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ON THE CAUSES OF THE DESTITUTION OF FOOD IN THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS OF SCOTLAND IN THE YEARS 1836 AND 1837.

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A thorough knowledge of Highland manners and character is essentially necessary to form a proper estimate as to the circumstances and condition of the inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. It is not enough to have a knowledge of their present state, but the different changes which have taken place from time to time in their condition as a people, must be traced back to remote periods. Various causes have combined to render the Highlanders of the present day, as if a race entirely different from that of their forefathers. Some centuries ago, when feudal law reigned with absolute sway in every Highland district, agriculture, even of the rudest description, was but little attended to or looked after. The young and hardy men, from the days of boyhood upwards, were destined for employments entirely different, and such as were more suited to their warlike temperament of mind, to the principles in which they were daily instructed, and to the usages of the periods in which they lived. It was then that the Highland chieftains, like petty kings over their respective domains, had each a stated number of followers or retainers, according to their power, as well as to the extent of their possessions. These possessions were not valued, as now, according to the amount of rents raised from them, but according to the number of men upon them able to carry arms,

and willing to fight for their feudal lord in his combats with some neighbouring chief. Depending more on the chase, and on spoils from their enemies, for subsistence, than on agriculture, the "crànn-tàraidh," or "gathering-beam," commanded more attention than the plough. That such should be the case, will not appear so surprising, when it is considered that all who slighted the call of this mute messenger of death, were either irretrievably disgraced, or put mercilessly to the sword. In those rebellious times, however, the Highlands were not so densely peopled as at the present day. The population were more dispersed over the face of the country, and in reality less numerous. Even should a time have been when the Highland families would equal in number those of later times, it is rational to suppose that the dangers, hardships, and conflicts to which the Highland youth were then exposed, would have a direct tendency to decrease the population, or at least would prove an effectual check to its increase. The feuds and conflicts among the clans were not confined to any particular county or district, neither did they take place at the same period of time. On the contrary, every Highland territory suffered in its turn, for a revolution of centuries, from the ravages of intestine broils, and deadly skirmishes. So severe were the contests between the Clan-Chattan and the Mackays in the north of Scotland, in the reign of Robert III., that that monarch deemed it proper to send the Earls of Crawford and Murray to effect a reconciliation between them. For this purpose the said noblemen, after due deliberation, deemed it advisable to have recourse to policy, and by appointing an equal number of men on each side, to fight as champions for their respective clans, the victorious party were to be honoured with royal favour, while the vanquished party were to receive free pardon for all their former offences. Reconciliation was thus effected between these bold and barbarous clans on the North Inch of Perth, in the year 1396. In the same manner bloody feuds were carried on, with varied success, between the Clan-Donuill and the Macleans,—the Clan-Donuill and the Macleods,—Lord Kintail and Glengarry,—Rasay and Gairloch,—Sutherland and Caithness,—the Siol-Torquill, or the Macleods of Lewis, and various enemies on the mainland of

Scotland, &c. Under such a state of affairs, there was neither leisure nor desire to effect any such changes as would ameliorate the condition of the people in their domestic comforts. Lands were little valued by their owners in a pecuniary point of view ; and the proprietors frequently awarded large shares of their possessions, during life, to their seanachies, bards, pipers, and to such of their retainers as distinguished themselves by acts of bravery and military prowess.

Such was the state of affairs in a more or less degree until the close of the Rebellion in 1745-6. When the last ray of hope in favour of the house of Stuart had vanished, and when the house of Hanover had come to wield with undisputed right the British sceptre, things assumed a more gentle aspect. Feudalism vanished by degrees under the influence of Protestant laws judiciously enforced, and the wild spirit of the Highlanders was softened down to that pitch of tranquillity, which enabled them to live on peaceable and easy terms with their neighbours and with each other. Their minds were no longer distracted by wars and deadly feuds with their surrounding clansmen. These were happily forgotten, except when rehearsed in their tales, or chanted in their ancient Gaelic songs.

The Highlanders (though not now exposed to the dangers of civil commotions around them, and though no longer called out by their liege lord to plunder the effects and to destroy the retainers of some contiguous enemy) were still possessed of much ardour in military affairs, and displayed courage which was surpassed by no race of men whatever. It therefore fell to the lot of many of them to enlist in the Highland regiments ; and of this brave people these regiments were, at one time, exclusively made up. Better soldiers never faced an enemy ; and as Dr Macleod so justly said in his eloquent address at the Mansion-house, " These are the men who in every field and in every clime had covered themselves with glory." The numbers who were thus engaged in fighting their country's battles, bore but a small proportion to the numbers of those at home, who had now to depend on industry and labour for their maintenance. But still the aggregate of population was but very small, when compared with that of the present day. This may be illustrated by the parish of Kilmuir in

Skye. In this parish stand the magnificent ruins of Duntulm Castle, a strong Danish fort, which the noble Clan Maconald made choice of as their residence, and enlarged for that purpose. And the fact that the Maconalds were powerful chiefs, who always maintained their dignity and reputation as renowned warriors, is a sufficient proof that their retainers would, if possible, be as numerous, to say the least of it, as those of any other feudal lord. But the population of Kilmuir was, in the year 1736, only 1230 souls. Nineteen years afterwards it amounted to 1572 souls. In 1791, it amounted to 2060. In 1831, it was 3415; and now it amounts to about 4000 souls, though at various periods within the last sixty years considerable numbers have emigrated to America. The increase in this parish for the last century is therefore nearly four-fold; and a tolerably correct idea of the increase of the population in the Highlands in general may be formed from the facts now stated in reference to Kilmuir.

There is reason to suppose that, during the time which intervened between the period when the Highlanders mainly depended for subsistence on the bounty of their liege lords, and the period when they had for that purpose to engage in public works of industry, their circumstances and modes of living must have been of the most ordinary description. They had not been trained in general to those public sources of employment, which afterwards turned out so lucrative, and which justly engaged their sole attention,—such as the rearing and managing of black cattle for the southern markets,—the manufacturing of kelp,—the fishing and curing of herring, &c. Such ordinary or inferior modes of living were not at this time peculiar to the Highlanders, but were prevalent also among the great bulk of the population in the southern and western counties of Scotland, even as late as the middle of the last century. “To those,” says a late historian of Scotland, “who are not old enough to remember having seen the last remains of it in operation, no description can give any thing like an adequate idea of the wretched economy that was at this period prevalent.” Even the plough made use of at this time in those localities was of the ancient Scottish make, having four horses yoked in it, which were led by a man walking backwards.

The horses, which were small and shaggy, were accoutred in the most antique manner, having collars made of bulrushes, to which was attached a rude harness made of hair clipped from horses' manes and cows' tails. When the implements of husbandry were so very primitive in kind, it is natural to think that all the other appointments of the people corresponded with them. Their dwellings were miserable huts, through every part of which the rain had free access, washing away the soot which had feathered upon the beams and rafters, and causing it to drop like showers of printing-ink upon the culinary utensils underneath, as well as upon every thing else which lay in the way. Yet under this rude system the people are said to have lived contentedly, little desirous of a change, as they knew nothing of its comforts. In the eastern counties of the Lowlands of Scotland, agriculture had even at this time been brought to some degree of perfection. The spirit of improvement soon found its way into the west, and remarkable changes were speedily effected in the habits of the people, and in their modes of operation. Spinning-mills were erected in various quarters by wealthy companies, whereby cotton was manufactured into the various fabrics in which it is seen at the present day. Weaving, sewing, tambouring, dyeing, and printing, were each lucrative and extensive sources of employment, which gave an impetus to a variety of arts necessarily connected with them. Work was thus procured for men, women, and children, and a spirit of emulation, together with a taste for improvement, found way into every hamlet. The lowly farm-steading gave place to the stately mansion, surrounded with its group of offices, alike for comfort and convenience. And while commerce thus flourished, agriculture kept regular pace with it. "Hedging, ditching, planting, and improving," says Struthers, the author already alluded to, "called forth energies of which no one knew he was in possession, till in the person of his neighbour he beheld them in full operation. The beautiful hedgerows, the thriving clumps, and the convenient enclosures of one proprietor, excited the taste and awaked the emulation of another, till hands could with difficulty be found to execute, or a sufficiency of materials to complete, the improvements that were in progress; while each, as-

tonished at the beauty and fertility that so suddenly began to glow around him, was anxious to engage in new and still more extensive experiments."

While the Lowland districts alluded to thus emerged from a state of comparative sluggishness and inactivity, the poor Highlanders had various insuperable obstacles to contend with in their progress to improvement, granting even that they had been inspired with a taste for such processes of civilization and domestic economy as they stood so much in need of. They were a distinct and separate people, who associated but little with their more highly favoured countrymen around them, and who could have but little or no traffic, by way of commerce, with distant parts of the world. Their language differed with that of the rest of the nation. They had neither roads, nor canals, nor commercial cities, to facilitate, or even in the remotest degree to encourage, the march of civilization among them. Though no people could be more brave and heroic, none more loyal to their king and their country, none more honest, upright, and hospitable, yet their inherent and native virtues, though pleasing and praiseworthy in themselves, were insufficient to raise them in the scale of useful and practical improvement. To effect this, some external impulse behoved to be made to bear upon them, and many barriers would require to be wholly removed.

After the lapse of some time, when the clamour of arms had ceased, and the din of war subsided,—when the Highlanders were permitted to enjoy a share of that domestic repose which had been for centuries denied them, they were naturally impelled to have recourse to such resources as were within their reach, for the purpose of bettering their condition, as well as for permanent means of livelihood. The inhabitants of the Hebrides, and of certain parts of the western coasts of the Scottish Highlands, engaged themselves in the manufacturing of kelp, as well as in the catching and curing of herring and other fish; while the natives of the Highlands and Islands in general were more or less in the habit of rearing black cattle for the English markets. The fall in the price of kelp, or rather the ceasing of kelp manufacture, in consequence of the reduced duties on salt and barilla, proved a most severe stroke

to thousands and tens of thousands, who profited extensively by the manufacturing of that commodity; and this may justly be looked upon as *one of the principal remote causes which led to the late destitution*. In most parts where kelp was made, every person had the sea-ware of that portion of the shore which was opposite to his farm, for the purpose of converting it to kelp. The tenants thus manufactured it, and when ready for the market it was purchased by the proprietor, at a rate which considerably exceeded the rent of the farm. Thus the landlords had the comfort of regularly paid rents, and the tenants had the same. About the year 1803, both kelp and cattle fetched prices unprecedentedly high. Landlords naturally supposed that the state of their tenantry could bear an increase of rent, which having in most cases been laid on, they took the kelp into their own hands, and allowed their tenants a certain sum of money per ton for manufacturing it. There are places, however, where this did not take place; and though of little or no value, many farms have the kelp attached to them to this day. Such hamlets as were not contiguous to the sea-shore, and could derive no direct benefit from kelp, were let at rents proportionably low. An idea may be formed of the immense profits which arose from the making of this commodity to both landlord and tenant, when it is considered that at one time every ton brought a price of L.16 Sterling and upwards. It then fell by degrees to L.12, L.8, L.6, and L.4 Sterling per ton. In place of the high remuneration derived at one time by the tenants for their labour in kelp making, they were ultimately paid with even as low as two guineas for making each ton.

While the decline in kelp manufacture thus proved an incalculable loss to both proprietor and tenant, the fall in the price of black-cattle, for a series of years back, aided vastly the progress of the approaching calamity. Napoleon Bonaparte, whose ambitious and bloody career disturbed the peace of Europe for such a length of time, may justly be considered as another principal remote cause which led to the late destitution. In course of the late protracted and expensive wars, black-cattle of every description quickly rose in value. High prices were asked, and readily obtained,—prices which consi-

derably exceeded the intrinsic value of the commodity exposed for sale. It may be said of kelp, that the benefits derived from it were naturally confined to the localities in which it was manufactured. Such was undoubtedly the case, but the same thing held true with regard to the rearing of black-cattle, with this advantage, that they were a general staple commodity, reared to a more or less extent in every quarter: and now that the prices have fallen, the disadvantage is equally general, and the causes of complaint equally loud in every Highland county and parish. Cattle having thus speedily risen in value, by an impulse which could neither be durable nor certain, and all kinds of traffic being at the same time brisk, a higher value was set upon the lands, and, as a consequence, they were held by the tenant at a higher rate from the landlord than was formerly done. Through time the different sources by means of which the tenant, through his industry and exertions, benefited himself, almost entirely failed. As a matter of course, he experienced much difficulty in maintaining himself and family on the scanty produce of some acres of ground, accustomed as he had been to accumulated profits from the sale of cattle, kelp, and fish. The evils which arise from the depression in value of such Highland commodities as have been alluded to, have found their way from the toiling tenant to his indulgent landlord. The connection which subsists between landlord and tenant is distinct and immediate. The prosperity of the one immediately affects the other, and they live in mutual dependence. In consequence of the failure in kelp alone, some proprietors have been deprived of one-half of their wonted incomes, and some of even two-thirds; and thus they suffer alike with their tenants from the causes already mentioned.

Another principal remote cause which led to the late destitution, and which contributed largely to the poverty of the islanders in particular, is the failure of the herring-fisheries. While kelp and cattle sold at the advanced prices already stated, herring abounded in immense shoals in the numerous lochs, bays, and creeks, which intersect in every part the western isles and coasts of Scotland. These were caught with little trouble, and at comparatively small expense, by the na-



tives ; and after furnishing themselves with large supplies for their own consumption, they disposed of the rest to numberless crafts and small vessels which resorted in large fleets from the south, to every convenient bay and anchorage around the rocky coasts of the West Highlands. This resource, like the rest, has almost entirely failed, as the quantity of that excellent fish which is now caught is so exceedingly small, that it bears hardly any proportion to the thousands of barrels cured of it, at a time when the circumstances of the people would have enabled them to dispense with it much easier than now. It would appear that the natural history of this prolific fish is very little known, for such as have been for years engaged in catching it, seem as ignorant of its motions and migrations as those who never attempted to ascertain them. Many fruitless investigations have been made on this subject, and the probability is, that it will remain a problem never to be satisfactorily solved. It has been observed, that since the fisheries became so productive on the north-east coast of Scotland, the herring has almost entirely deserted the west. It is thought, however, that this desertion consists more in the manner of the visits, than in the non-appearance of this capricious fish. That it does not frequent the lochs and indentations, which it at one time made a resting place, is quite certain ; but it is equally certain that it annually passes by, both in the deep sea and in the open channels, where it might be caught in large quantities by the natives, were they possessed of skill and means for such an undertaking. Some people attempt to account for its deserting the localities which it formerly visited, by its being scared away by the numbers of steam-packets which now ply from port to port on the west coasts, whose paddles cause unusual commotions in the streams and currents. This argument, however, for its non-appearance seems to have but little weight.

In consequence of the failure in the means of livelihood just enumerated, the poor Highlanders were more than ever under the necessity of having recourse to various shifts and expedients to enable them to earn a scanty subsistence, and to pay the rents of such portions of land as were occupied by them. As little or nothing could be done at home to get this de-

sirable end accomplished, the able men resorted in great numbers to the south, and to such other places as could afford them labour; while the women went annually to the Lothians, and even to the northern counties of England, to procure employment at harvest work. In so doing they underwent almost incredible hardships in their wanderings, while at times they had, after coming home, but a few shillings for their trouble. And this is not all; they frequently carried along with them a variety of disorders, such as measles, small-pox, fevers, &c., and thus conveyed the infection to their friends, and rendered such disorders very destructive in the country. It frequently happens that some of them die when in those remote localities, and the consequence is, that an immediate demand is made upon their native parish to defray their funeral and other expenses; and from the poverty of those parishes, it becomes at times a serious matter to meet such demands.

When that great national work the Caledonian Canal commenced in 1803, it afforded lucrative employment for many hundreds from Skye and the Long Island. Even from Skye alone between three and four hundred labourers went annually to that great undertaking, at which they earned individually from L.10 to L.15 Sterling in the half-year. While this work lasted, considerable sums of money were brought annually into the island, which proved of vast advantage to the community. About this time also great numbers found employment at the making of public roads in Glengarry, Kintail, Lochalah, Lochcarron, &c. In the year 1807 the making of roads commenced in Skye, which for years afforded convenient work for many people.

To add to the many disadvantages of the poor islanders in particular, public labour is now hardly to be found any where, even at a reduced rate of pay; and though hundreds of both sexes migrate yearly to other counties in quest of such work as they may fall in with, they return to their homes at the close of the season, much broken down in spirit and constitution, with small pittances, which can go but little way to meet the several demands made upon those who so distressingly earned them.

The causes already mentioned as having led, in a remote

manner, to the late destitution, are chiefly of an external nature, or such as over which the sufferers had no direct control. The poor Highlander could not help those legislative enactments, or alterations in the commercial policy of the nation, which led to the reduction on salt and barilla, thereby depreciating the value of kelp. He had no power over the migrations of the herring, or over the causes which led that capricious fish to desert those lochs and bays where it was once so profitably caught and cured. He had no sway whatever over those impulses by which the price of black-cattle rose and fell, and ruined his prospects. But there are remote causes yet to be considered, which led to the late destitution, over which the Highlander, and those who take an interest in his welfare, have some degree of control, and cannot, like those already alluded to, be termed of an external nature. These causes now come to be briefly mentioned and discussed in the following order :

1. An excess of population ;
2. Early and improvident marriages ;
3. The lotting-system, and the continued subdivision of lands ; and
4. Bad husbandry, or the mismanagement of domestic economy.

Though these causes are thus classed for greater facility in treating of them, yet in reality they mutually take their origin from each other, and act as it were in concert, to render the condition of the poor Highlander more and more miserable.

Be it observed, *1st*, That an excess of population is an undoubted cause which led to the late destitution. From what has been already stated in reference to the parish of Kilmuir, it will be seen how enormously the population has increased for the last century. At the present day the lands are so overburdened with people, that in favourable seasons they yield, under the system of husbandry pursued, but a very scanty livelihood for the population ; so that, when failure in the crops ensues, from whatever cause that may arise, destitution in a greater or less degree is the inevitable consequence. No class of people can perhaps be found who are more patient, content, or enduring than the Highlanders. Various were the

hardships which they have put up with in silence. Many and severe were the privations under which they have lived, without uttering a sentence of complaint even to their neighbours or intimate friends. Their very food at times has been such that perhaps no other people could have subsisted upon it, and none would have done so with that forbearance and resignation which they so silently displayed. Their principal means of support, in every season, are potatoes. Few can afford to supply themselves with animal food, and even in maritime districts there are many poor families who can procure no fish. Several causes have led to the increase of the population. Since the termination of local feuds, and latterly since a general peace has shed its blessings over the country, the Highlanders were permitted to enjoy a degree of quietude and repose previously unknown. Their young men, in place of being called out to take a share in the defence of their king and country, were left at home to branch out by degrees into separate families, and to increase a population already sufficiently numerous. If that most useful and prolific root, the potato, had not been raised in such immense quantities, it would have been impossible for the lands to afford any other crop which could possibly support the present population. About sixty-five years ago there were no more potatoes planted than what was sufficient to serve the family at their Christmas dinner, after leaving a little for seed, which they bundled up in a mat of bulrushes, which for security was suspended to the roof-tree of their dwellings, as a safe keeping-place, until the season of planting ensued. But the principal cause which led to the great increase of population, and consequently to the late destitution, is,

*2dly*, While the young Highlanders are a peaceable, orderly, and even industrious class of people, they are notwithstanding highly improvident as to the future. Possessed of an easy disposition, and blind to future consequences, they are too apt to be satisfied with such little earnings as they may get possession of, after months of hard labour in some distant part of the kingdom, and suppose that thereby they are in circumstances which entitle them to enter upon the marriage state, and set up separate families for themselves. They live under

the impression that a good wife is certainly worthy of her maintenance, and while so far they judge aright, they fail in taking into the account, how that maintenance is to be procured, or how provision is to be made for the number of little ones, who will, as a matter of consequence, group in a few years about their solitary hearths. No doubt seasons of repentance will overtake them, when too late. But on this subject they keep silent. They labour and toil late and early, far and near, to keep their destitute families alive; and in despite of all their exertions, their children must live in poverty and rags. Yet the fate of one gives no warning to others. Each successive year adds to the number of these improvident youths; and nothing can be more evident than, when their desultory and precarious means of subsistence receive any check, either by the failure of public works, by sickness, or by death, their poor families, totally unprovided for otherwise, become a burden to their friends or to the public at large. And the very evil thus complained of leads,

*3dly*, To the lotting system, and the continued subdivision of lands, which very materially unfitted the Highlanders to meet the late destitution. When the population of the Highlands had by degrees increased considerably beyond its usual number, several proprietors deemed it necessary to divide farms, which were originally somewhat extensive, into lesser lots and crofts, with the intention of supplying each family with less or more possessions. Though this was done with humane and charitable views, to the great personal inconvenience of the proprietors themselves, yet the system, from the facility and temptation it afforded to single men for taking up families, had in a very short time, of course, a very sensible effect upon the population. And pernicious as were the results of this first subdivision, the evil has always gone on increasing, from continued subdivision and subletting, generally unknown to the proprietors. The common custom is, that when the son or daughter of a lotter or crofter marries, the newly married couple are received by the parents of either party, with whom they live for some time as one family; but eventually the said parents cut off a portion from their own little possessions, for the young people, on which they build a house, and become

liable to pay the original occupier a share of the rent, in proportion to what was thus allowed them in subseet. The old people who originally occupied the lot or croft, generally portion off their lands in as many shares as they have of sons and daughters unmarried. In some time after the first member of the family marries, another does the same, who immediately gets his share of the croft, and builds his house, then another and another, until the original occupier be ultimately left with a share no larger than any of those given away to his children. He stands as federal head over the whole, and is alone accountable for the rents to the proprietor. All this take place on a tenure of land too small for the comfortable support of the original occupier. On many farms, by means of this baneful system, the population has doubled within the last sixteen years. The subtenants just mentioned can never raise the rents from the produce of their possessions. At times they cannot keep a single cow upon them to furnish their children with a little milk. They trust to chance employment for means to pay for their contracted possessions, which tend, in general, to no purpose but to bind them in poverty to one locality. It must also be considered, that, notwithstanding this continued sub-division, there are more families who have no lands than there are who have. An example of this may be given from Kilmuir, exclusive of the Government district attached to it. In the parish just mentioned, there were in February last (1837) 421 families, and the number of lots and crofts, together with four farms occupied by large tacksmen, is only 190. From this it is seen that 231 families have no lands whatever from the proprietor. Of these 231 families, 101 hold shares of lots and crofts, as above described, and the remaining 130 families occupy lands in no shape whatever, but subsist upon the half-foot system, which will be immediately described. The vast number who occupy no lands, wish of course to have them, and rather than want some sort of possession in this respect, they would be contented with any thing; and thus they tend, if possible, to increase the evil which is already too extensive and prevalent. Should the number of families be reduced to an equality with the number of lots and crofts, the population after all would be sufficiently

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numerous. The occupiers of lots can keep in general not more than two cows, and no horse; while the crofters, whose lots are larger, keep of course more cows, but are seldom able to keep any horses, with the exception perhaps of small ponies which a few of them endeavour to have, for assisting in carrying home fuel and other little necessaries. Some are apt to lay a great share of the existing poverty to the charge of the Highland proprietors; but it should be taken into consideration, that though the proprietors were in many cases to give a free grant of their lots and crofts to their present occupiers, poverty would not after all cease, owing to an overpopulation living under a rude system of husbandry. The example given in reference to Kilmuir, it will be obvious that over more than one-half of the population of the district the proprietor has no control whatever. Out of 421 families there are 231 who neither pay rents to the proprietor, nor do they consider themselves in any respect under his jurisdiction while they live peaceably on their own scanty earnings. Under such a state of things, injury is done to all parties. The poor landless cottars are directly or indirectly a burden on the occupiers of land, whose circumstances they eventually ruin, and, when once injured, the proprietors suffer accordingly.

The "*half-foot*" system, under which such a vast number of cottars contrive to eke out their scanty means of subsistence, comes now to be described. These people are undoubtedly the poorest and most dependent of all the Highland population. They generally rear their dwellings about the outskirts of large tacksmen's farms, as well as in every locality where they can find a footing. They meet with kindness and assistance to a degree which those on whom they are a burden in general but ill afford. Such of them as raise small quantities of oats, do so in the following manner: The tacksmen allot a portion of ground for them, which they till with the "cäs-chrom," and when ready for sowing, the tacksmen furnish one-half of the seed, and the cottars till the ground. The cottar then sows and harrows the ground, and watches and protects until harvest, when he receives the one-half of the sheaves for the tacksmen, as rent for the ground, and the other half for himself. In

manner, also, the cottar raises potatoes for his family. As the potatoes require manure, the tacksman allows him to cut sea-ware, which he carries in creels to the ground; and after receiving one-half of the seed from the tacksman, furnishing the other half himself, he plants the same, and watches over its growth, until he lift the potatoes in harvest, when he gives one-half the produce for the use of the ground, and has the other half for himself. Sometimes the cottar is permitted to have a cow, which is allowed to range with the other cattle of the farm. In this case, besides the oats and potatoes which he raises on the "half-foot" system just described, the land-occupier generally gives him a piece of ground wherein to plant potatoes with the manure of his cow, the produce of which he keeps entirely for himself. For the said cow and ground he pays the land-occupier, partly perhaps in money, but for the most part in labour, either as "grass-keeper," or by cutting peats, mowing grass, reaping corn, or such other employments as may be required about the farm.

After this manner, therefore, that class of the population just spoken of endeavour to earn a livelihood; and while it is in no respect calculated to raise themselves to a state much above abject poverty, it proves a great bar in the way of agricultural improvement, and gives every encouragement to what was to be considered in the

4th place, viz. *Bad Husbandry*, or the mismanagement of Domestic Economy. That little or no improvement can be effected in the various departments of husbandry under the present excessive population, is a self-evident fact. That much improvement is both practicable and required, is an equally plain and palpable truth. Where the processes of husbandry are either neglected, or carried on under a bad system, the population depending on the same for their means of support, are necessarily unfitted for encountering such a visitation of Providence as the late destitution.

Throughout the northern islands of the Hebrides, in particular, the lands, from continued sub-division and sub-letting, are cast into lots so exceedingly small, that the occupiers can keep no horses to plough or harrow the ground, or to execute those multifarious processes of labour, which are exclusively



allotted to horses in other quarters of the kingdom. What is thus in other parts of the country performed by horses, the poor hard-toiled Hebridean must perform for himself. In lieu of the plough, he must late and early ply his "cās-chrom," or crooked spade. This primitive kind of utensil resembles the stilt of a plough, with a straight piece of wood attached to the lower end of it, forming an obtuse angle, and having a socket of iron on the part that enters the ground. The stilt is held with both hands, and the lower part or, "sole" is driven into the ground by means of a peg, on which the right foot rests and presses. The instrument is exactly a crooked lever, in which the power is to the weight nearly as 1 to 3½.

Though the "cās-chrom" is much more expeditious in tilling than the common spade, yet it becomes a tedious and most laborious task to till several acres of ground with it. The consequence is, that the poor people must begin the work of cultivation even as early as Christmas, and keep toiling at the same under the boisterous and rainy climate of their country, until the middle or end of May, ere their labours are finished. By being thus exposed to the inclemency of the weather, they are seldom either dryly clad or shod. From this arises among them the prevalence of inflammatory complaints, diseased action of the lymphatic system, as also acute rheumatism, pleuritic diseases, typhus fevers, &c.

Besides that the "cās-chrom" mode of tilling is both toilsome and tedious, it very much injures the ground, as it does not turn it up in that regular manner which is accomplished by the plough. And this is not all; when cultivating with this instrument, it is found necessary to convert the field into long, narrow ridges, and rounded on the top by heaping up the earth to carry off the water. The said ridges are also made as crooked, irregular, and distorted, as the characters in the Greek alphabet: and while the latter has no more perhaps than four acres in all, much of even that is lost by the broad and useless spaces which are left between the ridges.

When the ground is turned over, the sowing commences, which is generally performed in a slow and awkward manner. The sower goes backwards, and having a fistful of seed, he shakes his hand with the same three or four times, in a verti-

cal position, before he disposes of it and is ready for the next. The harrowing then takes place, which the women for the most part execute, by dragging after them the fatiguing instrument. Owing to the lightness of the harrow which the poor women are thus capable of dragging after them, the ground cannot be made sufficiently smooth; and to remedy this they commence anew, with another instrument, called the "racan," which gives a smooth finish to the whole. The "racan" is merely a block of wood, having a few teeth in it with a handle about three feet in length. The poor people must also convey sea-ware from the shores, manure from their houses to the field, and peats from the hills to their dwellings, with the creel on their backs, which is fastened there by a belt passing over their breasts. In harvest they have no alternative but to carry home the produce of their possessions the best way they can, the potatoes by the creels, and the corn in bundles upon their backs.

It will readily be acknowledged on all hands, that this bad system of husbandry can turn out to no real advantage either to proprietor or tenant; and while the population continues as it is, it is no easy matter to effect any remedy. While possessions are so small, the occupiers of land can keep no horses, and consequently no alternative is left them but to drag out a weary existence in the manner just described. From the want of draining enclosures, as well as from the tardy manner of cultivation, sowing is unavoidably very late; the consequence is, that, ere the crops are ripe, or ready for cutting, they are liable to be overtaken by the storms and hurricanes so incidental in the Highlands, particularly about the autumnal equinox. It is a correctly ascertained fact, that the climate, though naturally wild and boisterous, may be greatly mollified by hedging, trenching, fencing, and improving the lands in the various modes so successfully practised in the south of Scotland! While the present condition of the Highlanders requires some great radical changes to render them more independent and comfortable, it remains with those who have the power, and are willing to exert it, both to devise and apply such remedies as are necessary for the accomplishment of an end so very desirable.

Having thus at some length endeavoured to trace out the most prominent of the *remote* causes which led to the late destitution, the *immediate* causes which led to the same come now to be briefly spoken of. On this part of the subject it is unnecessary to say much, as the causes, from various reports made by Highland clergymen and others regarding them, are already known to all. From the situation and circumstances of the Highlanders, already so fully mentioned, it will easily be perceived, that they are in a condition utterly incapable of enduring without much suffering, even a partial failure in the means whereupon they so scantily subsist. A total failure, therefore, exposes them at once to the ravages of dire famine. To the sad consequences of such a failure, the Great Disposer of all events was pleased to expose them during the currency of the two last seasons. The spring of 1835 was cold and inclement. Sowing was consequently late; and from the wetness of the soil, the seed in many instances was destroyed, and never vegetated. The potatoes were seized by some unaccountable disease, which generally prevented their growth, so that whole fields laid under them appeared with scarcely a plant. Harvest came with torrents of rain, which prevented the crops, which would be otherwise late, from ripening and filling; and after the same were cut down, it was impracticable to secure them in good condition. The straw was deprived of its substance, and could afford little or no nourishment for cattle. Meal was of inferior quality, and exceedingly scarce. Potatoes were the same. The stock of cattle on hand was much larger than usual, owing to the low prices; and while the people themselves might have contrived to subsist without complaint on their diminished store, had they not improvidently kept an extra stock on hand, they were under the necessity of giving the cattle the potatoes and grain on which they should have subsisted themselves; and in many instances they lost their cattle, after expending their all to keep them in life. Never were they in more unfavourable circumstances to meet such a severe spring as that of 1836 turned out to be. Many had little or no seed to put in the ground. Others who contrived to keep potatoes for seed, were afraid to plant them but in small quantities, as they exhibited symptoms of the dis-

case of the former season. Sowing was even later than in the previous spring. The summer and autumn months were unprecedentedly wet, and before either corn or potatoes had attained to any degree of ripeness, they were overtaken by the snow-storm and severe frosts of October. Destitution had even then commenced, and it was heart-rending to witness the manner in which poor families passed the following winter. A similar destitution is not recollected by any now alive. That of 1782 was by no means so severe in the islands, yet "*bliadhna na peasrach*," or the "pease-meal year," was sufficiently memorable to render it an era from which old Highlanders calculated dates, or made other references. An idea may be formed of the scarcity and extent of the famine in that year, by perusing the following quotation from the recently published "*Memoirs of the Life and Works of the late Right Honourable Sir John Sinclair, Bart.*," a gentleman enthusiastically devoted to the service of his country: "So cold and stormy was the summer of 1782, that the crops were late and unpromising. On the 5th of October, before they had time to ripen, a frost, armed with the rigour of a Greenland climate, desolated in one night the hope of the husbandman. The grain, frost-bitten, immediately contracted a hoary whiteness. Potatoes and turnips, already dwarfish, were further injured. The produce of the garden was destitute of its usual nourishment, and the fields yielded not one-third of an ordinary crop. No wholesome food could be procured, and disease as well as famine began to overspread not only the whole north of Scotland, but even some districts on the south. On this occasion of general distress and alarm, the Member for Caithness earnestly besought the interposition of Parliament." Well-timed relief was in this way procured, "and the whole cost of it was little more than L.15,000, yet no less a number than 111,521 souls, inhabitants of fifteen counties, were rescued from starvation."

Several localities in the north of Scotland suffered considerably from a hurricane of unexampled severity, which took place in the year 1807, and laid waste some of the districts which had availed themselves of the already mentioned Parliamentary grant. No distress of this kind was afterwards felt until the year 1817, which, in consequence of the unfavourable nature of the preceding year, proved to be a season of considerable severity. The case of several districts was represented to Government, and a supply of oats was at once allowed for the benefit of the distressed. From that year

down to the two late seasons of destitution, there was happily no great cause of complaint ; and what has been already stated in regard to the severity of those seasons, renders any additional remarks on that subject wholly unnecessary.

The remote and immediate causes which led to the late destitution having been already considered with some degree of minuteness, it remains now to treat, *1st*, of the remedies for the immediate relief of the distressed ; and, *2d*, of the ultimate means to be pursued to prevent (under Providence) the recurrence of similar destitution.

*1st*, As to the remedies for the immediate relief of the distressed, these have been already most effectually applied. No sooner did famine begin to shew itself among the rugged hills and the romantic glens of the Highlands, than the British nation bestirred itself, with laudable promptitude, to arrest the progress of this ghastly assailant of life, and to rescue the dejected Highlanders from falling victims to its merciless assault. The liberality of the English nation in particular, evinced as it has been so forcibly during the currency of the bygone season, surpasses the bounds of admiration and praise. While appeals could be made to no nation more alive to generous impulse, or more ready to give ear to the cry of distress, such appeals were made by a gentleman, than whom the afflicted Highlanders could find none more devoted to their cause,—none possessed of more varied and extensive knowledge of their manners and character as a people,—none imbued with a higher sense of their integrity, loyalty, and many redeeming qualities. Of this people he boldly affirmed, “ that there were none in his Majesty’s dominions more peaceable, more honest, or more loyal to their king and country.” For their benefit he relinquished for a time not only the ordinary duties of the clerical office, but also those high and important duties which devolved upon him as Moderator of the Church of Scotland ! Himself a genuine Highlander, it was his delight to call forth his utmost energies in behalf of a people, for whose advancement in moral and religious knowledge he had ever exerted himself with much success. In his tour to England, he was fortunately accompanied by a gentleman, who, though no

Highlander by birth, is, notwithstanding, possessed of Highland characteristics to a high degree,—a gentleman who always displayed a zeal for the Highlander's welfare and improvement, and who went out on this mission of charity at the sacrifice of private interest and secular avocations.

The English nation, always liberal in a good cause, were thus appealed to by the eloquence of these gentlemen, furnished as they were with minute reports from the quarters in distress,—and their appeals, instead of being slighted or overlooked, were immediately responded to by the nation at large. The British capital, aroused by feelings of charity and benevolence, displayed a sympathy which was instantaneously shed abroad, throughout the counties and corners of broad England. The coffers of the wealthy were speedily opened, and thousands, impressed with feelings of brotherly love, came forward, and vied with each other in supplying the means to relieve the distressed, and to pour the elements of life into the almost countless hamlets and cottages of those who were just on the verge of yielding to the fell attack of famine. By means of the benevolent committees, so prudently organized in London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and in various other quarters, the local committees in the Highland parishes were furnished with supplies of meal and other necessaries at regular and timely intervals; and these supplies were dealt out with a care and economy, which could neither induce supineness nor inactivity on the part of the distressed, nor even tempt them in the least degree to habits of idleness. It is unnecessary even to attempt to give a picture of the misery and wretchedness which existed in most Highland districts during the late seasons of distress. While the nation in general was so strongly moved and made alive to the amount of suffering which then existed even by feeble accounts of it, the feelings of such as were daily eye-witnesses of the reality may be easier conceived than described. The afflictions of the distressed arose not only from want of food, but, owing to the wetness of the seasons, it was out of their power to secure their wonted supplies of peat or turf for fuel, and therefore, in this respect, they greatly suffered. While they had also no seed fit for sowing, from its

damaged condition, they were likewise in this respect most liberally supplied. Besides the quantities awarded to them from the subscription funds, several local proprietors came forward with their private supplies,—amongst whom the Right Honourable Lord Macdonald eminently distinguished himself. That Noble Lord and most indulgent proprietor imported many hundred bolls of excellent oat seed into the different parishes on his estate, which proved an inestimable boon to his tenantry, not only for the present season, but will also do so for years to come.

Now that the Highlanders have been relieved from their late calamity,—that they have been rescued so humanely from the ravages of an impending famine,—may they never forget the great debt of gratitude which they owe to their benefactors in general, but to the English nation in particular, whose generosity, zeal, and humanity, have gained it immortal credit. May they also tender, with heartfelt thankfulness, their grateful acknowledgments to the office-bearers of the London Committee, whose industry, anxiety, and exertions in their behalf, were of no ordinary description. The duties which these honourable gentlemen took upon themselves, without any pecuniary reward, were most laborious and difficult in their nature. Exposed, on the one hand, to the gibings of ignorance and prejudice, and on the other to the hostile invectives of such as were enemies to the cause, their situation was, in consequence, of high responsibility, and such as could only be endured from the firm conviction that they were acting on humane and Christian principles. Yet, though far removed from the localities for whose benefit they toiled, and though no doubt perplexed at times by contradictory intelligence, in reference to the nature and amount of distress, they have now the pleasing reflection that their labours have been attended with a success which reflects upon them the greatest credit,—and that their devotedness and energy in the good cause have gained them the esteem and admiration of every well-principled man.

But while the Highlanders should thus be actuated by feelings of thankfulness, may they ever bear in mind that their numerous benefactors were merely willing instruments in the

hands of the Father of Mercies, for the accomplishment of his gracious purposes ! To Him let them sing aloud the song of praise and thanksgiving, for having blessed them with a season of unexampled fertility and abundance ; and for “ crowning the year with his goodness, until the little hills rejoiced on every side, and the valleys covered over with corn, shouted with joy. They who sowed in tears have reaped in joy. He that went forth and wept, bearing precious seed, came again rejoicing, bringing with him his ‘ heavy ’ sheaves.”

2d, The ultimate means to be pursued to prevent (under Providence) the recurrence of similar destitution, now remain to be taken deliberately into consideration. From the various causes already more or less alluded to, which led to the late distress, one striking corollary seems to be clearly and fairly deducible ; and that is, that the recurrence of similar distress can only be guarded against, and the real condition of the people permanently ameliorated, by an extensive and well-regulated emigration. To any one who has considered with some degree of attention the various circumstances connected with the Highlands, in as far as regard the comforts, the means, and the capacities of the people, it must be sufficiently apparent, that the precarious nature of their means of livelihood, and their liability to become the victims of such appalling visitations as the late calamity, take their origin entirely from an excess of population. Let that excess, therefore, be done away with, either by a judicious interference on the part of Government, or by the application of means otherwise provided, until the population be reduced to a wieldy community, and thus rendered fit subjects for a variety of subsequent improvements. It is humbly suggested that this desirable end can only be effected by emigration, at an expense foreign to the people themselves ; for if left to be accomplished by such as are otherwise fit subjects for it, the consequence will be, that it never will take place. Whatever might have been done in the way of voluntary emigration, at their own expense, some years ago, such is now quite impracticable. Should they have the will they want the means, in consequence of a series of adverse seasons. Granting even that a few families were to leave each parish in this way, it is a palpable



## HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS OF SCOTLAND.

fact that, by so doing, no relief whatever would be given to the country under the present system of management. New aspirants otherwise unprovided for, or such as remain in a single state, for an opportunity to get "helps me them," would immediately grasp at the deserted possessions and would speedily multiply to a degree incompatible with the means of support afforded from their new possessions. Emigration, therefore, must be resorted to on an extensive scale, new modes of management must necessarily be adopted to prevent in future the wonted evils arising from an accumulating population.

It is true that emigration has been already carried on to a certain extent from the Western Isles, in course of last year, but that was done under a most erroneous system, and should be carefully avoided in future. The emigrants were selected with care, and were restricted to certain ages, but which none would on any account be taken. It is intended, without doubt, that this system was, for the benefit of the country, but the effects of it tended only to increase the evils which Government was anxious to alleviate. Were it to be continued until the population would be reduced to that degree which circumstances so loudly call for, every Highland district and every island would be left peopled with a helpless group of aged men and women, afflicted for the loss of their friends, and unable, by reason of years and infirmity, to provide themselves with those necessaries of life, which were wont to be furnished, in whole or in part, by their dutiful sons and daughters, then banished ever from their view. But should this system be attended with no such effects, it is characterized by a degree of cruelty (which was undoubtedly unforeseen by the promoters of it, but which was intended every thing for the best), which renders it revolting to the nicer feelings of a civilized public! It breaks the most endearing ties of relationship, and with a fiat as peremptory as that of death itself, it separates for ever aged parents from their tender offspring. It deprives the country of its strength and of its working population, though most advantageous to the land of the emigrant's destination, it becomes ruinous to the land of his nativity. It is wanting to render the system both good and effective.

that, instead of making breaches in families, by selecting from among them the young and able-bodied members as emigrants, the said families be removed *en masse* to the colony intended for them. The Highlanders, like all others brought up amid the romantic scenery of towering hills, expansive plains, and placid lakes, are a most patriotic race of people. To whatever clime they go, they ever cherish in hallowed remembrance their dear old mother-country, and still would fondly call it "home." A people, therefore, possessed of such feelings, should be gently dealt with, and weaned away from the land of their birth by means founded on humane and patriotic principles, otherwise they will take a dislike at the most prudently devised schemes for their ultimate good. Many of the parting scenes, rendered doubly distressing by the nature of the system lately acted upon, were enough to make the poor people shudder at the very name of emigration, and to cause them to live contentedly in poverty on their native soil, however barren, rather than leave with sorrowful heart their aged friends unprotected behind them.

With considerable accuracy it may be stated, that, by the two emigrant ships which sailed in course of last season (1837) from Skye to Australia, (viz. the "William Nicol" of Glasgow, and the "Mid-Lothian" of Leith), 609 souls were embarked for that distant colony, of whom 203 were under seven years of age. Of this number, 459 souls were from the different parishes in Skye, and the remaining 150 from the adjacent coasts of the mainland. Those who emigrated from Skye left 264 individuals behind them, who were their nearest relatives, and members of the same families, of which number 103 were parents or aged sisters, who are now thrown entirely upon their own resources, having lost their chief stay and support! Besides the two ships now mentioned, a third has sailed since for the same colony from Tobermory, in the island of Mull, having about 320 emigrants on board.

This statement, in reference to the emigrants from Skye, furnishes a proof sufficiently striking, that the mode of emigration thus practised can bestow no benefits, but quite the reverse, on the poor Highlanders. It is, therefore, earnestly suggested, that, in future measures for their relief, an exten-

sive scheme of emigration will be pursued, founded on more beneficial principles. Should emigration take place to any of her Majesty's colonies elsewhere than Australia, say to New Brunswick or Upper Canada, it would be essentially necessary to provide the emigrants, not only with provisions and a free passage, but also with a supply of substantial clothing. The causes which led to the late destitution, affected them not only as to aliment, but likewise as to clothing. From the high price of wool for some years back, and from the smallness of their possessions, having few or no sheep of their own, many are miserably destitute as to the article of bed-clothes and wearing apparel. The people in general seem more inclined to be conveyed to the British colonies in North America than to Australia; and should measures to that effect be condescended upon, they could no doubt be executed at less expense than Australian emigration, even including a liberal supply of clothing for the cold American winters. This predilection for America arises solely from the people's ignorance of Australia. Most of them, until lately, never heard that such a colony existed; and such as did hear, knew it only by the name of Botany Bay, which they considered a wild place, and only suited as a region of punishment for rebels and convicts. All means should be used by such as have influence over them to do away with this prejudice, and to make them acquainted with the climate and natural resources of this excellent colony.

After thus disposing of the surplus population of the country by emigration, local remedies must be effected, and such causes of destitution as over which the people themselves had a direct control, must forthwith be discontinued.

Early and improvident marriages should be discouraged, and eventually checked; not, however, by the enforcement of any positive enactments for that purpose, but by the total removal of such inducements as may directly or indirectly lead to an untimely entrance on the marriage state. For this purpose, the young should be instructed not only in the different branches of useful industry, but likewise in the fields of moral, religious, and scientific knowledge, and that to a degree suited to their various capacities, and calculated for their ultimate

good. The diffusion of general knowledge among them would make them think differently of themselves, and would wipe away those traits of improvidence wherewith they are presently characterized. The young Highlanders are frugal, careful, and most kindly disposed; yet, it must be acknowledged, that they are destitute of that ambition or keen desire which should stimulate them to emulation, and thus enable them to see that their condition is less independent than it might be.

For the attainment of the general advantage spoken of, many changes must be brought about, and one local remedy in particular is indispensably necessary, without which all others will be to no purpose; and that is, that, as speedily as possible, the lotting system, or the continued subdivision of lands, must be universally checked, and for ever discontinued. To the small allotments of lands, and to the craze for making them still smaller, are attributable most of the hardships incidental to the Highland population. From this source alone arise the desire and the opportunity for early marriages. From it arises, in consequence, an undue increase of numbers, with a want of means to support them. It proves a total check to every improvement. It gives direct rise to abject poverty, and precludes even a wish for amelioration. It is not enough for securing the ultimate comforts of the people, and for opening a field sufficiently wide for agricultural improvement, that emigration reduce the number of families to an equality with that of the original undivided lots and crofts. These lots and crofts were decidedly too small for the due maintenance of a family, and for enabling that family to live entirely on the profits of their possession, without having recourse to chance employment in distant countries. This only mode of remedying the evils complained of, when once condescended upon, should be acted upon judiciously, but determinately, avoiding at the same time all measures which tend to harass, or to an unnecessary disturbance of the people's peace and happiness.

From the adoption of such beneficial measures, many happy results would necessarily ensue. The rising generation, no longer allured by the shadowy prospects by which they were formerly chained down to poverty, and no more fettered with-

in the bounds of a possession too contracted for their support, would direct their attention to other pursuits, and would engage themselves in the prosecution of those various arts, handicrafts, and professions, which never fail to secure a comfortable livelihood almost anywhere. In this respect a proper subdivision of labour would take place, and would prove advantageous to all parties. Habits of industry would get a new stimulus, and would be practised under a new light. The deeply-rooted improvidence of former times, would give place to a general taste for improvement, from a sense of the numberless comforts which would flow from it. The chances of suffering from such occurrences as the late visitation of Providence, would be infinitely diminished, and the population would at once be raised from a state of indigence and toil, to the happier and more enviable condition of an independent, intelligent, and well-instructed people.

When the lands are once converted, by a local process of enlargement, into shares severally adapted for the maintenance of a single family, every encouragement should be given to improvement, both by draining and fencing that which is presently in some degree arable, as well as by trenching in and reclaiming waste lands. It is known to every one who has made a tour of the Highlands, that vast tracts of land are to be met with in a state of sterility; and without even condescending on the spaces and patches of ground which are presently useless, within the very bounds of their measured lots, immense ranges lie under moss, which are presently looked upon as irreclaimable. It is acknowledged that waste lands of this description occasion considerable expense ere they are reclaimed; and it may be objected that the crofter has no capital, and consequently no means, wherewith to effect such improvement. This objection might be justly pleaded were the crofter under the necessity of converting all his waste ground into arable land within the space of a year or any other limited period. But such need not be the case. Let the work go on gradually, and however small the portion reclaimed in a season may be, the benefits arising from it will prove a more powerful stimulus to proceed with the improvement thus commenced than could be effected by any advices on the subject, however persuasively given.

As limestone is to be found in most Highland districts, every family might make lime for itself, unless the inhabitants of contiguous hamlets would see fit to club together, and manufacture quantities of that most useful commodity for the benefit of their lands. Lime is very little used by the small tenants in the Hebrides as a stimulant, for many indeed are ignorant of its good effect upon the soil. A variety of very important improvements should thus be carried on, all tending to the advantage of landlord and tenant, and thus to the community at large. Those domestic concerns which are at present so grossly mismanaged, would be conducted on more approved and genial principles. By the employment of horses, both men and women would be freed from a degree of slavery, by which they have been so long enthralled, and would be no more subject to grievous and unnatural acts of labour. Creels would give place to cars, and the "cäs-ehrom," so long an instrument of toil, would be for ever discarded! Works of industry would arise from the due management of their more extensive possessions, which would amply repay the necessary labour in executing them. Thus, annual migrations to distant parts of the kingdom for chance employment would for ever cease! Long, fruitless, and fatiguing journeys, would be discontinued. The natives would become a sort of domesticated community, who would live in comparative ease and comfort on their own resources. Health, happiness, and independence, would spring up in every quarter, and even the appearance of famine in future would become, under the blessing of Heaven, a matter of rare and almost impossible occurrence.

After thus adverting to the benefits which would flow to the people from a reduction of the population, as well as from an improved system of agriculture, one other source of useful and profitable employment remains to be mentioned, which seems to be the only local source to this effect besides husbandry which lies within the reach of the people,—that is, fisheries. It has been already mentioned, that, at one period, the herring appeared in immense shoals in every loch and bay which intersect the Hebridean Isles, and that the natives caught it in large quantities, both for the market and for do-

mestic consumption. But while that fish has deserted its wonted places of resort, it is well ascertained that, in its annual migrations, it passes by in the streams and currents of the deep sea, where the people have neither skill nor materials to catch it. Some years ago, when it abounded in almost every creek, the people had nets and other necessaries for procuring it. Their circumstances then enabled them to provide such things as are now beyond their reach; besides, that the stations which that fish then frequented, enabled them to catch it with far less skill, as well as with less danger and expense, than at the present day. Herring, however, is not the only fish which might, through time, afford the natives lucrative employment. Cod and ling, and endless varieties of lesser fish, frequent the banks and currents of the western seas, which might, through skilful management, turn out of vast advantage to the people. As matters stand at present, the benefit derived from fishing is very limited indeed. With the exception of small quantities, which are caught by such of the natives as are able and inclined in good weather to go a-fishing, for the immediate use of their families, little or nothing is secured for the market in many of the Western Isles. The natives of Lewis Island must, however, be excepted, who are in this respect rather industrious, and catch considerable quantities of cod and ling on the western coast of their island.

The London cod-smacks furnish ample proof that white fish of this description is still abundant in the open channels which surround the northern Hebridean Isles. These vessels are furnished with "wells," into which the fish is put alive, and is brought in that state to the British capital. A certain number of these vessels visit the Lewis coast annually, and supply the London market during the season with considerable quantities of fish in excellent condition. When the London season is over, they are generally engaged for some weeks in supplying the Stornoway fish-curers with the fruits of their industry, giving them the ling for sixpence or so each, and the cod for threepence or fourpence, according to size and quality. It is said that hand-lines are the only tackle made use of by these English fishermen; and that they are possessed of so much skill in their vocation, that a vessel, by leaving Storno-

way on Monday morning, and resorting to banks in the deep seas, returns on the following Saturday evening, having almost incredible quantities of fish on board.

About the year 1810, an English fish speculator of the name of Degraives, visited the shores of Orkney and Shetland, and there carried on his traffic with considerable success. The fishermen whom this gentleman employed were Dutch; and it is reported that, had he not ruined his prospects with over-speculation, the undertaking would have proved very successful.

Several years ago, a man from Fraserburgh, in the county of Aberdeen, went to the coasts of South Uist, where, from his skill and perseverance in fishing, he not only benefited himself by his industry, but also the natives of Uist by his example. He had in all four boats and twenty-one men, and his speculation was so successful, that he cured about forty tons of fish during the season.

The greatest fishing now carried on in the Western Isles, besides that by the London vessels already mentioned, is by the Irish, who have frequented for some years back the different banks in the channels between Barrahead, Coll, and Tiree. They are supplied with large Portross wherries, well adapted for the boisterous stations which they make choice of, as well as for carrying the produce of their labours generally to the Irish markets.

While such examples are recorded as to the extent to which fishing might be carried on, as well as to the advantages which might be derived from it, it will be observed that the same has been almost entirely effected by strangers,—while the natives, who so very much require such advantages, are incapacitated, from want both of skill and means, to avail themselves of the benefits which are otherwise within their reach. It becomes a matter of serious consideration *how*, and *when*, they are to be supplied with the means of fishing on a proper system. The question simply comes to be,—whether that should be done under their presently constituted state of society, or whether the same should be deferred until the population be reduced in the manner already suggested?

From the various preparatory steps necessary to establish



fisheries on a proper basis, it would appear difficult to accomplish this end under the present accumulated state of population. The very nature of fishing on a scale thus projected, would require the young to be trained to it from boyhood upwards, and, by looking upon it as their sole occupation, to bestow upon it their undivided attention. But from what has been already stated as to their present circumstances, such would be almost an impossibility.

It is incompatible with the vocation of a fisherman, that he pass one-half of the year either at labour in the south country, or toiling at the cultivation of a few acres of ground at home. That vocation, if properly managed, requires all his energies and attention. Experience, conjoined with a knowledge of seamanship, are indispensable to secure success to the fisherman. The most rational way, therefore, though undoubtedly the most protracted to get it accomplished, for securing lasting benefits to the islanders, appears to be, that, after lands are portioned out in proper allotments to such as will live solely by them, at least a part of the surplus of the rising generation be trained to fishing, and be encouraged to prosecute it for their own benefit as well as for that of the country at large.

Even under their present modes of fishing, considerable good would result from a temporary supply being awarded them of long lines, hooks, &c. Many might benefit their families by occasional supplies of fish, who cannot avail themselves of the same in the mean time, merely for want of such tackle as is used in the place. But for permanent advantage from this source of industry, it is necessary to supply them, not only with fishing materials on approved principles, but also with skilful men to instruct them in the art, to superintend the work, and to arouse their emulation and industry by their example.

Among the various requisites to establish fisheries on this scale, are harbours, quays, and store-houses. These should be as numerous as possible, at the same time taking care that they be erected at stations judiciously chosen. Without them, the occupation of the fisherman can never be carried on with re-

gularity or equable success. The next requisite is boats, or wood and iron to make them. The boats suited for the white-fishing should be from sixteen to eighteen feet of keel, or even larger, while the kind for the herring-fishing should be larger still, resembling those used at Fraserburgh, Peterhead, or Banff. As to the tackle for cod and ling fishing, every boat would require cordage, commonly called long-lines, to rig out 600 hooks, with buoy-strings in proportion. Every herring-boat should be supplied with five or six barrels of herring-nets. Each boat would require an experienced fisherman, at least for a time, as instructor, and perhaps none are better suited for this purpose than fishermen from Peterhead, and other places on the east coast of Scotland. Some are of opinion that, were fisheries thus established, it would be necessary to have a general inspector over those of every island, such as Skye, Lewis, Uist, &c., for the purpose of superintending the work generally, as well as for seeing that order and industry prevailed at every station.

Before such extensive arrangements as have been thus pointed out, can possibly be brought about, several years must necessarily elapse, during which the people will be as liable as ever to be overtaken by the sad consequences of inclement seasons, should it be the will of Divine Providence that such will come to pass. It is therefore earnestly to be hoped, that, from whatever quarter relief is to be obtained for the permanent benefit of the Highlanders, by the adoption of such arrangements as are both judicious and necessary for that purpose, the same will be speedily applied. Though the late cry for bread has been heard, and humanely responded to, by a liberal and benevolent nation,—and though the Divine Bestower of “every good and perfect gift” has been graciously pleased to crown the year with abundance, and to shed abroad His blessings, with bountiful hand, throughout the regions of distress, yet it is not enough to rest satisfied under these circumstances, or to view the future condition of the late sufferers with lukewarm indifference. The fact that they have been mercifully rescued from the late calamity, and that they are still, from local peculiarities, more liable than the rest of the nation to similar calamities in future, renders their case worthy

of deliberate consideration, by all such as have the power to accomplish measures of improvement.

The London Committee, after having fulfilled their arduous duties in the most satisfactory manner possible, have still a sum of nearly L.12,000 Sterling in their hands, which will, of course, be laid out in some shape for the benefit of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. It becomes a question of considerable difficulty and importance how that sum should be expended, so as to gain, on the one hand, the approbation of the benevolent donors, and, on the other, to contribute in the most judicious way to the welfare of the objects of their charity. That sum, though of very considerable amount, would go but a short way in accomplishing the various ends suggested in this paper, for the permanent benefit of the Highlanders; and it is the opinion of many, that it would be deviating too far from the charitable object at first held in view, to apply it for that purpose. Among the various modes which may be thought upon for the application of this residue, the following is humbly suggested,—that it should be awarded to the poorest of the Highland parishes, in such portions as would be condescended upon, for the purpose of forming a fund in each of the said parishes for the benefit of paupers. In many of the Highland parishes, the church collections for the poor do not amount to L.3 Sterling annually, and, from their smallness, they cannot be distributed among paupers, amounting to sixty or seventy in number, but once in the two years. Yet this small sum, which can be given in no larger shares to most than one and sixpence each, is very thankfully received. Were there a parochial fund of L.100 or L.200 Sterling, the interest of that money would be of permanent advantage to this most helpless class of the community; but this is not all, the very existence of such a fund in each parish, would be the means of increasing itself through time, as the charitable would contribute to it, and small bequests and legacies would at times be left it, which would never be thought of, nor indeed could be, until such a fund existed.

While the population of the districts lately visited with distress is so very large, it may happen that even the means of relief already mentioned may fail in some cases of having

the desired effect. Amidst so extensive a community, several will no doubt be actuated by various inclinations. Of those who may be fit subjects for emigration, some may be willing to avail themselves of it, and some may not. Some may have a wish to engage in the different departments of industry at home, while others may not feel so inclined. It is therefore desirable that the promoters of the Highlanders' welfare should, in a sense, endeavour to be "all things to all men,"—and thus render the means of relief as various as may be consistent with prudence and judicious arrangement.

It is well known that the Highlanders have always been a brave and warlike race of people,—and though their spirit has no doubt suffered considerably of late, through adversity in various forms, yet their characteristic valour, if called forth, would still be an honour to their name and to their country. It were therefore to be regretted, that such of them should be banished to foreign climes, as might be useful and willing for the service of their Queen and country. To part with brave soldiers, if required as such, would be parting with so much of the national strength. Might not service in her Majesty's forces be offered to such Highlanders as are inclined to accept of it, in preference to other employments? Might it not be consistent with expediency to raise a "New Regiment of the Isles," and to give the Highlanders another opportunity of distinguishing themselves in the field of honour, as the descendants of brave and dauntless heroes? Let their deeds, in former times, be for a moment called to recollection,—deeds by which the mighty fell, and by which the fame of the victors shall live for ever in the annals of history.

As a specimen of their bravery, some of the brilliant achievements of the Black Watch may be called to remembrance, as they were the first Highland corps called to the service of their king and country. This regiment was at first made up of men who held a distinguished rank in society,—young chieftains, cadets of principal families, and gentlemen's sons. When garbed in their sombre tartan, and armed with their broadswords, pistols, and dirks, they formed a beautiful contrast with the dazzling scarlet dress of other regiments. As this celebrated body was composed of brave and spirited men,

#### HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS OF SCOTLAND.

it might be expected that their deeds of valour would be great and glorious! Their gallantry shone forth in brilliant colour at the battle of Fontenoy, fought on the 11th May 1745. This was the first opportunity they had of meeting foe in the open field of strife. But the most deadly scene in which they were ever engaged was the siege of Ticonderago, in the United States of North America, on the 7th July 1750. In this desperate and sanguinary struggle, a part of them rushed with more gallantry than prudence, through the barricades and breastworks of the fort, and plunged with a fearful cheer among the enemy, against whose deadly fire they had proudly stood for hours. The affair covered the survivors with laurels which shall never wither,—laurels which shall while valorous deeds continue to be recorded in history. Their bravery and loyalty on this memorable day excited the admiration of the world, their Sovereign was pleased to honour them with the name of “Royal.” They subsequently distinguished themselves in a manner equally brave in the West Indies, and in various other quarters. In the celebrated expedition to Egypt under Sir Ralph Abercromby, this gallant corps as well as other Highland regiments, fought with most heroic courage. Aboukir Bay and Alexandria will ever testify to Highland bravery. In those places evolutions were executed and charges made, which no human power could resist, the enemy only stood before the magnanimous sons of Scotland like chaff before the wind.

It were needless to recount the various battles in which these noble soldiers had an honourable share during the Peninsular war. Let Wellington, that renowned “hero of a hundred battles,” bear evidence to the manly conduct and glorious exploits of the Highlanders! General Lord Hill, a humane nobleman, will also feel pleasure in calling to recollection the bravery of the 79th and 92d Highlanders, in various campaigns abroad. At Vittoria, the Pyrenees, Orthez, Toulouse, and in various other deadly skirmishes, how bravely did they acquit themselves under the command of that illustrious General! Perhaps there was no General to whom the Highlanders were more devotedly attached than to Lord Wellington. Even in active service they looked upon him as their “Father.”

and were wont to call him by that endearing name. Such proofs of genuine respect must be a pleasing source of comfort to that gallant commander, and cannot fail to be one of his most agreeable reminiscences.

Under the choicest generalship, the Highlanders thus fought bravely for the freedom of that land which gave them birth. The cause of justice, liberty, and truth, was then at stake; and though some deemed it infatuation even to oppose the formidable legions of the enemy, yet the best of soldiers, under the best of Generals, rushed into the struggle, fierce as the storm of their native hills, and swift as the eagles of heaven flying over their crags and mountains. Thus they obtained the victory.

On the plains of Waterloo, the Highlanders acquired the consummation of that fame which had hitherto been so deservedly great. It is said that Napoleon himself could not refrain from expressing his admiration of these brave and warlike men. The stakes to be decided by the fate of that memorable day were in their nature most important. The glory and pride of the French nation on one side,—and, on the other, the patriotism, the liberty, and the glory of Great Britain! For a time the conflict was desperate and deadly. In every quarter the hardy race of Caledonia did fearful havoc amid the hostile ranks! No barrier could then oppose them! No foe could then withstand them, fighting for their liberty and their country! On that eventful day, the two greatest Generals which the world could produce stood mutually opposed, but the deeds on which the sun went down might well cause the immortal Wellington to exclaim, in the words of the Latin bard,

“*Exegi monumentum ære perennius.*”

Seeing that, in course of the bygone century, the four quarters of the world testify the bravery of the Highlanders as warriors, it cannot be supposed that any unfavourable circumstances in their condition have as yet damped their native spirit of heroism, or softened them down to diffidence in defence of their liberties, their country, and their Queen. That they have in general multiplied to a degree incompatible with the natural resources of support from their possessions, has

been already explained. That improvements should be effected, and that emigration should be resorted to, has also been mentioned. But let it be considered, that, in the event of men being required to serve their country, and protect the Colonies attached to it, every Highlander who may volunteer himself for that service, will diminish the population of his parish or district as effectually, as though he were conveyed at the expense of Government to Australia or North America. It is therefore humbly, but earnestly, suggested, that this source of relief to the country be added to the rest,—and, amid a variety of such resources, let the Highlander avail himself of that which he deems most suited to his inclination and circumstances.

In bringing these remarks to a conclusion, one other remedy, although already slightly alluded to, remains to be more particularly mentioned, and that is a more extended system of Education and Religious Instruction. It is to be hoped that every one will acknowledge the importance of education, as the best security for general happiness, public tranquillity, and permanent improvement. Some, eminently distinguished for piety and erudition, maintain that the permanent improvement of the poor and working classes, can originate only in the diffusion of salutary education and useful knowledge, and that it is unavailing to look for any such improvement from emigration, or any legislative enactments whatever, framed for that purpose.

While the superior importance of education is freely admitted, and the hope fondly cherished that it may soon become more generally diffused,—it is thought at the same time, with all due deference and respect to the learned men who maintain the reverse, that the theory that education is the “one thing needful,” cannot hold good. That it greatly tends to improve the condition of society is at once acknowledged,—yet many circumstances powerfully influence that condition exclusive of education. Unless the condition and habits of the Highlanders be improved by some salutary changes in the external circumstances under which they are placed, it seems to be questionable *how* or *when* the same could

be accomplished by education alone. The changes which pave the way to this desirable end have been already discussed. While such changes may be in contemplation, and may soon become to be in progress, let them by all means be accompanied with a more extended system of moral and religious instruction. It is of the highest moment, both with a view to the genuine comforts of the people, to the benefit of the community at large, as well as to the peaceable government of the country, that the great mass of the population should be well educated. The blessings of education would cast a new light around, by which appearances would be distinguished from realities,—and, by the increase of moral culture flowing therefrom, both temporal and spiritual affairs would be founded on proper principles.

Though the parishes in Scotland have each at least one parochial school, yet the field is too extensive for this most useful system of education, as presently constituted. Though the General Assembly of the Church have, with laudable zeal, brought nearly one hundred additional schools into operation, on which between seven and eight thousand pupils are wholly dependent for education,—and though the “Society in Scotland for propagating Christian knowledge” have, for upwards of a century back, supported schools, and appointed preachers of the Gospel in a number of localities, yet there is still a woeful deficiency in the means of instruction. The Highlands and Islands are in this respect so ill provided still, that upwards of *eighty thousand* of their population are at the present day unable to read or write! To afford the young free access to the means of instruction, no fewer than four hundred additional schools would be required.

But the deficiency of means for raising the Highlanders in the scale of useful knowledge, consists not only in the want of schools, but also in the deficiency of pastoral superintendence. The Highlanders, strongly attached to Establishments, and firmly bound to that National Church for which Scotland formerly made such a bold stand, have a claim upon the Government of the country for more extended means of pastoral superintendence. Almost every Highland parish requires one or more additional churches,—for, presently, many have to



make distances of from five to twenty miles to places of worship, and that not unfrequently over stormy lakes, rapid rivers, and rugged mountains. It invariably happens that the greater the destitution in the means of religious instruction may be—quite unlike the destitution in the necessaries of life—the less will be the desire for relief! Endowments for additional schools and churches, therefore, would bring about a lasting and desirable reformation in the Highlands, not only in temporal affairs, but also in the knowledge of that divine and blessed Revelation which “brings life and immortality clearly to light.”

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[*Note by the Editor.*—No one at all acquainted with the present condition of the agricultural population of Ireland, but must have been struck with the exact similarity of their condition with that of the Highlanders, when perusing the foregoing clear and truthful statements of Mr M'Gregor. The evils arising from excess of population, improvident marriages, landsplitting, and bad husbandry in the Highlands may easily find a resemblance in Ireland. But the condition of the Irish cottiers has been much ameliorated, and the evils complained of are gradually disappearing, under the system of managing small farms adopted by Mr Blacker of Armagh, on all the estates of which he has the charge. It is not for a moment to be doubted that the same system would produce similar effects on the condition of the Highland cottar if it were adopted on the estates in the Highlands and Islands by the proprietors and their factors. The system itself is exceedingly simple, may be adopted under any circumstances of tenure, and is clearly and fully explained by Mr Blacker in a pamphlet on small farms, which he issued a few years ago, and a recent edition of which, being the fifth, and a large one, may be found in any of the booksellers' shops in Edinburgh. To this small and cheap, but really valuable work, we earnestly direct the serious attention of every proprietor and factor in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, who desires the removal of the great evils so eloquently deprecated by Mr M'Gregor, and for the permanent removal of which emigration will always be found to be but a very temporary expedient.]