

EXTRACTS

FROM

LETTERS TO THE REV. DR. M'LEOD,

GLASGOW,

REGARDING THE

FAMINE AND DESTITUTION

IN

THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS

OF

SCOTLAND.

MDCCCXLVII.

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DESTITUTION

IN THE

HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS OF SCOTLAND.

I.

FROM THE REV. M. M'GREGOR.

MANSE OF KILMUIR, SKYE, 29th Dec. 1846.

REV. DEAR SIR,

I beg leave to address you on a subject which is in itself of the most vital importance, viz. the prevailing famine with which it has been the will of the Great Ruler of all things to afflict this quarter of the kingdom. The condition of this parish, in common with all other parishes around, is at present deplorably alarming. It is well known that the potatoes formed almost the sole staff of life to the population of this country. It is likewise well known that the unaccountable failure of that esculent has, for several months back, caused a famine over the length and breadth of our parishes. Unless relief had been afforded, many deaths would have taken place from actual want of food.

I may state that the population of this parish is at present about 4000 souls. Of these, upwards of 2000 have no lands from the proprietor. They had indeed small patches from the occupiers of lands, for planting potatoes; but from these patches they have this year derived no benefit whatever, as

the potatoes totally failed. These 2000 souls are now reduced to a state of abject famine, and have lived for the last four months solely on the bounty of the Proprietor, Lord Macdonald. On the other hand, nearly 2000 souls occupy crofts of land, but the returns from the same, in the shape of corn crops, will not be sufficient to afford them support for more than a month to come. In a short time, therefore, the whole population will become the victims of scarcity and famine.

It is but justice to state, that Lord Macdonald has distinguished himself already for his liberality in support of the destitute. His Lordship has for the last two months expended at the average rate of about £9 a-day, for the support of the destitute in this single parish of Kilmuir, which sum of money exceeds the rental of this parish. Numbers are added daily to the lists of the destitute, and, as already stated, all the population will be in want some weeks hence.

While it cannot be expected that the Proprietor is able to continue for any length of time this liberality, it must be recollected that, should he do so, the whole rental of the parish would be inadequate to afford relief to more than one-fourth of those who will be utterly destitute in a few weeks. The existing calamity *must*, from the nature of things, be of protracted duration, and wise measures ought consequently to be adopted, in the first place, to keep the population alive, and, in the second place, to ameliorate their condition. I earnestly and humbly anticipate, that, while much will be done by public contributions, the Government of the country will not look with apathy on the fearful state of our distressed population at this moment. While such vast sums of money are awarded to Ireland, surely the equally necessitous condition of the peaceful, the loyal, and the deserving population of the Hebrides, *cannot*, and *will not*, be slighted by the public, and particularly by Government. The great forbearance, and the submissive deportment of our Highlanders, ought surely to arrest favourable and immediate attention in their behalf. The present visitation of Providence is equally sudden as it is distressing. It is of an extraordinary nature, and requires an extraordinary remedy.

I may briefly mention what I humbly deem requisite for the present alarming emergency.

In the first place, the people must be kept alive by ample and regular supplies of food, which may be best in the shape of oat, barley, and Indian meal.

In the second place, the people ought to be supplied with the seed of oats, barley, and, if possible, of potatoes. Unless every family be provided with less or more seed, it is a matter of certainty that next season must, if possible, be worse than the present season. Unless seed be procured, there can be no prospective comfort for the poor people, and the calamity must go on from year to year.

I would also humbly suggest an opinion, that no relief ought to be eleemosynary, except to such as are incapable of earning it by bodily labour. Even in regard to charitable contributions, let the able-bodied do something for their allowances, by which they will benefit themselves and their country, and by which, above all, they will preserve that spirit of independence for which the Highlanders have always been proverbial.

Trusting that these brief but hasty remarks may be of use, I have the honour to be,

REV. DEAR SIR,

Your most obedient Servant,

M. MACGREGOR.

REV. N. MACLEOD, D.D.

II.

FROM THE REV. N. M'KINNON.

BROGADALE MANSE, 29th December, 1846.

MY DEAR SIR,

Yours of the 19th I this moment received. It is unnecessary to state that the condition of the poor people all over the Highlands is fearful. Nothing of the kind that ever happened to them before can give the least idea of their

present state: we frequently had bad *Springs*, but this is a Winter of Starvation after one of the "bad Springs." Formerly, if they had anything, it was in Winter; always a good fire and plenty of potatoes, if nothing better. My only fear at present is, that relief will come too late. They are now in actual want of every thing in the shape of food; some of them days past told me they had not eaten anything for two days but a salt herring, which they said "kept them in heart:" but even this much, only those who had a few shillings at the time could buy them from the other end of the country. Where they have been favoured with a good fishing—but comparatively of little value, from the want of potatoes—they get no price for them; but even this much the poor people of Brocadale had not got, but when they could get a few shillings they went to buy them, as being the cheapest thing in the way of food they could buy. I can scarcely find time, in writing you by return of post, to consider what the prospects of Spring are. The present evil is the worst; and, before another week ends, I would be afraid to conjecture the most favourable results under present circumstances. I have attended already death-beds that, though they actually did not die of want, may be said to have died of starvation, their disease having been evidently from want of proper food. In many cases I have seen some, who were said to be dying of some sickness, for which I found a little nourishing food an effectual cure: but with what can I feed? I have already involved myself; and all my effects would not give them one bit each. Too much cannot be said of the exertions of Mr. McAskill of Tallisker, who has in a great measure supplied the country with meal; and, I should say, to a ruinous extent given it to poor people who can never pay him. This day, a great number came to my house, who said they had not a bite, and the meal store was run out; a Government store-ship having come into the loch, on her way to Portree, they thought I could get them to land some of it; but this could not be done. Oh! send us something immediately, whatever may be done again. In this parish no works of any kind have commenced, and per-

haps this very time is the worst that can be. Send it: whether from Establishment or Free Church. I may say that nothing has been done in this parish, in a general way, for a starving population. The extensive farmers are trying to create some work for some of the people; but it is impossible for them to support the expenditure for any time.

I might multiply cases that would melt the hardest heart in Glasgow: I entered the house of one, the other day, who formerly was in better circumstances than the generality. By the flickering light of the fire, I saw the mother earnestly looking at her four young children, unconscious of my presence, dropping tear after tear in the embers that had not that day prepared a repast. I could almost fancy her saying, "must I let them die;" the youngest of them exclaiming, "Mother, mother, you never kept food from us before."

I hope you will excuse this hurried note, as I had only time to scribble it over before the return of the post, as the incoming post by which I got your note had been later than usual, from the state of the roads. I do believe there is no part of the Highlands in a more wretched state than Brocaldale; the majority of the people being cottars, that had no cow or anything to calculate on when the potatoe failed. I implore your sympathies in behalf of your native land, as they are, from not having a herring fishing, and other circumstances, worse off, if possible, than any other parish I know. If you can send but a few pounds at present, let it come, for many are dying, I may say, of starvation.

In haste, yours truly,

N. M'KINNON.

The Rev. N. M'Leod, D.D.

N.B.—This case was considered so urgent, that relief in meal, to the value of £30, was immediately ordered.—N.M'L.

III.

FROM THE REV. JOHN M'IVOR.

SLEAT, 26th December, 1846.

MY DEAR SIR,

In consequence of the detention of our mails by the late severe snow storm, I had only the pleasure of receiving your circular of the 19th inst. this morning. I am happy to perceive that you have resolved in soliciting aid, from every quarter and in every shape, for an interesting population.

The scarcity of food in this parish is truly alarming, and, unless immediate relief is afforded, it is impossible to say what the consequences may be. Lord Macdonald has been most liberal in procuring supplies for the poor people, but the rental of Sleat would not be adequate to meet a *tithe* of the distress. He has given unlimited power to me to relieve extreme cases, but, from the many applicants asking relief, I cannot conscientiously take advantage of the privilege to a large amount without injuring his Lordship. He has given employment to forty people about the Castle, and these are only admitted by certificates from me, stating their poverty; all these are daily supplied with soup and bread from the Castle.

I know several families who do not taste bread or animal food for several days; they subsist entirely on fish, without anything else. The small tenants have still a little corn, but they must soon attack *their seed* for Spring. It is harrowing to one's feelings to anticipate what their distress will be in Spring and next Summer. This is a national calamity, and ought to be met by the national resources. I do really hope Government will come forward liberally.

I remain,

Yours truly,

JOHN M'IVOR.

IV.

FROM THE REV. JOHN LAMONT.

SWORDDALE, 25th December, 1846.

DEAR REV. SIR,

The people here have suffered much already from the calamity that has overtaken us; and they are only in the beginning of their suffering, unless they get assistance from other quarters; and numbers of them, indeed, will positively die of starvation before long, unless something be done for them by benevolent people in the South.

I have had repeated applications from people in my own district, who have declared that they had nothing to taste in the morning before coming out; and one poor woman told me that she had lived for two days upon a boiled cabbage. I have known another case, where a woman with a sucking child at her breast had not tasted anything for some time, until going some distance she got some food in another house, and nearly fainted upon tasting it. Misery and want are plainly depicted in the very faces of the people, and unless something be done, and done *soon*, the consequences must be of the most deplorable kind you can imagine.

The proprietors—I mean the great ones, Lords Macdonald and MacLeod of MacLeod—are doing much in order to meet and alleviate the distress; but they cannot, with any justice to their own interests, do anything like what will be required in the case, before this awful calamity shall have come to an end.

Now then is the time to be active on the matter, if you are active at all, in order to keep those who will be at work, whenever the time for that comes, in anything like proper condition for their undergoing the tear and wear of their labour; and to keep others alive, who, from the general want among all, must without this perish.

The Government stores, being sold only for cash, will be of little avail to us until the weather and the time of the year come round when the money obtained under the Drainage

Act will come to be distributed among the people for their work, and this may take some time yet; besides, how many families are there who, from various causes, will get no part of this, and who must be otherwise supplied, or want.

I should have mentioned also, that Talisker has been active at this trying crisis, and done much good in the country, by bringing meal into it, which, when once within reach of the people, will be got at in some way or another, by credit or compassion, or some means, as men in general cannot see their fellow-men perish, if they can prevent it. Dr. M'Arkel also, of Drynoch, is showing great attention to his own sub-tenants and cottars at this time; but all that *can* be done, by private activity and benevolence in this way, will go but a short way to make up what will yet be required, even if they should expend their all in this cause of humanity: we must therefore appeal to more public and distant quarters for support.

In case my other letter should miscarry, and as the matter is of importance in itself, I have only to repeat, that means for procuring seed-corn should be kept in view as well as present supply of food, as I plainly perceive that there will be a great want of this among the people when the time comes round for its being required; and, hoping to hear soon of something being done for this quarter, and that its results will reach in good time to be of avail to the patient and exemplary people who are now suffering so much, I remain,

DEAR REV. SIR,

Yours very sincerely,

JOHN LAMONT.

Rev. N. M'LEOD, D.D. Glasgow.

V.

FROM A. MACKINNON, Esq.

CORRY, 29th December, 1846.

DEAR SIR,

The whole facts regarding the condition of the people here may be summed up in a very few words.

The potatoe crop has been long ago exhausted, and that portion of the people who entirely depended on that esculent for the maintenance of themselves and their families, (which I should think would be nearly one-half of a population of 25,000 souls,) are now reduced to a state of extreme distress. The other half will have exhausted their corn crops before seed time is over, and what is to become of them, unless some plan for supplying seed is devised, is more than the farthest seeing amongst us is able to divine.

The Landed Proprietors of the County are doing every thing within the compass of their means to alleviate the sufferings of the people; but it is impossible that they can do a tithe of what is required, because many of those who were formerly in comfortable circumstances, and would be so again had they temporary relief, are now as much pinched for want of food as the poorest.

Yours respectfully,

A. MACKINNON.

Rev. Dr. M'LEOD, St. Columba, Glasgow.

VI.

FROM H. M'ASKILL, ESQ.

TALLISKER, 26th December, 1846.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

Your favour of the 19th I only this day received, and the delay, no doubt, was occasioned by the great fall of snow.

I am glad to learn that the distressing case of the destitute Highlanders is now to be taken in hand by a community so able and willing as the charitable inhabitants of Glasgow; and I indulge in great hopes that great good may emanate from their exertions, assisted by their rich and influential neighbours of Edinburgh.

You may recollect, that when I had the pleasure of seeing you in September, that I stated, if Skye were left to her own resources, that she would not support herself beyond the 1st

of January; and I am now sorry to say that the circumstances of the country, as to food, justify me in having made that remark; in corroboration of which I may state, that, since the 10th of October, no less than 7000 bolls of meal have been imported into the island, and when a vessel that I chartered from Aberdeen with meal for Lord Macdonald's stores arrived at Wig this week, there was not a dust in any of the stores, except a trifle in the Sleat one, although about half the quantity I stated has been distributed out of his stores.

You request to know what is doing for the relief of the people at present.

1st. The regular Paupers are supplied under the provision of the Poor Law Act.

2d. The proprietors, such as Lord Macdonald and M'Leod, have applied for a loan under the Drainage Act, and have a number of the able bodied employed in carrying the provision of this Act out, besides carrying on the necessary roads, and through them their principal Tacksmen get a share of the benefit, and employ such of their cottars as are able to work; or, rather, are now making preparation to commence: but all these laudable exertions are quite inadequate to the wants of the people. An able-bodied man, under favourable circumstances, might earn as much as would support himself, wife, child, and perhaps two: but what is to become of him that has six or eight depending on his exertions, in such a wet climate as this, where there are so many broken days? and I may instance that, during the last month, there was not five days that a man could earn more than his own meat at out-day work; besides, during the Spring, how are they to work for others when they have the laying down of their own crops to attend to, if any seed remains with them to be put into the ground, and it is impossible that the Proprietors and Tacksmen can continue to do what they are doing, when twice the land rental will not keep them in the article of meal alone.

I refer you to an excellent letter of the Rev. Mr. M'Gregor of Kilmuir, now going the round of the papers, who has drawn a very correct picture of the state of his own parish; but as he classified the other parishes as not being in a better

condition, I may safely say that they are all worse, as Kilmuir used always to be reckoned the granary of this Island as a corn-producing country, and I know that they have now more than any of their neighbours, although quite inadequate to their wants.

I am quite at a loss to guess how the Spring and Summer months are to be got over—the able bodied, that have no families, will of course sally off to the Railways—those that have families must remain at home to till the ground, and depend on getting some work from the Proprietors and Tacksmen, and some of the women will get partial employment, cleaning turnips, &c.; but on these resources they cannot support themselves, nor can they leave the locality for work.

Besides, meal, oat, and beer seed, to a great extent, will be required, and potatoes if possible, otherwise the state of things will be worse next year than now.

To give you an idea of how I am situated myself, I think it will not be amiss in me to state that I am tenant of the district called Minginish, with a gross population of . 939
41 families, of which include my own and servants,

making	255
13 that may for a year be able to support themselves,	60
125 requiring immediate aid from some quarter,	624
	— 939

To me it is appalling to be saddled with such a population, and you may naturally ask how I ever was able to support them? My answer to this is, that they have small allotments of land, on which they made more than sufficient to support themselves of potatoes, and some of them have a cow's grass, for which they paid rent, and I allow them days' wages for their work in place of money. In short, while the potatoes continued the staff food of the country they were contented, and I put up with their burden cheerfully.

I still continue and am even increasing my work, for the sake of giving employment to the men, at various works, but it is a trifle what I can do; and, as a last resource, to keep the women alive, am now giving them wool to spin, for the

workmanship of which I give them meal, but I anticipate that the system will be unprofitable to me.

MY DEAR SIR,

Yours always most sincerely,

HUGH M'ASKILL.

DR. NORMAN M'LEOD, *St. Columba, Glasgow.*

VII.

FROM H. MACDONALD, Esq.

PORTREE, *26th December, 1846.*

REV. DEAR SIR,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 19th current, relative to the failure of the potatoe crop in the Highlands, and the distress among the poor which has been thereby occasioned.

I have no doubt you are already in possession of all the information on this subject which I can give you. I may mention, however, that destitution to an alarming extent prevails in the islands at this moment. You are well aware that a great number of the inhabitants of this island have no lands whatever in their possession. They managed to get stances for houses from the Tacksmen and larger crofters, and also patches of ground for potatoes. With their potatoes and their small earnings they managed to exist; but as the potatoes have failed they are utterly destitute, particularly the sickly and the aged. The small crofters are also beginning to be in want. They have hitherto been eating the grain which should serve for seed in the ensuing spring, and as soon as this is consumed they will be equally destitute as those who have no lands.

The Proprietors, Lord Macdonald and MacLeod, are doing a great deal for the people. They are not only giving them meal, but also employment. Mr. Rainy of Rasay is also doing a great deal for his people, both with regard to provisions and work.

In order to enable the poor people who have lots to lay down a crop, it will be quite necessary that corn is imported to enable them to do so.

I could enumerate cases of individual distress, but I think it unnecessary.

I hope that the people of Glasgow will, with their usual liberality, come forward to our assistance.

In haste, I am,

REV. DEAR SIR,

Yours faithfully,

H. MACDONALD.

The Rev. Dr. NORMAN M'LEOD.

VIII.

FROM THE REV. ANGUS MARTIN.

SNIZART MANSE, 25th December, 1846.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I received your circular this moment, when I am preparing to leave home. I am sorry I cannot, therefore, enter at length into all the details of the painful calamity with which the Highlands have been visited.

The destitution is at present truly alarming, but it is only in its commencement. Whatever precautions may be adopted, in consequence of the entire failure of the potatoe crop, the famine will prevail for two years, at least, in the Highlands. It is daily and rapidly on the increase, with all its concomitant evils, such as discontentment, sickness, and death. I am not aware, however, that as yet death has occurred from want of food; but the mortality in this parish is unusually great.

The destitution already prevails to a fearful extent. Besides the poor, who had only potatoe ground, there are many who have been paying rent whose resources are completely exhausted.

Lord Macdonald has been hitherto most liberal to the destitute. In this parish, a small allowance (about half a stone

of meal weekly), was ordered by his Lordship to be given to each individual in actual want, whether on the Poor's Roll or not. And this was given by his Lordship to the poor on other estates in this parish, as well as to those on his own. It is, however, impossible that his Lordship can continue this supply. I do believe that he is only making an extraordinary effort at present, in the expectation that assistance may soon come from some other quarter. The quantity of meal already distributed at the expense of this illustrious Nobleman is enormous; and the number of applicants for relief is daily increasing.

Our prospects regarding the future are most gloomy. There are only about a-third of the population now in want; but in the course of two or three months more the famine will be universal—all the small tenants will be equally destitute. I made particular inquiries into the state of this parish, which I submitted to the Inspector of the Poor, who was with me on business of this kind this day, when your letter arrived; and I find, at an average, that each family would require 16 to 20 bolls in the year at least to support them: those who have meal of their own, live at that rate just now. But what have we to meet this demand? Certainly not more than would feed the inhabitants of the parish for two months, should it be equally distributed amongst them. The largest crofts yield about twelve bolls of meal, the smaller about one and a-half; and there are twenty small crofts for every large one. From this you can easily perceive, that those who at present support themselves will be, in a few months hence, quite destitute. Many of these are already in a worse condition than actual paupers; they have numerous and weak families to support, and large debts to pay.

To meet the present emergency, there are three or four measures which must be speedily adopted and carried into effect: viz.

1st. Labour must be provided at home for those who cannot go to the south country for work, and this I humbly think is the bounden duty of the proprietors of the soil.

2d. Emigration must be encouraged on a large scale. I

find that many of the people are willing to emigrate to British North America, where they have relations in independent circumstances.

3d. Food must be provided immediately, and it should be intrusted for distribution to the Inspectors of the poor in the different parishes, subject to the control of the Parochial Boards; with whom should be associated, such persons in every parish as those who subscribe may think proper to name; and the meal or other provisions should be given out weekly, in proportion to the number in each family respectively.

4th. In Spring, the people should be provided with seed to lay in the ground—a change of seed would be attended with the most beneficial results. It should be sold at a low price to those who are known to the Parochial Boards to be able to purchase it, and the proceeds of the sale should be laid out again in purchasing food for the destitute.

I am sorry I have no time to add more; but I trust you will receive such information from the Highlands as will enable you to bring the subject before the public with effect. No time should be lost. The communication with the South is at present very irregular; but when you are informed of the state of one parish in the Highlands, you know the whole: I believe we are all in the same condition. Do not, therefore, wait for particulars from all our parishes.

Yours faithfully,

ANGUS MARTIN.

IX.

FROM ALEX. M'IVOR, ESQ.

STORNOWAY, 28th December, 1846.

REV. DEAR SIR,

I am this moment favoured with your letter of 19th instant only. You are no doubt aware that our liberal proprietor, James Mathison, Esq. has come forward to give em-

ployment to all the labouring classes on the estate of Lewis, that are fit for work, and supplies such persons with meal; but as yet no suitable provision has been made for a class of people who are incompetent for labour, with the exception of females, and those are to be employed in spinning yarn from wool, at a price that will prevent them from actual starvation; and I have no doubt, from Mr. Mathison's benevolent disposition, but he will even aid the class to which I have alluded as unprovided for. As yet, however, nothing has been done, as there has not been actual want even among them; and I learn that he visits this property in March, when, I have no doubt, he may attend to his people. Our present population numbers about 20,000 souls: their principal food, for ten months each year, was potatoes, with fish, milk, &c. and the failure of that root, I may say, has been almost general, though in a few localities their crop of beer has been fair; and, in many instances, families may have six months' food; though in some of the parishes, particularly Big, their beer crop is already expended; and I have been informed that some families have already purchased seven bolls of meal, and, their ready money being exhausted, are at a loss how to make future purchases. But it is in the end of Spring and Summer that we will experience the greatest want; and it is my firm belief that this proportion of the Long Island will require at least 24,000 bolls of meal, before they can have a supply for next season from their crop; and in many districts, from the manufacture of their crop, they will be at a total loss for their sowing seed.

I am however happy to say, that with this visitation of Providence I do not hear of any murmur or complaint among them, and there is no dread of any outbreak or disturbance of any kind. It is also proper you should be informed that a few spirited people have laid in large stocks of meal, and it is now retailed among them at a small profit; and I could purchase even this day two thousand bolls oatmeal by a couple shillings per boll cheaper than at Glasgow, and it might readily be shipped at an easy rate to such districts as are most needy.

To-morrow morning our steamer sails, so does our mail-packet, and my aged eyes are getting dim to continue a longer detail; but I will resume the subject by next post, when, I have no doubt, you may also have details from the pastors of the other parishes; though we have the misfortune to be at present without a spiritual instructor. Believe me to continue,

REV. DEAR SIR,

Yours very truly,

ALEX. M'IVOR.

X.

FROM J. R. MACDONALD, ESQ.

RODEL, 28th December, 1846.

REV. DEAR SIR,

I am this day in receipt of your letter of the 19th current, and regret much that it is not in my power to state anything cheering as to the condition of our poor starving people in this part of the world, notwithstanding all that has been done for them by the Countess of Dunmore, both in her capacity as tutor for her son, and also by her own private charity—by importing for their use a large quantity of meal during the last Summer and Autumn—providing free passages to Glasgow, with provisions, for all the natives of Harris who could be prevailed on to proceed South in quest of employment—liberally supporting the families of those who were induced to go South—and, with a view to encourage the country manufactures, purchasing from them for ready money every sort of woollen fabric which they can produce. And although we expect to employ some of them under the new Drainage Act, still they are in a very destitute and melancholy situation, entirely owing to the failure of their potatoe crop—particularly the population of the island of Bernesay, amounting to about 800 souls, the whole of whom are at this moment little removed from a state of starvation,

they having already not only consumed their little crop, but also that portion of it which they were in the habit of keeping for seed in Spring : so that, unless Government or a benevolent public come forward to their assistance, God alone can foresee where their misery is to end ; for even were the proprietor to hand over the whole of the rents of the estate, it would not be sufficient to support the population during the next Spring and Summer, to say nothing of the present Winter.

Earnestly trusting that the meeting about to be held in Glasgow may be productive of much good to our poor starving countrymen,

I beg to remain,

Most faithfully yours,

J. R. MACDONALD.

The Rev. DR. M'LEOD, of St. Columba.

XI.

FROM C. SHAW, Esq.

LOOHMADDY, 28th December, 1846.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am only now favoured with your letter of the 19th current.

I need scarcely say how sincerely I rejoice to observe that you have once more embarked in the cause of the unfortunate Highlanders. They never, on any former occasion, had such need of aid from every quarter from which it can be obtained.

My district consists of the parishes of Barra, South and North Uist, and Harris, all in the county of Inverness. I see people almost every week from all parts of the district, and get all the information I can procure as to the state of the people.

Barra and South Uist.—The population of these parishes is about 10,000 : Colonel Gordon of Cluny is sole proprietor. Nothing has hitherto been done for the people, and fewer works have been carried on by the proprietor than for the

last few years. 1000 bolls of meal, sent by the Colonel, have been expected for some weeks back, but they have not yet arrived. When they do come, they will, if divided among the population, afford one stone for each individual. In the meantime, a large proportion of the population are, I am credibly informed, on the eve of starvation. Upwards of a third of them—that is, more than 3000—have not one morsel to eat but what their neighbours give them, and these will themselves be destitute in March. In fact, I have not been able to find out correctly from any one how these 3000 or so live. In harvest they had a few bad potatoes; after that, a few sheep and poultry: now, all these sources are exhausted; and as those who have a little meal are, from necessity, more careful of it than usual, I fear that half a meal of fish or shell-fish, and sometimes a handful of meal or so, from a neighbour, forms at this moment the food of many families. I have been informed that two females have died in Barra of want—one of them under twenty years of age, and the other advanced in life. This was contradicted; but the person who did so, did not appear to me to have had information so correct as to justify him in doing so. I saw Dr. MacLeod, Colonel Gordon's factor, last week, and he estimates the quantity of meal that will be required to sustain the population till next crop at from 15,000 to 20,000 bolls. Unless aid is immediately given in these parishes, there must be deaths from starvation. My own amazement is, that many have not died before now, from the effects of poor and unhealthy living. The prospects for the future are dismal in the extreme. The cottars who used to plant potatoes, on which they subsisted for a large portion of the year, will have no potatoes to plant, nor any other seed to put into the ground; and even the tenants who pay rents are at this moment, in many instances, consuming the beer and oat seed. This is one of the worst features in the state of these parishes; as, if they are not supplied with seed, they will be worse off next year than this year.

North Uist.—The population here is about 5000. Lord Macdonald is sole proprietor. In September his Lordship

sent upwards of 500 bolls of meal, which was given to the people on credit. In November he sent 500 bolls more, but these were only sold for cash. No works have yet commenced. The proportion in absolute want is not yet so great here as in the other two parishes; yet there are several families whose whole resources are exhausted, and who depend entirely on what they get from their neighbours, and on occasional assistance from the Parochial Board. The Board sometimes give occasional aid in meal to those who are quite destitute, though not on the Poor's Roll. Nearly the whole of the tenants will have exhausted their crops in April, and there are some who have already begun using what they had reserved for seed. These and the cottars will be in want of seed.

I may here mention that the Free Church Committee sent 100 bolls of oatmeal, which was distributed in small quantities in the Uists, Barra, and Bernera of Harris, and which did a vast deal of good.

Harris.—My information from this parish is not so recent as from the others, but I believe a large portion of the population is quite destitute. The population is about 5000. The medical man in this parish says he never saw the parish so healthy, till a few cases of typhus fever broke out a few days ago. If this spreads it will indeed be a fearful addition to the other calamities.

You will see I have written in very great haste, to catch the packet, so excuse blunders of every kind.

Yours ever,

C. SHAW.

The Rev. NORMAN M'LEOD, D.D.

XII.

FROM DONALD STEWART, Esq.

LUCKINTYRE, ISLE OF HARRIS, 28th December, 1846.

REV. DEAR SIR,

Your letter of the 19th instant I only received this morning. I lose no time in replying briefly to the in-

quiries regarding the condition of the poor people in this parish. It may, with great safety, be stated in general terms, that their present position and prospects for the ensuing Spring and Summer—in regard to the great means of existence, food—are most deplorable. This evil, though great in all, is various in its extent in different parts of the island.

On the moss lands on the east coast of Harris a small quantity of potatoes has been saved, and were there any supply of meal in the district at present, a few could be saved for seed. But on the west side, including the populous farms of Strend, Gab, &c. with the islands of Bernesay, in the Sound of Harris; in a word, on all the better soils, and generally most productive portions of land, the failure has been complete and heart-rending in its results.

In the island at large, the people are daily consuming their little grain crops, which formerly were reserved for seed, and hence, unless something be done immediately to remedy this state of matters, their condition will be too deplorable to contemplate.

The Parochial Board are willing to exert their utmost in retrieving the destitute poor, but to the great mass of those requiring assistance their efforts cannot extend.

The death of the lamented proprietor, the late Earl of Dunmore, and the early minority of the present Earl, deprives the poor people of the immediate assistance which, in other circumstances, would have been granted.

I have the honour to be,

REV. DEAR SIR,

Yours very sincerely,

DONALD STEWART.

The Rev. Dr. M'Leod, &c. &c. &c.

N.B.—Should any farther information be required on this painful subject, I shall be happy to do so, and to render every assistance in my power.

D. S.

XIII.

FROM THE REV. ALEXANDER KENNEDY.

JURA MANSE, 22d December, 1846.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

Without entering into a minute detail of startling facts, it may answer your purpose, in the meantime, barely to state, that in the parish of Jura, not including Collonsay, we have now upwards of fifty on our pauper's roll, with additional claimants every week; that the assessment for the support of the poor is five per cent. on the rental of the parish; that the potatoe crop has been worse than an entire failure; and that we must look, under Providence, to other resources than our own, both for a supply of seed potatoes in the Spring and for the means of supplying food for many, very many of our people, during the Summer months.

We hail with heartfelt gratitude to Almighty God the manifestation of that truly Christian and charitable feeling in which your contemplated meeting originated, and we look to you, as the friend of the Highlanders, for exerting yourself towards directing the stream of the Christian charity of the people of Glasgow to the united parishes of Jura and Collonsay, containing seven inhabited islands, upwards of two thousand souls, and comprehending a surface of from 14 to 1500 square miles.

REV. AND DEAR DR.

Respectfully and sincerely yours,

ALEXANDER KENNEDY.

XIV.

FROM THE REV. DONALD MACDONALD.

MANSE OF KILMENV, ISLAY, December 30, 1846.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

In reply to your letter of inquiry of the 19th inst. I beg to state, that, owing chiefly to the failure of the potatoe

crop, in this parish and the island at large, there is now beginning to be felt great and crushing destitution, because the small savings which labourers in most cases had made from their harvest operations are *now completely exhausted*; and although there be many employed in draining land, and thereby enabled to keep life afloat for a little time, yet there are many others still unemployed, and there is no provision as yet made for their maintenance during Spring and Summer.

While *men* can get work, they procure food for themselves; but females who have no work are in a much worse condition than men; and where they have three or four young children crowding about them, crying for bread and none to give—pray, what can *they* do to relieve them?

This island, however, had in general an average crop of oats and barley this year, and in that respect it is better supplied than any of the Hebrides with its own produce, but the quality of the oatmeal is far from being so substantial or nourishing as it was last year, and wherever the barley is found to be of sufficient weight, it has been ordered into the distilleries to pay the landlord's rent, and only what is deficient in weight is allowed to be converted to meal. Taking these statements into your serious consideration, you can easily see that want, and extreme destitution, and starvation press hard on a great proportion of our people already, and that no provision has as yet been made to relieve them for the Spring and Summer months. I state this in reference to the parish of Kilmeny, and my information leads me, in keeping *within the mark*, to say that there are, in the villages and other localities in Islay, upwards of 5000 souls whose pressing wants and impending starvation demand immediate relief. And another phase of our case is, that if the small tenantry do anything near justice to their own families, in supporting them from the produce of this year's crop, they can have no seed of their own growth to sow their fields next Spring.

Such is the information, keeping within bounds, that I feel myself obliged, in all candour, to give. Trusting that you may find these facts of some importance in any public state-

ment which you are called to make, at the meeting of the people of Glasgow, to consider the condition of the Inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland,

I am,

REV. DEAR SIR,

Yours faithfully and respectfully,

DOND. MACDONALD.

The Rev. Dr. M'LEOD, of St. Columba, Glasgow.

XV.

FROM THE REV. JAMES DEWAR.

MANSE OF KILCHAMAN, 24th December, 1846.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

In answer to your communication of the 19th current, I have to say,

1. That in this island the principal proprietor is doing every thing in his power with a view to alleviate our present distress, and to meet the greivous calamity with which it has pleased the Almighty as a judgment to visit us. Islay has promptly taken advantage of the offer made by government, and a considerable amount is to be laid out in draining; and which, in the meantime, will, in the generality of cases, afford temporal relief. But,

2. As to our prospects "in regard to the Spring and Summer months," they are dark and gloomy in the extreme. It is only for a month or two that draining can afford relief or employment. In March, preparations for next year's crop will commence, and what employment is to come in place of draining is more than I can conjecture. I know that the proprietor will do all that prudence, prompted by benevolence, can do; but, from what I see, and from what I learn from those who are more competent to give an opinion in the matter than I am, the destitution and distress will be such as we never before in the Highlands experienced.

Even supposing the able-bodied should have employment,

still there must be a mass of pauperism and destitution, and that *beyond the reach or benefit of the provisions of the Poor Law Act*, which employment cannot relieve, and which, in present circumstances, would soon drain private means, however ample.

And even in the case of able-bodied men—while the price of provisions is so very high, it cannot be expected that the wages of one man, however able and however well employed, can adequately supply the wants of a family, consisting, as it may be, of eight or ten individuals.

Be it remembered, too, that there is a painful peculiarity marking the present destitution. In past years of scarcity, we could calculate on *sure prospective* relief from the potatoe crop about the latter end of July; and the meal that was required was *only in supplement*. But this year, there are no potatoes *in store or in prospect*. Meal must be our sole and entire support. There is no prospective relief to be looked for before the end of September; and even then only, in the case of those that have crops to depend upon.

In a word, my own opinion is, that there are trials awaiting *us in the Highlands, for the next nine months*, such as neither we nor our fathers ever experienced. Never were the aid and sympathy of a generous public more required than they are this year. Grateful for the deep interest which you always manifest in the welfare of the Highlanders,

I am, with sentiments of the deepest regard,

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

Sincerely and truly yours,

JAMES DEWAR.

The Rev. NORMAN M'LEOD, D.D. Glasgow.

P.S.—I am sorry that, owing to the short time I have been located here, I cannot condescend on such facts as might tell with effect. The facts I shall soon be in possession of; but,

in the meantime, you must be satisfied with such as I can give.

J. D.

XVI.

FROM THE REV. ARCHIBALD M'TAVISH.

MANSE OF HILLDATTON, 24th December, 1846.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I was duly favoured with yours of the 19th inst. and feel thankful that the condition of the suffering Highlanders is calling forth the sympathy of their more favoured neighbours, and I trust the Almighty will put it into the hearts of all those who have somewhat to spare to open their hands liberally, to save a brave, loyal, and moral people from the horrors of famine. The inhabitants of this island have as yet been better off than many of their countrymen, but they will be very destitute during Spring and next Summer, for their small stock of oats and bere will soon be consumed; and, unless some remunerative labour is provided for the able bodied, a great proportion of them must depend upon the bounty of others for the support of themselves and families; this will be more especially the case in this parish, if distillation is stopped, either by orders of Government or by a scarcity of grain. If regular work is furnished, the able bodied may support themselves and contribute a little towards the support of their families, but it is impossible, at the present rate of wages, which is from six to seven shillings a-week, that a family of seven or eight can be suitably provided, when meal is at three shillings and fourpence per stone, Dutch weight; the consequence is, many families take but two meals a-day, and those often scanty. The real paupers are tolerably well provided for, but if food is not sent to us, even the families of the best labourers will endure severe privations. It will also be necessary, to enable those who have some crop,

to preserve as much as will be necessary to sow the ground: this can only be done by supplying them with food, for they will consume all the grain they have, rather than allow themselves and families to starve, if the land should lie waste, which would prolong the evil, and entail an additional burden on the country. If draining is carried on to the extent proposed, and regular payment made at short intervals, it will tend greatly to alleviate the distress which some already experience, and with which a great proportion of the labouring population is threatened.

My anxiety to return you an early answer prevents my sending so full a statement of our condition as I would otherwise have done; but I trust what I have said will be sufficient to insure us a portion of the public bounty, and that a supply of food will be sent us as soon as possible, which I engage to see properly distributed in my parish, including Oa. I remain,

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

Yours faithfully,

ARCHIBALD M'TAVISH.

The foregoing statement respects cottars, labourers, and occupiers of small portions of land.

XVII.

FROM THE REV. DAVID STEWART.

MANSE OF ARDNAMURCHAN, 25th December, 1846.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I hasten now to put you in possession of some answer to yours. In order, then, to put you in possession of our circumstances here, I beg to exhibit the people here under

your view under the following classes: 1st—Paupers; 2d—Small crofters, of whom there are two classes, one class being pensioned off by the proprietor, the second class being dependent upon the tenantry of the farm on which they reside; 3d—Small tenantry, paying rent directly to the proprietor, varying from £3 to £4 sterling, up to £10 or £12, and under this class may be embraced shepherds. Those paying a higher rent than this are in general in circumstances so comfortable, as that I need not embrace them in any subsequent remarks.

1st Class, or Paupers upon the Poor Roll.—Of this class there are about forty (or perhaps a few above that number), who receive regular aid, according to their necessities; their wants are well supplied. There are about twelve more, who receive occasional aid. For these provision has been made.

2d Class.—First, those pensioned off by the proprietor, who gives them a house, fuel, small croft, and a cow's grass. Of this class there may be eight or ten. In ordinary years, these persons by the aid of their families lived comfortably; few of the inhabitants, perhaps, more so. But this year they will be, and are mostly already, very destitute; so much so, that, without immediate aid, they will be reduced to the rank of the 1st Class; and most of them are already altogether supported by the proprietor's pecuniary bounty, in addition to all those things they receive from him in kind.

Second Class of Crofters.—There are in the parish from twenty to thirty families of this description. These persons were in the practice of getting potatoe ground, and, after planting their potatoes, were usually employed in the months of May and June at wood-cutting, and at harvest work in the South during the months of Autumn, usually spending the Winter and Spring months at home. Now, these families are this year quite destitute—at present the most destitute of the whole population. Their little earnings are long ago consumed: the potatoes, on which they in former years calculated, destroyed, without ever coming to maturity. Once and again, more frequently than I can mention, has the head

of such a family in this class come to me, declaring that he or she (as the case might be) had not left at home so much as one meal of food, and not knowing where to go to ask it, should I refuse relief. I could name a family in this class, of no less than thirteen members, in these deplorable circumstances. Now, for many of those in this class, we perceive no immediate means of relief earlier than the end of the month of May next, that is, until the cutting of the woods commences. To whom then can these people look for aid, but to their proprietor—whose means of aiding them are diminished just in proportion to their necessities—or to a generous public?

3d Class, Small tenants, paying rent directly to proprietors, of from three to four pounds sterling, up to ten or twelve pounds.—This is by far the most ruinous class among us here. Many of these have been buying meal since June last. The new crop of potatoes failed at that very period when they were in the practice in former years of beginning to use it. In former years, they of this class were in the practice of giving their corn to their cattle, they themselves living chiefly on their potatoes; and even then, towards the end of Spring months, it was no unusual thing for their fodder to fail, when they were obliged, in order to keep their cattle alive, to give them of their potatoes. Let it be observed, that the articles on which they calculated for the paying of their rent were their cattle and their barley. Now, this year they are themselves under the necessity of using the few oats they had for their own sustenance, and also their barley; and, by many of them, both are already consumed. And should the Spring months be severe in proportion to what is past of Winter, then there is reason to fear both for themselves and cattle; for they have diminished the food of their cattle, in so far as the oats are concerned, and of potatoes there are none to give them. And the barley is already consumed by several of this class, which, in years past, was always looked upon as security in so far for the rent. Just, then, in proportion to the urgency for aid, are the means of

the proprietor to yield and diminish; and it affords me pleasure to bear witness that no one can be more anxious to afford aid than the proprietor of this parish.

In connection with this class there is another—that is, shepherds. These are generally among the most destitute. Shepherds here have perhaps no money wages, and no allowances of meal—such, at least, is commonly the case among those engaged by small tenantry; they have in lieu a croft, with permission to keep sheep, &c. Now this year, as happened to the employer so it happened to the employed—the croft yielded nothing, or next to nothing; the consequence is, that the shepherd has been living by selling off his stock: and in this way some of them are already reduced almost or altogether to nothing, and that with the months of Spring and Summer before them; and that, too, while the employers are as poor and helpless as himself. It is with dread that I contemplate the picture,—with seven or eight of a family depending upon him for support, and our means of charity here already all but exhausted, and still six or seven of the most trying months of the year before us altogether unprovided for.

I have only further to express my fears in regard to how the poor people here are to get seed wherewith to sow down their ground. I will not at present, however, enlarge; anxious that this may reach you without delay.

With very best regards, I am,

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

Always most truly yours,

DAVID STEWART.

XVIII.

FROM ROBERT STEWART, Esq.

AHARACLE, 24th December, 1846.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I received your letter of the 19th December, intimating that a public meeting is to be held in Glasgow, to consider the condition of the Inhabitants of the Highlands and Isles, and to adopt measures for their relief.

In answer, I have to state, that while some severe cases of privation have come under my observation in this district of Aharacle, there have been hitherto no cases which we have not been able to relieve with the means at our disposal. But it is now a fact consistent with my knowledge, that in the whole of the district, and in which there is a population of about 2000 persons, the food raised in the country is now exhausted, and henceforth the sole reliance of the people for the means of subsistence must be upon food imported from other countries. Up to this time, by means of the potatoes spared by the disease, their little patches of oats and barley, the returns from their cattle, and their personal labour, the inhabitants have been not only enabled to pay their rents, but to support themselves in a state, if not in the enjoyment of their former abundance, yet by no means approaching to the horrors of famine. On the estates of Dr. Martin of Irin and Mr. Robertson of Kinlochmoidart, I have reason to believe that the present wants and future comforts of the people are not overlooked. Such also may be said as to Lochshiel. On that part of Sir James Milles Riddell's estate comprised within the district of Aharacle, on which there is a population of between 800 and 900, the most anxious desire to relieve the present necessities, and to ameliorate the future condition of all classes of the inhabitants, is pleasingly manifest. The

paupers on the regular roll, and the necessitous on the occasional roll, are regularly supplied with food. Numbers of workmen are employed in woods or on roads; and, that those not so employed, and in want of work, may not suffer, advantage has been taken by Sir James of the Drainage Act, so that every able bodied man may live upon the fruits of his honest industry. That nothing which might conduce to the ease and the comfort of the people should be left undone, a store of meal has been established at Salen, in a central situation, to which the persons employed may have easy access, and where they will receive the food at prime cost. Under these circumstances, our prospects here do not look so gloomy as they did a little time back, and there does not seem any ground of despair, even should we have nothing to look to but our own exertions. Still, after all, the benevolent and unwearied exertions of Sir James Riddell, and his agent, Mr. Kennedy, aided as these are by the truly admirable conduct of the people; seeing that we have seven months before us, in which every particle of food used must be bought and imported; we are compelled to look forward to a state of things in which hardship, severe hardship, must be generally endured. The labour of the strong will meet with frequent interruption from the snows, the frosts, and storms of Winter. The aged and the feeble cannot do a great deal in work, to which they have hitherto been unaccustomed, and even strong men, able and willing, and knowing how to work, but with numerous and weak young children, cannot be expected by their own individual exertions to earn a sufficiency of food to satisfy the craving wants of their families. Such being our present condition and future prospects, I hail, with gratitude and delight, the aid which the generosity of our countrymen in the south is about to send to us, and though it does not become me to say in what way that aid should be bestowed, perhaps I may be permitted to suggest, that, if at all possible, it should be bestowed as the reward of profitable labour, or as aiding individual exertions, that thus the self-respect and independence of the recipients may be preserved. I would

submit also, that it would be a great matter to provide a supply of seed for the crop of the ensuing year—say oats, barley, turnips, carrots, with, at the same time, a supply of guano, or one or other of those foreign manures which may be best calculated to cause the seed put into the ground to yield abundantly. This would be a boon indeed—a boon in the first seed time—and a boon which might lay the foundation of a new order of things, which, under the blessing of Divine providence, would cause that the cry of distress be no more heard from our land.

Could no aid be given to the women in the shape of profitable employment, such as knitting, or the like?

I have the honour to be,

DEAR SIR,

Yours most respectfully,

ROBERT STEWART.

The Rev. DR M'LEOD, St. Columba, Glasgow.

XIX.

FROM DUNCAN M'CALLUM, Esq.

ARISAIG, Dec. 24th, 1846.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

In reply to your letter respecting the state of the inhabitants of this part of the country, in consequence of the potatoe failure, their prospect for the ensuing Spring and Summer is very poor. The mass of the people here and in the adjacent districts are beginning to be in want: cottars or small tenants have had some means till now; but many of them will soon be in a worse state than the paupers; these, being on the poor lists of the proprietors, receive allowance

in meal, &c. No work is going on at present : indeed the weather is such, that nothing can be done ; but in a short time the people will be employed, under the Drainage Act, which will however enable men that have families to earn only so much as will buy meal for them during that week, and that employment may not last long ; nor can such as have land neglect their own work in Spring. They must sow as much barley as possible, now that they have lost all hopes of potatoes, on which I may say they heretofore entirely depended in this country. But how are they to sow their land ? Seed will be high and scarce here, and the most of the small tenants cannot obtain it. There is none as yet in absolute want, yet many take but two meals of meat a-day ; and indeed a few *one* meal. I speak of those who have a small portion of land and a little stock—a cow or two each. Such as have none, depend upon the proprietors, who will not allow them to be in want. One proprietor, Lord Cranstoun, is most charitable and most desirous that all able-bodied men would go South, where they may get work and good wages, as the whole rent of this small estate would not supply long the wants of all the population on it.

It is unnecessary to say more. My impression is that the inhabitants of these districts will be in a deplorable condition till next harvest, and many of them can have little prospect of relief *then*, unless assisted in finding means to sow their land.

I am,

REV. AND DEAR DOCTOR,

Yours, most faithfully,

DUNCAN M'CALLUM.

XX.

FROM THE REV. WILLIAM FRASER.

ULVA MANSE, 25th December, 1846.

REV. DEAR DOCTOR,

In answer to your letter of the 19th, I beg to state that the poor people on the Mull part of this Quoad Sacra parish get employment from the Master of Strathhallan—the men at the rate of a shilling a-day, and the women get spinning, so that every thing is done for them that can in the circumstances. They are ill off, but not so bad as many others. A shilling is not much among five or six, when the family consists of that number, when it is borne in mind that the meal costs 3s. the stone.

In the island of Ulva, the state of most of the population is miserable beyond description. Tobermory is bad off, but *there* they have fire, and can get something for their penny, when they have it—whereas the Ulva people have for most to go to Salen, a distance of twelve miles, or to Tobermory, a distance of twenty, before they can get anything to buy.

Many of the crofters tell me that they will not be able to sow anything this year, as they are now busy at work at their querns, when they are not ready to go to the mill. I was told on good authority that on a farm of eighteen families that there was not a single particle of meal last week but what was ground by the quern.

But, bad as these are, they are well off in comparison to the cottar families, who are very numerous. I believe that it is beyond the power of many individuals to keep themselves in life till summer. It is a common case for me to have an application from a family of six persons, and who did not taste food, as they say, for two days previous, either for the loan of money or what will serve a diet. Indeed, I am glad when I see the faces of many who are

known to be in want. We expect that road-making will go on, but not, as I am told, till June, if Government will be prevailed upon to grant the money then.

In short, I give you it as my candid opinion, that there will be many deaths here soon, unless something be done immediately.

WM. FRASER.

Rev. N. M'LEOD, D.D. Glasgow.

XXI.

FROM DONALD CAMPBELL, Esq. J.P.

JUNNON, 23d December, 1846.

MY DEAR DOCTOR,

Relief cannot be sent to us too soon; the cases of destitution that come daily to my knowledge are most distressing; and although Mr. M'Lean of Coll has been here for some weeks back, on purpose that he may know the state of his people, and do all he can to relieve them, yet he finds it impossible to do half their destitute state requires.

He has hitherto found work at drainage, roads, &c. for the greater part of the able-bodied; but there is a class—and a large one—of poor people, male and female, who are not able to work, and yet have no legal claim to be put on the Poor Roll, who are very destitute.

There are at least one hundred families on his estate, of poor cottars and others who have no land, that are in a state of destitution that I cannot describe. They are, indeed, at this moment, principally supported by his charity, and that of other members of his family.

I will, by next post, send you a more particular detail ; at present, believe me when I assert that no statement, however strong, can exaggerate the state our poor countrymen are likely to be subjected to—that of actual starvation, unless the liberal hand of the rich and generous is extended to them.

I remain,

MY DEAR DOCTOR,

Yours very sincerely,

DON. CAMPBELL.

The Rev. Dr. N. M'LEOD.

XXII.

FROM THE REV. ALEXANDER MACGREGOR.

MANSE OF IONA, 25th December, 1846.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I am this day favoured with your letter of the 19th ; and, as you request, lose no time in sending an answer to your queries as to what is doing for the relief of the poor people. His Grace the Duke of Argyll, who is sole proprietor of this parish, has, since the 1st of October, supplied the wants of the poor to a very great extent, and at an expense which the rental of his lands here will not nearly meet. The distress is only now beginning to press upon us, as all the little shifts the poor could make are exhausted, and now they must be wholly dependent upon charity.

I may mention, that in addition to the scarcity of food, which presses upon the poor with a weight which cannot be described, many of them, and in a short time mostly the whole, will be in a miserable state for clothing ; as this year

they had to appropriate for food their little harvest earnings, which in favourable seasons they used to apply in the purchase of wool for clothing. I mention this merely to bring under your notice that the poor here are in a state of great destitution, not only for food, but also clothing.

My prospects in regard to the Spring and Summer months are dark and dismal: most of the cottars have sold and consumed their only cow; many of the small tenants are at present living upon their stock of cattle, which they are disposing of for food: a short time will reduce many of this class to the level of the poorest cottars. The only hope I have for the Spring and Summer months is, that many of the poor are able to work; and should an over-ruling Providence in His wisdom and goodness provide a field for their labour, this will tend to mitigate our distress.

His Grace has for two months past employed a number of people in making drains: though their labour does not repay the expense of supporting them, it is attended with a good effect, and one much to be desired, not to allow charity to destroy the spirit of independence, which should, if possible, be cherished.

I hope the generous public of your city will aid us in our present extremity.

I remain, DEAR SIR,

With great respect, yours faithfully,

ALEX. MACGREGOR.

The Minister of Ross, who has not received one of your letters, joins me in this letter.

XXIII.

FROM ANGUS MACINTYRE, Esq.

KEILOCHSPELVIE, BY OBAN, 24th Dec. 1846.

MY DEAR SIR,

With reference to your letter of the 19th of this month, I beg to state that there are in this parish about sixty families, all of whom look forward to the Spring and Summer months with the gloomiest apprehensions.

The failure of the potatoe crop, like every other misfortune, has not come singly. The poor people are obliged, often at the peril of their lives, at much inconvenience and expense, to go to the mainland for food; and you well know the long distance they have to go by sea, and the dangerous channel they have to cross. Scarcely a day passes, at this inclement season, that their small boats are not seen struggling on a sea, the dangers of which I need not describe to you, who have so often seen it in "its phrenzy rolling." They are often detained by stormy weather, and the inconvenience, annoyance, and expense, to which the people are in consequence subjected, bear very hard upon them.

In past years they were seldom obliged to leave their homes and employment, but now they have to spend, in search of food, the time they formerly devoted to fishing and other profitable work. They are a most industrious people, and bear the calamity with which Providence has seen meet to visit them with becoming patience and resignation—thankful that, as yet, they are able to procure a scanty supply of the necessaries of life; but they appear to have an overwhelming dread of the approaching Spring and the Summer months.

Their earnest anxiety is to have facilities afforded them for procuring seed in Spring. In all the places in which they were accustomed to procure seed they have been already told that none could be spared them; and even if they should be possessed of the means of purchasing it, (as I am sure they will not,) I am convinced they will have the

greatest difficulty in getting it, unless facilities be given them for procuring a supply from other quarters. Besides, as they are resolved not to plant potatoes, they will require a larger quantity than they were accustomed to sow. They are afraid they cannot, even if they had the means, procure the requisite supply in due time.

I have written you this hurriedly, for the proposed meeting, and that without specifying any cases of distress. Indeed, I believe that at present there are few in this district of Mull; but many cases of extreme distress I anticipate in the course of next Spring.

It is my earnest request that you will take the case of my poor people, and the peculiar circumstances of it above specified, into your kind consideration; and that you will keep in view, particularly, and urge the necessity of employing a great part of the means for the relief of Highland destitution in providing seed in Spring, and in affording the people facilities for their securing the necessary supplies of it in due time.

The principal proprietor in this district is not at home at present, but I understand he is most anxious to provide employment for the people, but they have not been provided with any as yet; but even if they were to have regular employment, it is my sincere conviction that it will be absolutely necessary to supply the most of them with seed for Spring, and that gratuitously. There are here about forty-four tenants, forty of whom I am convinced will require to be supplied. I think for this district two hundred and thirty bolls of oats, and a quantity, say thirty bolls, of barley, will be necessary.

I remain,

MY DEAR SIR,

Yours very sincerely,

ANGUS MACINTYRE.

XXIV.

FROM WM. ROBERTSON, ESQ.

KINLOCHMOIDART, STRONTIAN, *Dec. 23d, 1846.*

MY DEAR DOCTOR,

IN reply to your letter of the 19th, I have only to repeat the common cry of want and misery caused by the failure of the potatoe crop. With me there was not one month's supply of food from this year's crop.

I believe that one-fourth of the population of my estate would have died of famine ere now, had I not supplied them with food.

This I have hitherto done at a vast expense, inconvenience, and sacrifice; and I look forward with the very greatest anxiety.

With care and expense, I had made great advances to putting all my people in comparatively independent circumstances. No one, to my knowledge, on my estate, has even received parochial relief. Now all (with the exception of five tenants and servants) would be without a roof were I to exact my advances. Can proprietors, without assistance, keep their estates—and who would purchase Highland coast property? Yet I employ every man who is able to work, and supply my poor with food.

Almost immediately the people must commence working their crofts, when their earnings cease. Still they must be kept alive, and yet I can only recommend one man to go South, so necessary are the rest to prepare food for the future.

The prospect for the future is bad food and seed, to an extent that I fear to calculate. The people, when allowed, are already eating their seed oats and barley. Unless assisted, their crofts will be barren in future. Could not seed oats be *quietly* purchased, and stored ready for distribution in March? Do think of this.

I intend shortly to give and insist on my people sowing and

planting garden *stuffs*. Would it not be possible to purchase some acres of cabbage plants in Ireland, for distribution at the proper time?

Were it not an imperative sense of duty, I would not remain in the Highlands and see so much that pains me. It would never do to allow the people to suppose they would get seed gratis, in case of, by any accident, supplies not getting forward.

Ever yours, very truly,

WM. ROBERTSON.

To Rev N. McLEOD, D.D. Glasgow.

XXV.

FROM DAVID ROSS, Esq.

TOBERMORY, 24th December, 1846.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

Within the Tobermory district the potatoe crop proved a total failure. About one-third of our population (say from 400 to 500) lived almost entirely on potatoes and fish. The suffering among this class is great: I have met with men and women who declared that they had not tasted food for four-and-twenty hours; and, lately, a woman applied to me for relief, who declared that she and her husband both lived on three halfpence worth of barley-meal for two days. Isolated cases of distress occur among the labouring classes in years of greatest plenty; but the emaciated forms of men, women, and children, may convince the superficial observer that the distress is deep and general.

Perhaps one-third more are engaged in agriculture. Distress prevails to a certain extent among this class; but it is not yet general, but will be so towards the end of Spring.

The remaining third, consisting of tradesmen, merchants,

and others in comfortable circumstances, feel the destitution only from the demands made upon them for the support of others.

I shall now state what is doing to relieve the destitute.

The gentlemen of the island met on the 1st September, at Salen, to consider the steps necessary to be taken. A general Committee was that day formed, and their first effort was to procure a loan from Government for making roads; and I am happy to say that they have obtained a loan of £2820 for that purpose. I mention this fact because it will prove beneficial to the whole island.

Sub-Committees were also formed in each district, and I shall now state what is doing within our district in particular.

Mr. Nairne, of Aros, offers work to all who choose to work at the wages he allows, and he is negotiating with Government for a loan of £2000, which, if judiciously applied, under the direction of a man acquainted with the habits of the people, may do much good. I may also state, that some able-bodied men left for the South, as the potatoe disease developed itself, and are now supporting their families here by their earnings in the South.

Our Committee at Tobermory were not idle spectators.

When the "Belvidera" store-ship arrived, we opened a subscription to enable us to establish a depot on shore, from which the labouring population obtain meal in such quantities as they are able to purchase. Sir Edward Coffin headed the list with a subscription of £10, and the other officers in charge of the "Belvidera" followed his example, by subscribing also. We have thus raised, among the members of the Established Church in the village, or those favourable to it, nearly £50. We have also purchased wool to employ the females. We intend to afford temporary relief to those in extreme distress—to furnish fishing apparatus to such as apply,—also to assist able-bodied men to proceed to those places where they meet with the most remunerative employment.

Our funds cannot meet the demand, and I fear the demand

will increase. As the days lengthen, and the warm weather advances, the labouring men will find it easier to support their families than they do now, but a greater number will depend on manual labour alone for subsistence.

A main object which we must have in view, is to obtain seed, potatoes especially; our proprietor does not feel disposed to send for any. Sir Edward Coffin is of opinion that Government will not attempt to supply potatoe seed, from the expense attending the carriage; and if we do not obtain any the destitution will become permanent.

The prospect before us appals me. In these villages we must have extraneous aid, or I fear that some will perish.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I am, with much esteem,

Yours sincerely,

DAVID ROSS.

The Rev. Dr. M'Leod, Glasgow.

FROM THE SAME, OF DATE

2d January, 1847.

REV. AND DEAR DOCTOR,

I cannot furnish well authenticated facts of *overwhelming* distress. We have abundance of meal (barley) at 2s. per stone. It is clear that those able and willing to work may weather the storm; but during sickness and boisterous weather, able labourers are exposed to distress. Two nights ago one of this description came up to me on the street, shedding tears, and told me, that he had not a particle of food for his family, eight in number, nor any means of obtaining it, unless he sold a blanket off his bed; I of course relieved him. He has this moment called to tell me that he will be able to repay me on Monday.

Last night a member of my congregation informed me that two of the Frees had no particle of food for their families: I gave each a stone of meal. I called lately on a woman whose husband is in Glasgow, and for whom I paid his passage. She has three of a family. I found her in a miserable house. I removed her to a more comfortable place, and became bound for the rent. This woman's tale was, that she rose in the morning without food of any kind in her possession, nor money to procure it; that her husband was away, perhaps stretched on the bed of sickness; her children craving that food which was not in her power to bestow: that, thus circumstanced, she knelt down, and, with outstretched arms, and eyes raised to heaven, she cried to God for bread.

FROM THE SAME, OF DATE

5th January, 1847.

DEAR REVEREND SIR,

Two new cases of destitution came to my knowledge yesterday. An old man and his wife breakfasted on a little oat cake and cold water, and tasted nothing more until the woman applied to me about 7 p.m. Another family's case stood thus—The husband had just one morsel of bread in the morning, and went out to trench at Dunnipie. The wife and a boy and girl had not a single morsel. The girl, towards the evening, got a little broth in the School of Industry, and the mother and boy had nothing but a little cold gruel from one of the neighbours in the dusk. Their case was reported to me about 7 p.m. I gave them a stone of meal. On Sabbath day I requested that no one should be on one meal a day, without representing his case to me.

XXVI.

FROM THE REV. JAMES MORISON.

MANSE OF KINTAIL, 28th December, 1846.

MY DEAR SIR,

In reply to your letter, which I received on Saturday afternoon, it is not necessary I should write at any great length. A few words are sufficient to state that the existing state of destitution in my parish, Kintail, is as deplorable as, in my opinion, it can be. 'Tis the next stage to absolute want and starvation. We have no deaths, as yet, from want; but, unless relief be afforded—and that right soon—death from starvation will be of no rare occurrence.

You ask what our prospects are for the Spring and Summer. I reply, beyond dependence on Providence, we have none whatever; and that unless supplies of food be not immediately sent among us, it is impossible to foresee the consequences.

Imagine the worst state of destitution, and that is ours. Some of my poor people are for *two days* occasionally without *seeing* food. The existing want is prodigious.

I trust your Glasgow meeting will produce good results.

I am, DEAR SIR,

Very faithfully yours,

JAS. MORISON.

DR. M'LEOD, of St. Columba, Glasgow.

XXVII.

FROM THE REV. J. MACRAE.

GLENELG MANSE, 26th December, 1846.

DEAR DOCTOR,

In reply to your favour of the 19th, which, in consequence of the detention of the posts by the snow, only reached

me last night, I beg to send you, as the most authentic statement within my reach regarding the condition of my parishioners, the following extracts from the resolutions of a meeting which was held in the Church on the 25th of August last:—

1. That the population of the parish of Glenelg is 2729 souls, or 600 families.

2. That of this number, about two thirds (or 400 families) depend chiefly—and of these a large proportion entirely—on potatoes for food.

3. That the produce of the land laid down with potatoes this season, would, if saved, have amounted to not less than 48,000 barrels, equivalent to 6000 bolls of meal.

4. That the whole potatoe crop is affected by the prevalent disease, to such a degree as to be already quite unfit for human food.

5. That the corn crop raised in this parish does not average more than one boll for each family; being, if equally divided, barely sufficient for one month's subsistence.

6. That the herring fishery, upon which many of the people partially depend for food, has hitherto failed on this part of the coast.

7. That the inhabitants of this parish, being generally in indigent circumstances, have not means to purchase the necessary quantity of food for their maintenance.

8. That although many of the young men are in the practice of going South to labour at public works, yet their usual savings have not been more than sufficient to support themselves and their families in ordinary circumstances, and are altogether insufficient in the present emergency.

With regard to the present condition and prospects of the people, I have to state, that on the above representation being made to the heritors, they came forward with most praiseworthy liberality, and furnished such quantities of meal, rice, biscuit, &c. as have till now preserved the people from absolute starvation, and will probably last till about the beginning of March—but beyond that period there is no provision made for their support, and I tremble to think of the condition to

which they will then be reduced, unless means are provided from some other source for their maintenance. The small crops of corn upon which some of them have hitherto subsisted, as well as the food provided by the heritors, will, by that time, be exhausted, and yet half-a-year more must elapse before they can have any returns from the ground. Of the number of families who will by the time above-mentioned be in a state of utter destitution, it is impossible now to give more than a probable estimate, yet, after making full allowance for the number of paupers supported by the assessment, and for the number of families which may be provided for by the labour of parents and brothers employed at public works, the families who will be dependent on public charity for their maintenance cannot be calculated at less than 200, or 900 individuals. Of half this number again, the males might do some work within the parish, though incapable of going to a distance from their homes, leaving thus another hundred families (consisting chiefly of females, for whom there is no profitable employment in this part of the country,) totally unprovided for.

I am sorry that I cannot on such short notice furnish exact statistical data, but I believe the above statement is not far from the truth, and certainly not beyond it.

I am always,

Very sincerely yours,

J. MACRAE.

XXVIII.

FROM THE REV. ALEXANDER ROSS.

ULLAPOOL MANSE, 23rd Dec. 1846.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your very kind inquiry respecting the state of destitution here, and in reply to which, I beg to state that in this village, containing a population from 800 to 900 souls, there is at present a considerable number of families in absolute want of food, raiment, and money, subsisting wholly on the charity of their poor neighbours,—a great many of whom will themselves become equally destitute in a few weeks, unless a kind Providence send some relief from some unseen source. A few bolls of oatmeal placed within their reach would, at present, be the readiest and best relief; for there is not at present, I am sorry to say, any immediate prospect of relief.

Rev. and dear DOCTOR,

Your most obed. servant,

ALEX. ROSS.

Rev. N. M'LEOD, D.D. Glasgow.

XXIX.

FROM THE REV. D. ST. CLAIR.

MANSE OF ASSYNT, 25th Dec. 1846.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

In reply to your letter of the 18th inst., received this morning: the condition of the poor in this extensive parish, owing to the (almost) total failure of the potato crop, our chief article of food, is at present deplorably alarming. In the in-

land townships of Elphine and Knockan, with their 40 or 50 families, there is not a single potato to be had—the people are obliged to eat their seed corn, of which there is not a month's consumption, and after that they must sell their cows; and thus utterly destroy the provision of the future: at this moment there are hundreds throughout the parish in actual starvation.

Little or nothing has, as yet, been done for their relief;—a supply of meal has been expected for the last four weeks. I believe some 50 or 60 bolls were landed, this week, to meet the wants of upwards of 3000 souls.

Our prospects in regard to the Spring and Summer, are gloomy and cheerless in the extreme—we have no seed for the ground, and no money to buy it. Some labour is promised (in road-making,) which will afford temporary employment to a fraction of our population.

In conclusion, I have no hesitation in saying, unless something is done, and that immediately, for their relief, hundreds of my poor parishioners will, ere two months elapse, be in eternity.

I remain, my dear SIR,

Yours faithfully,

D. ST. CLAIR.

Rev. N. M'LEOD, D.D., Glasgow.

XXX.

FROM THE REV. JOHN REID.

MANSE OF APFLECCROSS, 29th Dec. 1846.

MY DEAR SIR,

I really do not know how to begin to give you an account of the state of this parish. The whole

parish is one *fact* to be brought before the notice of the public.

The population consists of small tenants, who depended chiefly on the potato crop; and of cottars who depended altogether on the potato crop, which has been this year a total failure.

I do really believe that those of them who are best off, notwithstanding the greatest economy they may use, cannot subsist on what they have got for more than two months; and when I say this of those who had some oats sown, you may well imagine what is the state of those who depended altogether on the potato crop. It is no uncommon thing for me to hear from some of these, that they have tasted no food for twenty-four hours; and I do know families that stint themselves to one meal per day,—fish and a small bit of oat cake. I have no hesitation in saying, that had it not been for meal which Applecross brought to the parish, and which is given out to the people, there would have been, even already, deaths from starvation among us. Such, then, is the state of the people of this parish: and there is nothing done for their relief, so far as I know, with the exception of the meal to which I have alluded above. But it is not likely that Applecross can continue to give them meal; for I do not think his rents would be sufficient to support the people on his property requiring aid this year. This being the case, you will not be surprised that our prospects in regard to the spring and summer months, are gloomy indeed. Not only will we not have seed to put into the ground, but I dread disease and death from starvation.

I remain,

Yours truly,

JOHN REID.

XXXI.

FROM THE REV. DONALD MURRAY.

SHIELDSDAIG MANSE, 29th Dec. 1846.

REV. DEAR SIR,

I am favoured with your letter of the 19th inst., regarding the meeting to be held in Glasgow, for the relief of the distressed Highlands and Islands of Scotland, and in reply, beg leave to state, that a great number of the people of Shiel-daig, Kishorn, and Torridon, are already, or will soon be reduced to a state of complete destitution, in consequence of the failure of the potato crop. Such is the state of some who hold lands from the proprietor, that they are beginning to tremble for the future, when they are under the necessity of consuming the grain which they intended for seed, to keep their families from starvation. There have been various cases, where no rents have been exacted, and could not be given this year, on account of their distressed condition.

At Kishorn there are upwards of twenty families without lands, who may be said to be more or less in a state of destitution; at Shiel-daig not so many; but at Torridon, which does not belong to the estate of Applecross, there are from thirty to forty families in great want, having little else to support them but fish, which they caught in great abundance during the season. All those that I have mentioned, particularly the people of Torridon, who got no supply of any kind yet, are in a state more easily conceived than described, and how they are to pass the rest of the winter and spring, it is very difficult to say, unless an extraordinary effort be made by the generous and benevolent public, through the praiseworthy and humane appeals that are made in their behalf. It is proper to mention, that our benevolent proprietor, Thomas M'Kenzie, Esq., of Applecross, has sent a supply of meal to this country, to be distributed among the most necessitous in the different parishes

on his estate; but owing to the general distress, which is not yet at its height, this seasonable supply cannot last long. Hoping, therefore, that in the distribution of what is to be collected in Glasgow, for the relief of the distressed Highlanders, you will see the propriety of allowing the people of Shiel-daig, Kishorn, and Torridon, a share; of which I beg leave again to say, that they greatly stand in need, I have the honour to be,

REV. DEAR SIR,

Your obedient servant,

DONALD MURRAY.

Rev. N. M'Leod, D.D. Glasgow.

XXXII.

FROM THE REV. JOHN CAMERON.

ENDISTON, 24th December, 1846.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

Famine has not yet assailed us—the paupers get their allowance quarterly, but it barely suffices to keep them alive.

Their neighbours, while they have any thing, aid them a little although they are assessed, but this cannot last long. Many in the parish who have a little at present will themselves be paupers during spring and summer. What has passed already of the winter has made them encroach on their spring provisions, to keep alive their cattle, which cannot get a picking outside by the depth of snow; no, not so much as the tops of the *whin* bushes, which they used to cut, carry home and chop for them.

The few potatoes received are now rotting in pits and in their houses—thus, every fresh fall of snow decreases their provisions.

Unless a supply be procured soon, in order to enable them to spare their sowing seed of barley and oats, they must encroach on these—the consequence will be, that there will be nothing to sow.

The only way to prevent a two years' famine is to give them work, to enable them to purchase meal—this will enable them to spare their sowing seed, and look with hope to the succeeding harvest.

If they cannot get work; and who can work outside with this weather? a donation either in meal or money must be given.

If they are enabled to weather the spring, then they will be able to work in summer, and their wages will procure provisions. But if they get neither work nor charity soon, to weather this spring, the prospect is dismal. I remain,

MY DEAR SIR,

Yours truly,

JOHN CAMERON.

Rev. N. M'LEOD, D.D. Glasgow.

XXXIII.

FROM REV. JOHN M'KINNON.

MANSE OF LOCH CARRON, 24th Dec. 1846.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

Your letter of the 19th instant I only received to-day. And in regard to the condition of the poor people, I have to state, that the potato crop was a complete failure in this parish. I am assured that none of the people has had a single potato for the last three months, and none at all preserved for seed for next year. Unless work be speedily furnished for such as are

able to work, and charity extended to others, I have no hesitation in asserting that, in many cases, if not in most, starvation must necessarily ensue, in course of the spring and summer.

I am,

Rev. and dear SIR,

Yours faithfully,

JOHN M'KINNON.

Rev. N. M'LEOD, D.D. Glasgow.

XXXIV.

FROM THE REV. PATRICK M'INTYRE.

CANNOCH MANSE, STRATHCONAN,
28th Dec. 1846.

REV. AND DEAR DOCTOR,

I have only two days ago, (owing to the heavy fall of snow we have had,) received your letter of the 19th inst., respecting the Public Meeting to be held in Glasgow, to consider the condition of the inhabitants of the Highlands and Isles, in consequence of the failure of the potato crop.

With respect to the condition of the poor people in this parish, I beg leave to say, they are in common the same with most of the other parishes in this country, very alarming; and I fear this will be severely felt before the winter and spring is over. It is well known that the potatoes formed almost the staff of life, not only to the greater part of the population of Strathconan, but to the great majority of the parishes in this county. The failure of the potatoes in this district is, I may almost say, the same as over the length and breadth of the land.

And what I have said with respect to Strathconan may serve, as I understand, as an example for the state of the parishes north from here. The Proprietor has given work to many of the poor crofters and cottars, but the weather for the last month has been very stormy and variable, so that the people are not able to do any thing without doors. This, I am afraid, will add greatly to the privations of the poor, and the scarcity of provisions. I have written lately to Lady Blanche Balfour on this subject, and I have no doubt, but Mr Balfour and her Ladyship will do all they can to alleviate the sufferings and privations of the poor, as soon as possible.

My dear Sir, I beg leave to add, that the destitution which you nobly and humanely advocated some years ago in England and Scotland, is nothing in comparison with the calamity of this season. And what is worse, there is no hope for next season, unless many more influential meetings, such as is to take place in Glasgow, will form a fund, so as to enable the poor Highlanders to buy seed in spring to sow the land for next year.

We were lately visited with a severe snow storm—the heaviest witnessed here for some years past. The snow fell incessantly for several days, and was till of late, from ten to twelve inches on the road. This cut off our communication to the Post-Office, to obtain the news of passing events. Every out-door work is suspended, which, of course, renders the circumstances of the people still worse.

I am, with every sentiment of respect and esteem,

Rev. and dear SIR,

Yours faithfully,

PATRICK MINTYRE.

XXXV.

FROM THE REV. HECTOR MACLEAN.

MANSE OF LOCHALSH, 29th Dec. 1846.

MY DEAR SIR,

I duly received your letter of the 19th inst., relative to the Highland destitution, and take the earliest opportunity of returning an answer.

The population of Lochalsh is upwards of two thousand five hundred. The great body of the people depended on the potato as their principal food. Of that crop the failure has been so general and complete, that the exceptions need not be mentioned.

In regard to their rents the people have been treated with great indulgence. Mr Lillingston, the proprietor, employs a number in cultivating land, and has purchased a quantity of meal, to be sold for ready money, at 23s. per boll of 140lb., or to be given in lieu of wages for work. Of this meal a cargo of nine hundred bolls has arrived, and afforded seasonable relief.

The turnip grown on his farms are disposed of at 1s. 3d. per barrel, and the people find them very useful taken with a little meal and fish.

Mr Lillingston has also established soup kitchens, one in the village of Ploctown, and one at Dornie. The soup is given gratis to those who are unable to pay, and to those who are able, for the cost of the materials.

The herring fishing has been good, and the people in general have secured a plentiful supply for their families. As far as I have ascertained, no cases of extreme distress from the want of food have as yet occurred in this parish. These are the favourable circumstances. The abundance of herring has especially been a blessing. It will not, however, supply the want of the potato. Looking forward to the ensuing summer, and the following year, if the people are left to their own resources,

there is no prospect but a destitution more extensive and more severe than the oldest person among us has known. In 1837 the seasonable supply of three hundred bolls of meal (in this parish) served to afford relief, but what was sufficient *then*, when the failure of the crop was only partial, is scarcely a tithe of what will be required *now*.

The seed which in ordinary circumstances would be reserved for sowing, has been in many instances already used for food. The people's little stock of money will be soon exhausted in purchasing meal. It is sufficiently clear that to prevent a famine, with its accompanying miseries, great and immediate exertions require to be made.

, It is both unfeeling and unwise, to refer to the Highland proprietors in the manner done. If their resources are in the rents, how can they supply the people when their rents are not paid?

Allow me to suggest (what I have no doubt has already occurred to you), namely—the great importance of supplying the people with seed, especially seed potatoes, to be sold at a moderate rate. I am quite aware of the objections to the giving of any gratis, but perhaps it may be done in very extreme cases. I am,

MY DEAR SIR,

Yours truly,

HECTOR MACLEAN.

Rev. N. M'LEOD, D.D. Glasgow.

XXXVI.

FROM THE REV. FARQUHAR M'IVER.

GLENSHIEL MANSE, 28th December, 1846.

REV. AND DEAR DOCTOR,

In consequence of the detention of the mail (I suppose) I only received your letter of the 19th curt., so late on Saturday

last that I could not answer it by return of post, as requested. But I trust it will reach you in time before the public meeting of the people of Glasgow, which is to be held to take into consideration the condition of the inhabitants of the Highlands and Isles, in consequence of the failure of the potato crop, and in which you request of me to send you such *facts* regarding the condition of the people—what is doing for their relief, and what *our* prospects are in regard to the spring and summer months. The object of the intended meeting is truly philanthropic and praise-worthy at the present awful time.

Now, Sir, in regard to the condition of the inhabitants of this parish in general, I have to state that their condition is truly appalling and heart-rending. I may with truth say, that with the exception of eleven families and a few shepherds, all the families in this parish are on the very brink of starvation; and if they are not *soon* relieved, the consequence will be, that there will be deaths among us for want of the necessaries of life.

There has been some meal of different kinds brought some time ago from Glasgow, and sold to the people of this parish for ready money only, at the highest market price; but it is now all eat up, and though the people had money, which they have not, they could not get a stone of meal to buy, except some that is brought by carriers from Inverness, and for which they charge at the rate of 31s. per boll.

I know families who, for some days past, have had nothing to feed upon but salt herrings and small rock fish, and they are crofters. Such of the people as have crofts, (and many of them have no crofts, except small bits of ground they get here and there for planting a few potatoes with tangles, and for which they pay very high), were in the habit of planting their crofts or lots principally with potatoes, on which they subsisted for at least nine months of the year. They were not in the habit of sowing barley, and indeed very little oats, and the little that grew to them last harvest is by many of them already converted into meal, and that meal is now consumed.

There is no work carried on at present in this parish, except

a bog, on the property of Mr Matheson, which he intends to bring into cultivation, and which would give employment to some of the able-bodied men for some time, but the people say that they cannot go on with the work at this inclement season of the year, and that they might as well starve for want of food at home, as to starve in a bog to their middle in water and mire.

As to the poor people's prospects in regard to the spring and summer months, I may say that they are very gloomy indeed. Some of the crofters, or lotters, to whom I have already alluded, told me this very day that they would not have a grain of seed of any kind to put into the ground first spring, and that they would have no money to purchase any, though their crofts remained ley. Such are their prospects in regard to spring and the following summer. The facts which I have thus stated in regard to this parish, may give you an idea of the destitution of its inhabitants; and the same dark and gloomy view may, without exaggeration, be given of all the parishes within the bounds of our presbytery. Now, if the poverty of the people has, so early in the season, reached such a pitch, what will become of them during spring and summer, if the Lord doth not open the hearts of the high and middle classes throughout the empire, and stir them up to contribute liberally of their means according to their ability, for the speedy relief of the poor starving Highlanders and Islanders who, while they had potatoes and herrings, were never heard to murmur or grumble.— I remain,

Rev. and dear DOCTOR,

With great respect, yours very faithfully,

FARQUHAR M'IVER.

Rev. N. M'LEOD, D.D. *Glasgow.*

XXXVII.

FROM THE REV. ARCHIBALD CLERK.

MANSE OF KILMALLIE, 25th Dec. 1846.

ACCOUNT OF THE PARISH OF KILMALLIE, SHOWING THE STATE OF ITS POPULATION AS TO THEIR ABILITY TO SUPPORT THEMSELVES DURING THE PRESENT SCARCITY. 25th Dec., 1846.

Total Population, including that of the <i>Quoad Sacra</i> Parish of Balachelish		5397
I. Fort-William or Village, 1200		
1. Of whom independent of aid,	780	
2. Dependent on aid for the year,	350	
3. Totally destitute at present,	100	
4. Paupers supported by the Parish,	70	
II. Rural portions of the Parish. Total, 4195		
1. Of these there are independent heritors, farmers, and their servants,	627	
2. Crofters supposed independent,	680	
Paupers,	100	
3. Crofters requiring aid during the season, to keep them from consuming their Stock, and thus falling into utter poverty,	2790	
4. Crofters unable for hard work, as widows, infirm, and old men and others destitute,	558	
III. There are thus requiring aid, 3140		
Independent of aid,	2257	
Requiring immediate aid, and unable to work at heavy work, though not all starving,	658	
Total Population, ———		5397

MY DEAR DR. M'LEOD,

I received your Circular only on the evening of the 22d instant. The intermediate time I have anxiously devoted to the collection of such information as would enable me to answer your queries with some degree of precision. I wish it distinctly understood, that it is *only* a *degree* of precision to which the preceding statistics of this parish can pretend. Much time and investigation would be necessary to make perfectly accurate returns; but the above are as near the truth as I could possibly go within the short period at my disposal.

It is proper to state, that the paupers, 170 in number, receive half-a-stone of meal and fourpence of money per week, each individual. And I am glad to be able to say regarding every member of the Parochial Board, that they are most anxious to provide comfortably for the poor.

As to the second point of inquiry in your Circular, viz., What is now doing for the poor? I am glad to answer that the proprietors are manifesting great anxiety to provide for the wants of their people. Colonel Maclean, of Ardgour, offers work to all the able-bodied men on his estate, at the rate of 1*s.* 6*d.* a-day, at a distance from their homes; or 1*s.* 3*d.* at their houses. Sir Duncan Cameron, Bart., of Fassfern, also offers to his crofters 1*s.* 3*d.* a-day for improving their own crofts. Mr Cameron, of Lochiel, who has by far the largest population, has offered work in trenching moss and making roads; but I am sorry to say that the people have not yet in any considerable numbers availed themselves of his offer: and they are so numerous that it is not to be expected he should provide for them all.

In regard to Fortwilliam, again, the wealthier inhabitants have made a collection for the supply of the immediate wants of those who are in danger of starvation, and they propose to procure some work for others. It cannot be looked for, however, that they should continue to provide for all the necessities in the village.

Thus, while the proprietors and others are doing a great deal to meet the present most sad crisis, it is confessedly beyond their power to maintain for any length of time, the immense number of 3,140 individuals who all require aid, in order to prevent them from sinking, in the course of a few months, to utter beggary. There are 2,482 of these able to work, and I hope that with the combined aid of proprietors, and of a benevolent public, work may be provided for them. Regarding the remaining 658, their case is pitiable in the extreme. If deprived of their cows and crofts, they sink into irretrievable pauperism, and become a fearful burden on the land. I am afraid that all these

would require an immediate, and nearly gratuitous supply of food to keep them from utter wretchedness.

Having so frequently expressed my dread of the evil of the ruinous effects of giving gratuitous aid to the able bodied, or of dealing with the present state of the Highlands in any impartial or sectarian spirit, I have only to conclude with the prayer that the Almighty may enable you and others like minded, to raise such means as may save the poor Highlanders from the famine pressing on them, and promote their future benefit.

Yours respectfully,

ARCHIBALD CLERK.

XXXVIII.

FROM REV. ARCHIBALD CLERK.

KILMALLIE MANSE, FORTWILLIAM, 19th Dec., 1846.

MY DEAR DR. M'LEOD,

As the relief of the sad destitution which prevails throughout the Highlands and Islands is now occupying the attention of the public in all parts of the kingdom; and as the mode of relieving it involves questions of the deepest importance to the economical and moral condition, present and future, of the Highlanders, I hope you will allow me to state to you my opinion, to offer a few remarks on some points connected with the subject, which appear to me to demand the serious consideration of such benevolent societies or individuals as may engage in the humane task of lightening the evils of that sore calamity with which it has pleased the Almighty to visit this extensive tract of country.

Let me premise, briefly, that the destitution is beyond all question appalling, both in character and extent. According

to the best accounts, there are from 100,000 to 130,000 individuals who, in the course of the year, will be exposed to all the sufferings of famine, unless they be relieved by the kindness of their fellowmen.

Some of the landed proprietors have come forward liberally and nobly to meet the crisis : others, however, are still inactive ; and it is evident that, while the landlords cannot in justice be called upon to provide for such a disaster, it is in many instances utterly beyond their power to remedy it. Therefore, the Christian public must interpose their charitable aid, or bear the reproach of seeing many of their fellow-creatures perish for want, while they have abundance and to spare.

It is a question, whether it be more conducive to the good of the people to supply their wants immediately—thus running the risk of relaxing their own exertions for their support, and also deranging, if not stopping, the operations of local benevolence—or to allow them now to put forth all their own energies and come to their aid later in the season, making them feel the necessity of exerting themselves to the utmost before they can expect succour from others, and certainly rendering the gift more highly appreciated when it is bestowed. This is a question that must be decided by accurate statistics from every particular locality, and which, in the absence of such statistics, I do not venture to pronounce an opinion upon.

There can be no doubt, however, that aid must be given either now or at some future period not distant. But then—a very serious question indeed—the question of difficulty presents itself. How is this aid to be given ? On what terms is food or money to be offered to the people.

It is obvious to every man of reflection, that regard must be had in this matter, not merely to the present subsistence, but to the future welfare of the people, and this is what I am afraid many persons under the promptings of a warm, but unthinking benevolence, will be apt to overlook. I trust it may not be overlooked ; for, if present relief only be contemplated, and if *aid* be given *gratuitously*, the consequences to the Highlands will be deeply injurious. Every feeling of independence,

as well as the strongest motives to exertion, will be destroyed in a people already known to be prone to indolence and improvidence. They will trust to the support of others in every hour of need. They will lose all self-respect, relax all industry, and become a herd of beggars. I need not say that, with self-respect, every other virtue will depart, and that we may look for crime as well as for wretchedness, in a people thus degraded; nor need I say that, next to the blessing of his God, the poor man's best possession is, a sturdy self-reliance on his own exertions—a spirit of manly wrestling with the difficulties of his lot.

That I am not here conjuring up any imaginary evils will be evident to any one conversant with the state of the Highlands for the last ten years. In 1836—37, there was deep suffering from the loss of the crops. An appeal was made to the British public, and nobly, indeed, was that appeal responded to. Beautiful, truly, was the illustration afforded by that period of the operation of the law, wherewith He who "hath made of one blood all the nations of men," hath bound them together in the tender sympathies of a common brotherhood, though they may dwell far as the poles asunder. The cry of distress which arose from the lone and distant Hebrides, was heard and answered from the banks of the Ganges to the Mississippi—from Canton to the remotest bounds of the West. Contributions flowed in from all quarters; a munificent sum was collected, and the distress was relieved. But there was a most serious and fatal error committed in the distribution. Relief was given without exacting work for it;—was given *gratuitously*:* and the degrading effects were most visible on the character and conduct of the people, for the few following years. I speak not of what I have heard, but of what I have *seen*, when I say, that in 1838, '39, and '40, able-bodied men frequently loitered

* The Regulations of the Relief Commissioners, I am aware, were judicious and commendable. They *prescribed* work; but work, except in a few instances, was *not executed*. The relief was, in the great majority of cases, given *gratuitously*.

for days around the houses of their superiors, entreating of them to petition for fresh supplies of meal.

I trust then, that the lessons of an experience so recent, and confirmed by every sound maxim of political economy, will not now be disregarded. I trust that they who are kindly disposed to repair the injuries (so to speak) suffered by the social machine, may not, through unskilfulness, derange it still further, and destroy its very spring of motion. Temporary relief may be made to harmonize in all respects with the preservation of the industrial habits of the people—with the advancement of their welfare in time to come; and any one who would dissociate the two, is guilty not merely of culpable thoughtlessness, but of deep cruelty.

In order to combine these two objects, then, I consider it absolutely necessary that *work* should be exacted from every able-bodied man who receives any aid from the public. This is an assertion, in the correctness of which every intelligent man in the Highlands will fully concur; and I earnestly hope that it will be borne in mind by our benevolent friends in the South.

There is room for much diversity of opinion as to what kind of work should be prescribed; and I submit the outlines of the following plan, not imagining it to be free from objections, nor expecting that it shall be adopted; but hoping that it may suggest something better to those more versant in the details which it implies than I can pretend to be.

1. Supposing a sufficient sum of money collected, let it be placed under the control—the *absolute* control, of *one* Committee, composed of men of intelligence, without respect to party or to creed.

2. Let this Committee appoint local agents in the destitute districts, who shall rent pieces of improvable land, in such situations as will be most accessible to the people throughout these districts.

3. Let the people who are in need of aid be employed in trenching, in cultivating this land, and receive reasonable wages for their labour.

4. When the land is cultivated, it may be let either to the small tenants, or to the landlords at a fixed annual rent.

5. Let this rent be applied from year to year, to some purpose fitted to advance the benefit of the people;—suppose the improving their mode of agriculture—promoting fishing—facilitating emigration, or educating the children of the poor.

One advantage of this plan is, that it secures a greater breadth of land for the raising of crop against next year,—an object much to be desired; and the chief objection to it which I see is, its entailing considerable expense in the payment of local agents, on whose integrity and energy it is manifest the success of the whole depends; but it surely is better that a small proportion of the money should be thus laid out, ensuring the beneficial application of the remainder, than that the whole should be grievously misapplied.

I will be delighted to see a simpler and a more efficient plan proposed; but I am most fully convinced, that if some such method be not followed—if relief be given gratuitously and indiscriminately, that that relief will be a bane, not a boon to the Highlanders—will be as a serpent instead of a fish—a scorpion instead of an egg—will be a curse and not a blessing.

The present year certainly marks the most momentous crisis in the condition of the Highlands that has occurred for a century;—that has occurred since 1746, which was a year of deep and dreadful suffering in itself, and which will always recall a train of very mournful associations to the Highland mind. But, though darker and distressful in itself, 1746 marked the dawn of a brighter and a better day to the Highlands than had ever shone upon them before,—ushered in peace, order, and security, with a rapidity unknown in the history of any other people,—established, in a very few years, an undisturbed reign, where war, and rapine, and turbulence had for ages previous prevailed. I trust and pray that 1846, though dark and lowering in its present aspect, may, through the Divine goodness, be as memorable for the advancement of industry

and prosperity, as 1746 was for the introduction of peace and of quietness.

This desirable issue depends, under God, entirely on the mode in which the present destitution will be dealt with. If treated on any short-sighted, ignorant, or sectarian principles— if treated with a view to present subsistence only, and relieved by a gratuitous distribution of food or of money, the result will be truly and deeply disastrous. The Highlands will be thrown back many, many years in the march of civilization; and the people be reduced to a state of utter inactivity and apathy,—of dependence and beggary, with their sad train of meanness, lying, and dishonesty. If, however, all parties inclined to relieve their present wants unite in one harmonious and systematic plan, constructed on the broad principles of enlightened philanthropy, they may easily raise in the scale of society a people who, whatever their faults be, are more free from gross crime—more orderly, and more equable than any other people in Europe—they may establish among that people, the foundations of permanent and increasing prosperity.

I am, SIR,

Yours truly,

A. CLEBK.

Rev. N. M'Leod, D.D. Glasgow.