Kennedy, Esq., Leanachan,
Thomas M'Donald, Esq., Achindaul,
Donald Cameron, Esq., Camisky,
John M'Donald, Esq., Inverlochy, (for himself and the tenants of Killichonate,)
Mr. John Robertson, Inverlochy, (for Mr. D. Gordon Stewart.)

Mr. Thomas M'Donald was called to the Chair.

This meeting assembled for the purpose of taking into consideration certain severe attacks made upon the character and conduct of the Right Hon. Lord Abinger: and having done so, they came to the following unanimous

RESOLUTIONS.

1. That the meeting have read with unqualified disapprobation the virulent and unjustifiable attack upon Lord Abinger's character as a landlord, which appears in the *North British Daily Mail* of 24th August last.

2. That nearly all the land improvements which have taken place on the Lochaber estate have been made during the short period of six years for which Lord Abinger has been its proprietor; and that while it may be quite true that the cultivation of the soil has not been carried on to the extent which is desirable, it is entirely false to accuse his Lordship of "hatred to industry, or discouraging improvement."

3. That the principal farms on Lord Abinger's estate, with one single exception, are possessed under current leases, granted antecedent to his purchase, with the terms of which his Lordship could not interfere; and, as regards that exception, very extensive and judicious improvements are in progress upon it; whilst on every single farm on the estate some amelioration has been made by the tenants in possession.

4. That the meeting cannot too warmly dsclaim this attack upon Lord Abinger's character as a landlord, his Lordsihp having always behaved to his

tenantry in the kindest and most considerate manner, and there being between him and them the most cordial and entire good feeling.

5. That the statement, that the late Lord Abinger purchased "this Lochaber moss for a game preserve, and that the present owner devotes every inch of it most religiously to the same purpose," is a glaring and monstrous untruth. That great and distinguished man never interfered with the estate of Inverlochy; the management of which he left with his son, for whom it was purchased, and who has never since his occupancy removed or disturbed a single tenant. Moreover, it consists with the knowledge and experience of this meeting, that whilst his Lordship has excellent moors, he lets less of them, and gives comparatively less trouble to his tenants, than almost any other proprietor in the district; the whole extent from the river Nevis to the eastern boundary of the estate, with the magnificent range of mountains in the background, being let in sheep-farms, and there is just one gamekeeper on these bounds.

6. That the meeting strongly reprobates this unwarrantable and malicious interference between a landlord and his tenants; an interference rendered the more indiscreet and inexcusable because made in connection with her Majesty's tour through the Highlands.

T. M'DONALD, ESQ., TO MR. M'GREGOR, LORD ABINGER'S FACTOR.

Fort William, 1st Sept., 1847.

MY DEAR SIR—As Chairman of the meeting of Lord Abinger's tenants, held here this day, I beg to send you with this the Resolutions entered into by all who attended; and you can, if you please, transmit them to his Lordship, or hold them until he arrives in this country.

Believe me, yours very sincerely,
(Signed) THOS. M'DONALD.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD ABINGER TO THOMAS M'DONALD, ESQ.

Abinger Hall, Sept. 7, 1847.

DEAR SIR—I hold myself greatly obliged to you and to the other gentlemen, the principal tenants of the estate of Inverlochy, who signed the Resolutions I have just received.

Their sense of the malice and the untruth of the attacks made upon me by some writer in a Glasgow newspaper is expressed in a manner very gratifying to me; and I receive with great pleasure this spontaneous proof that no malice can impair the cordial esteem and confidence which so happily subsist between us. The consciousness of possessing such a body of just men for my firm friends is an addition to my comfort, in proportion as I value my good name more than any other possession I inherit from my lamented predecessors.

I enjoy in that consciousness a reward for the pains and the cost I have bestowed in what I think you fairly call the exclusive improvements of the lands of Inverlochy; and I am animated by it to proceed, unmoved by calumny, in the same course.

I will not dwell upon the details of those improvements, whether of planting, trenching, draining, or enclosing, as you are well acquainted with them; but, turning to another subject, I wish to take this occasion of mentioning,

that I should have been forward in giving whatever assistance I could, by my presence and that of all my tenants, on a recent occasion, if I had not conceived that retirement and quiet were the object of the visit with which the Highlands have been so greatly honoured. Whenever our loyal duties clearly call upon us to stand together, I shall ever be found ready.

I beg you will accept my best thanks for your kindness; and that you will communicate them also to the other gentlemen; and

I remain, dear Sir, yours very sincerely,

(Signed) ABINGER.

In reply to the above, I addressed the following to the Editor of the *Mail*:—

SIR,—Mr. M'Donald has already published, in an Edinburgh contemporary, the resolutions adopted by six of his co-tenants, condemnatory of the remarks, or, as they are pleased to call it, "the attack," which I felt it my duty to make upon the condition of Lord Abinger's property in Lochaber, in a letter published in the *Mail* of the 24th ult. It is somewhat singular, as you observe in your article of to-day, that these resolutions should have been concealed from public notice till it was known that I had left the district to which they refer. They were adopted at a meeting held on the 1st instant, and the letter which Lord Abinger has attached to them bears to have been written a full fortnight ago. If my attack was so calumnious as these resolutions represent it to be, why did Mr. M'Donald permit his chivalrous vindication of his landlord to remain so long unpublished? I cannot but think that it was intended by this delay to place me at a disadvantage when I should come to make a reply to the charges levelled against me in these resolutions. Had I not forearmed myself, it might have been necessary for me to have returned to Lochaber, and there elicited, by much difficulty and expense, the materials necessary to substantiate my original statements, and to repel the accusations made against my veracity. Luckily I used the precaution of making myself thoroughly acquainted with the condition of Lord Abinger's property in Lochaber before I left that part of the country; and I now request the patience and attention of your readers, while I give to the advertisement concocted by Lord Abinger's factor and seven of his tenants as complete a refutation as can be given to any public document.

That I may miss nothing of importance, I propose to take up the statements in the resolutions *seriatim*, and to number them as I proceed.

Firstly, I am charged, in general terms, with making "a virulent and unjustifiable attack on Lord Abinger's character as a landlord." My reply to this is simple. Lord Abinger keeps a beautiful and most improveable tract of country under moss and heather—a course which deprives the people born on that soil of their natural subsistence, and the nation at large of valuable resources. The press, I maintain, is entitled to condemn such conduct in a landlord. At a period when the Highland population is living upon the charitable donations of the public, and when the commerce of the country itself is reeling under the effects of scarcity, the press is not only entitled—it is solemnly bound to do so; therefore my attack cannot be called "unjustifiable." As to its being "virulent," I cannot see how that epithet can be applied to an honest censure passed upon a system which is no less injurious to his Lordship than to the people at large.

Secondly, It is said that "nearly all the land improvement which has taken place on the Lochaber estate has been made during the short period of six years for which Lord Abinger has been its proprietor." I never asserted that it had not. The purport of my letter was, that during these six years Lord Abinger had kept a large amount of good land in a state of waste; and it is no answer to say that nearly all the improvement which has taken place on the estate has been done under his Lordship's proprietorship. Lord Abinger's predecessors may have been as bad improvers as himself, and if they allowed good land to lie waste, that does not justify his Lordship in following the same course, or a course only a shade or two better. So far from concealing that some improvements had taken place on the property, I drew special attention to several cases in which the moss had been reclaimed with the greatest success. I alluded to Auchindaul, to M'Diarmid's croft, and to the allotment occupied by Lord Abinger's shepherd, as parts of the estate which had been fertilised by a praiseworthy expenditure of capital and labour. And the success which had attended these cases of improvement was instanced to show the inexcusableness of Lord Abinger in allowing the large part of the estate occupied by himself to lie under moss. For it is to Lord Abinger's farm that my letter of the 24th ult. had special reference. The seven tenants pass resolutions, in which they talk of improvements made by tenants in possession, and on this farm and the other farm, and adroitly endeavour to have all these placed in the mind of the reader to the credit of Lord Abinger. It is obvious, however, that there ought to be a wide distinction made between improvements effected by his Lordship and those effected by his tenants. The principal improvements observable on the estate have been effected by tenants under leases granted by Lord Aboyne, and for which Lord Abinger is entitled to no credit. This fact led me to infer that, had the property remained in the hands of Lord Aboyne, it is probable that the work of reclamation would have proceeded with vigour, seeing that the leases granted by that nobleman were just so many experiments upon the improvable qualities of the soil. This inference may be too favourable to Lord Aboyne; but it certainly is not unjust to Lord Abinger, as his Lordship has neither granted any new leases of the moss to improving tenants, nor reclaimed it by his own capital.

Thirdly, In connection with the above statement, the seven resolutionists affirm that "it is entirely false to accuse his Lordship of 'hatred to industry, or discouraging improvement.'" There is no such phrase as this in my letter of the 24th ult., or in any succeeding remarks on this subject which have been published in the *Mail*. It is not merely a garbled but an invented quotation, ascribable to a little of that falsity of imagination on the part of the seven which they impute in such unmeasured terms to others. The poverty and wretchedness of the labourers and crofters on the Lochaber estate, when contrasted with the degree of comfort with which Lord Abinger remunerates his gamekeeper —a remuneration to which that official is no doubt fully entitled—is described in my letter of the 24th ult. as having the effect of infusing a "hatred of industry" into the hearts of the people; but no such thing has ever appeared in the *Mail* as an accusation against his Lordship of being personally actuated by "hatred of industry." Neither have I directly charged his Lordship with "discouraging improvement," though I feel that I might now do so with the utmost truth and justice. In my letter of the 24th ult., I blamed his Lordship merely

for doing nothing to advance improvement; but is it not a direct discouragement of improvement to prohibit the crofters from burning the heather off the hills for which they are paying rent, and which yield the only pasture that can be got by their cows? My attention was attracted to a green spot on the braes where the heather was set on fire, *by chance*, as the crofters say; and there plenty of good sweet grass was growing, while all around there was nothing but a brown unkindly covering of heath. The match has only to be applied to that heath in order to cover the whole hill with the same rich pasture; but Lord Abinger steps in, and by a word of power prevents this simple and fertilizing operation. Will the seven resolutionists say whether his Lordship, in so doing, encourages or discourages improvement? It is worthy of notice that, in the same resolution in which they declare it to be "entirely false to accuse his Lordship of discouraging improvement," it is admitted "to be quite true that the cultivation of the soil has not been carried on to the extent which is desirable." By this confession they yield nearly all that I have affirmed, and all that is most important to contend for. That Lord Abinger owns a tract of soil the cultivation of which is "desirable," and that he has hitherto failed to cultivate it himself, or to cause it to be cultivated by others, is just the sum and substance of all that I have stated; and it is very gratifying to find its truth acknowledged by the same mouths which attempt to load me with a charge of falsehood.

Fourthly, It is stated that "the principal farms on Lord Abinger's estate, with one single exception, are possessed under current leases, granted antecedent to his purchase, with the terms of which his Lordship could not interfere." I stated distinctly in my letter of the 24th ult., that certain farms on the estate were held under leases granted by the Marquis of Huntly, so that this announcement must have some other object than to contradict any assertion made by me. The seven wise men of Lochaber intend, perhaps, to transfer from Lord Abinger to the Marquis of Huntly's leases the odium of any mismanagement or oppression which may be found to exist upon the estate; but they will find this to be impossible. It is chiefly on the farms held under Lord Aboyne's leases that any reclamation of waste land has taken place. If these improvements, therefore, are attributable to the leases, it is Lord Aboyne and not Lord Abinger that must be thanked for them. But if the leases are unfavourable in some respects, as I believe they are, to improvements, as well as unjust to the tenants, it is a weak and ridiculous subterfuge to say that Lord Abinger cannot alter or interfere with the injurious, any more than the beneficial, part of their terms. What is to hinder him? The tenants are certainly not likely to object to their privileges being extended, or to those prohibitions being removed which prevent them from deriving the advantages from the soil which it is capable of yielding, even though the change should cast a little disrespect on the integrity of Lord Aboyne's leases. The crofters of Unachan will offer no objection, I dare say, to his Lordship building them new dwelling-houses and offices, though their lease compels them to build them for themselves; or to his granting them a few acres of good improvable land, in lieu of the impracticable moss of which they have found one-half their crofts to consist. It is perfectly easy for Lord Abinger to do a vast amount of good on the farms held under lease; and good, moreover, which the existing conditions of the leases prevent; while, as regards those

farms of which the tenants have no leases, as well as that part of the estate which is occupied by the owner himself, the path of beneficence is quite open to his Lordship. The resolutionists say that it is the "principal farms" which are under lease; but why are leases granted of the principal farms only? The poor crofters of Brachlatter, Kilmonivaig, Tommaharrich, and Dalavenve, have no leases; and yet Lord Abinger has been six years their proprietor. Is tenancy-at-will the mark of an improving landlord? This question of leases opens up a deplorable chapter in the history of Highland landlordism. The large farmers have all leases; fine dwelling-houses and substantial farm-steadings are built for them at the landlord's expense; and the finest parts of the land are included in their sheep-walks. But the poor crofters are located on the poorest and coarsest parts of the soil; they are obliged to erect their own mud hovels; and the lands on which they cannot enter without building habitable erections, and from which they cannot expect to extract the scantiest subsistence without a most lavish and unwearied expenditure of labour, are held by them without any lease, or any securer tie than the sufferance of their landlord, or the verbal promise of his factor.

Fifthly, It is said that the attack on Lord Abinger cannot be too warmly disclaimed, because his Lordship has "always behaved to his tenantry in the kindest manner," and between him and them there is "the most cordial and entire good feeling." My letter of the 24th ult. did not contain a single word affecting Lord Abinger's treatment of his tenantry. It regarded solely the injurious effects of his Lordship's waste ground upon the interests of the people generally; and Mr. Thomas M'Donald and his six co-tenants committed an act of gross presumption in meddling with a matter with which they had nothing whatever to do. Admitting that Lord Abinger has been very kind and considerate to Mr. Thomas and his six friends, is this any reason why no notice should be taken of the improvability of his Lordship's moss, and the good which would be diffused throughout society by its cultivation? It is certainly a most glaring act of vanity for seven Lochaber farmers to push forward their private feelings and interests as a counterpoise to the weightiest considerations of the public good. I would recommend Lord Abinger not to place too much reliance on what the seven tell him respecting the feeling of his tenants. Such conceited gentry are very apt to mistake their own feelings for the feelings of the tenantry at large.

Sixthly, It is alleged that it was "a monstrous untruth" for me to say that the late Lord Abinger purchased "this Lochaber Moss for a game preserve, and that the present owner devotes every inch of it most religiously to the same purpose." Which is the untruth? The statement that the late Lord Abinger purchased the moss for a game preserve, or the other statement that his son devotes it to that purpose? The resolutionists would fain deny the truth of both these statements, and the way in which they do so is a fine specimen of verbal jugglery. "The late Lord Abinger," say they, "did not purchase the moss for a game preserve—that great and distinguished man purchased it for his son!" The evasion involved in this reply is truly artistical. But when you ask them, Does not the present Lord Abinger devote the moss to the purpose of a game preserve? the sleight-of-hand with which they dispose of it is equally clever. "No! he does not," say they; "he never, since his occupancy, removed or disturbed a single tenant!" Why,

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...lings appeared in the *Times*, from which I extract the following ...—"The first resolution was proposed by Lord Abinger, who ... a high eulogium upon the character of the Highland peasantry, ... appropriate terms alluded to the condition of his estates on the ...oast of Inverness-shire. The noble Lord stated that he was pre... to adopt the views of the society, and had already sent down to ...isher a gentleman whom he was proud to call his friend, and whose ...tion would be closely directed to the interests and prosperity of the ...ts placed under his Lordship's care." The leading objects of the ...ltic Society are to improve the husbandry of the crofters, to ex... to the present wretched cottar system, and to improve the dwell... of the peasantry; and to these Lord Abinger not only declares his ...sion, but considers them to be so much needed on his own estate, ... to send down a friend for the purpose of promoting them. I could ...have desired a more satisfactory proof of the success of my labours, ... more complete refutation of the charge made against me by Mr. ...Donald and his six co-tenants.

...M OF NINETEEN YEARS' LEASE GRANTED TO LORD ABINGER'S CROFTERS ON THE FARM OF UNACHAN.

Fort William, 3d August, 1835.

(Name of Crofter)———————
Residing at———————

As authorised by the Earl of Aboyne, I hereby set to you the Croft, No. —, ...nachan, as shown on the plan made up by Mr. Morrison, land-surveyor, in ... month of March last, and which plan is subscribed by me as relative ...reto, and that for the space of nineteen years from and after the term of ...Whitsunday last, at the yearly term of ———, payable at two terms in the ...ear—Martinmas and Whitsunday—by equal moieties. The souming of every ...kind to be kept by you on the said croft is on no account to exceed three cows ...and one horse, and the horse is to be turned off the croft during four months ...of every year. You are hereby expressly taken bound to convert in a proper ...and sufficient manner at least one half acre of the waste ground and moss of ...the said ... arable land yearly, till the whole is taken in. You shall be ...entitled to ... ameliorations, at your removal, for such a dwelling-house as ...you ... provided the same is done according to a plan, to be approved ...of ...prietor or his factor, such allowance not to exceed the sum of ... ...ring. You are expressly taken bound to observe and conform ...the printed rules and regulations of the estate, a copy of which, ... factor, is herewith delivered to you, and to enclose the said croft, ...the enclosure in a sufficient state at your removal; and, lastly, it ...expressly declared and conditioned, that you shall forfeit this lease, ...the proprietor shall be entitled to remove you from the said croft, at

the first term of Whitsunday, in any one year in which you shall fail in improving the said one half acre of land, or in which you shall keep an oversouming, contravene any of the printed regulations, or any of the conditions of this set.

(Signed) JN. MACGREGOR.

CROFTER'S ACCEPTANCE OF LEASE.

Unachan, 7th Sept., 1835.

I hereby accept of the within offer of lease, and that under the conditions and stipulations therein mentioned, as well as under the conditions and stipulations contained in the printed regulations therein referred to, a copy of which I hereby acknowledge to have received.

(Signed Red Rob or Black Sandy, &c., as the crofter's Gaelic designation may be.)

ARTICLES AND CONDITIONS OF LEASE.

The following is a copy of the printed regulations referred to in the above form of lease:—

1. That in case of any controversy with the neighbouring heritors or their tenants respecting marches, it shall be in the power of the proprietor or his factor to settle these marches without the consent of the tenants, they being only entitled to compensation for their loss, as the same shall be ascertained by two arbiters mutually chosen.

2. That if any controversy respecting marches shall arise betwixt tacksman and tacksman of the respective farms bounding with one another, all such difference shall be referred and submitted to the said proprietor, who may either settle the same by a writing under his own hands, or delegate a power by mandate to his factor on the lands for the time being, or any other judicial person in the district, whose determination in writing shall be final.

3. That the proprietor shall have liberty to enclose and preserve the stools of wood upon the respective farms, and also to enclose and plant any other grounds that he may judge suitable for that purpose, granting such compensation for the grounds so occupied as shall be awarded by two arbiters to be mutually chosen.

4. That every tacksman and tenant shall be accountable for the whole growing timber and wood of every kind upon his possession; and in case they, by themselves or servants, shall be found guilty of cutting, peeling, or destroying any wood, or guilty of kindling or raising muirburn, later than the time fixed by Act of Parliament, after being convicted on sufficient proof by the judge ordinary of the county, or his substitute, they shall forfeit the benefit of their lease.

5. That, whereas there are many rivers and burns running through different parts of the lordship, that are occasionally very destructive to the adjacent grounds, particularly in high floods; therefore, in order to defend the fields from the effect of these, it is expressly stipulated that every tenant paying a rent of fifty pounds and under shall be obliged, when regularly charged by the ground officer, to work for six days with one man, at said rivers, any season of

the year (seed time and harvest excepted), for the customary working hours, or pay a penalty of three shillings sterling for each different day; and every tenant renting more than fifty pounds to work nine days, on the same conditions.

6. The proprietor reserves all the peat mosses, with power to regulate and divide them as circumstances may render necessary; and all the tenants and possessors of farms are to be obliged, in future, to cast their peats and fuel in a regular manner, and on the allotments set apart for their respective farms, by the moss grieve, carrying the banks equally forward, without potting, under the penalty of twenty shillings sterling for each transgression. No tenant is allowed to sell peats, or grant a liberty of cutting peats, on his possession, to any other proprietor or his tenants, under penalty of forfeiting his lease on conviction.

7. The proprietor reserves all the fishings, game, and all mines and quarries, with the liberty to search for mines and quarries, and work them, without the tenant's consent, on paying the surface damage, as the same shall be ascertained by two arbiters mutually chosen; and the tenants are hereby taken bound to use all diligence in preserving the fishings and game, and preventing poaching.

8. The tenants are bound to accede to all regulations and measures of public police which are, or shall be, established by the proprietor, for the more orderly management of the estate and the general good of the country; and, in particular, they shall be obliged to employ fox-hunters, as may be judged necessary, and contribute to the payment of their wages, in proportion to their real rents.

9. The tenant is bound not to subset or assign his lease without the permission, in writing, of the proprietor. The tack is to go to the lawful heirs-male of his own body, according to seniority in the first instance; failing them, to the heirs-females by the same rule, without division; and failing them, to his nearest male heir whatsoever, on his finding security for punctual payment of five years' rents; but the tenant is allowed, notwithstanding, by a regular deed under his hand, to select any one of his children that he may incline, in preference to another, to succeed him in the lease, who will be recognised and received by the proprietor as tenant, provided the lease is not burdened with provisions to other children, but descends to the individual named free and unincumbered.

10. And whereas much inconvenience has been experienced in cases of bankruptcy from the interference of creditors, who have frequently insisted for and obtained possession of the farm, even where all assignees, whether legal or voluntary, had been excluded in the usual style, it is expressly stipulated that when a tenant becomes and is declared bankrupt, his lease shall terminate, and the farm revert back to the proprietor, to be at his disposal; but that there may be no ground to complain of this as being unjust, whatever surplus rent is obtained for the farm, when let anew, shall be accounted for annually when recovered, during the balance of the lease, to the creditors or their trustee, or an equivalent, as may be agreed on, paid in one sum for all the years unexpired.

11. The tenants are expressly prohibited from keeping any goats, or permitting any of their dependents to do so, on any part of the lands under wood, either planted or natural, under the penalty of paying £5 for each goat so kept, attour the damage that may be sustained.

12. The tenant shall be bound to warn off and dismiss from his lands, at the

first term after he is required by the proprietor or his factor, any cottar, subtenant, or servant, accused of stealing wood, of killing salmon, of poaching, or any felonious crime, or harbouring persons guilty of such offences.

13. The tenant and his heirs shall be bound to preserve in good order all the houses, steadings, and offices, built or to be built upon the lands for his use, either by himself or the proprietor, and shall leave them in good repair at the end of the lease. In like manner he shall be bound to preserve or uphold the dykes or fences built or to be built on the grounds, and leave them in good tenantable order at his removal; and in order that the tenant may, at his entry, receive the houses and fences in the state of repair in which the outgoing tenant is bound to leave them, he shall then concur with the proprietor in appointing proper persons to inspect them, and whatever sum shall be recovered from the out-going tenant for putting them in repair shall be applied by the proprietor to that purpose.

14. The tenant shall be bound to insure against loss by fire all the houses, steadings, and offices, covered with slates, and shall regularly pay the premium and duty, and produce to the factor the receipt for the same at Martinmas yearly, and the factor shall mark such production on the back of the receipt to be granted to the tenant for his rent; and in case the tenant shall omit or neglect to make such regular payment, he shall be liable to sustain any loss that may be thereby incurred, by accident or wilful fire, and to erect of new the buildings destroyed.

15. The tenant shall have no right to claim damage from the proprietor, or deduction of rent, on account of roads, either public or parochial, being carried through the lands, without prejudice to any claim in law against the public, county, or parochial funds.

16. The proprietor reserves full right and liberty for himself, his factor, and others appointed by him at all hands, during the lease, to enter upon the lands and premises for the proper care of the woods and due management of the estate, and also to examine the condition of the farm, horses, dykes, and fences; and if any of these shall be found in disrepair, the proprietor or his factor shall be entitled to require the tenant, in writing, to make the necessary repair within one month; and if the tenant shall neglect the same within the time limited, or refuse to make such repairs, the proprietor shall then have power to make the same, and the tenant be bound to pay the expense thereof at the next term, along with his rent, on the proprietor or his factor producing his accounts thereafter.

17. All additional rents to be paid in certain events are on no account to be considered as penal, but as the express agreement of parties, any law or custom to the contrary notwithstanding. And it is hereby declared, that the proprietor, receiving payment of the ordinary stipulated rent, and discharging the same, shall be no bar to his demanding the additional rents of any preceding years of the lease.

18. In case any party refuse or delay to name an arbiter in the various cases above mentioned, when specially required in writing to do so, or in case the arbiters differ in opinion, and refuse or delay to name an oversman after being required in writing to do so, it shall be competent, upon the lapse of one month after such notice, to apply to the Judge Ordinary to name an arbiter or overs-