THE EMIGRATION

OF

HIGHLAND CROFTERS

IN A

LETTER TO THE LORD ADVOCATE

BY

ROWLAND HILL MACDONALD

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCLXXXV

Price One Shilling.

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UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT, SHOWN TO BE INEVITABLE AND OBLIGATORY

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EMIGRATION OF HIGHLAND CROFTERS.

To the Right Honourable

THE LORD ADVOCATE FOR SCOTLAND.

MY LORD,—

The writer does not presume to forecast the lines upon which the Government mean or are likely to legislate with the view of ameliorating the unhappy circumstances of the great mass of the crofters and cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, and of amending the present unsatisfactory relationships existing between themselves and their landlords, which circumstances and relationships have been prominently before the mind of the country for the last few years,—have recently been very clearly portrayed and stereotyped, so to speak, in the exhaustive Report of the Royal Commissioners appointed in March 1883, for inquiring into the condition of these people,—and have more recently been brought to a crisis by the necessity which has arisen for sending a naval and a military force to restore order in Skye, and to prevent further lawlessness in that quarter. But it is no presumption to anticipate that, whatever legislation on this subject may be in the near future, emigration under Government auspices will, of necessity, be an important factor in it, or must speedily follow as a supplementary enactment.

Her Majesty's Commissioners, whose bias, if such an expression be permissible in the circumstances, is decidedly favour-

able to the crofters, and who had ample opportunities and special qualifications for arriving at a just conclusion in their interests, are as near as possible unanimous as to emigration from certain districts being unavoidable.

Referring to Skye and the Long Island, the Commissioners say: "We need only point out here that if half the population were to give up all share in the land, there would be barely thirty-nine acres apiece for the remainder, instead of the average of fifty-seven requisite to furnish all with the substantial crofts to which they aspire; and after making every allowance for the number of people who may be expected to derive the whole, or the greater part, of their livelihood from the sea, we are of opinion that a resort to emigration is unavoidable."—(Report, p. 101.)

On a recent occasion, in the Upper House of Legislature, the noble chairman of the Commission of Inquiry emphasised his views as to emigration to the following effect: "The capital objection that was brought before the Commissioners in the course of their tour was the question of restriction of the area of crofts. That objection was urged and admitted by all classes of witnesses. It was therefore to that capital objection—the restriction of the area of crofts—that the Commissioners had to direct their attention, and the remedy which they had provided in order to correct it. The most obvious method by which the holdings could be extended was naturally that of the emigration of some of the tenants, and the division of their lands amongst those who remained. For his own part, he thought the remedy of emigration should be subject to two conditions: first, that it should be entirely voluntary on the part of the people; and secondly, that the lands vacated by the emigrants should be divided amongst the tenants of the same class as those emigrants."

These are the sentiments of Lord Napier as an individual. But this is not the first time that men of erudition and a practical knowledge of the conditions of the isle of Skye and the Long Island, and of the circumstances of their inhabitants, saw emigration to other countries to be necessary and desirable; and it is remarkable that some of these gentlemen, writing nearly

half a century ago, foresaw the advancing shadow of the recent disturbances in the Hebrides as the natural outcome of the then miserable condition of the crofter population.

The writer of the last Statistical Account of the parish of *Duirinish* says: "It must be evident to every thinking man that while some of the landowners and tacksmen may be to blame for the present state of things, yet that the main cause of the evil is to be found in the ignorance of the people themselves. Were they enlightened, they would not submit to extortion or to want. They would seek in other quarters of the world the means of independent and comfortable subsistence. The immediate and most obvious remedy for the evils arising from the superabundant population of the parish is confessedly the removing of numbers by emigration to places where they may support themselves in comfort by the labour of their hands. This is a measure which is loudly called for by the circumstances of the country—demanded more loudly and imperiously each succeeding year,—and a measure which, if now neglected, will speedily force itself on the notice both of the landowners and the Government, not only by the piteous wailing of want and famine—not only by the sad spectacle of a once moral people becoming, through the hardening and animalising influence of grinding poverty, the reckless slaves of low passions—but by the still more alarming though not more woful spectacle of a loyal and peaceable people giving themselves up to robbery and rapine."

Education, which means enlightenment, has, since that time, made some progress among the crofter classes, and that, together with another form of enlightenment—viz., the teachings and the incitements of professional agitators—has resulted in the people throwing off the restraints of customary submissiveness in a manner more demonstrative than was anticipated by the rev. gentleman who wrote the account just quoted.

> "A little learning is a dangerous thing,—
> Drink *deep*, or taste not the Pierian spring:
> There, shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
> And drinking largely sobers us again."

Bracadale is an exceptional parish. The writer of its Statis-

tical Account (1840) says, in substance, that one of the most striking variations betwixt the then state of the parish and that which existed at the time of the former Statistical Account (1797) is the system of farming followed for some time previous to 1840—viz., the throwing into one large tack for sheep-grazing a number of farms, and dispossessing the small tenants and setting them adrift. As to the means of subsistence, he says: "People are generally not considered ill-provided who can feed on potatoes and salt, and during the last season even that would have been a luxury to many of them." Regarding their comforts as to clothing, it may be sufficient to mention that when it was apprehended the cholera would spread to these quarters, inquiries were made on this point, with the result that there were 140 families found in the parish who had no change of night or day clothes.

"From the above remarks as to food and clothing, it must appear evident that the people are far from enjoying the ordinary comforts of society, and under these circumstances it is but natural they should feel discontented with their situation; and if their complaints are not more loudly heard, one great reason is that the system of farming pursued has placed them in such absolute dependence on the tacksmen, as to preclude any hope of amelioration."

Matters have been sinking rapidly from bad to worse since that time (1840). When the foregoing Account was written, the average number of persons receiving parochial aid was 64 out of a population of 1824, being at the rate of 3½ per cent, or one in every 28½ of the entire population; and the yearly average amount contributed from all sources for their relief was £20, 12s. At present the number of paupers on the roll is 80, out of a population, as at the last census-taking, of 929, being at the rate of 8.6 per cent, or one in every 11.6 of the entire population; and the assessment for the last financial year was £666, 2s. 11d. Thus in forty-four years the rates for the relief of the poor have increased more than thirty-two-fold, while the population has decreased fully 49 per cent, or nearly one-half! At that rate of decay, there would not be one native left in the parish forty-three years hence!

The Royal Commissioners select this parish as an illustration of the evil effects of the desire of proprietors to unite large tracts of land in sheep farms. "Here," they say, "we have an example of a parish in which the system of small tenancy under the proprietor has had no existence, where the whole area has been proportioned to six tenancies, and where the inhabitants have had no permanent footing in their country, no avenue open to a better condition in connection with the land."

Emigration from Bracadale cannot be urged as a remedy for "congestion of population," but it is assumed that the most ardent opponent to so-called "expatriation" would not venture to deny that if even the whole of the inhabitants of the parish had emigrated in a body to Australia, or some other suitable colony, forty or fifty years ago, it would have been a great blessing to themselves and their descendants, as compared with the miserable condition of the remnant that still cling to their native soil.

The writer of the Statistical Account of the parish of *Sleat* says: "There is no demand for labour in the parish, and hence there is only occasional exertion on the part of the people. . . . Their poverty arises very much from over-population: there are 225 families, comprising upwards of 1100 individuals, located in different parts of the parish, who pay no rents, deriving their subsistence from small portions of land given them by the rent-payers for raising potatoes. These are a burden to the proprietor, inasmuch as they destroy the land in cutting fuel and turf (for thatching), and are a grievous burden to the inhabitants generally, from the extent of pauperism prevailing amongst them. An adequate correction of such an evil is difficult to be found. Their abject poverty stands in the way of any stimulus that may be applied for enabling them to better their condition; and if matters are left as they are, there will very soon be such a mass of pauperism as it is alarming to contemplate. The most efficient remedy appears to be *an extensive and well-regulated emigration.*"

The writer of the Statistical Account of the parish of *Strath* says: "In the years 1836 and 1837, this parish, in common with the rest of the Highlands, experienced the effects of the

alarming destitution which was so prevalent, in consequence of the failure, from some unaccountable cause, of the crops in general, and of the potatoes in particular. And had it not been for the laudable and philanthropic exertions of John Bowie, Esq., W.S. (agent for Lord Macdonald), and Dr Norman Macleod of Glasgow,[1] and the timeous relief procured by the appeal of these gentlemen to a liberal public, a fearful loss of life must have been the consequence. The recurrence of similar calamities can only be prevented by striking the evil at the root, *by the establishment of a systematic emigration conducted upon proper principles, and holding out such inducements as will overcome the* amor patriæ *so strongly implanted in the heart of every Highlander.* . . . Within the last three years about 200 souls have emigrated from this parish to Australia. It is earnestly hoped that the favourable accounts of those who have settled there will induce many of the people to avail themselves of the great boon which is now offered to them—viz., a free passage, with every necessary and desirable comfort during the voyage.

"So satisfied is the writer of this account of the prosperity of that colony, that he has done all in his power to persuade his poor countrymen to emigrate to it; and to convince them of his good intentions, as well as to prove the sincerity of his advice, he has himself, within the last two years, sent thither three of his sons, and if spared for a few months longer, he proposes to send a fourth."

The writer of the Statistical Account of the parish of *Portree* says: "It is perfectly evident that no liberality on the part of proprietors can render the present immense surplus population in any measure comfortable. And there is, humanly speaking, *no other way to provide for them than emigration;* though, certainly, it would be for ever a matter of deep regret that so noble a race of men should be under the necessity of leaving their native land and seeking an asylum on a foreign shore. But as they are unable to effect this (emigration) by any means within their own reach, they should be conveyed to any British settlement which may be thought eligible—all the expense de-

[1] The father of Dr N. Macleod of the Barony.

frayed and lands provided for them in their adopted settlement by the Government of the country."

The kind and generous writer of the above would have been the last man to advocate or encourage what unreflecting or self-seeking people call "expatriation." He says in another part of his account of the parish: "The parish is rather a pastoral than an agricultural district. To produce the greatest advantage, therefore, to proprietor and tenants, it should be cut into sizable farms, with distinct boundaries to each, and of sufficient extent to support a family. These farms should be let on leases of from fifteen to twenty years' duration, and given to persons who have a sufficient capital to stock and skill to manage them; but with the present immense population in a place without commerce, without manufactures, without agriculture, and without any kind of permanent employment for the people, no system that can be adopted will render them comfortable."

The Statistical Account of the parish of *Snizort* was written by a comparative stranger in Skye, and he did not enter so fully as other writers—the native clergy—into the condition of the people. He says, however: "In consequence of the crowded state of the population, the *tenants* have sunk to the rank of lotters, having but a small portion of the land which they occupied when there were but few to cultivate the soil. *Want* is driving many to seek in the wilds of America for the comforts denied them in their native land."

After referring to the memorable destitution of 1836-37, the writer of the Statistical Account of the parish of *Kilmuir* remarks: "The primary cause of the late destitution was a redundancy of population, occasioned by an injudicious system of management. The error of the system lay in the frequency of early and improvident marriages, encouraged by the lotting system, which, in its turn, gave rise to bad husbandry. These several causes operated on each other with mutual influence, and acted in concert against the prosperity of the inhabitants. The population was rapidly increasing, while the amount of the means of support for each family was in the same ratio diminishing. Poverty was speedily making inroads among the people,

and the seeds of wretchedness at a future period were rapidly growing up. Other causes were the fall in the price of cattle, the failure of herring-fisheries, the cessation of kelp-manufacture, and the want of remunerating employment. The only preventive remedy is to *reduce the population by a Government system of emigration.*"

With one exception, that of Snizort—the work of a very worthy man—these several accounts were written, and that nearly half a century ago, by the parochial clergy of Skye, whose professional and sacred calling necessarily forced upon them a thorough knowledge of the circumstances of their respective parishioners, their domestic life, the hardships of their lot; and who could have been influenced by no other motive than the sincerest solicitude for their welfare in so strongly recommending emigration as the only opening by which the surplus of an ever-increasing population could not only earn a comfortable living by the labour of their hands, but also have a fair prospect of rising in the social scale, and even to positions of affluence, as not a few of the bolder spirits amongst them, who had the fortitude to overcome the *amor patriæ*, and to seek their fortunes in other quarters of the vast British empire, have actually done.

But with the one unanimous voice in which these parish ministers urged emigration as the only true remedy for existing evils, they also depicted the poverty of the people, and made manifest the necessity for a Government-aided scheme of emigration.

But before and after the destitution of 1836-37, which has been so feelingly alluded to, that country had and has, periodically, been visited with scarcity of the means of subsistence to such a degree of severity as to call forth public sympathy and aid.

The general scarcity in 1782 — *Bliadhna na peasrach*, the pease-meal year—left its terrible reminiscences behind it. In a similar manner, the miseries of want were severely felt in the years 1807 and 1817 respectively. But the sufferings of these seasons were but commonplace in comparison with those of 1836-37, which period was the advent of the mysterious potato-

disease, which completely destroyed that important article of food for that year, partially destroyed it for several succeeding years, and left its germs behind till our own times, making the potato always an unreliable crop. Such were the times of which the crofters of the present day say, "The former days were better than these"!

But even the miseries of 1836-37 were quite overshadowed by the widespread and ruinous destitution arising from similar causes, commencing in 1848 and spreading its blight over the three subsequent years. That crisis led to the introduction, in 1851, of a scheme of free emigration to the Australian colonies under Government auspices, as we shall notice further on. The distress that prevailed over the West Highlands and Islands generally, but in the Lews particularly, in 1882-83, and which necessitated an appeal to public sympathy, and the despatch from the distressed localities of deputations composed of factors, clergymen, bankers, &c., to the municipalities of rich and populous cities and towns, resulting in the munificent Mansion House Fund under the auspices of the humane and generous Lord Mayor of the time, now Sir Henry Knight, and in kindred funds in Glasgow and Edinburgh, contributed to by several minor communities, is fresh in the memory of most thinking men. But these appeals ofttimes repeated, be they ever so feelingly expressed, and ever so eloquently pressed, will lose their charm if the people on whose behalf they are made should persist in their ill-advised tumultuous agitation, and in their repugnance to leave their overdone, and, in many places, overcrowded country, for more genial and promising climes.

This repugnance to emigration on the part of the crofter classes was found to prevail in all the places where the subject of emigration was mooted by the Royal Commissioners, who say in their Report (p. 103), "We are inclined to think, however, that the prevailing land agitation has not been without considerable influence in prompting the expressed dislike to emigration; and we hope that when over-population is clearly shown under any distribution of the land that could take place, and when the people are satisfied that the interests of those

who remain at home will be cared for, their aversion to emigration will disappear."

It is beyond all controversy that the professional agitators who imposed upon themselves, or undertook at the instigation of others, the task of instructing the crofters in the matter of grievances, and in what they vainly call "their inherent right in the land of their forefathers," are responsible—if responsibility does not lie rather lightly upon them—for the mischievous delusions so universally prevailing. But these minor prophets may well hope to be excused when M.P.'s and platonic philosophers do not hesitate to follow their lead, and, notably, when one prominent M.P. advises continued agitation, and tells the crofters that the *Premier* is on their side, and will, whenever he can find time, introduce a Land Bill for the Highland people, in which he will be sure to secure for them similar enactments to those secured to the Irish people in the Land Act for Ireland. People outside of Parliament believe that it is not the habit of Mr Gladstone to make confidants of gentlemen outside the pale of the Cabinet in matters of State; and it would, I think, have shown more wisdom on the part of the M.P. referred to, to have given the Premier time to speak for himself in this important matter.

This is not the first occasion on which agitators made capital of the miseries of the crofters and cottars of the Highlands and Islands, and, in the name of these people, traded upon the credulity of the charitable public. The notorious Donald Ross—mentioned in Sir John M'Neill's report of 1851, and who lived luxuriously for several years as a self-constituted philanthropist, writing to English newspapers, especially those of the religious type, harrowing tales of starvation, cruel evictions, and even the drowning of whole crews of fishermen, and other calamities that never happened, and receiving in response large sums of money, some of it anonymously, for the relief of these imaginary victims of oppression, these widows and orphans—had the boldness to board in the Clyde a steamer full of emigrants from Skye and the Long Island, on their way to the Government depot at Birkenhead, there to embark for Australia, under the auspices of the Highlands and Islands Emigration Society—an

outcome of Sir John M'Neill's report. The object of Mr Donald Ross's visit to the steamer was to distribute amongst the emigrants tracts in the *Gaelic language*, denouncing emigration as only a milder type of penal servitude for life, concocted by rapacious landlords, with the approval of the Government, and earnestly advising the poor people to return to their former homes, and take possession of the land which their forefathers had possessed and defended against all comers with the courage of their race and the edge of the sword! But Mr Donald Ross, and two friends who were assisting him in this patriotic work, made a hasty retreat when one of the gentlemen under whose care the emigrants were made his appearance on board, and saw the character of the mischievous literature. In that batch of emigrants was the family of Donald Macaskill from the parish of Bracadale, in Skye. The family consisted of himself, his wife, a daughter, and four young sons, in utterly destitute circumstances. Immediately on their arrival in Melbourne, a *squatter* engaged the whole family for *two* years at £500 a-year, with rations! A happy escape from the tender mercies of Donald Ross the philanthropist!

It is a general complaint amongst the Highlanders and Islanders that the very soil and climate of their country are perceptibly undergoing a change for the worse; that, instead of the heavy falls of snow and the long-continued frosts in the winter season, the genial springs, warm summers, and joyous harvests, still recollected by the older men, they have had, with little exception, for many years past, destructive gales, with fierce showers of sleet or rain, both in winter and in spring, cold and sunless summers, late and unproductive harvests, and, as a consequence, much misery and suffering throughout the year. But Pennant, who visited the Highlands and Islands in 1772, says of Skye: "The westerly wind blows here more regularly than any other, and arriving charged with vapour from the vast Atlantic, never fails to dash the clouds it wafts on the lofty summits of the hills of *Cuchullin;* and their contents deluge the island in a manner unknown in other places. What is properly called the rainy season commences in August: the rain begins with moderate winds, which grow stronger and

stronger till the autumnal equinox, when they rage with incredible fury. The husbandman then sighs over the ruins of his vernal labours; sees his crops feel the injury of climate, some laid prostrate, the more ripe corn shed by the violence of the elements. . . . The farmer labours to remedy this distress to the best of his power, but the wetness of the land late in spring prevents him from putting into the ground the early seeds of future crops. Poverty prevents him from making experiments in rural economy: the ill success of a few made by the more opulent determine him to follow the old track, as attended with more certainty, unwilling, like the dog in the fable, to grasp at the shadow and lose the substance, even poor as it is. The produce of the crops very rarely is in any degree proportional to the wants of the inhabitants: golden seasons have happened, when they have had superfluity; but the years of famine are as ten to one."

Pennant was not a prejudiced observer: his description of Skye does not show that soil and climate there were worse or much better in his time than the inhabitants of the present day, as well as the many strangers who visit the place, declare them to be. The marvel then is, that, in the face of the glowing accounts received through reliable sources of the vastly improved circumstances and the bright future prospects of former neighbours and of kinsmen who have gone to and settled in the Colonies, and the improved facilities for reaching the Colonies, there should be such a repugnance as there is to emigration. But that repugnance is merely artificial, and will, after calm reflection, gradually disappear with the agitation that produced it.

It would be well that the minds of the people were disabused of the erroneous views they hold as to the elysian character of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland in the former days, and the possibility of such a state of things being conjured up in the full blaze of the intelligence and civilisation of the nineteenth century. If there were extraordinary instances of such conditions as oral tradition and romantic imaginations describe, or of conditions at all approaching them, they were local and transient. All reliable history puts beyond a doubt that the

discomforts and disadvantages greatly outweighed, at any time, everything that could be put into the opposite scale. The climate, which is responsible for a vast deal of evil, is much as it had been in times past, and will continue to be so while the "vast Atlantic" heaves its mighty billows, and westerly gales rage with fury. The climate is beyond the control of man, and laughs to scorn proprietors, factors, and peasants alike.

The last Statistical Account of Skye (1840) has already been largely quoted from. The old Statistical Account (1797), written when the country was yet in a transition state after the feudal system had yielded up its power to the British Crown, does not give a more roseate account of the condition of the people generally.

Buchanan, who travelled in the Hebrides and the West Highlands in 1797, says: "On a general survey of the Western Hebrides, as we have seen, the picture that is oftenest presented, and which recurs again and again to the mind, is that of melancholy and depression. Those isles are, in general, the melancholy abodes of woe, of suffering in various forms, where the people are treated merely as beasts of burthen, and worse than beasts of burthen. If want and stripes leave any room for sensibility to a state of slavish dependence and cruel revilings and mockery, surely the tears, the cries, the groans of so great a number of oppressed, though lively and acute people, call for pity and relief at the hands of Government."

Quoting once more from Pennant's 'Tour in Scotland,' he says of Sutherland: "This tract seems the residence of sloth; the people almost torpid with idleness, and most wretched; their hovels most miserable, made of poles wattled, and covered with thin sods. There is not corn raised sufficient to supply half the wants of the inhabitants; climate conspires with indolence to make matters worse. Yet there is much improvable land here in a state of nature; but still famine pinches. They will not bestir themselves: they are content with little at present, and are thoughtless of futurity,—perhaps on the motive of Turkish vassals, who are oppressed in proportion to their improvements. Dispirited and driven to despair by bad management, crowds were now passing, emaciated with hunger, to

the eastern coast, on the report of a ship being there laden with meal. Numbers of the miserables of this country are now *migrating:* they wandered in a state of desperation. *Too poor to pay, they madly sell themselves for their passage,* preferring a temporary bondage in a strange land to *starving for life in their native soil.*"

Emigration from the Highlands and Islands is not a novelty. It has been frequent, general, and occasionally extensive. When Dr Samuel Johnson and Boswell visited Skye in 1773, they found an "epidemical fury for emigration" prevailing. The ship Nestor was in Portree Bay at the time, embarking emigrants. Many of the foremost families in Skye at that period emigrated to North Carolina; and when Flora Macdonald, her husband, and family, arrived there in 1774, they received quite an ovation from *their countrymen and former neighbours, of whom hundreds were in the colony before them.*

The important events that took place in the American colonies soon afterwards, sent the loyal Highlanders back to their native country. It is a remarkable truth, stranger than fiction, that the widow of one of these—one who fought gallantly for the British crown, and measured swords with General Washington—is at the present time one of those threatened with eviction in the Kilmuir district of Skye![1]

Since that period (1783) the tide of emigration from the Hebrides and the West Highlands has been, until recently, exclusively to the Canadian provinces; and there are districts there in which the Gaelic is the spoken language.

There is not in the Dominion a finer, a more loyal set of men, a more prosperous community, than the Glengarry Highlanders, whose forefathers brought with them to the land of their adoption the language, the poetry, the music, the traditions, the very name of the fatherland in the old country.

Kilmuir.—Turning again to the 'New Statistical Account,' written in 1840, it is said of Kilmuir: "From what has been stated, it will be seen that during the last sixty years the

[1] The widow of Captain Samuel Macdonald, who married at the age of 92, and lived to the age of 105.

population has rapidly increased, although at various times considerable numbers have *emigrated to foreign lands.*"

Snizort.—Of the next parish, Snizort, it is said, as already quoted: "Want is driving many to seek in the wilds of America for the comforts denied them in their native land."

Portree.—Of the parish of Portree the Account says: "The immense increase that has taken place in the number of the people may be ascribed to the introduction of vaccine inoculation, and to the subdivision of lands among the crofter-tenants, by which two or three families occupy one lot, and sometimes one house. The population is diminished by from 500 to 600 souls who *emigrated to North America* in the course of this and last summer."

Sleat.—The Statistical Account of the parish of Sleat does not say that any emigration had recently taken place, but it is stated that "the population, which stood at 1788 when the former Statistical Account was written, had increased to 3000 in 1840—*i.e.*, an increase of 67.8 per cent in forty-nine years; that the people generally were *excessively poor;* and that the most effectual remedy appeared to be an extensive and well-regulated *emigration.*"

Strath.—The account of the contiguous parish of Strath says: "Within the last forty years the population of this parish has been more than doubled. In 1837 it amounted to 3450 souls, but since that period about 200 have *emigrated to Australia.*"

Barra.—Similar statements are made with respect to the Outer Hebrides. The writer of the New Statistical Account of Barra says: "The increase in the population would have been very great, owing to early marriages, &c., had not *emigration* to Cape Breton and Nova Scotia carried off the island a great many almost every year. In some years several hundreds leave for those places."

South Uist.—The New Statistical Account of the parish of South Uist says: "From the reports of old people in the parish it is believed that the population must have more than doubled during the last century, notwithstanding the *frequent*

emigrations which have taken place to North America since 1772."

North Uist.—Of the parish of North Uist the writer of the New Statistical Account says: "*Upwards of* 600 *souls emigrated in the year* 1828 to British America; and though a few have since followed their friends across the Atlantic, the population is still excessive. It is now (1840) considerably greater than it was in 1831—viz., 4603."

Harris.—The writer of the New Statistical Account of the parish makes no mention of emigration. He says, however, that the population, which at the time of the former Statistical Account amounted to 2536, was 4000 in December 1839. At the last census-taking (1881) it was 4814. He adds that the arable ground in Harris is of very small extent, that the district is more adapted for pasture, and that some of the most fertile farms possessed by small tenants had been depopulated and converted into extensive sheep-walks.

It is known that there had been emigrations from Harris, and that they had not been entirely voluntary. Harris is now divided between two generous proprietors, who seem anxious do all in their power for the melioration of their people; and there is no reason to doubt that they would join other proprietors of Highland property in a well-regulated scheme of emigration under Government auspices. Indeed, the Earl of Dunmore (proprietor of South Harris) has already helped some of his crofters to emigrate to Manitoba, and has himself visited that province with the view of judging on the spot of its adaptability as a field for emigrants from the Hebrides.

The island of Lews is exceptional. Notwithstanding that emigration from it took place at various periods of its history, its population, every time it has been enumerated since the first enumeration in 1755, shows a great increase over what it had been at the preceding enumeration. In 1881 it was considerably more than *double* what it had been sixty years before. At the present time the population of the Lews may fairly be estimated at 26,500 souls—that is, nearly 1000 above *four times* what it was in 1755, when it stood at 6386—being an increase of 315 *per cent in* 130 *years!* This enormous increase will stand

out more prominently when compared with the increase of the population in the next largest island — Skye — in the same period.

For the last forty years the population of Skye has been decreasing, but from 1755 till 1841 a perceptible increase was going on. In the sixty years ending with the census-taking of 1881, and in which the population of the Lews more than doubled itself, the population of Skye decreased to the extent of 3030 souls. Assuming that this retrogression has met a check, and that the population of Skye stands in 1885 at what it was when the census of 1881 was taken—viz., 17,797—the increase in the last 130 years has been 6545, or 58 per cent, as against the increase in the Lews of 20,114 souls, or 315 per cent! Again in 1755 the population of Skye was approaching double that of Lews, the figures being—Skye, 11,252; Lews, 6386. In 1885 the population of Lews is 8703 greater than that of Skye! In other words, Lews, starting 130 years ago with a population numbering 6386 souls, against Skye with a population of 11,252 souls, has not only come up to its rival, but gone beyond it to the extent of 8703 souls—thus gaining in the race 13,569 of a population over its neighbour, though Skye possesses a much richer soil, and on the whole a better climate!

From the date of the old 'Statistical Account' (1797) to the date of Sir John M'Neill's Report (1851), the resident clergy and others connected with the island, who have been called upon to express an opinion as to the population of the Lews and its condition, are unanimous in stating that early and improvident marriages, the healthiness of the people, the absence of a proper organisation, and the want of means for emigration, are the causes of the rapid increase of the population. Undoubted authority says that it is not uncommon in the Lews to see two, and often three, families living beneath one roof, existing under the most wretched circumstances. Periodically the fishing, the potato crop, or the cereal crop fails. Occasionally all three fail together, and hurricanes sweep with destructive energy over the coasts, and destroy the boats of the fishermen, who, suffering under accumulated evils, are unable to

replace them—as was the case in 1881 and 1882. Then the usual premonitory signs of approaching famine necessitate an appeal to the public for relief. But the patience of the charitable is limitable; and now that a Royal Commission has made an exhaustive Report upon the condition of the Hebrides generally, it is not unreasonable that the public should point to the most practicable of the remedial measures proposed by the Royal Commissioners in reply to any further appeals for charity on the part of people who, ignoring all friendly suggestions or advice, persist upon remaining in a semi-starved condition on an overcrowded and comparatively unproductive island. As to the exceptionally rapid increase of the population and its causes, the Legislature, that guards the welfare and guides the destinies of the nation, is powerless in the matter of early marriages. The healthiness of the people is a matter for congratulation,—it would be monstrous criminality even to suggest interference with it in any way. But a wise and comprehensive system of aided emigration is both possible and practicable.

The authoritative statement of the Royal Commissioners as to the inadequacy of the area of land in the Northern Hebrides to give barely 39 *acres* (including pasture and hill-grazing) apiece to the *half of the population* now clamouring *for* 57 *acres* apiece, as the extent of the croft upon which a family could make a living after paying rent and taxes, together with the general poverty that prevails, forces upon all unprejudiced and intelligent minds that State-aided emigration to the British colonies can alone bring effectual relief and a lasting benefit to the crofter population of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

The Royal Commissioners say (page 104): "We are of opinion that the need of emigration now is in some districts as urgent as it was in 1851,[1] that this need must shortly bring about the desire for it; and *that*, without making any drafts on the public revenue, beyond the cost of establishing an Emigration Agency in connection with a Scottish Government Department, and without infringing economic principles, that the

[1] The circumstances of 1851 and those of the present crisis have little resemblance to one another.

State might give most valuable assistance to intending emigrants, and ought to do so where localities are overcrowded."

In this instance, the Commissioners obviously overlooked the fact that the circumstances that obtained in 1851 and those of the present times are widely different. In 1851-52 there was a sore famine in the districts referred to, and urgent appeals for food to the famishing people were made to the Home Secretary, and to others, by clergymen and local authorities in the distressed localities, with the result that a Government war-ship was sent with supplies, even to the narrow waters of the east coast of Skye, and that another ship of the Navy was sent to Campbelltown, there to embark emigrants from the Hebrides for Australia.

When the emigration was set on foot, the people had become so reduced in circumstances that many of the selected emigrants reached Glasgow in a condition little better than nudity, and were unable to proceed further until supplied with the necessary outfit, clothing, &c., by the Agents of the Highlands and Islands Emigration Society.

The poor people were, themselves, utterly helpless; every thing had to be done for them. Without money, without clothes or shoes, many of them without any knowledge of the language spoken by the people with whom they would have to deal at every stage of their long journey, these emigrants could not have left their wretched homes had there not been extraneous funds to cover the whole expenditure of the emigration.

But as the wind is tempered to the shorn lamb, so these calamities were assuaged by providential interposition. At that time large sums of money were being received in this country from the Australian colonies for the promotion of free, or almost free, emigration to these colonies. The Emigration Commissioners, who had the administration of the funds, extended the benefits of this free emigration to the families *selected* by their own officer, in conformity with established regulations, in the districts where Sir John M'Neill had found a redundancy of population, and distress prevailing. In addition to this, there was a considerable amount of money subscribed by a charitable public, and there were loans of public money obtained for emi-

gration purposes by landowners, under the provisions of the Act 14 and 15 Vict., cap. 91 (1851).

Conditions such as these do not now exist. Of overcrowding and poverty there is plenty, but there is no famine or threatened destitution. The Highlands and Islands Emigration Society, with its perfect organisation, no longer exists. The Australian colonies have long since ceased to remit money to this country, to be controlled by officials of the British Government for emigration purposes. There is no unexhausted fund that had been contributed by a charitable public for the relief of distress amongst the crofter and cottar population in the Highlands and Islands; and it is doubtful whether a case could now be got up that would justify an appeal to the public in that direction, and still more doubtful that such an appeal would be successful, seeing that the causes of the periodical distresses that afflict the Highland crofters and cottars are now well understood; that they have been put on record by the tribunal chosen by the crofters themselves and their trusted advisers; and that the distresses referred to are *preventible*, if only the redundant population would disabuse their minds of the pernicious notions instilled into them, and could be persuaded to quit a country in which the population has overlapped the means of subsistence, and flee to the cities of refuge which would seem to have been providentially provided in anticipation of the present crisis.

Population, how to keep it within the limits of the means of subsistence, or how the means of subsistence could be made to keep pace with the natural growth of population, is a problem that has puzzled thoughtful men — statesmen, philosophers, political economists, and philanthropists—in all ages: in this country, notably since the time of Malthus. But it is not to be overlooked that some of the most eminent of these men lived in an age in which Free Trade was unknown, and the removal of the restrictions upon the free importation of the people's food from countries which produce it to overflowing was not considered possible.

In those days unnatural and impracticable checks upon the increase of population were not looked upon with disfavour.

Even the great and good Dr Chalmers contemplated with dismay the magnitude of the fleets of transports that, without some such checks, it would be necessary to have in constant employment conveying beyond the seas the annual surplus population. The Doctor wrote, however, before the problem of crossing the Atlantic in a steamer was solved. At the time I speak of, a ship of 1000 tons burthen would have been looked upon as exceptionally large. The ordinary size of emigrant ships was from 500 to 700 tons burthen each; and the voyage from the West Highlands to the St Lawrence occupied nearly as long a time as a sailing-clipper occupies now between the Clyde and Melbourne. There was no Board of Trade supervision; the sanitary arrangements were left entirely to the discretion of the shipowners and the emigration agent; there was no dietary scale, as the emigrants took with them their own provisions.

It is not surprising that, under circumstances such as these, Chalmers should have felt some anxiety respecting what he considered the coming necessity for establishing a strong and continuous tide of emigration from our shores. But the times we live in are very different. Iron has superseded wood as the material for shipbuilding, and steam to a large extent has taken the place of canvas as a propelling power. Our steam-ships are from five to ten times as large as the old wooden sailing-ships; and instead of being beating for weeks against adverse winds, or hove-to for days to escape the destructive results of tempestuous seas—all to the great terror and discomfort of passengers—go with great speed and regularity straight to their several destinations in defiance of wind or tide. The comfort of emigrants is provided for in the best manner human foresight could devise, and strictly enforced by Government authority; so that the once-dreaded voyage across the Atlantic has, in our day, taken the character of a really pleasant excursion.

It is estimated that the existing colonies and dependencies of Great Britain cover about one-sixth of the land-surface of the globe, and embrace the same proportion of its population. From this calculation *India*, of course, with its many millions of inhabitants, is to be deducted. But taking Australasia and

the Dominion of Canada, we have vast regions presenting every variety of soil and of climate, and longing to be peopled; and they will continue so to long for many centuries to come, for their strength and their glory depend upon a numerous population of the very classes that are superabundant in the mother country—in some quarters of it often on the verge of destitution, owing to the difficulty of procuring the means of subsistence. The area of Australia (New Holland) is equal to four-fifths of Europe, and, with New Zealand and Tasmania, is fully equal to the whole of Europe in size, and perhaps in value. It would be superfluous to dwell upon the vast resources of these Australasian colonies; their rapid growth in population, in wealth, and in importance; their adaptability to the condition, habits, and genius of the crofter and cottar population of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. If some of these colonies are warmer than the climate we are accustomed to in this country, the climate of *Tasmania* is neither so warm nor so dry as that of the mainland (New Holland). That being so, the island is well adapted to all the various processes of British husbandry. New Zealand, which in area is nearly equal to the British Isles, is blessed with a temperate climate, in all respects greatly better than ours, and with a fertile virgin soil.

But it is the great province of Manitoba—in the language of the Red Indian, "the speaking God"—that is now more particularly attracting the special attention of those who take an interest in emigration. Originally founded in 1812 as the Red River Settlement, under the Hudson Bay Company, Manitoba was made a distinct province and admitted into the *Dominion* in 1870, with an enlarged area taken out of the North-West Territory. Situated between the parallels of 49° and 50° 50′ of north latitude, and 89° and 102° of west longitude, in the centre of the American continent, it contains about 123,200 square miles, or 78,000,000 acres of land, most of it *prairie* land—that is, land clear of the primeval forest, browsed over and enriched by countless herds of buffaloes for untold ages before the Red Indian's hunting-fields were coveted and appropriated by the pioneers of modern civilisation, of the richest quality known in the world. It has been visited and reported upon by

practical agriculturists from England, Scotland, and Ireland, and all are unanimous in its praise.

The Professor of Agriculture in Dowton-Salisbury says: "The soil of Manitoba is a purely vegetable loam full of organic matter, in some places many feet deep, and resting on alluvial drift. It is, of course, extremely rich in the chief elements of plant food, and cannot easily be exhausted; and so the farmers take all they can out of it in the shortest possible time, and return nothing whatever in the form of manure."

A delegate from the Kintyre Agricultural Society reports, as part of the experience of a settler from Craignish in Argyllshire, that oats average 75 bushels per acre, but that it is not uncommon to take 100 bushels off an acre: the yield, therefore, is 31 returns for oats. Barley returns 30 fold for the seed sown, and potatoes 29 fold. It is stated in Sir John M'Neill's Report (1851) that in several parts of the Lews the oats sown yield *2½ fold, barley 4½ fold,* and *potatoes about 4 fold!*

A gentleman in Manitoba, writing to a friend in Glasgow in July 1883, says: "To the west the prairie extends in an unbroken plain as far as the eye can reach. This prairie, however, consists of the finest soil I have ever seen; and during the months of June and July vegetation grows with a rapidity that is quite astonishing. Potatoes yield from 300 *to* 400 *bushels* to the acre, and other vegetables yield in about the same proportion. I need say nothing about the growth of wheat, as it is now generally admitted that this country is destined to be the great wheat-producing country of the world, and I am satisfied that there are ample grounds for the prediction. I was specially impressed with the prevalence of clear and cloudless skies, and the absence of winds. I am bound to admit that in winter the cold is most exhilarating, and never produces the chilly feeling that one experiences in the old country."

These are not isolated or sensational accounts, written by interested speculators for the purpose of enticing emigrants to the North-West. They are the productions of men who have a character to maintain, and who were sent to that country by constituencies who wished to know the simple truth. They are, moreover, corroborated abundantly by gentlemen of position

and influence who have recently visited the Province for their own pleasure and information.

The Rev. Gavin Lang of Inverness, who was a member of the British Association at its meeting in Canada last autumn, made use of that opportunity to pay a visit to the North-West. Let us hear what he says of Manitoba:—

"In Manitoba wheat is produced 2000 feet above the level of the sea, in Calgary 3000 feet, and in Canmore 3500 feet, and of excellent quality." The highest peak of the Cuchullin Hills, in the Isle of Skye, is only 3305 feet high: no vegetation of any kind is produced there, and streaks of snow are seen upon it, in crevices, all the year round. Mr Lang, quoting from the Harvest Report of the Department of Agriculture, gives the following results: The acreage under wheat this season was 309,281, against 260,842 in 1883, showing an increase of 18 per cent; and the total yield was 6,205,620 bushels, leaving a balance for exportation, after supplying their own wants, of 4,744,058 bushels. The acreage under barley was 40,936, giving a yield of 1,341,928 bushels, or 32 bushels per acre; the acreage under oats 128,487, yielding 5,187,079 bushels, showing an average of 39.7 bushels per acre. The yield of wheat ranged from 28 to 32 bushels per acre—the bushel containing from 62 to 66 lb.; oats, 56 bushels per acre; barley, 37 to 40 bushels; peas, 38; potatoes, 278 to 348 bushels per acre. This extraordinary fertility will be better understood when it is mentioned that the average of the celebrated wheat of Dakota, United States, is from 14 to 15 bushels per acre; and that in Illinois, the best of the U.S. provinces, the yield does not exceed 17 bushels per acre.

The rev. gentleman, in concluding his lecture, expressed himself as follows: "Could any one see that boundless prairie, its unlimited acreage, its endless resources—could any one go to these magnificent Rocky Mountains—could any one realise the grand enterprise of the Canadian Pacific Railway, without coming away with the impression and persuasion left on his mind that, without exaggerating, there is the Greater Britain?"

Should it appear to any one that there is a discrepancy between the accounts given by the delegates referred to above

and the Report of the Department of Agriculture as to the fertility of the soil, it is to be borne in mind that the former obviously referred to the *maximum* yield in favoured localities, while the latter gives the average yield of the half million of acres under cultivation in the entire province.

The Rev. Dr MacGregor of St Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, who visited Manitoba a little over two years ago, and Professor Ramsay of Glasgow University, who has but recently returned from it, are equally emphatic in its praise as a most desirable place of settlement for Scotch crofters, than whom, the Professor says, it would be impossible to find people better suited for settlers in it—"for they were accustomed to struggle at cultivation in a bad climate and poor soil all their lives." The winter, he added, was immeasurably preferable to that of this country, owing to the extraordinary absence of damp. The people suffered much more from cold at home than in Manitoba.

It being admitted by undoubted authority—the Royal Commission—and verified by the unanswerable logic of facts and figures, that emigration from the Northern Hebrides and other places in the North-West Highlands is inevitable, and it being evident that legislation on the subject of the crofters' grievances cannot wisely be longer delayed, the time has arrived for facing three important questions:—

(1.) How ought this emigration to be inaugurated, so as to recommend itself, with a fair prospect of success, to the common-sense of the parties specially interested?

(2.) To what Colonies should the emigration be chiefly directed?

(3.) How the means for defraying the expense of the emigration ought to be provided?

First, it is submitted that the people ought, without delay, to be enlightened as to the inadequacy of the available area of land in their native country to give crofts of anything approaching the necessary size to one-half of the present population, and that vast numbers of even that half do not possess the capital to stock, supposing them to have the skill and the ability to manage such crofts. They should be informed very

clearly that the emigration is to be perfectly voluntary, that it is to be in entire families, and that as many families as may be willing will be encouraged to go together in one body, so as, if desirable, to form communities by themselves in the land of their adoption.

Second, intending emigrants should have the privilege of choosing the Colony they severally like best. Official statistics show that Australia and New Zealand are more in favour with the Scotch than they are with either the English or the Irish emigrants.

The following table gives the proportions of the emigrants of the three nationalities that chose the several Colonies in 1883:—

Colonies.	Scotch Emigrants.	English Emigrants.	Irish Emigrants.
	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.
Australia and New Zealand, .	20	15	8
Canada, ...	14	17	9
South Africa, ...	4	6	1
United States, ...	60	58	81
All other parts, . . .	2	4	1
	100	100	100

Of the Scotch emigrants who chose the United States, the great preponderance consists of artisans and skilled labourers from the large towns and the manufacturing districts, and of Irish by blood shipped at Scotch ports, such as Glasgow and Greenock. Few, if any, of the Highland crofters go thither. In February 1884 some families from Skye were induced to emigrate to North Carolina, but they were not long there before they discovered that they had been grossly deceived by the *female* agent who persuaded them to go to that country. Two heads of families returned in July last, and on their arrival at Greenock, a meeting of Highlanders and other sympathisers was convened for the purpose of hearing a statement from them. Before the close of that meeting, the Rev. Mr Macaskill submitted the following resolution, which was adopted unanimously: "This meeting, having heard the statements of Donald Matheson and Alexander Finlayson, recently returned

from North Carolina, to which they had been induced to emigrate last February, strongly condemns the way in which these men had been induced to leave their homes, to find the promise made before leaving falsified on their arrival in North Carolina. The meeting also expresses deep sympathy with them, and cordially recommends their case to the liberality of their fellow-countrymen and to the general public for the means necessary to bring back their families to their native land, or to enable them to emigrate from North Carolina to some suitable place in the Dominion of Canada, or elsewhere, where they can find employment for themselves and families."

I have been informed that the whole of the Skye emigrants to North Carolina have now returned to this country.

But for the expense of the passage, the Highlanders would go in greater numbers to Australia and New Zealand, where they would readily find employment in either agricultural or pastoral pursuits, in both of which they are more or less skilled, *or where they might engage in these pursuits on their own account.*

Third, it has been shown in the foregoing pages that as far back as 1840 the people in the Northern Hebrides were so poor, that State-aided emigration was then advocated very strongly by the local clergy as the only remedy for the evils of overcrowding and the extreme poverty that prevailed. And when matters came to a crisis in 1851, free emigration and other assistance were provided on a limited scale. Had there been sufficient funds, the emigration would have been extensive, and would have relieved more effectually and more permanently the pressure at home on the means of subsistence. There was a keen competition for passages to Australia.

Matters have again come to a crisis more serious than any preceding one. The Royal Commissioners are of opinion that the need of emigration now is as great as it was in 1851, and that this need must shortly bring about the desire for it. As to the inability of the people to emigrate unaided, it is significant to note that at the present time the Earl of Breadalbane, with the assistance of other persons of influence, is asking subscriptions to make up the capital sum of £2000 for the instant relief of crofters and cottars in the disturbed districts of the

north end of Skye, a place of which Pennant wrote in 1772: "Uig is laughing with corn;" "Kilmuir is the granary of Skye." It is then beyond the shadow of a doubt that if the process of thinning and transplanting the redundant population by means of the "inevitable emigration" is to be carried into practical effect, the Imperial Government must, in the first instance, undertake the responsibility of providing the means.

Having thus far disposed of the three important questions, I beg to remark further that, in my opinion, the repugnance to emigration found by the Commissioners to exist wherever the subject of emigration was introduced, is both artificial and superficial. The Highland peasantry are not impervious to reason, or deaf to the voice of common-sense; they abhor deception; and when convinced that they are misguided by vain imaginings, they will readily enough refuse to proceed further in the wrong direction.

Notably, two ministers of the Established Church in Skye, neither of whom, by the music of his voice or the magic of his name, has been able to gather a congregation in appreciable numbers within the walls of his own church, have assumed much of the leadership in the crofter agitation, and get crowds of professedly Free Churchmen to listen to their opening prayers and political harangues on the hill-side! Who can doubt that this effervescent triumph is illusive and transient? By judicious means the counsels of *Celtic Ahithophels* (the Highlanders love quotations from the Old Testament) might be turned into foolishness. Already unmistakable signs of a reaction are manifest. A highly esteemed Free Church minister in Glasgow, who has himself taken a prominent part in advocating the cause of the Highland crofters, has recently addressed a letter to the leading journal of the West, in which he says, with respect to a meeting held in the City Hall, under the auspices of the Scottish Land Restoration League, on the 22d January last: "I beg the favour of a few lines in order to express the hope that none of your readers will imagine I have the slightest sympathy with the style of speaking about landlords which was indulged in at that meeting. In my judgment, it was sheer fanatical raving,—not only unjust and unchristian,

but directly fitted to do serious injury to the cause the speakers had met to aid. Talk of that kind can work nothing but mischief all round—prejudicing the public mind against the subject, exasperating landlords, inflaming the passions of the crofters, and making the wise and satisfactory settlement of a pressing question increasingly difficult. And, perhaps, in view of such meetings as that of last night, you will allow me to add that, when I think of the intimate and responsible relation in which the Free Church stands to the Highlands, it is to my mind a matter simply of amazement how its Courts can be content to stand aside in silence and offer no words of wiser guidance and more helpful sympathy when others are ceaselessly pouring inflammatory speeches and counsels into the ears and hearts of *its people.*"

The Free Church, undoubtedly, claims the Highland crofters as her children. Her ministers in the North-west Highlands and Islands, whether deservedly or not, get the credit of having fostered, if not originated, the agitation which now, seemingly, has got beyond their control. At all events, with the exception of one noble instance, that of the Rev. Mr Macdonald of Inverness, we have not heard of any effort made by the Free Church clergy to convince their people in Skye and the Long Island that they are not wiser than the Legislature, and that it is suicidal policy on their part to attempt to place themselves above the law. If any such efforts have been made, they have proved utterly futile. Some of them, indeed, frankly admit that they are opposed to emigration, on the ground that *the support of the Christian ministry*—in other words, their own means of livelihood—depends upon the people remaining on their native soil. This would seem to imply that engendering a repugnance to emigration, and encouraging the cry of "more land to every one," even where there is no more land to give, is a vital policy for the sustentation of the Free Church.

But if the spiritual welfare of their people is the primary consideration with the Free Church clergy, I can see no good reason why that welfare should not be as successfully, if not more successfully, attended to in the Colonies than it is in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Peace, quietness, and

worldly comforts are more compatible with the deepening of the spiritual life through the preaching of the Gospel, than are a chronic agitation, the deforcement of officers of court in the execution of their duty, the assaulting of policemen, and the indiscriminate denunciation of landlords.

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," is a favourite phrase with leaders in the crofter agitation. It is because the earth is so, that I think the crofters and cottars, who are cribbed and confined, uncomfortable and unhappy, on their native soil, should go and possess as much as they please of the Lord's earth where the soil is infinitely more fertile and the climate vastly more genial than they are in this country.

If the people emigrate in numbers sufficiently large to be a relief to all concerned, surely a proportionate number of their spiritual guides might, with every possible advantage, accompany or follow them. The improved circumstances of their people in our flourishing colonies would correspondingly improve their own position and comfort.

I am aware that the Widows' Fund of the Free Church ministers is a stumbling-block in this direction. But the Free Church as a whole could, no doubt, remove that obstacle by extending to the ministers emigrating to the Colonies the privilege of continuing to contribute to the fund, and to their widows equal rights with the widows of ministers dying at home.

The words of the late Rev. Norman Macleod, D.D., will, I think, bear repetition here. In his 'Reminiscences of a Highland Parish,' he says: "Emigration has, to a large extent, been a blessing to the Highlands. It is the only relief to a poor and redundant population. The hopelessness of improving their condition at home, and which rendered many listless and lazy, has, in the Colonies, given place to the hope of securing a competency by prudence and industry. These virtues have accordingly sprung up, and the results have been competence and independence."

Though emigration from all parts of the United Kingdom to each of our Colonies, as well as to the United States of America, goes on extensively, it is but the removal from their native soil

to distant lands of individual persons and individual families, who are neither impelled into taking that step by apparent distress, nor acting in concert in the exodus. Desultory emigration of this kind does not advance rapidly nor very perceptibly, but has the disadvantage of drawing off gradually the best self-supporting portion of our peasantry, and in more ways than one impoverishing the country. It is therefore of importance that State-aided emigration should be by family, and that no aid should be given to the strong and the young singly to get away from their duties and obligations, as well as from their poverty. Such a policy would, doubtless, tend to increase the burdens and helplessness of those remaining behind. But if the *amor patriæ* is deeply rooted in the breast of the Highlander, the love of kindred is still more so, and that has always been a strong element in hindering emigration. It would, unquestionably, contribute greatly to the success of a State-aided scheme of emigration from the Highlands and Islands, that the people should have the opportunity of emigrating in tolerably large communities of families to the several Colonies chosen by them —the ties of kindred unsevered, and the loyalty of the emigrants unimpaired.

When a great crisis overwhelms a whole people, such as was the Irish famine of 1846-47, and such as is the deplorable condition of the Highland crofters now, it behoves, I venture to say, the Imperial Government to recognise that on them lies the obligation of applying the remedy which all unprejudiced and competent judges acknowledge to be the only one that would justly and lastingly meet the exigencies of the situation. Emigration, it is admitted, is a matter of necessity. On a sound basis and a comprehensive scale it would, undoubtedly, be beneficial to the emigrants themselves, and also to those remaining behind.

The principal obstacle is the want of funds, and that want would be best and most speedily supplied by the Government taking the initiative. Lady Gordon Cathcart has already set a noble example, equally worthy of praise and of imitation. The crofters who, by her bounty and judicious arrangements, were enabled to emigrate from the parishes of South Uist and Barra

to Manitoba, and who were cared for on the long journey, and seen advantageously located in New Benbecula by trusted agents of her ladyship, do themselves declare in their letters to relatives and friends in the old country that the experiment has been successful—far exceeding their most sanguine expectations.

Equally satisfactory accounts, on undoubted authority, are given of the prosperity of emigrants of the same class who found their way to the Australian colonies some years ago.

The resolutions adopted at the recent meeting of Highland proprietors at Inverness—which meeting, I think, might have with advantage been a public and not a private one—shows a conciliatory and liberal disposition on the part of these gentlemen. But that disposition does not appear to be appreciated, far less reciprocated, on the other side; neither, indeed, could it be expected to be, so long as the crofter agitation is remunerative, or in the least likely to float prominent agitators into Parliament.

Even if the leaseholders of extensive sheep-farms were willing to relinquish all the land cleared of crofters and made into or added to sheep-runs, say within the last forty years, for the purpose of being again put under crofters, there would not be half enough to satisfy the requirements of the crofters clamouring for more land.

A practical farmer from the South of Scotland, having large sheep-runs in the Highlands, and unquestionably friendly towards the crofters, stated before the Commissioners that a profitable size of a farm would require to be one of 50 *acres* of arable land, and pasture land capable of carrying 500 to 1000 sheep and a score of cows: that would not, he said, be too large for a club or joint-stock farm for *five* crofters. The share of each in it should be four or five cows, and 100 to 200 sheep. The capital necessary for such an undertaking would be from £300 to £400 for each of the five crofters in the club-farm. As a rule, the crofters are not in a position to undertake holdings of this kind without substantial aid. To put 3000 crofters into such holdings would require a capital of £1,050,000—or say, in round numbers, one million sterling.

The number of Gaelic-speaking people in Scotland does not

exceed 300,000 at the outset, and of these probably not more than 200,000 are in the Highlands. Assuming that one-third of these consists of farmers above the crofter grade, professional men, shopkeepers, artisans, and paupers, we have 133,334 individuals, or 26,667 families of the crofter and cottar classes. The settlement of these in club-farms, or on crofts sufficiently large to rear and support a family upon each, and to pay the rent from the surplus produce, would take close upon nine millions sterling! This calculation does not include the crofters of the Orkney and the Shetland groups, where the Gaelic language is not known. The figures produced are startling. But let us suppose that the crofters themselves would be able to supply one-third—viz., £3,000,000—of the necessary capital, we would still have a rural population starting in business, so to speak, as crofters, loaded with a debt of six millions sterling. We may imagine what the result would be three years afterwards!

All are agreed, however, that if any good to the crofters is to result from the forthcoming legislation on their behalf, a large sum of money must be advanced by the Government, either as a loan on easy terms or as a grant; or, perhaps, partly as the one and partly as the other. The question, then, that stares us in the face is, which is better calculated to secure the permanent amelioration of the crofters,—to apply that money, or at all events a large portion of it, in carrying out an extensive scheme of emigration to our flourishing colonies, or to devote it to the relief—temporary relief—of these people at home? Apart from the fact that there is not a sufficient area of land in the districts under review, I would unhesitatingly say that the better and the wiser course would be to apply, at least, the greater share of any money that may be advanced by the Imperial Government to the carrying out of a comprehensive scheme of emigration.

Much has been said about constructing harbours, and otherwise encouraging the fishing industry in the islands and on the West Coast generally. That is, no doubt, most important. "He who draws a fish out of the water draws out a piece of silver;" and he who increaseth the food-supply of the people is a public benefactor. But the constructing of harbours and

the development of the fisheries must, of necessity, be of slow growth, whereas the case in point is pressing. We cannot overlook the fact that the condition in which the Royal Commissioners found the settlements made, with the most laudable intentions, by the British Fisheries Society, which was founded by Act of Parliament nearly 100 years ago, teaches a lesson that ought to be instructive. With the exception of Tobermory, which is kept in existence chiefly by Mr MacBrayne's steamers, the settlements have, after the fashion of Jonah's gourd, flourished and decayed,—figuratively, "came up in a night and perished in a day." Tobermory itself was described to the Royal Commission by a witness as "hemmed in on every side like a city besieged." It has long ago ceased to be a fishing-station. Ullapool, at the entrance to the greater Lochbroom, once a flourishing fishing-town, with a large fleet of boats, an extensive yard for boat-building, a cooperage, a manufactory for herring-nets, and even a custom-house, has now hardly a boat that the fishery-officer would certify as seaworthy to go to the East Coast herring-fishing. It has no carpenters, no coopers, no net-making, no industry of any kind. The village is tumbling into ruins, but still affords shelter to most of the poor of the parish of Lochbroom, who number 378, and cost the rest of the parishioners £1677 a-year for maintenance! Shieldag, also in Wester-Ross, seems to have ceased to exist as a fishing-station altogether. A vice-chancellor of England is said to have taken it from the people and made it his own. Lochbay in Waternish, Isle of Skye, has also ceased to be a fishing-station to any appreciable extent. These were the British Fisheries Society's stations. Let us hope that the efforts now contemplated for developing the fisheries on the West Coast and in the Hebrides may be more successful. Steam, which was not utilised in the former times, will of course help greatly.

The longer the present crisis is looked at from every point of view, the more urgent and unavoidable does emigration seem to be. But to land large bodies of people penniless, or almost penniless, in any of the Colonies, would neither be politic nor just.

Lady Gordon Cathcart advances £100 to each family emi-

grating from her estates in the Outer Hebrides to Manitoba, repayable on such terms as not to hamper the energies of the new settlers. The experiment, as already stated, has been eminently successful. It would, in my judgment, be wise on the part of the Government to incorporate this principle in any great scheme of emigration that may be inaugurated for the benefit of the Highland crofters generally. In point of fact, the Commissioners recommend this as an alternative—that is, in cases in which families would go to a Colony with the intention, not to hire themselves out as labourers, but to settle in homesteads of their own. I think the most of the crofters who would emigrate would aspire to have homesteads of their own. Those who would choose *Manitoba* would certainly go on no other footing. I speak of families, of course. I know that in Skye and North Uist the crofters took a pride in holding land direct from the proprietor—in being *tenants* of Lord Macdonald or Macleod of Macleod. To propose to these people to go out as labourers under any kind of agreement or contract with parties already established in the Province would, in my opinion, make the emigration scheme unpopular. It might be different with respect to Australia. Employment with a rich squatter, having perhaps 100,000 or 200,000 sheep to look after, is enjoyable in a fine climate, with plenty of horses to ride upon, and often leads to *employés* becoming squatters themselves.

Leaving the *Lews* as an exceptional island, there are in Skye, Barra, the two Uists, and Harris—all in the county of Inverness —3851 families of crofters, of whom perhaps about 900 pay less than £4 a-year of rent, and fully three-fourths less than £6 each. Taking all these families at the usual average of five souls to a family, we have a crofter population of 19,255, or say, in round numbers, 20,000, needing, and confidently expecting, Government aid, or Government interference in one shape or another. This is independently of cottars — a numerous class.

Let us suppose that it be resolved to encourage and enable the half of these families—say 10,000 individuals, or 2000 families, of *all ages and both sexes*—to emigrate, the passage at the present rates would cost as follows:—

To Queensland, ...	£127,500
To Victoria or New Zealand, ...	144,500
To Adelaide, Sydney, Hobart Town, or Launceston, .	153,000
To Manitoba, ...	63,916
Total, . .	£488,916

Or taking an equal division, say 500 families to each of the destinations named above, the cost then would be as follows:—

To Queensland, ...	£31,875
To Victoria or New Zealand, ...	36,125
To Adelaide, Sydney, Hobart Town, or Launceston, .	38,250
To Manitoba, ...	15,692
Total, . .	£121,942

It has not been overlooked that the colony of Queensland grants assisted passages at a nominal rate to eligible persons, which the Highland crofters undoubtedly are, and even free passages to the daughters of eligible families. This would very considerably reduce the cost of emigration to Queensland; and, no doubt, liberal arrangements would be made by the Colonial Government for the reception of the emigrants if arriving there in large numbers.

Under the Government scheme each family ought to have, at least, £100 clear after settling down in the colony: that sum to each of the proposed 2000 families would amount to £200,000, which, together with the cost of transport in equal numbers to the four destinations pointed out, would make, in round numbers, a total of £321,942.

To extend the benefits of the emigration to the other distressed localities—not forgetting the Lews—would take, on the whole, not less a sum than *one million sterling*. That was precisely the sum the Colonial Secretary agreed, some time ago, to advance on certain conditions to carry on a scheme of emigration from Ireland to Manitoba. The number of families was to be 10,000; a million sterling would give £100 to each family, including the passage-money.

It has been shown, in a former part of this letter (p. 36), that to settle 3000 families of crofters in this country on crofts

sufficiently large to be worked to advantage, would take not less than £1,000,000 sterling. Let us see whether that million sterling could be more advantageously invested in carrying on a Government scheme of emigration.

Taking the average number of adults and children in a given number of families—at the present rates for passages to the Australasian colonies and the rich province of Manitoba respectively, the passage of a family would be as follows:—

To Queensland (if unassisted by the colony),	£63 15 0
To Victoria or New Zealand,	72 5 0
To New South Wales or South Australia, West Australia or Tasmania,	76 10 0
To Manitoba,	31 19 2

The one million sterling would bring to the colony of Queensland (unassisted otherwise) 6017 families, and give to each of these families the sum of £100, or to the whole community the capital sum of £601,700 to begin their colonial life with. If we take the colony of Victoria or New Zealand, the £1,000,000 would bring 5805.5 families to either of them, and give £100 to each family, or the capital sum of £580,510 to the whole community. On the same principle the million would settle 5694 families in New South Wales, South Australia, West Australia, or Tasmania.

The rising province of Manitoba being so much nearer our shores, a million of money would settle there 7899.5 families, with a capital sum of £789,910 in hand to begin their colonial life with.

The Dominion of Canada and New Zealand are the favourite colonies with Scotchmen of the agricultural classes, but the great pastoral ranges of the Australian colonies attract many of those who at home follow a pastoral life.

Were a million sterling set apart for the voluntary emigration of Highland crofters, probably one-third of the emigrants would choose Manitoba and one-third New Zealand; the remaining third would likely spread themselves over the Australian colonies.

The one million sterling would in this way provide a passage and £100 each for 6315 families as follows:—

	Families.	Passage.				Total.		
To Manitoba, .	2105	at £32	19	2	+ £100 =	£277,772	0	0
To New Zealand, .	2105	at 72	5	0	+ £100 =	362,586	0	0
To Australian colonies,	2105	at 70	16	8	+ £100 =	359,604	0	0
Total, .	6315					£999,962	0	0
		Surplus, . .				38	0	0
		Total, . . .				£1,000,000	0	0

Of this money the landowners, I think, in all fairness, ought to pay a part, say one-third—viz., £333,333, 6s. 8d.—leaving the Government to provide the rest.

It may possibly be objected that some of the landowners are themselves too poor to be called upon to pay any share of this outlay; and also that it would be manifestly unjust to ask landlords who, acting on a policy of benevolence, have spent large sums of money in giving employment to, and otherwise assisting, the crofters in the thickly populated districts on their estates, and who have not thinned the population by arbitrarily raising their rents, to contribute in the same ratio as other landlords who pursued a contrary policy, without any regard to the feelings or interests of the people now, through rack-renting and deprivation of pasture lands, it is alleged, reduced to a state of poverty and desperation.

But no great social revolution for the advancement of civilisation and the wellbeing of the community generally ever was or can be effected without entailing temporary hardships upon individuals here and there.

As to the poverty of some landowners, no doubt arrangements could be made to enable them to borrow the necessary amount on the conditions on which the Government now advances money for drainage, &c.

It would be invidious to single out proprietors of the arbitrary class referred to above; but the *seventy* landlords themselves, who, on a recent occasion, met *in private* at Inverness, and there framed resolutions that *had to be unanimously adopted and published*, might arrange that matter under a clause in the forthcoming legislation.

There are different reasons pointing to the conclusion that

the landlords ought to bear a proportionate part of the cost of the emigration. From their own standpoint, as demonstrated by one of the leading men amongst them, their properties would be immensely enhanced in value by relaxing the pressure of the artificial resistance a crofter population offers to the scope of the economic laws which have, since the beginning of the present century, raised the value of Highland property. A great authority in such matters, himself an extensive landowner in the West Highlands, said not long ago that the conversion of the mountains into sheep-grazings was as much a reclamation of waste lands as if the whole of that vast surface had been for the first time reclaimed from the sea; that sheep were wonderfully adapted to the complete consumption of all available pastures; that, accordingly, the moment their adaptability to the Highlands was established, they spread rapidly over the whole of it; that the increase of value consequent on this husbandry has been enormous, and has contributed greatly to the national wealth. He instances one estate which, at the beginning of this century, was offered under lease at £400 a-year, and is now worth £10,000 a-year, or twenty-five times as much—equivalent to an increase of 2500 *per cent!*

Seeing, then, that Highland landowners have benefited so much in the past by the system that is, in a great measure, responsible for the present condition of the crofter population, and would benefit still further, on the same economic principles, by an extensive emigration from the Highlands, it appears to be but just and reasonable that they should bear a proper share of the burden of helping the poor people away, on the principle so handsomely and successfully inaugurated by Lady Gordon Cathcart.

But besides this advantage, the landowners would also gradually get rid of a grievous burden now upon them—viz., the rates for the relief of the poor, which, in Skye and the Inverness-shire part of the Long Island, amount to about £6500 a-year. That assessment in thirty-one years would amount to £201,500, of which the landlords would pay the half, or £100,750. In the Lews, including Stornoway, the assessment for the poor in the year 1882-83 (I have not got the statistics for 1883-84 at

hand) amounted to £3303; that in thirty-one years would amount to £102,393, the half of which—£51,196—would be a burden upon the landlord.

In the parish of Lochbroom, on the sea-border of Wester-Ross, the assessment for the relief of 378 paupers out of a population of 4191, or one out of every 11 of the inhabitants, was £1677, 8s. 11d. in 1882-83; and that, in thirty-one years, would amount to £52,000, 16s. against a single parish! If there were nothing else than these statistics to go upon, I think they would go far to prove that emigration is "inevitable." It will be observed that I have said nothing of the cottars—a numerous class, intermediate between the crofters and the very poor who are entitled by law to parochial relief. Of course the cottars chiefly supply the paupers. From the crofter to the cottar there is, alas, but a step!

After the thinning and the transplanting, as now proposed, there would still be left in the Highlands and Islands (exclusive of Orkney and Shetland) 20,352 families of the crofter classes to benefit by the anticipated legislation which the present Parliament is pledged to undertake.

I have the honour to be,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's most obedient Servant,

R. HILL MACDONALD.

GLASGOW, 11*th April* 1885.

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