

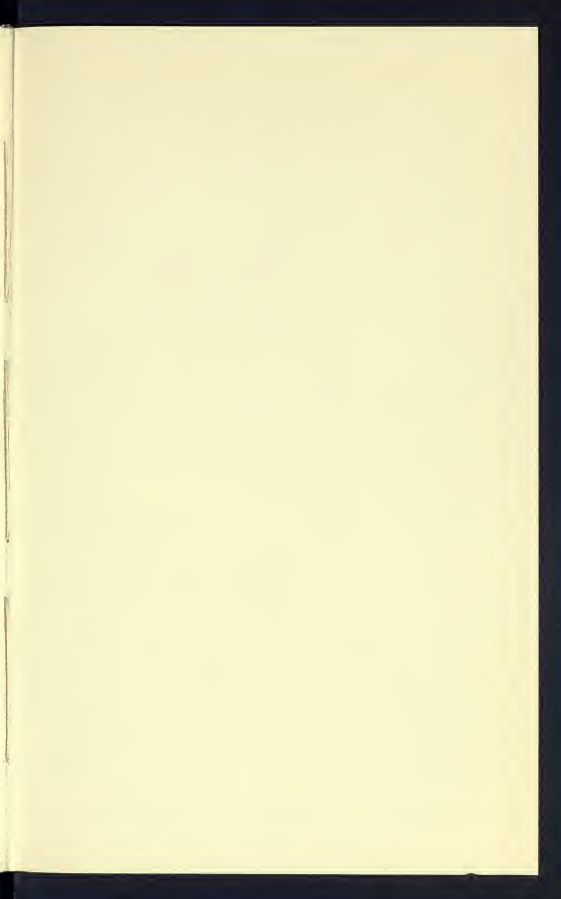
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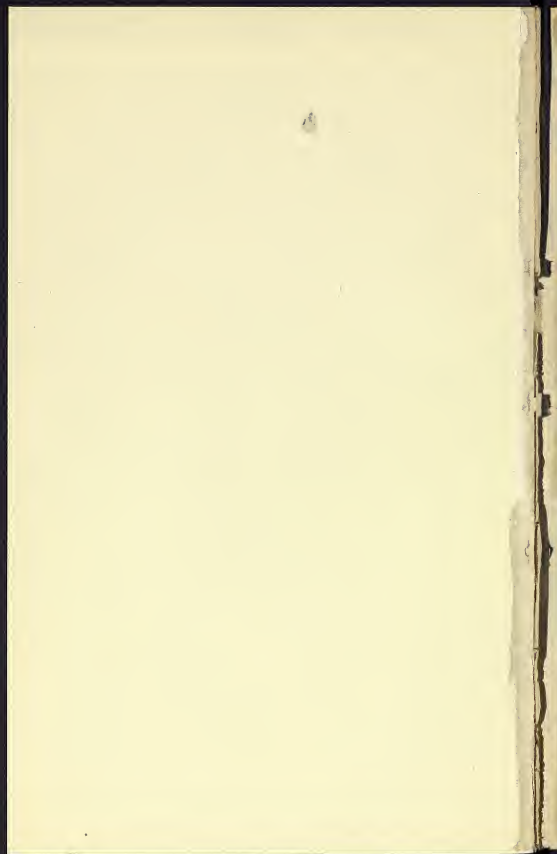
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Wm. H. Murray

“LANDLORDS’ RENTS”

AND

“TENANTS’ PROFITS;”

OR

CORN-FARMING IN SCOTLAND.

BY DAVID MONRO, Esq.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

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TO

HIS GRACE

THE DUKE OF MONTROSE,

PRESIDENT OF THE HIGHLAND AND AGRICULTURAL
SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND.

MY LORD DUKE,

A PAMPHLET has been lately published, entitled "High Farming under Liberal Covenants, the best Substitute for Protection," which is calculated, I think, to mislead landed proprietors as to the value of their estates, and tenant farmers, at least inexperienced ones, in the cultivation of their farms. I take the liberty of addressing to you, my Lord Duke, the President of the Highland Society of Scotland, the great farming society of the country, a few remarks on what I conceive to be fallacies, and dangerous ones too, in Mr Caird's pamphlet, and to add a few observations of my own on what I really conceive to be, in these days of free trade, the probable profits to be derived from corn-farming in Scotland, and what really may be done for the farming interest to enable them to bear up

against the difficulties they have now to contend with. It is certainly the duty of every landlord and farmer in this country to examine well a system under which a farm of 260 acres without, it is said, any peculiar advantage of soil, climate, or situation, yields an annual average gross produce of £2518, or very nearly £10 an acre, and a clear profit to the farmer, it is said, of £1000 sterling per annum. Such results, in a business which has not hitherto been found particularly money-making, must command attention, and the fortunate inventor of the new science cannot but have many followers. I believe, however, it will be found that page 15 of the tract will explain the whole matter, and a careful examination of the rotation there stated will dispel the whole delusion of this Californian agriculture.

The farm of Auchness in Wigtonshire, Mr Caird says, is farmed in the following rotation, which I would call a four-course rotation—viz.:

		Acres.
1st Year,	Turnips,	55
2d ,,	Wheat,	55
3d ,,	Italian Ryegrass,	55
4th "	In Oats, 30 }	55
	In Potatoes, 25 }	55
		—
		220
	In Potatoes,	40 reclaimed moss.
		—
	Total,	260

Mr Caird does not state the crops or money he receives annually from the four-course rotation; but he very ingeniously lumps them altogether in the grand total of £2518. I must, however, ask Mr Caird to explain the peculiarity of this rotation, which has four divisions always running the fair legitimate four-course

shift, (except that he takes potatoes after grass,) and into the bargain has a piece of moss-land of 40 acres, apparently *always* carrying potatoes. Mr Caird, indeed, says "the reclaimed moss-land is not cultivated in rotation with the rest of the farm, as for some years it has been found most profitable to take *successive* crops of potatoes on it." Doubtless it has been found most profitable to do so, and it has also been the means of propagating a delusion of £10 an acre being got from arable land, and a profit of £4 an acre being made by the farmer of it. We must, however, examine this four-course rotation; and, as Mr Caird has not put down the values opposite the crops, I will take the liberty of doing so for him, and he will not have to complain of illiberality, either in crops or money. To begin with his turnip crop. He has 55 acres of turnips. We will put him down for £330 for them, or £6 per acre, though doubtless Mr M'Culloch, like others, has in some years not made £2 an acre of them, unless indeed cattle and sheep in Wigtonshire are sold *warranted* to leave a profit. Next his 55 acres of wheat, in free-trade times, he won't object to be put down at £12 per acre, or £660 for the 55 acres. Then his 55 acres of clover and pasture—£5 per acre is very fair payment for grazing cattle or sheep, and I wish we could often get it, this £270; 30 acres of oats, 9 quarters per acre, at 20s., £270. Thus—

55	acres of	Turnips,	.	.	.	.	£330
55	...	Wheat,	.	.	.	.	660
55	...	Clover,	.	.	.	.	270
30	...	Oats,	.	.	.	.	270
<hr/>							
195	acres.						£1530

I hope I may not have understated the crops got by

Mr M'Culloch : it was indispensable for me to put supposed values upon them, as he did not state them, in order to bring out how his great profits are made. We have thus, in estimating his corn crops, and indeed all his crops excepting potatoes, arrived at the sum of £1530, leaving £1000 to be still accounted for. And how, my Lord, do you think this is done? By putting 25 acres of his leas or grass under potatoes, and laying 40 acres of moss-land, *year after year*, under potatoes! In this alone lies the grand secret of Mr Caird's high and most remunerative farming, growing most extensively the most uncertain root known, under a system quite opposed to the acknowledged rules of good farming, by which the same plant or grain should be as seldom as possible repeated on the same land; 65 acres of potatoes upon a 260-acre farm, 40 acres of which to be perpetually growing them, appears to me to be one of the most extraordinary propositions ever made to the agriculturists of Britain; and, though wishing to avoid a harsh expression, I cannot help denouncing such a scheme as a most unfair means of attempting to show a large return from a farm, unheard-of profits to the farmer, and advantages hitherto unknown to the consumer. Not much more unfair would it be in me, or any extensive farmer, to lay down all his farm in wheat, and, were it in such a year as 1846-7, to announce, with a flourish of trumpets, to the farming world, that now, under a new system, £10,000 would be the gross proceeds of a farm yearly! Some, indeed great, merit is due to the farmer of Auchness, for his house-feeding plan, his great expenditure in the purchase of manures, and general high farming; but, except the enormous extent of the potato cultivation, the least to be depended upon of all crops, there is nothing materially different

in his management from what prevails in the best-cultivated farms throughout Scotland. The effects, however, of this essay of Mr Caird's, will probably be, that landlords will become discontented with the rents they receive, when told that such profits can be made by farming; and, in attempting to follow his system, farmers may suffer great losses; for, were potatoes cultivated to the extent Mr Caird recommends, and to thrive, what a drug they would be; and were they to fail, (as would probably be the case,) what a loss to the farmers, and the country generally, from the great extent of ground laid under them, and the consequent displacement of other and more certain crops! I think, as a set-off against Mr Caird's potato-farming, it will not be ill-timed to state the result of twenty years' experience as to expenditure in farming; as also a statement of the crops got on an average of many years back, converted into money at present prices, the farm in an average climate and average soil of Scotland; and every man can then judge for himself as to landlords' rents and tenants' profits under a system of farming which has taken root in Scotland, and which, I venture to say, will not be easily displaced by the novelty of Auchness. One begins to be a little suspicious of the extraordinary profits one hears of, made by farming. I look upon the majority of them as clap-traps, unattainable by the farming community, either from the exorbitant expenditure, or advantages of situation entirely exceptional to the average arable farms of either England or Scotland. For instance, how many farms in Britain can command 500 loads of sea-weed, or 2000 loads of peat-moss, as the farm of Auchness does? I hold that, in bringing forward the example of a farm to in some degree regulate the rents and show the profits of

farming, one should be taken as nearly as possible possessing the average advantages of the country in situation, climate, and soil; and that it is unfair to delude landlords and tenants of inexperience by bringing forward, as instances of what the whole country should be, and might be, farms with great natural advantages, under an impossible and impracticable system of cropping. I think that a correct statement of the average annual income and expenditure of a farm, such as farms are over the country in well-farmed districts, is a desideratum in agricultural statistics. One hears continually remarks by landlords, inexperienced in agricultural matters, on the great profits that must be made by farmers. One says, "What enormous profits Farmer Dodds must be making. I passed his farm the other day, and saw a field of wheat which my factor assures me cannot be worth less than £250." Another says, "My tenant Hobbs must be actually coining money, for I am informed that he the other day sold 20 bullocks at £20 a-piece." Now, neither of these gentlemen knew more about the expense at which the wheat was grown, and the bullocks fatted, than did the bullocks themselves: they were under the impression that the principal items of deduction from the apparently great gross proceeds of a farm were their comparatively small rents. Nor are landlords the only deluded parties; one half the farmers, who are competitors for land, and spoil the business for those who really understand it, as well as injure themselves, are equally ignorant of the outgoings of a farm till they acquire the knowledge, to their astonishment, by dear-bought experience. Now, farming is too important a business to be thus treated as a haphazard, jump-in-the-dark affair: it is the great business,

by far the most important business, of the country; and it invariably punishes those severely who attempt to practise it and treat it with neglect. The day is past for ever when it was thought and said that any man could drive a gig and manage a farm: broken limbs have falsified the one assertion, and broken purses the other. But though agriculture is now looked upon with a little more respect than formerly, still, from the desire natural to man to cultivate mother earth, many undertaking the business are utterly ignorant not only of the ordinary and primary rules of farming, but of the outlay required, and innumerable cases of disappointment and ruin are the consequence. A kind of beacon to warn such of their danger is, I think, required; and it is with this view that I submit the following statement of the annual expenditure of a farm of 464 acres Scots, in a northern county of Scotland, but in the average circumstances of the country as to climate, soil, distance from markets, &c. &c. The district of country in which it is situated is not quite so early as East Lothian, nor is probably the soil so fertile, but it excels the climate of the higher districts of the south of Scotland in fully as great a degree as it falls short of that of the lowest districts of the Lothians, the Carse of Stirling, or that of Falkirk; so that I am entitled to call it an average climate of the country. On this farm there is nothing peculiar in the mode of cropping but such as prevails on well-cultivated farms throughout the country: 226 acres of it are farmed on the six-course rotation, and 238 on the five or two-years grass. All descriptions of grain and roots commonly cultivated in Scotland enter into the rotation; and though situated as far north as lat. $57\frac{1}{2}$, from its being only 20 feet above the sea-level, the

climate is probably better than that of the average of the arable land of Scotland.

EXPENSE OF CULTIVATING A FARM CONTAINING 464 SCOTCH ARABLE ACRES.

Money-wages of greive, shepherd, cattle-man, and nine ploughmen, }	£118	5	0
Meal for ploughmen, 88 bolls, }	88	0	0
Milk for ploughmen, &c., }	28	0	0
Coals for ploughmen, &c., }	8	0	0
Day-labourers for the year, }	145	1	1
Wheat seed for 83 acres, 45 qrs., at 40s. per qr., }	90	0	0
Barley seed for 36 acres, 23 qrs., at 26s. per qr., }	29	10	0
Oat seed for 83 acres, 63 qrs., at 20s. per qr., }	63	0	0
Bean seed for 15 acres, 9 qrs., at 27s. per qr., }	12	3	0
Clover and ryegrass seeds for 84 acres, at 12s. per qr., <i>new</i> }	50	8	0
Turnip seeds for 45 acres, }	6	15	0
Harvesting crop, }	122	0	0
Horse corn in the year, 100 qrs., at 16s., }	80	0	0
Smith's account for year, }	30	0	0
Saddler's account for year, }	10	0	0
Carpenter's account for year, }	10	0	0
Incidental expenses, such as tear and wear of sacks, barn implements, shipping of stock and corn, &c. &c., }	25	0	0
Interest of money in live stock and farm implements, which depreciate in value, at 7½ per cent on £1300, }	97	10	0
Interest of money on stock, such as manure, fallow, grass, seed corn, &c., which do not depreciate in value, 5 per cent on £1300, }	65	0	0
	£1078	12	1
7 tons of guano for turnips, (45 acres,) 3 cwts. per acre, }	70	0	0
7 tons guano, at £10, }			
Lime for 20 acres fallow each year, upon an average of 19 years, 30 bolls per acre, at 2s. per boll, £3 per acre, }	60	0	0
Farmers' poor-rates, 8d. per pound of rent, £700, }	23	6	0
	£1231	18	1

This sum, divided over the 464 acres, gives the annual expense of labouring each acre of the farm, which is £2, 12s. 8d. per Scotch acre, without any charge for rent. In order to give landlords the advantage of fix-

118
88
28
8
145
122
30
10
25
48

ing what that item of rent should be, I submit the following statement of crops, got, on an average of many years back, at present prices:—

SIX-COURSE ROTATION.

45 acres of turnips, £5 per acre,	£225	0	0
36 acres of barley, 6 qrs. per acre, at 23s. per qr.,	248	8	0
39 acres in hay, all used by horses,	nil		
38 acres in oats, 7 qrs. per acre, at 20s. per qr.,	266	0	0
15 acres in beans, 4 qrs. per acre, at 27s. per qr.,	81	0	0
16 acres in potatoes, tares, &c., consumed by people (and horses,	nil		
37 acres in wheat. 5 qrs. per acre, at 40s. per qr.,	370	0	0
226 acres	£1190	8	0

FIVE-COURSE ROTATION.

48 acres in bare fallow,	nil			
47 acres in wheat, 5 qrs. per acre, at 40s.,	£470	0	0	
47 acres in pasture, at £2 per acre,	94	0	0	
51 acres in pasture, at £1 per acre,	51	0	0	
45 acres in oats, 5 qrs. per acre, at 20s.,	225	0	0	
464 total acres.	Total proceeds,	£2030	8	0
Deduct annual expenditure,		1231	18	1
Left to pay rent and farmers' profit,		£ 798	9	11

I must here make a few remarks on the above statement of crops. The practical farmer will observe that I have given the farm no credit for the hay or potato crops; but my reason for this is, that I have made no charge *against* the farm for the hay used by horses, or for the potatoes used by the ploughmen, &c., nor for the tares used by the working stock. No more hay, potatoes, or tares being grown than what are consumed by the working stock, it was unnecessary to enter any sum for these in the returns of the produce of the farm, as the same amount would have to be entered in the statement of expenses, and would merely have the effect of

swelling the figures without altering the result one penny; and latterly, in particular, the potato having proved a crop so extremely uncertain, it appeared to me best to omit it altogether. It will also probably be said, that, in the five-course rotation, bare fallows should be superseded by turnips; and, doubtless, were the soil of a lighter description, such would be the case; but I have found, as probably other strong land farmers have done, that a bare fallow, followed by wheat, will, on that description of soil, even after having been drained, pay better than turnips followed by barley. The returns from both in money may be the same. For instance, the wheat crop, after a bare fallow, will generally give £10 an acre; the turnips, followed by barley, say turnips per acre £4, 10s.; barley 5 qrs. per acre, at 23s.=£5, 15s.; together, £10, 5s. But, then, the preparation of the land for turnips, the extra manure required, the excessive working of the land after turnips to fit it for the barley crop, all these throw the advantages altogether on the side of the bare fallow and wheat, particularly when a sufficiency of turnips can be grown on the farm without encroaching on the bare fallow. This, of course, only refers to the heavier description of soils; but even on turnip soils, and where turnips are uniformly taken instead of bare fallows, the aggregate value of the crops of the five-years rotation will not be found to exceed that of the above rotation of bare fallow, wheat, two grasses, and oats. If this statement of the produce and expenditure of a farm be correct, we can then come pretty near what rent the arable land of the country can bear, and what profits in these times farmers are likely to have from their business. Total proceeds from 464 Scotch acres, £2030, 8s.; deduct annual expenditure, £1231, 18s. 1d.; left to pay landlord's rent and tenant's profit, £798, 9s. 11d. Now,

a very common rent in Scotland, and perhaps more under than above that of the average of the country, is 30s. per Scotch acre. This, over 464 acres, will give the sum of £696 as rent, which, deducted from £798, the excess of income over expenditure of the farm, will leave £102 as the farmer's profit, or 4s. 4d. per acre.* A startling difference this, certainly, from that made by the tenant of Auchness; but, notwithstanding, I venture to say, that this statement will be confirmed by the majority of Scottish farmers; and I will be so bold as to affirm that, since the fall in the price of farm produce, for one farmer who has made more profit than this, fifty have made less. I have, in this statement, omitted altogether casualties to which farmers are liable, such as destruction of crops by hail, rain, wind, and floods, pleura among cattle, and rot among sheep, and the ever-recurring accidents to the working stock of a farm.

I have thus endeavoured to lay before the farming community, the landlords in particular, a plain, unvarnished statement of the *bona fide* income and expenditure of a farm at present prices, present wages, and present rents, in an average soil and climate of Scotland, without any advantage of markets, or any other peculiarity in the situation to raise the value of land; and I trust it may have the effect of showing landlords, unacquainted with agriculture, what they should really

Since the above was written, wheat has fallen in price in this neighbourhood from 40s. to 35s. per quarter; barley from 23s. to 21s.; and oats from 20s. to 18s. The gross proceeds are thus reduced from £2030, 8s. to £1674, 10s. The expense of working the farm £1231, 18s. 1d., and the rent £696, remaining as before, without any diminution, except the reduced value of the seed sown, which will make a difference of £20, 13s., the account will then stand thus:—

Gross proceeds,	£1674 10 0
Expenses and rent,	1907 5 1
Loss to a tenant farmer by farming this farm,	£32 15 1

get for their lands, and inexperienced tenants what they should really pay. And if this letter should have the effect of imparting information to either class, I shall have my reward. What appears to me as nationally desirable, is not apparently great returns of produce from impracticable, almost impossible, rotations of cropping, (the result of an outlay of money more fitted for millionnaires than tenant farmers,) but a full development of the capabilities of the soil by the application to it of such an amount of capital as will remunerate the farmer. We could grow the sugar-cane, and cultivate the grape in Scotland, but would it *pay* to do so? In like manner, would it pay either to grow a crop of wheat of probably 3 qrs. per acre, by an expenditure of £4 or £5? I look with suspicion upon all enormous returns from extravagant cultivation; buying the crop by the outlay on manures is not the business of the farmer; such amusements should be left to amateur farmers, like the English clergyman who grew Swedish turnips on a deal board; nor can I, as a Scottish farmer, feel much indebted to Mr Caird for advising me to lay *one-fourth* of my farm under potatoes, seeing that my 7 acres this year are not worth the raising: I cannot hold such a suggestion as an equivalent for the withdrawal of protection.

I do not deny that the farming of the Lothians will prove some protection to the farmer of the south of England if adopted by him, because by it he will increase his produce and diminish his expenditure by a much greater amount than will the fall in the price of produce affect him. The substitution of two horses for four in working his land, improved rotations of cropping, thrashing by steam instead of by the flail, the enlargement of fields and removal of fences and hedge-row timber, and many other improved modes of tillage, un-

known or unpractised in the south of England, will in time go far to compensate the English farmer for the withdrawal of protection; but from the Scotch farmer, who was "up to the mark" before, and was rented accordingly, who farmed as highly as it was safe for him to do without endangering his crops by over-luxuriance, "the crutch," rotten though it may have been, has been withdrawn, and Mr Caird's potato crutch has proved equally rotten, and been even a more unsafe substitute. That this withdrawal of protection was inevitable, is generally admitted; and probably the effect of it may not be so disastrous as farmers anticipate; but that for it, or in lieu rather of it, a more extensive growth of the most uncertain plant known should have been recommended, appears almost incredible. That the root which statesmen, political economists, and agriculturists blame for the great degradation and misery of Ireland, should, by a practical farmer, be recommended to be cultivated to the extent of one-fourth of the whole arable land of Britain, is one of the most astounding and unaccountable facts, I will venture to say, on record.

It is with the greatest diffidence that I venture upon naming a possible substitute for the withdrawn protection in lieu of the potato farming recommended by Mr Caird; but in stating what I have myself found, as a practical farmer, most injurious to my success and profits, I cannot be very far wrong in attributing to the removal of these, some compensation for the unlimited competition we are now exposed to in the production of food. In looking at the state of agriculture in Britain, some things calculated to improve it, and benefit those who practise it, appear to be in the power of the landlords to bestow; other remedies, in that of the

Legislature of the country. I shall first state the former.

1st. I take it for granted that an estate is in a fair condition as to tillage, with proper buildings, &c., for carrying on the business of farming, and that the landlord is willing to grant a lease of nineteen or twenty-one years of the different farms. Without such a lease (universal in Scotland, but not so in England) I conceive that a man would be insane to rent land; and that the very fact of his holding land without such, infers not only insecurity of reaping the reward of his industry and capital, but argues a degree of subservience and serfdom inconsistent with the possession of abilities to carry on any business with advantage. At present, even on the majority of the best-managed estates in Scotland, a rotation of cropping is prescribed for the *whole* estate, irrespective of the difference of soils and their suitableness for different crops; penalties are exacted for any infringement of this prescribed rotation; and the result is, that by this mistake landlords often do not receive the rents they might do for their lands, nor do tenants make the profits they should do by their business. As an instance of this, I am acquainted with a tenant farmer who took a farm on an estate where the five-course rotation, with two years' grass, was the prescribed rotation for the *whole* estate. The land was heavy clay land, and quite unfit for such a rotation; and the tenant, after some years' experience, finding his second year's grass not worth one half the rent he paid for the land, broke up his one year's grass for oats, and intended, and properly too, to adopt the four or six course rotation, with one year's grass. By his lease, there was a heavy fine upon the breaking up grass, unless two years out. The agent or factor counted the number of

acres ploughed up, attached the prescribed penalty to each, and sent the farmer a neat little account for £500! On the other hand, a great risk would arise from letting land without any prescribed rotation; and the only security appears to be, the ascertaining exactly what rotation is most suitable for a farm, most rent-paying to the landlord, and consequently most profitable to the farmer,—and prescribing that by the lease, fettering him as little as possible, till near the termination of his lease. As to a general rotation for a whole estate, the thing is quite preposterous; for one will hardly find four adjoining farms, out of six, suitable for exactly the same system of cropping. But a much better security against deterioration of land is to *choose* your tenant; to make his skill your "*sine quâ non*," and not to trust to a rotation of cropping which he may adhere to *to the letter*, but break in the only sense you care about, viz., the condition of the land; for a rotation may be strictly adhered to, and land may still be foul, poor, and unproductive. Landlords, hitherto, have looked upon their tenants having a sufficient amount of capital as the most indispensable thing; but important as, no doubt, it is, I will put it second to *practical knowledge*. One of the most successful farmers I ever knew, took a 300-acre farm at a high rent, with only £700 of capital: his knowledge, even with the bankers, stood for capital. A good farmer will easily grow a quarter per acre more corn than a bad one upon the same land, (the difference is often much greater.) Say that the "break" in white corn of each is 200 acres: this will give 200 quarters more corn grown by the good than by the bad farmer, which, at 30s. per quarter, (say the average price of the different kinds of corn,) is £300 a-year. This, as security

to the landlord, even for the payment of his rent, is equal to a very large sum of money if owned by the bad farmer. I have myself experienced this; for I am receiving just now 35s. per acre for land on which the tenant acknowledges that he is doing very well, and deserves to do so, where his predecessor failed at 30s. per acre. Good farming is thus not only the best security which landlords can have for the payment of their rents, but also the best security which the public can have for an abundant and cheap supply of food. While the difference is thus so great betwixt good and bad farming in Scotland, what must it be in some of the English counties where the farming is so bad, and at the same time so expensive! In showing an English squire lately a well-farmed district in Scotland, his exclamation was, "Where do you get the men who farm thus? We, in England, are thankful to get hold of a retired shop-keeper, or publican, with some money in his pocket to take our land, and we appear to have no such men in the south as the occupiers of these beautifully cultivated fields." It is the system of *large farms* held under *proper leases* which has produced these men, and given to Scotland its pre-eminence in agriculture. But while much has been done, much remains still to be done; for in many counties of Scotland a great deal of bad farming is still seen,—the result of letting land to men unacquainted with farming, and tying them down to rotations unadapted to the soils they occupy; and in choosing tenants for their skill, as much as for the rent they offer, the agriculture of Scotland is still susceptible of much improvement.

2d. The second mode of relief in the power of the landlords to give their tenants, which I would propose, is the diminishing of the quantity of game, and the total

extirpation of rooks and wood-pigeons. With regard to game, no farmer would grudge a fair proportion on his farm, because it affords a rational amusement, and induces the residence of landlords and country gentlemen on their estates. It is only with the *excess* of game, particularly hares and rabbits, that I quarrel; for when farmers find that their turnip crops are sometimes destroyed by one half their value, and that three hundred or four hundred hares are not uncommon upon one farm, costing the farmer, it is computed, 3s. 6d. each, it is time to point this out as a *real* injury to agriculture, and in the removal or reduction of which, farmers would have a certain benefit. In respect of rooks and wood-pigeons, I would proclaim complete extirpation and no quarter, for they are unmitigated evils without the vestige of good: they cost myself £20 a-year in endeavouring to keep them off my farm, besides head-money in destroying them in the rookeries. This sum would purchase guano to manure 15 acres of turnips, or drain 2 or 3 acres of wet land. A farmer who pays £700 a-year of rent in this neighbourhood, assures me that the protecting inadequately his crops from the depredations of these vermin, and the loss he sustains by them, costs him more than his parochial assessments for the support of the poor; and in the district in which this farm is situated, 6000 rooks were destroyed in spring 1849, without any very apparent diminution of their numbers. One gentleman in the neighbourhood, instead of being a rook-destroyer, is a rook-preserver; he rejoices in the aristocratic "caw, caw," of this pest; and, notwithstanding the petitions and remonstrances of his humble neighbours, strictly preserves the robbers of their potato patches. There exists a fallacy of these birds being beneficial in destroying grubs and wire-worms, &c. I

have proved that this is not the case; for I have had fields of oats, after old grass, completely ravaged by the grub, and not a rook ever lighted on the field; for at the time of the greatest destruction by the grub, the rooks are busy in hatching their young, and feed on grounds adjacent to the rookeries. But were this even as it is represented to be, the benefit would be dearly purchased; for at every season of the year the rook is a depredator; and in Scotland, where land hardly ever exceeds two years in grass, grubs do but little injury, and we keep up a certain evil for a most uncertain good. I believe that, in the diminishing of the numbers of game, and in the extirpation of rooks, rabbits, and wood-pigeons, real tangible good would be done to the farmers of Scotland; and it would have this peculiar advantage, that of being a great benefit to them, without cost or loss to any one.

3*d*. The third remedy in the hands of the landlords is the readjustment of rents according to the price of farm produce. I am fully aware of the many and great difficulties here. I know the inability of landlords to reduce their rents in many cases, and of the amount of ruin that would be sustained by themselves and their dependents by their doing so. Twenty-five per cent of the gross income of an estate is generally the proportion of the rental of Scotland required for public burdens, and private debts often absorb nearly the other three-fourths. Reductions of rent by men so circumstanced is an impossibility. They must cling for the support of themselves and their families to the narrow margin which remains, and liberality from them cannot be looked for. The greater part, too, of the landed property of the country is under strict entail; so that, however convinced of the necessity of giving reductions of rent landlords may

be, the nature of the tenure prevents it. It is, however, difficult to see how landlords can resist making some allowance to their tenants for the fall in prices. If wheat is really to fall from an average of 50s. to an average of 40s., barley from 28s. to 23s., and oats from 24s. to 18s., British landlords cannot expect their present rents to be paid. Suppose a farmer, some years ago, took a farm when wheat averaged 50s. per quarter, and calculated the rent he should pay for it at 300 quarters of wheat; this quantity, at 50s., gives £750; the price falls to 40s., and he suffers a loss of £150 on that quantity of wheat alone, (without counting the reduced value of his other produce,) or, in other words, has that much more rent to pay than he bargained for. No doubt, in such years as 1846-7, when wheat was selling at 90s. per quarter, the farmers did not, on that account, come forward and offer higher rents; nor have they, in this year 1849, when farming is notoriously a most unprofitable business, any right to expect reductions of rent. They have had their "*quid pro quo*," and have no right, as yet, to go to their landlords; for the years 1846, 1847, and 1848 will make a very fair average time to the British farmer. But if these prices continue but for a short time longer, then the interest of landlord, farmer, and labourer will demand a readjustment of rents, either in the shape of corn-rents, convertible into money at current prices, or in the reduction of the present money-rents of farms.

I now come to what I conceive the legislature may do for the relief of agriculture. And the first remedy I would mention is, to give the power to sell, or, in other words, to disentail what are called in England settled estates, or entailed estates in Scotland. I have already alluded to the impossibility of the proprietors of entailed

estates giving reductions of rent to their tenants, however much the times may require it; and I know not a greater benefit that could be conferred upon all classes interested in the cultivation of the soil than would be the abrogation of this law. To the prevalence of bankrupt entailed landlords in Ireland, much of her misery has been attributed; and, though in a less degree, both England and Scotland suffer from the same evil. An impoverished landlord afflicts with poverty all classes on his estate: his expenditure must be the spring which will stimulate improvement, promote industry, and, consequently, circulate money and its accompanying comforts upon his estate and in his neighbourhood; and, when that exists not, all—farmers, labourers, and mechanics—suffer. No one now thinks of disputing the fact, that tying up land in the hands of those who are without capital, and at the same time preventing them from raising it upon the security of their estates, is the greatest barrier possible to the improvement of a country, and that its effects are felt as much in the great cities of the empire as in the rural villages. Next in evil to the ruinous system, the law in France, of compulsory division of landed property, is the opposite one of entail; for of all articles of commerce, the most important one by far—land—should be free to the greatest possible investment of capital, because by and through it is the great body of the people employed and fed. No illustration of the evils resulting from a law which renders land extra-commercial is needed. Estates without proper farm-buildings, with undrained fields, impoverished tenants, and unemployed labourers, proclaim, in every county in Britain, more or less, the evils of the law of entail; and to remove all these, and substitute for them wealthy landlords, industrious tenants,

well-employed labourers, and, consequently, a perfectly cultivated land, nothing will do but a complete unfettering of the soil, untrammelled by legislation in any shape, making it as transferable as a bale of cotton or a cask of sugar. In these bad times the draining of a field, or the erection of a steam-thrashing machine by a landlord for a tenant struggling to bear up against prices he never expected to see, might be more beneficial than a very considerable reduction of rent; interest would be thankfully paid by the tenant on the outlay, and the landlord might thus save his tenant, and at the same time benefit himself. But upon this national and individual beneficial arrangement the law of entail puts its veto; and the tenant may, consequently, be ruined, the landlord and his estate permanently injured, and the public may and must suffer through the injury to both. Although this law has been lately very much modified, what are supposed to be individual and class interests are still permitted very much to obstruct the public good. By the amended Scotch Entail Act, the consents of the three next heirs to the possessor are required to disentail an estate. To get these consents must often be an impossibility, for these are the parties who have the strongest interest in refusing. To make it compulsory on heirs substitute *to take the value* of their interests in an estate, would be a more advisable measure than to permit private interests to stand in the way of improvement of the country,—of the employment of the people. To keep up a wealthy aristocracy—a golden link 'twixt the throne and the people—is really desirable, and therefore certain exceptions should be made in favour of the nobility in regard to entail. For instance, a duke might be permitted to entail £20,000 a-year in land on his heir-male, an earl £15,000, and a

viscount £10,000, and so on. This would always secure adequate incomes to titles, and make them respectable; and the injury to the country would be by this by no means so great, for entails are always injurious in proportion to the smallness of the estate; but to permit every man with more pride than brains to entail his bit of land, (instances have been known of land to the value of £50 a-year being entailed,) pauperising his descendants and the future inhabitants of the land, is a perfect burlesque upon legislation, and should on no account be permitted.

The next parliamentary measure for the relief of agriculture ought to be the repeal of the malt-tax. With a revenue, however, derived from this source of £5,000,000 a-year, I fear such a proposal would not meet with much favour in Downing Street. This tax is supposed to be paid by the consumer of malt liquors, and in one sense it certainly is so, but it is much more *a tax upon the agricultural interest*, for it diminishes the consumption, lessens the sale, and consequently lowers the price of one of the chief articles of their production. Mr Cobden would hardly allow that a heavy duty upon every yard of cotton cloth manufactured in England was a general tax, and not one in particular affecting the manufacturing interest; and yet a malt-tax, as regards the agricultural interest, is one quite analogous to this, and equally oppressive to the agricultural interest, as such a tax upon cotton cloth would be to the manufacturing interest. That this tax, from the large sum derived from it, will be continued, is pretty sure; but that does not alter the unfairness of it, or take away from the injury it inflicts upon the farmers of Britain.

The third and last legislative measure which I would take the liberty of suggesting for the relief of British

agriculture, is a moderate fixed duty upon foreign corn, for the sake of revenue, and also for the purpose of putting the home and foreign grower upon an equal footing in the home market.

Mr M'Culloch, a very high authority, and certainly no advocate of the late corn law, says, in his article on the corn laws, (see *Commercial Dictionary*,)—“ It is difficult, or rather perhaps impossible, to estimate with any degree of precision, what the excess of taxes laid on agriculture, beyond that laid on manufacturers and merchants, may amount to; but we have elsewhere shown, that if we estimate it as making an addition of 5s. or 6s. per quarter of wheat, we shall be beyond the mark. However, we should in a case of this sort reckon it safest to err on the side of too much protection, than of too little, and would not, therefore, object to a fixed duty of 6s. or 7s. per quarter being laid on wheat, and a proportional duty on other kinds of grain. Under such a system, the ports would always be open, the duty would not be so great as to interpose any formidable obstacle to importation, and everybody would know beforehand the extent to which it would operate.”

Now, as Mr M'Culloch proposes a 6s. or 7s. duty per quarter upon the importation of foreign wheat, the consumer cannot be far wrong in offering the British agriculturist, in order to put him on a footing with the foreigner, in order to raise revenue, and to save and secure the home production of food, and the home market for our manufactures,—I say the consumer cannot be far wrong in proposing to the farmer a compromise of 4s. per quarter on wheat, 3s. upon barley, and 2s. upon oats; and I believe this would be accepted by the agriculturist as a fair, just, and final compromise of the question. A small tax upon the consumer would

this be, indeed, for the settlement of so important a question; for a 4s. duty upon the quarter of wheat would raise the price of the four pound loaf a halfpenny, or half-a-farthing per pound of bread—there being just about a hundred such loaves from the *fine* flour of one quarter of wheat. Setting aside the national outcry for a total repeal of the corn law, and looking at the question dispassionately, I think every unprejudiced person will allow that the home grower is entitled to a *certain* amount of protection. Consider that from the coach, horses, wines, windows, servants, &c., &c., of the landlord, to the pot of beer and tobacco-pipe of the labourer, everything used or consumed by the agricultural class is taxed; that higher rents and higher wages must result from this, and that if then the produce from which all this must be paid is put on an exact footing with the untaxed produce of the foreigner, in our home market, what great injustice and grievous injury must be done to the home grower! We have not either, in many parts of Britain, the advantage of proximity to markets, and consequent cheap carriage; for a quarter of wheat will be conveyed at a lower rate from Hamburg or Dantzic to London than from the Moray Firth. No doubt, the manufacturer has to pay taxes as well as the farmer, (though there are many taxes, and heavy ones too, peculiar to land alone;) but contrast his position as a British manufacturer with that of the foreign manufacturer, and see how independent he is of protection against his foreign rival. See what an advantage the inexhaustible beds of coal in England, and the consequent command of steam-power, have given him over the foreigner. The dense and highly skilled populations of the great manufacturing cities, situated on navigable rivers, with ships ready to waft their productions to

every part of the world; the power of producing by them an *unlimited* amount of manufactures, unaffected by wind or weather, heat or cold, light or darkness; labour beat down by competition to the lowest amount; all these enable the British manufacturer to undersell the world, to laugh at protection; and by these causes, all analogy between the condition of the farmer and that of the manufacturer is completely destroyed. For what advantage has the British farmer over the foreign? He has a worse climate, a less fertile soil; he is more highly taxed and rented; steam is not available to him except for the thrashing of corn; and for the general operations of his farm he must use oxen and horses, as does the serf of Poland or the American farmer; labour is also much more expensive than it is in the exporting countries of continental Europe; and poor-rates, unknown there, press heavily on the British farmer. Were ours an art as patent to the application of steam-power, as independent of the seasons, as elastic in production, as improvable by machinery as that of the manufacturer, we would ask no protection against the produce of untaxed, low-rented countries. We would allow that the parallelism between our position and that of the manufacturer existed, and ask no more advantage or protection in the production of food, than he does in the production of clothing; but seeing that it is not so, but that while the foreigner pays little or no taxes, has cheap land, cheap labour, and low freights to our shores, with a more fertile soil and a better climate, and that we must plough and harrow, sow and reap as he does, but at a greater expense, we totally deny the analogy between our business and his, (the manufacturer's,) and demand, for his sake as well as our own, and in order to preserve to him the home market for his productions, as well as

the business by which we live, a small, but fair and just protection.

No doubt the manufacturer will say—"Don't be chicken-hearted; do as we do; put on the steam: bone and guano more; employ more labour; ditch and drain; and grow *double crops*." No doubt fine fun for Mr Manufacturer. The advice is, of course, intended to be general; and the consequence would be, that the farmer, by expending 30s. per acre extra on guano for his wheat, would find himself with a quarter more per acre, but would have to sell the whole produce of that acre of wheat at 30s. per quarter, instead of at 37s., which would do away with the whole benefit of the extra quarter per acre, and 5s. more, supposing he grew five quarters per acre by this expenditure, instead of four without it. This would be a very agreeable amusement to the consumer; and we will "play at the game" to please him, provided he gives us *fair play* at it, and prevents those from joining in it who have land for next to nothing, labour at one-half the price of ours; who pay no taxes, little rent, and no poor-rates; but, till he *starts us fair*, we beg to be excused, and won't play the fool to profit and amuse him, but to injure ourselves. It is when farming *pays* that we do this, and hence the manufacturer's gain in our wellbeing; but with wheat at 35s. per quarter, and a loss of £32 a-year in farming a four hundred acre farm, we not only cannot buy bones or guano, ditch or drain, but we must *do the shabby*—cut down the poor labourer's wages, withdraw our custom from the shopkeeper, (which the manufacturer will by-and-by feel, as all must do the same,) and farm *low* instead of *high*. The bankers, too, "shy" us with wheat under 40s. per quarter. They don't like back-going customers, and that puts it out of the power of

the needy ones among us to farm high; so that this same oft-repeated advice of high farming is not only generally more profitable to the public than to us, from the excess of produce resulting from it still more reducing the price, but, in bad times like these, impracticable, from want of money and want of credit.

I have now done with my panaceas for our suffering business. They are, I am aware, very imperfect, but they are such as some experience in farming tells me may be of some use.

They are,—1st, A thorough cultivation of the soil by letting land to *none* except to skilful practical farmers, and not fettering them over-much as to rotations of cropping.

2d, A reduction in the numbers of game, and extirpation of vermin destructive to corn; and if these don't do, then—

3d, A reduction of rents in proportion to the fall in prices. These remedies the landlords have in their own hands.

Then, I conceive the *legislative* remedies to be—

1st, Opening up the soil to the investment of capital, by the abolition of entails, except in some cases.

2d, The abolition of the malt-tax.

3d, A moderate fixed duty on foreign corn, for the sake of revenue—for the sake of securing the home supply of food to the consumer, the home market to the manufacturer—and for the purpose of preventing the ruin in which this country would be involved by rents being unpaid, land thrown out of cultivation, and labour deprived of employment.

But, my Lord Duke, allow me to put you in mind of this—"bis dat qui cito dat." If justice is to be done us, if these remedies are to be applied, it were well they

were done quickly. On the 20th October 1849, the average price of wheat in Mark Lane was 41s. 1d. per quarter, of barley 28s. 2d., of oats 17s. 4d.; and from these prices have to be deducted the cost of freights to London.* I need not tell your Grace, that such prices, if long continued, will throw many a good acre of England out of cultivation. I am sure that no appeal to your Grace, or to the landlords of Britain, is necessary in behalf of the tenant-farmers. I know that they would scorn an appeal "*ad misericordiam*." I know that you know that they are not the least valuable class of the community. It is through and by their industry, capital, and skill, that the hill-sides of Scotland have been made to wave with yellow corn, and that our swamps, instead of being the haunt of the plover and the snipe, have become the rich pastures of the bulky Short-horn and the broad-backed Leicester. It is they who pay the landlord's rents, employ and feed the labourer, and support the pauper. They produce what sets the wheels of manufacture and commerce in motion. Manchester and Birmingham, notwithstanding what may be said to the contrary, have a greater interest in the harvests of Lincolnshire and the Lothians, than in the prairies of America or in the fields of Poland. The most important business of this country is in the hands of the tenant-farmers—namely, the production of its food; and it is not too much to say, that, without them, society, as it is now constituted in Britain, could not exist. For contrast, my Lord Duke, a country in which none such may be said to exist, with our own; compare Ireland and her cottier-holders with Scotland and her tenant-farmers. Not all the difference of climate, soil, and situation, can

* Edinburgh averages, on 21st November 1849—Wheat, 37s. 4d. per quarter; barley, 22s. 2d.; oats, 17s. 2d.

compensate for the prevalence, the universality, I may call it, of the one class, the non-existence of the other. The landlord in the one country, with nominally an estate of £10,000 a-year, may be, and alas! often is, a pauper; the landlord in the other, with an estate of £1000 or £2000 a-year, enjoys all the comforts and many of the luxuries of life. While the soil of Britain was bound up in feudal fetters, and the landlords were thus powerless to improve it, the capital and the knowledge of the tenant-farmers developed its capabilities, and doubled your rent-rolls. In their wellbeing still consists your prosperity, and in their destruction will be your ruin. Preserve, then, my Lord Duke, yourself and your order, this valuable body of men, and thereby serve yourselves. A few years such as the present would not only incapacitate them to make use of Mr Caird's panacea of high farming, but would reduce them to poverty; while assistance from you, in the way I have above recommended, in your legislative and individual capacities, might save them and benefit yourselves. We are altogether in the dark as to the future effects of recent legislation as to corn, but let its consequences be what they may, the possession by this country of a class of industrious, intelligent tenant-farmers—a class peculiar to Britain alone—must ever be a great advantage, must be a source of wealth and strength instead of poverty and weakness, and we should not lightly lose them.

I have the honour to be,

My LORD DUKE,

Your most obedient Servant,

D. MONRO.

ALLAN, BY TAIN, ROSS-SHIRE,
25th November 1849.

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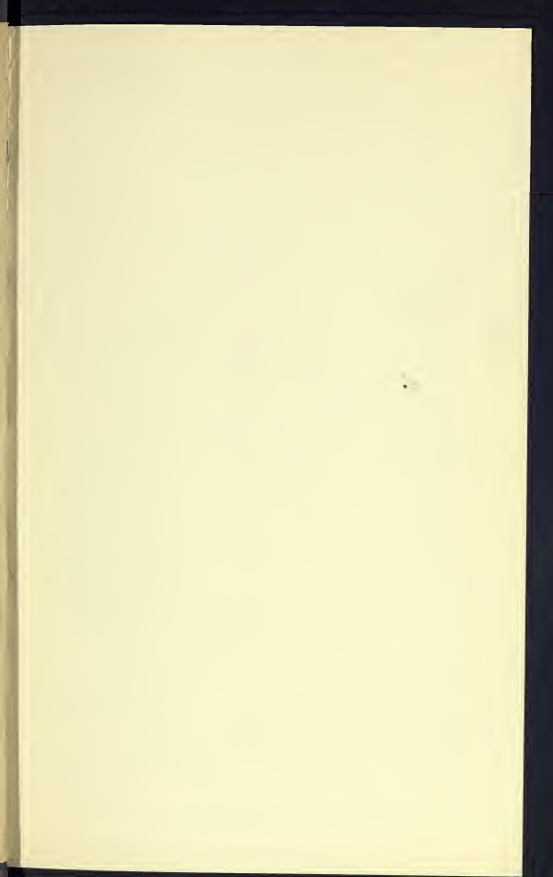
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