

# The Scottish Historical Review

VOL. XIX., No. 73

OCTOBER, 1921

## Eighteenth Century Highland Landlords and the Poverty Problem

**D**URING the latter part of the eighteenth century the inhabitants of many parts of the Highlands and Hebrides were living permanently in a state that bordered upon destitution. They were badly housed, they were poorly fed, and they had a continual struggle to pay their rents.<sup>1</sup>

This state of poverty was not universal; in some areas and on some estates the tenants presented an appearance of comparative prosperity. Where it did exist it had certain limits, for its existence did not prevent a large increase in the population of the Highlands, and that increase was greatest where the poverty was most marked; apparently the food supply was not so short as to affect the birth rate. But, after making these reservations, the fact remains that in the districts in question the general standard of living was below what was regarded, even in the eighteenth century, as a decent level for subsistence. Highland farmers often enjoyed fewer of the comforts of life than the ordinary day labourers in the Lowlands, and the latter were not a class that could be accused of riotous living.

What was the cause of the low Highland standard?

No doubt, it was partly due to custom. There is no evidence that the standard of living amongst the Highland peasantry had ever been anything but low. Ministers of long residence in the

<sup>1</sup> See the *Old Statistical Account* and the *General Views of Agriculture* for the Highland Counties, 1794-18.

## 2 Eighteenth Century Highland Landlords

Highlands, even when critical of the conditions that prevailed about 1795, made no attempt to represent the past as a golden age. When they made definite comparisons as a result of their own experience, these were almost invariably in favour of the present.<sup>1</sup> They appear to have had no illusions about the old order.

The second factor in the situation was the rapid increase of population. The figures given in the *Old Statistical Account*<sup>2</sup> are significant, and the increase continued to be equally remarkable for the twenty years following 1795. It is unnecessary to enlarge upon the subject since it has been already dealt with fully in a former article upon emigration.<sup>3</sup> The increase was undoubted, and the only question that arose was how could the districts affected absorb these additions to their population? With their geographical conditions, and with their want of manufacturing towns, it seemed likely, that if things were simply left to take their natural course, the standard of living, low in 1755, would be still lower in 1795.

The conditions of the eighteenth century Highland poverty problem presented themselves thus.

Given a low standard of living to start with, given a rapid increase of population, given an area with no automatic method of providing employment for its increase, how was the standard of living to be raised, how, indeed, was it to be kept from falling? Obviously no merely negative policy on the part of the landowners would solve the problem. The proprietor who clung fondly to the methods of an allegedly paternal past did not avoid the distressing sight of poverty at his own gates. Highland unemployment and Highland distress could not be wiped out merely by rekindling the ashes of a dying feudalism. A positive policy was wanted.

As stated, the problem appears to have been mainly one of creating employment. That was true so far, and would have

<sup>1</sup> O.S.A. Fortingal (Perthshire), Lochgoilhead (Argyll), etc.

<sup>2</sup> Typical Parishes.	Pop. 1755	Pop. c. 1795
Applecross (Ross)	835	1734
Glenshiel (Ross)	509	721
Edderachylis (Sutherland)	869	1024
Rogart (Sutherland)	1761	2000
Abernyte (Perth)	258	345
Kilcamonnell	1925	2448
Kilberry (Argyll)		
Hebridean parishes	49,485	75,466

<sup>3</sup> *Scottish Historical Review*, vol. xvii. p. 73.

been still truer but for the psychology of the Highlander. The latter had strong prejudices against certain kinds of work, notably day-labouring, and would often prefer to live in a state of semi-starvation rather than accept such employment in his own parish, though he was quite willing to do so in the Lowlands; very much as a middle class Englishman before 1914 would often do in Canada what he would have scorned to have been seen doing in England. This particular form of Highland pride was in process of decline, but it was still strong enough about 1800 to complicate the problem of finding work for all the Highland inhabitants in their own area.

For the moment, we propose to leave this consideration out of account. We are mainly concerned here with the steps which the landlords took, or might have taken, to raise the standard of living, and amongst the latter we do not include the working of psychological miracles upon their tenantry.

On the much discussed question of bettering Highland conditions, contemporary opinion was divided into several different groups. According to one of these groups, the only adequate policy was a lavish expenditure on public works, and the encouragement of local manufactures. The manufactures were to occupy the bulk of the inhabitants, and the owners would then be left free to run their estates upon the best Lowland models, no longer hampered, as they had been in the past by the necessity of using uneconomic methods for the sake of providing work for the surplus population. This was the view put forward by many persons intimately acquainted with Highland conditions, such as Sir John Sinclair, James Anderson the agricultural writer, and others. Sinclair, indeed, thought that nothing else offered any real hope for the future, not even the development of the fisheries upon which Knox built great expectations. The essential thing to keep in mind about the group is, that however the individuals in it differed in their details, they were all agreed that the solution of the Highland problem could only be found in the creation of employments other than agrarian, and *not* in changes in farming methods or estate management, though they thought that such changes were desirable. We do not propose in this article to enter into the detailed projects of this group, since these do not directly affect the landowners. It is true that many proprietors did take an extremely active part in promoting fisheries and manufactures, but such activities are not part of the business of the landlord as

## 4 Eighteenth Century Highland Landlords

such, and he could hardly be blamed for not trying them, or for trying them and doing them badly. On the other hand the management of his estate was the landlord's business, and most eighteenth century writers took it for granted that he was under a social obligation to do it in a satisfactory way.

The method of coping with the situation advocated by the second group came within the sphere of the landowners, and appealed very strongly to those with a bent for agrarian improvements. Its essential feature was the consolidation of the existing small Highland farms into units of a more profitable size. In many cases the consolidation was accompanied by the introduction of sheep, but in others it was done to make easy the carrying through of general farming improvements.

There is not space here to enter fully into the prolonged controversy over the relative merits of small and large farms. At this particular stage, there were ranged on the side of the large farms most of the experienced improvers of the Lowlands; most of the writers of agricultural reports, Highland as well as Lowland; and a very large number of writers in the *Old Statistical Account*. It is safe to say, that the general consensus of opinion was, that the Highland farms had been so subdivided that it was impossible for the farmers to hope to live on them with any decent comfort.

Notice that this is not intended to apply to land in process of being reclaimed from the waste, when a small unit was often regarded as an advantage, but to the ordinary Highland grazing farm which, for geographical reasons, seemed likely to remain the normal type, whether the stock kept was sheep or black cattle. The writer who made the most elaborate defence of the small Highland farm was Brown.<sup>1</sup> He gave figures to show that a small tenant farmer might live comfortably, and yet, in many cases pay a higher rent per acre than the big farmer. But Brown partly destroyed his own case when he explained how this was to be done. The small farmer was to have some subsidiary means of support in the shape of fishing or kelp making, and it was from his profit from them that he was to pay his high rent. This could hardly be regarded as a satisfactory defence of the small farm, for it not only implied a most unfair relationship between owner and tenant, but it could only apply

<sup>1</sup> *Strictures and Remarks on the Earl of Selkirk's Observations on the Present State of the Highlands of Scotland.* Sheriff-Substitute Brown of Inverness-shire. 1806.

to the very limited areas which had the natural facilities for fisheries or kelp works.

We need not go further into this controversy at the moment. It is sufficient to say, that there was a fair amount of evidence to justify a number of landlords in coming to the conclusion, that they could only improve their estates and raise the level of their tenantry by following the Lowland practice of uniting farms.

Where the policy was adopted it certainly did raise the standard of living. Not only did the tenant of the good sized sheep or cattle farm live prosperously, but his servants enjoyed a degree of comfort far beyond what they had done as small independent holders.<sup>1</sup> Garnett<sup>2</sup> who disliked the development of sheep farming intensely, admitted that the shepherds were much better off than the very small cattle farmers had ever been. The ministers of Kilmalie, Fortingal, and other parishes give evidence of the same sort from direct observation.

But the policy, while so far successful, had one obvious drawback: its immediate effect was to diminish, not increase, the available amount of work. True, this difficulty could sometimes be got over in districts where some subsidiary occupation existed or could be developed, or where there was waste land to be brought into cultivation, but these conditions were not always present. If the policy was to be universally applied throughout the Highlands and Hebrides, it must inevitably lead to a rise in the general standard of living, but also to a considerable amount of emigration, or migration. Most of its advocates were willing to admit this, but argued like the Earl of Selkirk, that the transfer of part of a population was better than allowing the whole population to continue in a state of semi-destitution.

This argument was in its own way unanswerable. At the same time a policy which got rid of unemployment by the simple method of getting rid of the unemployed obviously left something to be desired. It was in the nature of a last resort.

Such was the feeling of many proprietors. Some of them had voluntarily abstained from introducing sheep farming because they feared the effects would be disastrous to the small tenants, and they had been disheartened by finding that the sacrifice of their own profits left the tenantry in the same stage of wretched poverty as before. A policy of consolidating farms would not help such landlords, for if they could not provide for

<sup>1</sup> *General View of the Agriculture of Perthshire.* Robertson. 1799.

<sup>2</sup> *Observations on a Tour through the Highlands.* Garnett. 1800.

## 6 Eighteenth Century Highland Landlords

tenants to be displaced by sheep, neither could they provide alternative occupations for those displaced by the enlargement of cattle or other farms. What was wanted was a policy which would be within the scope of the landlords and which would raise the general level of life, without causing any serious removal of the inhabitants.

It was the opinion of several contemporary writers, that such a policy could be found without much difficulty, if only the owners would take sufficient trouble. Some of these writers insisted that the greed and indifference of the landlords were the chief, if not the only, causes of the deplorable condition of the tenants; others, like Macdonald,<sup>1</sup> paid a high tribute to the kindness of the proprietors, but thought that their outlook was too limited; all were agreed, that whether the cause was to be found in the greed or the negligence, the conservatism or the stupidity of the owner, the average Highland estate was not well managed, and that it was quite possible by changes to raise the general standard of living, and at the same time to supply enough work for all those inhabitants who were at present practically unemployed.

What we propose to consider now is :

- (a) What were these proposed changes from which so much was hoped ?
- (b) How far was it possible for the owners to adopt them ?
- (c) To what extent did their complete adoption meet all the requirements of the situation ?

If we collect the various suggestions made by different contemporaries on the subject of estate management, the following is a summary of the programme mapped out for the proprietor :

1. He should try, by residence, to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the needs and circumstances of his own estate.
2. He should take measures to provide his tenants with houses suitable for human habitation.
3. He should refrain from rack renting.
4. He should give his tenants proper security of tenure.
5. He should take measures to introduce as far as possible all the improved farming methods that had been found to work well in the Lowlands, *e.g.*  
the division of runrigged lands into independent holdings,  
the abolition of out-field and in-field,

<sup>1</sup> *General View of the Agriculture of the Hebrides.* Macdonald. 1811.

the creation of proper fences, drains and enclosures,  
the insistence on proper attention to breeding,  
the introduction of green crops,  
the introduction of better implements, etc.

6. He should also proceed to reclaim whatever waste land on his estate was capable of it.

Before discussing these suggestions in detail, it is essential to recall one of the characteristic features of old Highland estate management. It must not be forgotten that the Highland proprietor was not always in direct relations with all the persons holding farms on his estate. Where estates were still being run on the old system, there remained the normal division of farmers into tacksmen and subtenants. With the subtenants, who would form the major part of the tenantry on such an estate, the landlord had practically no direct contact.

It is true, that as the century advanced the middlemen were gradually being eliminated, but the process was very far from complete by the end of the eighteenth century. As late as 1808, 40,000 persons in the Hebrides,—practically half the population,—still held their farms as subtenants, and in Sutherland the indirect tenure was still the normal. The tacksmen, it will be remembered, held leases, often of great length, and they could only be got rid of when their leases expired, or in special cases, when sums, borrowed by the proprietor from the wadsetter tacksmen on the security of a farm, were repaid. Resumption of his direct control over all his tenants might therefore at any particular time be either legally or practically impossible for a Highland owner. The importance of this fact will become apparent later.

*Absenteeism.* The first and most immediate improvement which the landlord could make was to reside and take an interest in his estate. According to Macdonald, three-fifths of the Hebridean proprietors were non-resident, and the proportion on the mainland was probably similar. The drawbacks to this absentee habit were obvious.

The presence of the owners was urgently needed to give a lead to improvements of all sorts, a point which we shall touch upon again. In their failure to do this, the absentee landlord was not the only offender; not infrequently the tacksman also was an absentee and rent lifter,<sup>1</sup> and the unfortunate subtenant was left without guidance of any kind.

<sup>1</sup> *Forfeited Estate Papers* (Lovat Papers). Scottish Historical Society.

## 8 Eighteenth Century Highland Landlords

Residence of the proprietors would also have prevented their making serious mistakes from pure ignorance, when they came to fix terms of rent and leases.

More important still, it would probably have prevented a considerable amount of oppression by the factors, examples of which were given by many authorities. Pennant mentioned a bad case in Cannay on Clanronald's estates; Knox gave one in Harris; Sir George Mackenzie stated that most of Ross-shire was managed by factors who often made more profits than the owners, and deliberately multiplied the number of small tenants for the sake of the gain from their services. Sir John Sinclair, writing of Sutherland in 1795, indicated what were probably the main abuses when he suggested that all large estates should be split up amongst several factors to avoid giving one man too much power, or too much work to do properly, and that no factor should be allowed to accept services or presents from the tenants.

The presence of the landowner was particularly necessary where the farmer had small holdings and no leases, since that type of farmer was peculiarly at the factor's mercy. It was equally necessary on estates where the farming methods remained of a very backward type, and were not likely to be altered except by the personal encouragement and example of the landlord.

At the same time it is possible to lay too much stress on the value of constant residence. The owner of great and widely scattered estates could not be always in residence on them all, but it was not these great estates which were worst managed. Macdonald, though a very severe critic of the absentee, admitted that 'the best managed estates are of considerable size, some of them indeed the very largest of all.' The Argyll estates might be taken as a fair example of this.

What was wanted was a landowning class, that kept in close touch with what happened on its estates, but was not so isolated as to lose touch completely with the general current of ideas on the subject of improvements.

*Housing.* The condition of housing in the Highlands was due partly to the fact that it was the traditional, and even at the end of the eighteenth century still the normal, practice for tenants to build their own houses. The part of the landlord was generally limited to supplying a certain amount of timber and other materials. Houses so built did not last long enough to give rise to any questions of compensation when a tenant left.



In some areas they were built of earth, and every five or seven years were destroyed and added to the dunghill.<sup>1</sup>

The housing of the smaller Highland tenants was frankly deplorable. We quote the following passage from Macdonald which referred particularly to the Hebrides, but which was equally applicable to conditions on the mainland, wherever the problem had not been specially tackled by improving owners: 'Three fourths of the forty-thousand cottagers of these Isles live in hovels which would disgrace any Indian tribe; and many of them are found on islands of the first rank in point of population and extent. At least seven thousand of the natives of Lewis (for instance) know nothing of a chimney, gable, glass-window, house flooring, or even hearth-stone by their own experience at home.'<sup>2</sup>

By the end of the eighteenth century the districts which had made most advance in housing, were those where the system of big farms and day labourers or cottagers had replaced the old system of small tenant farmers. This is not surprising. No serious improvement could be made in housing until the landlords took over the responsibility of building. If the landlord, however, put up solid structures, it would involve considerable expense, and he would expect to get back the interest on his outlay in the form of increased rents. But the small tenants could not, as things were, pay any such increase, and it is certain that given a choice they would have preferred to continue in their hovels rather than accept such an alternative.

In spite of these difficulties some landlords had faced the problem with very fair success. On the Argyll and Breadalbane estates something had been done before the end of the century, and in the Hebrides, Campbell of Shawfield and the smaller proprietors in Gigha and Colonsay had set a comparatively decent standard. In justice to the proprietors, it is only fair to mention that the expense of putting up solid buildings in the Highlands, particularly in the Hebrides, was considerably greater than in the Lowlands. Materials had often to be brought from a great distance, the difficulties of transport were enormous, and skilled artisan labour was often not to be had. Macdonald calculated, that in the Hebrides, a house that could be erected for £100 in the Lowlands, would cost £150, and that it would only last fifteen years instead of twenty, under the

<sup>1</sup> O.S.A. Kiltearn, Ross-shire.

<sup>2</sup> *General View of the Agriculture of the Hebrides*, Macdonald, 1811.

greater stress of the weather conditions. Housing was certainly not a simple problem in the Highlands, but judging from the examples of the better estates, it was not insoluble, and many landlords might have done a great deal more to solve it than they did. At the same time the housing question must be considered in relation to the main Highland problem. There was nothing to be gained by putting up substantial houses on an estate, if the inhabitants could find no means of making a living there.

*Rents.* How far was the poverty of the Highlanders due to exorbitant rents? Some writers thought it was the main cause, but the more constructive critics were not amongst them. Still we must note in passing, that the minister of Kilcalmonnell and Kilberry felt so strongly on the subject that he proposed that there should be a statute passed regulating them.

Rents had certainly risen in the Highlands, though in very different proportions in different areas. In 1795 they had risen in North Uist by 33 per cent., and in Glenorchy parish by 200 to 300 per cent. Rents moreover continued to rise; Macdonald reckoned in 1811 that rents in the Hebrides had been multiplied by five since the process started, while from other sources it would appear that the rentals of the Forfeited Estates had been multiplied by six before 1806.

In connection with these facts certain things have to be remembered.

During the same period the rise of rents in the Lowlands averaged about 300 per cent., and the rise was accompanied not only by great advances in agriculture, but also by a general improvement in the standards of life.

Secondly, the rise of Highland rents was occasionally due to quite abnormal circumstances such as the suitability of a particular farm for kelp manufacture. A kelp farm in the Hebrides would sometimes yield five times as great a return for the capital expended, as the corresponding arable farm.

Thirdly, it must be remembered that where the middleman system was still in vogue, the increase in rents was not necessarily due to the proprietor, nor did he necessarily reap any share in the proceeds. Macdonald admitted that there were many tacksmen farmers in the Hebrides holding huge farms of several thousand acres at almost nominal rents; yet the subtenants of these did not apparently enjoy similar privileges. Sheriff Substitute Brown mentioned a case in Harris, where the pro-

prietor, after removing the tacksmen, was able to raise the rent he got personally from £895 to £3500, and the old subtenants were better off than they had been before.

Fourthly, the districts where the rents had risen comparatively little, were not those which showed the greatest signs of prosperity. Marshall<sup>1</sup> gave as his verdict, that as the small tenants farmed in the Central Highlands, they would still be wretchedly poor even if they paid no rents whatever, and his view is corroborated by several of the *Old Statistical Account* writers

High rents did not necessarily produce poverty in the Highlands any more than low rents necessarily produced prosperity. Most of the misconceptions surrounding the subject arose from not distinguishing clearly between the people who were asked to pay the rents. It might be said that there were three varieties of 'high rents' in the Highlands.

There were rents so high that they could hardly be paid under any system of farm management known at the time. Such rents might be the result of pure greed on the part of the owner or tacksmen; they might be due to a foolish miscalculation of the value of the land; they might be due to an idea, not uncommon at the time, that the value of the land could best be fixed by putting it up to open auction, a method which in the existing state of land famine could hardly fail to force up rents to an impossible pitch. But rackrenting of this sort was not common. Macdonald stated that it was most unusual in the Hebrides, and that bidding for farms whether by public auction or private bargain was very rare. Occasional cases of the sort could hardly account therefore for all the poverty of the Hebrides.

There were high rents which could not possibly be paid by the small cattle farmer, but which could be paid without any difficulty by the big sheep farmer. The minister of the parish of Glenorchy where rents had tripled spoke in glowing terms of the increased comfort enjoyed by people of all classes.

There were high rents, which could be paid by the tenants of well managed cattle or arable farms, but which could certainly not be paid, while the latter remained in their aboriginal condition. The tenants on the improved estates of Islay paid as high rents as any in the Hebrides, yet they presented an appearance in every way superior to lower rented farmers on other islands.

<sup>1</sup> *General View of the Agriculture of the Central Highlands*, Marshall, 1794.

## 12 Eighteenth Century Highland Landlords

The saner critics of Highland estate management, while viewing some rents as excessive, did not greatly stress the point, though it was observed by them that in the Highlands, the general rise in rents was more in the nature of unearned increment than the corresponding increase in the Lowlands; where the increases were much more often spent on solid improvements beneficial to the tenants. Still, with this reservation, the critics seemed agreed that if the owners managed their estates well, there was nothing to prevent them getting high rents without oppressing their people. They found the real grievance, not in the amount the tenant had to pay, but in the uncertainty regarding it. The uncertainty might arise, either from the tenant being still liable to irregular demands for personal services, or from the possibility of a fresh rise in rent at any moment, in other words from the want of leases.

*Services.* According to Knox,<sup>1</sup> it was possible for tenants to be required to give forty-two days of service in the year, and these days might be chosen at the very season when a man would be naturally busy on his own farm. Knox did not say that these services were normally exacted, in fact he admitted that the custom of servitude was dying out rapidly in the Western Highlands, and that in this respect they were considerably in advance of Caithness, and most of the North Country Lowlands.

For exact information about services the *Old Statistical Account* is the best source of information.

On the mainland of Argyllshire and in Perthshire the custom had evidently ceased to be of much importance. Where it existed, as in Lismore and Appin, it was less burdensome than Knox suggested. In that parish the services amounted to six or seven days yearly, on general work, and two or three days on road work, and usually some allowance was made for the work done; even in this parish the whole system was rapidly becoming obsolete.

As usual in the eighteenth century it was in Sutherland and in the Hebrides that the most sensational conditions prevailed. In the Hebrides<sup>2</sup> the services exacted sometimes came to five days work a week; in Reay (Sutherland) they varied from twenty to one hundred and twenty days a year; in Loth and Edderachylis (Sutherland) in 1795 the rents were still sometimes paid entirely in services which were quite unlimited in amount.

<sup>1</sup> *View of the British Empire*, Knox, 1785.

<sup>2</sup> *Travels*, Buchanan, 1793.

In cases like the last mentioned the services probably covered all sorts of agricultural operations. In general the common sort of services demanded were : the cutting, stacking, and housing of peats ; sowing and harvesting ; carting and thatching ; road making ; more rarely the spinning of a certain quantity of wool or flax ; and in some of the kelp islands in the Hebrides, the making of kelp.

The drawbacks of the servitude system are too obvious to call for much comment. It kept the tenant in a disheartening state of insecurity ; it caused his own holding to be badly neglected ; and it gave to the person receiving the services an extremely inefficient supply of labour. Undoubtedly where the services remained, they contributed to the miserable condition of the Highland tenantry.

On the other hand two facts must be remembered. Services were retained in some districts solely because it was impossible to persuade the people to work as day-labourers. There is abundant evidence that the small tenant often preferred to keep his family quite idle rather than have them act in that capacity. In the face of this psychological phenomenon, a big farmer with work to be done would be tempted to hold on to any services that he had it in his power to exact. The remedy for this was in the hands of the small tenants themselves.

The second thing to notice was, who got the benefit of the services ? Here there seems hardly any doubt at all that it was the middlemen and not the proprietors. The districts where the services first became obsolete were those in which the owners first took over direct dealings with the subtenants ; the districts where they lingered longest were those in which the middlemen survived. Apart from that, Buchanan and Sheriff-Substitute Brown, and the Old Statistical writers for Reay, Edderachylis and other Highland parishes, all deliberately made the contrast between the attitude of the proprietors and the attitude of the tacksmen towards services ; the former easy in his demands, the latter insisting on his utmost rights ; the former ready when approached to commute his claims into a reasonable money payment, the latter generally quite inexorable. The only definite case which Knox himself mentioned of oppressive services proved to be that of a tacksmen in Harris.

The attitude of the tacksmen was of course partly comprehensible, since he had to get labour in some way, and the Highland temperament made it difficult for him to get it by ordinary

## 14 Eighteenth Century Highland Landlords

methods. A landowner who was not actually farming land had no similar problem to face. At the same time the middleman's use of his powers was often most unnecessarily harsh, and the whole system worked out badly for both parties and was best abolished. What we wish to emphasise is, that the comparative slowness of its disappearance in some areas was not due to the attitude of the owners who were abolishing it as fast as the terms of the tacksmen's leases would permit.

*Leases.* The insecurity of the small Highland tenants lay less in the uncertain demands for services than in the general absence of leases. The average small farmer either held a short lease of under seven years, or more commonly was simply a tenant at will. The absence or shortness of leases was commented on adversely by practically every writer who sincerely desired the improvement of the Highlands or a higher standard of living for their inhabitants; Macdonald went so far as to say—'The want of them is the most fruitful source of emigration and distress.'<sup>1</sup>

Where leases did exist they were far from perfect. Macdonald thought that they were generally too complex, and urged that the stipulations in them should be made simpler, fewer, and more adapted to Highland farming conditions. As examples of absurd clauses, he mentioned some contained in certain Hebridean leases which insisted on kelp farmers raising turnips, which would have to be sown in June at the time when they were most occupied with kelp-making—and others which insisted on the destructive and futile practice of enclosing sand banks. Knox also complained of the custom still existing in some parts of charging a fine called a *grassum* for the renewal of a lease. But he admitted the custom was not general, and not specially peculiar to the Highland districts.

The general advantages of a system of long leases seemed indisputable. Eighteenth century writers had also immediately before them the example of Lowland Scotland, where a succession of improving farmers, encouraged by favourable leases, had in the course of two generations brought the land from extreme barrenness into a high state of cultivation—their own standard of life advancing with the improvement made.

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that Sheriff-Substitute Brown alleged that the emigrations from Clanronald's estates were of tenants who held beneficial leases, and it was by selling the reversion of these that the emigrants got enough money to pay their passage to America.

In some Highland districts the burden of making any capital improvements was still left, according to the old custom, to be borne by the tenants. In practice this usually meant that no such improvements were made, a state of things that might be attributed in part to the want of leases. A farmer was not likely to embark on any expensive improvements if he thought that the immediate result would be to raise the valuation of his farm and increase his rent, before he had had any time to repay himself for his own outlay and trouble. The obvious way to encourage him seemed to be to grant him a lease of respectable length, and the slowness of the landlords to adopt this policy laid them open to the charge of neglecting both the interests of their tenants and the interests of the country.

It would be unfair to the landlords to suppose that no estates had adopted the policy of leases for all tenants.

A great impetus in this direction had been given by the Commissioners of the Forfeited Estates. Their motives were political as well as economic, for they believed that by giving the small farmer an independent position they were minimising the danger of future Jacobite rebellions. An anonymous writer in 1750 who shared their view suggested 'that a law be enacted to Oblige all Landlords among the disaffected Clans to give long Written Leases to their Tenants none to be for a shorter Term than twenty Years, and that every man who lives by Husbandry or Grazing in those Countries have such a lease from the landlord or his Steward. . . . By this means the Tenants will Enjoy the Fruits of their own Industry and know the Sweets of Peace and Liberty; which will put it out of the Power of their Tyrant Chiefs to Induce them to Rebel against a Government to whom they will be indebted for everything they possess.'<sup>1</sup>

No Act was passed binding the landlords, but the Commissioners themselves put the policy suggested into effect on the Forfeited Estates, and landowners became familiar with the spectacle of small tenants in possession of leases.

To do the owners justice, some of them had anticipated the policy of the Commissioners. As far back as 1737 Duncan Forbes was authorised to offer leases to the under tenants on the Argyll estates in Morven. The leases were for nineteen years, a fair length according to prevailing standards. Forbes, in referring to them, does not speak as if they were a novelty except in that particular area.

<sup>1</sup> MSS. 1750, edited Lang 1895.

## 16 Eighteenth Century Highland Landlords

Later in the century the Marquis of Breadalbane, Lord Macdonald, Campbell of Islay, and a little later the Sutherland family, were distinguished by their willingness to grant leases of reasonable length.

In spite of these notable exceptions the end of the eighteenth century saw most Highland tenants still holding their farms from year to year, a state of things which many writers promptly put down at once either to the gross tyranny, or the hopeless stupidity, of the landowning class. But when we come to look into the matter of lease-granting the whole question was not quite so simple as appeared on the surface.

There were several kinds of landlords who were slow to grant long leases. Some were of the kindly paternal type, beloved by the romantic writers, and their slowness was part of their traditional conservatism which opposed alike improvements or evictions; some were frankly greedy and did not choose to give up the possibility of raising rents; some approved of the general policy of leases, but were held back by a variety of practical obstacles; while some quite thoughtful landlords were not convinced that leases were going to improve matters,—they were particularly doubtful of the value of leases to small tenants without capital, and they thought that the Lowland analogy had no useful bearing upon circumstances so entirely different.

If we consider first the practical obstacles it will be found that some were anything but imaginary. It was too often forgotten that while the majority of the small tenants might be holding from year to year, the whole estate so far as the proprietor was concerned might be let out on lease. The situation is exactly similar to that which arose in connection with personal services.

On old-fashioned estates where practically all the land was held on lease by the tacksmen the owner had no direct power of granting leases to the subtenants. As for the middlemen themselves, their attitude towards granting leases, like their attitude towards the abolition of services, was much more decidedly conservative than that of the landlords.

To introduce a general system of leases generally meant that proprietors must start by getting rid of the middlemen; that is, they must start by destroying the whole social order with which they were familiar, and an order often defended warmly by the same writers who blamed the owners for the want of leases.

It is true that the landlords stood to gain from the abolition



of the middleman system, and that most of them were willing to proceed with it, but obviously a change of such importance could not be made so easily as the ordinary signing of a lease. However willing the owner might be, the process took time, some of the tacksmen's leases being for long periods like ninety-nine years.

The legal right of a leaseholder to sublet part of his land was not seriously questioned until the case of *Roughhead v. Mudie* in 1686-7, when the Court of Session decided in favour of the leaseholder. Subsequent decisions are not entirely consistent on the point, but the case of *Simpson v. Gray* upheld the theory that the power of subletting was implied in a long lease.

It was obviously difficult, if not legally impossible, for proprietors to get rid of the middleman system without getting rid of the middlemen themselves, and that they could only do gradually as the tacks expired.

This was the most serious practical obstacle to the grant of leases to the small farmers.

A minor one lay in the fact that the typical Highland farm was generally held in common by from four to eight persons. Such a system obviously involved a good many administrative difficulties even when the tenants held from year to year. A lease which would cover all the contingencies that might arise in such a common holding—tenants dying—tenants failing to pay their share, etc.—obviously required to be somewhat complex, a fact that should be remembered in view of Macdonald's demand that leases should be made simpler and less clogged with burdensome conditions. This particular difficulty was eventually got rid of by the abolition of the common holding, but that also was obviously not a thing that could be done in a moment.

These practical difficulties prevented some owners from carrying out the recommendations about leases, but there were others whose inaction was deliberate.

Some owners withheld leases from the small tenants because they considered their present situation was a purely temporary one. The point has already arisen in connection with sheep farming. Many Hebridean proprietors wished to turn part of their estates into sheep runs, but had refrained from doing so at a great financial sacrifice, because they could think of no suitable or happy way of providing for the tenants who would

have to be displaced. Still could such a way be found, sheep farming was their eventual object, and they naturally did not choose to make its introduction impossible by granting long leases to the existing farmers. The other considerations that weighed with the owners were more subtle.

It must be remembered that leases were still associated in the landlord's mind with the old middleman system, and an evil odour hung therefore about them. A landlord who had just seen with his own eyes the very positive evils resulting from allowing his estate to pass out of his personal control, naturally wanted a considerable amount of convincing before he was willing to make what might be the same blunder in a slightly different form.

Secondly, he was liable to be influenced by the fact that the small tenants were not always as eager for leases as the writers imagined. In 1737 Forbes of Culloden paid the visit already mentioned to certain parts of the Argyll estates and was instructed to offer leases of nineteen years to all classes of tenants. To his astonishment the small tenants refused to pay the same rents to the Duke as they had been willing to pay previously to their tacksmen masters when they held from year to year. Many of them rejected the leases altogether.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century two cases of a similar kind are mentioned by Brown. One was on the estate of Clanronald in 1802, the other on the estates of Lord Macdonald in 1803.

In the latter case leases were offered to the tenants of an area which contained a population of over four thousand persons, but only the tenants of two farms accepted them.

It is true that all these cases were somewhat exceptional. On the Argyll estates the refusal seemed due to an organised conspiracy of the tacksmen; in the instances cited by Brown the tenants wished to leave themselves free to emigrate at any moment. Still, whatever the reasons,<sup>1</sup> the fact remained that leases were not always welcomed with enthusiasm by the tenants themselves.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. following quotation from *General View of the Agriculture of Midlothian* :

‘In some of the moorland parts of the county the tenants still remain without any lease whatever; but this is not owing so much to their landlords, who are willing enough to grant it, as to themselves, who have an aversion at being bound by such an express engagement; rather preferring the greater freedom that results to them from a paction which endures only for a single year.’

There was also another consideration present to the mind of the owner. Enthusiastic writers were trying to persuade him that leases to everyone meant high farming and general prosperity, and they pointed to the Lowlands for proof. But the Highland proprietor sometimes preferred to consult his own experience. His tacksmen had held long leases on particularly easy and generous terms, and therefore according to the argument ought to have been advanced farmers, but the landlord knew that in actual fact they had been nothing of the sort. Eager advocates of leases like Macdonald admitted that the old tacksmen were the most fatal obstacle to improvements of any kind.

The tacksmen had had the absolute security of tenure which reformers demanded, and the only apparent result had been that for generations all advance of any kind had been stopped. If this was the effect of low rents and security upon the Highland temperament of the upper class, what proof had the proprietor that it would affect the lower class differently? Perhaps the first flush of pride in possession of a lease might produce an outburst of energy, but after the novelty was gone would not the subtenants just go the same way as their social superiors?

So many landlords argued, and if they were slow to accept all the rose-coloured pictures that the enthusiasts painted, and if they tended to make rather elaborate stipulations in the leases they granted, they were not entirely without some defence.

Even Macdonald admitted that there was something to be said for their point of view. He himself thought it inadvisable to grant the Highland farmers leases longer than twenty-five years. The rents also were not to be fixed too low and there should be some definite conditions attached. Macdonald drew up a list of stipulations which he thought should be inserted into every lease to safeguard the interests of both parties. On the one hand the owner was to give compensation for improvements made, on the other, the tenant was to bind himself not to sublet his farm even to his own family without the landlord's consent, and was to bind himself to adopt a proper rotation of crops and a proper method of cultivation. Macdonald was obviously not too certain of the capabilities of the small farmers, and many landlords shared his doubts.

It is probable that attention to all the points raised above—more constant residence by proprietors, better housing of the tenants, moderate rents for the small cattle farmers, abolition of services, and a general system of leases—would have done

## 20 Eighteenth Century Highland Landlords

something to improve the conditions of a section of the Highland population. None of them, however, touch on the extremely difficult problem of creating a sufficiency of work for the many wholly or partly unemployed inhabitants. It remains to be seen in a subsequent article how far that problem was likely to be solved by the landlords putting into effect the various suggestions made about estate improvements and reclamations.

MARGARET I. ADAM.

## The Daughter of Anne of Denmark's Secretary

QUEEN ANNE'S secretary, where noticed at all, has been usually dismissed with undeserved contempt as a Malvolio-like lover of Arabella Stuart; writers, repeating the same mistake, have prejudiced themselves against him in erroneously identifying him with William, son of Thomas Fowler, sometime a servant of Arabella's grandmother, Margaret, Countess of Lenox, and a spy on behalf of the English government. His literary remains (published by the Scottish Text Society) show him to have been neither a 'ridiculous person,' nor 'a simpleton and buffoon.' The following short account of his life may serve as an introduction to his curious and elusive daughter.

William Fowler was one of twin sons of the same name, born in 1560 to William Foulter<sup>1</sup> of Foulterlaw, a burghess of Edinburgh, and treasurer, at one period, of the French revenues of Mary Queen of Scots. His mother was Anne Fisher, who had come of English parentage. A sister of his, Susannah, became the mother of William Drummond of Hawthornden. In 1573-4 he was at St. Andrews attending St. Leonard's College, and in 1578 took the Master of Arts degree. Two years later he was studying law in Paris and incidentally offering himself as a disputant in divinity, although in that—to use his own words—an scoller of tender zeirs, of waik discretion, of raw judgement, of small countenance, and little understanding, cannot pyke mekyll praise for his travel.'

The young man's home atmosphere and training were anti-Catholic. In Paris he had acquaintance with 'my Lord Arbroith' (Lord John Hamilton); on the occasion of Master John Hay, a Jesuit, presenting a book composed by him on certain questions 'proponit to our ministers,' William Fowler, 'entering in my Lord's chalmer' was drawn into a heated controversy. There-

<sup>1</sup> This is the more common English spelling of his name; in Scotch documents it is Foulter or Foular.

## The Daughter of Anne

after he had cause to repent 'his waik discretion' in having engaged in it; for on the 18th of March, 1580,—the day bit itself into his memory,—Mr. John Hamilton, his fellow-countryman, but a Roman Catholic, with others in his company, set upon him 'as a Huguenot, a heretique, a contemner of saints, and blasphemmer of the Virgin Marie'; they dragged him through the streets of Paris, kicking and beating him, as he tells us 'with pennerinkhorns and batons upon my head, to the effusion of my blood in grit quantity, disfiguring of my visage and wounding of my bodie,' 'everie man and woman running from the market-places to behald sic a spectakil.' Finally he was compelled to leave France 'by the cruel pursuits of Papists.' Whether now or at some other time, he went to Rome, and fared no better.

For the Parisian adventure he consoled himself by writing 'An Answer to the Calumnious Letter and erroneous proposition of an apostat M. Jo. Hamilton'; it was printed in Edinburgh by Robert Leprurk in 1581. This little book he dedicated to Francis, Earl of Bothwell, who later rewarded him with the parsonage of Hawick. Fowler, however, could only take two thirds of the profits of the parsonage (the remaining third being drawn by William Auchmootie, who, if not the acting minister, may have been the grantee of the crown); in 1594 he received a royal grant of the third of the same parsonage, his possession of it being thus completed. But though styled Parson of Hawick, Fowler was never in orders; his early addiction to theological disputation did not last long. Poetry proved more attractive to him than divinity. His talent of verse-making was put to the service of the King, to whose *Essaye of a Prentice in the Divine Art of Poetry*, 1584, he wrote a commendatory sonnet. Thereafter he remained in royal favour. He was sent in 1589 with Sir Peter Young the Scotch ambassador, for the negotiations of the marriage between James VI. and the princess Anne of Denmark. After the consummation of that event, he was appointed Master of Requests, and Secretary Depute, and finally Secretary, to the Queen. In 1603, when she joined the King in England and the members of her new household were nominated, he was continued in those posts at the yearly salary together of 66*li.* 13*s.* 4*d.*, and with the allowance of two dishes of meat daily at the King's expense.

At the English Court amongst others with whom he came into contact were Gilbert, Earl of Shrewsbury, and his Countess.

A few of his letters to the Earl are extant ; though written in the stilted, respectful style then usual in addressing persons of high rank, they show something of familiarity, and the fact that the Earl was indebted to Fowler, according to the latter's last will, for what was in those days a not inconsiderable sum, suggests a friendly intercourse between them. Perhaps it was on that account that when the Queen's Secretary was brought into communication, through his official duties probably, with Arabella Stuart, that lady was disposed to regard him with favour. On his side he may have honestly admired her—in a letter to Shrewsbury he suggests that she might be 'to the seven the eight wonder of the world.' He certainly wrote a small number of sonnets to her, extravagant in style and far-fetched in metaphor, and scarcely poetical ; this does not warrant the unkind statement of Miss Strickland that the passion of this 'pragmatical coxcomb' for Arabella 'formed the amusement of the Court.' The poets and courtiers of the preceding reign addressed adulatory verses to 'Gloriana' of a much more amatory tone, yet none save the flattery-loving Queen herself would think them to be inspired by anything but the desire to stand well with her. With his letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury just mentioned, Fowler sent two sonnets for approval, one on a horologe and the other on 'that worthy and virtuous lady' his niece ; this is less the spirit of a lover than that of a man desiring to amuse his friends with a small literary effort in what he called an 'ungrateful and depressing age.' The secretary aimed in all likelihood not at the heart of the Lady Arabella, but at her patronage ; 'Patrona mia,' he named her, and recognising her nearness to the blood royal, he hoped her hands should 'statly scepters sway.' For William Fowler was a sober Scot now well over forty years of age ; he had been a friend of Sir Robert Bowes, ambassador of Queen Elizabeth at the court of James VI., and of Sir James Maitland, Chancellor of Scotland, to whose 'spous,' Lady Jane Fleming, he dedicated his translation of Petrarch ; though no longer, perhaps, eager for religious controversy, he still took life seriously. James Hudson in 1602, in asking Sir Robert Cecil for a pass 'for Mr. William Fowler the Queen of Scotland's secretary' then at Ostend, said of him, 'He is a very religious man and hath suffered persecutions and perils in Rome and in Paris by the malice of his own nation.'

He remained in the Queen's service until his death in 1612. On the 18th of May, 1612, 'William Foular. secretare to

the Quenes Ma<sup>te</sup> of Greate Brittainē being sick in bodie and haill in mynd and yet nevertheless considering the fragillitie and brakilnes of mans life is sumtyme troubled with the thought and dolor of death when the same approaches' drew up his will. He appointed Sir James Foularton, knt., John Foular his brother, James Ruth and Patrick Strivelingē his sons-in-law, conjointly to be the overseers of his testament, and Lodowick Foular his son to be his 'oneliē executor testamentar and intromittar,' Sir James Foularton to be tutor to him and to Fowler's youngest daughter Anna 'during all the time of their pupillaritie.' He directed his body to be buried in the church of St. Margaret, Westminster, according to the Christian use to be observed in the Church of Scotland. Among his bequests was a chain of gold and jewels worth £300 sterling, besides 'thre diayment ringes, to wit, one ring with nyne small dyaments geven me by her Ma<sup>tie</sup> one other with nyne dyaments and the third with five diamentes' (which *inter alia* he left to his brother John). Among the debts owing to him was the sum of £843 from the Earl of Shrewsbury, due 'by his band' the last day of July following, and 2000 marks Scots owing to him in Scotland. For his two children—only one daughter is mentioned though she is called 'youngest'—he made the following provision:—  
 'I leaffe and appointe to be geven by my executor and intromittar with my goods geir and debtes to Anna Foular my youngest dochter for her bayrnis parte of geir and preferment of her marriage five thowzand markis scotts money togidder with two thowzand markis moir for her apparell and ornamentis thereto, and in case of her deceise in the meane tyme I leaffe the same haill money to the said Lodowick Fowler my sonne.'  
 'I appointe the same money to be payit to the said Anna my dochter upon the second daie after her marriage, she allwayes marrying with the advice and consent of the said oversears vtherwise the same to come to my said sonne Lodowick Fowler.'  
 Lodowick was to have also all his goods within the kingdom of England, but in case of his death, they were to go to the Secretary's two brothers, William and John. The witnesses to the will were, James Kleghorn, a gentleman waiter of the Queen's Chamber, 'James Gibsonne Buckbinder' in Edinburgh, and William Fowler his nephew. On the 13th of July, 1613, the commission for the administration was issued to John Fowler, his brother, during the minority of Lodowick.



There is no mention in the will of Fowler's wife, his 'Penelope' as he calls her in a poem entitled *Orkney*; if she was his 'loveing dame' and 'deir' whom he bewails in another poem entitled a 'Complaint,' she had predeceased him. James Gibson, who witnessed his will, was perhaps a connection of Barbara Gibson, the wife of his twin brother William. The latter was presumably, like his father before him, a burghess of Edinburgh, and that William Fowler so designated who figures in several contemporary Scotch records, and was grantee of property in Ulster. The Queen's Secretary was generally described as Parson, or Rector, of Hawick.

Anna Fowler, so named probably after her paternal grandmother, Anne Fisher, or in honour of Anne of Denmark, has no discoverable history for a long period after her father's death. But five years after the Restoration, Sancroft, then Dean of St. Paul's, was receiving strange, begging letters from one who claimed to be the daughter of the late Queen's Secretary.

At Cambridge in 1665 there was living a very poor and (according to herself) loyal woman of Scotch descent, whose French husband had been slain in fighting for the crown. Towards the end of the Protectorate, she had got herself into trouble by a too open and too vehement manifestation of her political views in opposition to another woman of different sympathies; in other words, there was an unseemly wrangle, during which the royalist—Mistress Delille by name—flung a glass of wine at the Parliamentarian's face. The glass was broken, and a prosecution presumably for assault followed, the suit ending, 'after the King came in,' in a judgement against her. Widowed in the royal cause, impoverished, far from her own relatives, perhaps estranged from them, in arrears, moreover, for her chamber which she apparently rented from the Warden of Emmanuel College, she was unable to pay the fine of £10 imposed on her; the alternative was imprisonment, to which she had to submit for four years. Was that vulgar assault a sign of a gradual degradation, brought about by misfortune, above which she had not the spirit to rise, but which she tried to forget in intemperance? Or had sorrow rendered her a prey to melancholia? Was she subject to hallucinations? Upon the restoration the trials of the regicides not only must have stirred men's memories as to the details of the proceedings against Charles I., but also may have spread a fuller publicity of the

incidents in Westminster Hall. Did the fuller information about the tragedy of January 1649 reach her in imprisonment, and did she, dwelling on its injustices with a confused mind, imagine herself an indignant spectator on the scenes, and assimilate to herself the conduct of Lady Fairfax, exaggerating the details to suit her own principles as a devoted royalist? Or was she sunk so low that she had become a conscious humbug, and so determined to make a bold bid for charity and the favour of the Royal Martyr's son?

In 1665 she was out of prison, though apparently not at full liberty, the fine and her debts still remaining unpaid. Meanwhile she has become acquainted with a Dr. Levett (probably the John Levett who entered Emmanuel in 1626). He lodged on the same floor as Mistress Delille, though whether she now inhabited the tenement for which she still owed rent to the Warden is not clear. She must have been far from young, yet she had some charm, personal or intellectual, for the worthy Doctor. She told to him a wild tale of her sufferings for loyalty with conviction and assurance; nay more, she showed scars to him in proof thereof. His heart was touched. What could he do for her? With Sancroft, Master of Emmanuel, and now Dean of St. Paul's, he had a friendship, probably dating from college days. Doubtless it was he that advised the widow to write to the Dean, who perhaps could speak a word for her in high quarters. Her first letter to Sancroft is missing. The remaining three, ill-spelt and ill-expressed, but not so ill written, are given below from the originals in the British Museum. (Harl. Ms. 3784. ff. 270-274.)

Sir,

In all humilytie doe returne yo<sup>w</sup> most humble thanks for yo<sup>r</sup> ciuil apcantage of my abrupt lyns vnworthie of the trensparant of yo<sup>r</sup> eyes but for yo<sup>r</sup> account of me requyrd of the Mesenger that presented yo<sup>w</sup> with my vnpolished lyns he is all together a stranger vnto me farther then the discharge of this Employment as in my letter I gave yo<sup>r</sup> honred and grave wosome account of. I am a stranger Scots by decent & my husband frenche, but heir from my Infancie that I am stranger in my natie land, my fathir being secretarie to quene Ann & is decent of subiats and seruants in places of ho<sup>r</sup> to his Ma<sup>ties</sup> predisours my husband kild in his serice my self maide the obiact of pitie for loyaltie be burned & imprisoned as yo<sup>r</sup> dier friend Doctor

Leuett can tell but if I may humble beg my sutt to yo<sup>r</sup> wosome & ho<sup>r</sup> may be concealed he lodge on the same flore with me & knos not my Indigence but lements my suffrings so hon<sup>l</sup> he is to conscaue better of me then I can meritte & if yo<sup>w</sup> ples to ask of me at him concealing my preshumtione in my sutt to yo<sup>w</sup> he will giue that charucture of me I darre not clame as merett but in submishion to his plesheure, I am aledgt dettor most injustly as the enclosed will make apare which I humble beg yo<sup>w</sup> to seale vpp & returne agane & if yo<sup>w</sup> be pleased to speke of me giue me not out for sir yo<sup>r</sup> humble suplicant but for one distresed lady that yo<sup>w</sup> haue heird to be heir want of ten<sup>lb</sup> pound hes kigd me heir to superceade all actions that my aduarsare hes in malice layd vpon me & if it stood with yo<sup>r</sup> ho<sup>r</sup> conuenincie to giue the Doctor a visit taking no notice of me he will treuly tell his knoledge of me whos prayers yo<sup>w</sup> shall euer oblidge as

yo<sup>r</sup> euer deuotd

seruant

AA. DELYLLE.

if I could be maide a catholike I could  
not be trublisome.

Sir I haue for yo<sup>r</sup> better asshurance my casce stated for truthe and the copi of my letter to his Mai<sup>tie</sup> & to yo<sup>r</sup> hon<sup>ble</sup> self I leue the sucis of my necesitate & humble request whom the want of friends & mony make miserable.

(Address):—Theise For the honorable and the most Reverend Dean of Paulls humble present.

Sir

I am once more constraned to giue you this truble hoping your goodness is such as to pardon me for it by resone I am so put to it now for to superceade my actions that I may mak my adresse to the king & the chancloure to try for my libertie & not longer perish heir for I haue left my self nothing to subsist but hes to menten my self soold & ingadgd & hes no mor left that will procure six pence & if he doe not superceade muday the begining of the term heir I may ly & if a peny would doe it I haue it not at present nor can command my frend that does some what for me being sent upon busines for the King that I am forgot till his returne & I kno not when it I did sir I think

## The Daughter of Anne

send the copi of my cace to yo<sup>w</sup> with the other paper & if yo<sup>w</sup> haue it not it is miscaried by the mesenger I haue no more to say but in all humilite be yo<sup>r</sup> (*sic*) and pray for yo<sup>r</sup> many helthful days and craue the protection of yo<sup>r</sup> fauore to subscrib as becometh

yo<sup>r</sup> most hubl and devoted seruant

AA. DELYLLE.

(Adress) :—For the honred & mos Reuered  
Dean of Paulls humble present.

Sir

Yow may ples to conscaue me to be a very ingrate persone not haueng returned my thanks for yo<sup>r</sup> ciuilytie to me sence my wnableities denys to performe a deeper dett but this delay was not by neglect of my obledgd deuty, but till I hadd superceade my actions & haue a certificate to make appare the truth which I haue heir enclosed for yo<sup>r</sup> satisfaction & if I could haue compasd mony I might haue ben thus redy a weeke ago this litill paper stands me in 3<sup>lb</sup> 10<sup>s</sup>. of which I had 20<sup>s</sup>. of yo<sup>w</sup> sir for the which I returne yow humble thanks & wishes yo<sup>r</sup> store may be lyke the oyle in the crus & the male in the barrell yo<sup>w</sup> still taking & it euer encresing but now for my executione if I can not procure 6<sup>lb</sup> heir I am lyk to stay and the seale day is on munday and ther will be no more but on on Wensday. I humble beg pardon for this trespas and humble entret yo<sup>r</sup> ansuer by yo<sup>r</sup> seruant & yow sall oblidge the prayers of

the fleell tyme

yo<sup>r</sup> deuot

is now precious.

seruant

AA. DELYLLE.

(Adress) :—Thesse

For the reuerend and much honred the Deane of  
Paulls present.

What Sancroft really thought of the case is not clear, beyond the fact that he pitied the poor lady, for she thanked him for sending her money. Unfortunately the above with the two letters (Harl. Ms. 3784. ff. 271 and 287) presently to be quoted, is all of the correspondence on her matters now obtainable. She mentioned a letter to the King, which she had either sent before writing to the Dean, or proposed to send, upon the latter's approving of the copy enclosed to him. If Charles II. ever

received it, or any sort of petition from her, it is not discoverable among the State Papers of his reign. The probability is that Sancroft, only half believing her story, cautioned her against petitioning. He certainly was not satisfied as to her claims on the royal assistance, or perhaps on his own further help. He wrote to Dr. Levett for more information. That impressionable Doctor's answer reads like the outline of some modern sentimental Cavalier romance.

Noble S<sup>r</sup>.

You are the first I intend to waite upon when my horse is saddled, w<sup>ch</sup> may be (I thanke God) when I will, but some opportunity makes me affect a restraint at present. The Lady Delile you mention is my next Neighbour, & w<sup>th</sup> me above any man (I may say all in our blessed Colledge) acquainted, so that (if you dare credite the relator) you may expect a just relation of all you desire concerning her. She is a Scot by birth of a very worthy (if not noble family, especially by the mother side); many of her Ancestors have beene in place of great trust to the kings of Scotland, & her father (if I mistake not our Queene Anne her secretary). Her Husband was slaine in our late Kings warres, & for him. The Lady herselfe for abilitye scarce to be paralld by any of her sex: her engagem<sup>t</sup> here is ten pounds at the most, & that occasioned by her breaking of a glasse full of wine in the face of a woman for treason (had it not beene in the time of Oliver) & the Judgm<sup>t</sup> for the ten pounds was procured ag<sup>st</sup> her since our king came in & although she was sued by a false name she hath beene a prisoner 4 yeares only for this, & now for chamber rent, & her out goings I heare that 150<sup>li</sup> is demanded by our Warden; she is altogether miserable as to her fortune, if her friends faile her, she perishes. She hath two brands upon her, that of her shoulder I have seene, (a handfull broad) she received them from Col. Huson at the first tryall of our late king in open court for saying (upon their reading of his accusation) that it was not his subjects, but traytors and rebels that made it; His Maiesty then seeing her [flesh]<sup>1</sup> smoake, & her haire all of a fire for him by their hot irons, much comiserated her, & wished that he had beene able to have requited her; now his (God be blessed) can doe it, & it's an act (if not of justice) of great mercy that it shold be done, & whosoever shall be instrumentall in it will purchase to himself

<sup>1</sup> Crossed out in the original.

## The Daughter of Anne

a good report. S<sup>r</sup> when I have the happines to waite upon you I shall give you a fuller character of this Lady. In the interim & ever I am

y<sup>r</sup> most affectionate & humble servant

JO. LEVET.

18 May —65.

(Address):—For the Reverend my most  
worthily Honord Friend  
Dr. Sancroft Dean of St. Pauls.

The Dean, after receiving this extraordinary story, seems to have written to rebuke his friend's credulity, judging by the tone of Dr. Levett's next letter.

Noble S<sup>r</sup>.

Take my letter to you concerning the Lady Delye, (pardoning my naturall credulity) for an oracle. If Col. Gray (L<sup>d</sup>. Gray of Warke his Brother, & now maior of his Ma<sup>tys</sup> Regim<sup>t</sup> of Foote) Mr. Andrew Cok (one of his Ma<sup>tys</sup> Queeries) Mr. Robinson, the Duke of Yorks Chirurgion (who cured her brands) cum multis aliis confirme the same for a truth & especially if the Earle of Denby averre it who kissed her wounds, & condemned the then basnes of the L<sup>ds</sup>, that she shold be the only assertor of Loyalty, besides that weekes newes booke expressing in generall the barbarous usage of a lady speaking for the king. S<sup>r</sup>, I am taking horse, let it excuse my defects.

I am ever

yo<sup>r</sup> most affectionate & humble servant

JO : LEVET.

17 June —65.

(Address):—For the Reverend my most honr'd  
Friend Dr. Sancroft Deane  
of St. Pauls these.

Did Dr. Sancroft refer to any of the persons named? or did he take the trouble to inspect 'that weekes newes book'? The modern student of history will look in vain in the contemporary newspapers and accounts of the trial of King Charles I. for mention of the branding of any woman in his presence. On the charge of High Treason being brought against the King 'on behalf of the People of England' when

Lady Fairfax cried out 'it is a lie, not half the people of England,' she was not the only lady in the gallery. Sir Purbeck Temple, a witness in the trial of Colonel Axtel, said that he heard both Lady Fairfax and his own sister, Mrs. Nelson, make the interruption; but he spoke of no other woman up there with them, as 'assertor of loyalty' or otherwise. The only 'barbarous usage of a lady' known at the trials of the regicides was that of Colonel Axtel's order to the soldiers on guard in Westminster Hall to shoot into the gallery if Lady Fairfax and Mrs. Nelson were not quiet, and the consequent actual presenting of the muzzles of their muskets up to the gallery, according to an eye-witness, Griffith Bodurdoc, who remarked, 'My Lord, by this we were very hush.' That Mrs. Delille may have been branded, whether for loyalty to the King, or for some other offence, by the Parliamentary authorities on some other occasion, is possible. But without further evidence than her own words, the story which she gave to Dr. Levett as to how she came by the scars can only be regarded as fiction. That she, hallucinated and self-deceived, believed her own fabrication is quite possible also; else she must have perceived that the bold and wild tale, so easily refutable, would unmask her as a hypocrite and defeat her very object in appealing to Sancroft for help.

But her account of her parentage on her father's side was not incredible; perhaps it was on this account that the Dean of St. Paul's sent to her some alleviation of her penury. She signed her letters 'Aa. Delylle'; unless any one can produce another claimant, there is no reason to doubt that she was Anna, the 'youngest dochter' of William Fowler, mentioned by him in his will. But how came she to such an almost degraded state? Were her tutors faithful? To judge by her letters, they do not seem to have given her a particularly good education. Her assertion that she was in England, from her infancy, and a stranger to her native land, suggests that she may have been always out of touch with her own family. Had Mr. Delille been some young French soldier of fortune, who failed to win the approval of her guardians? And did she by an unwise marriage forfeit her little wealth to her brother Lodowick and was he later not disposed to help her? Or was he at the time of her need already dead? Of her younger years she herself tells us nothing sufficient to enlighten the obscurity from which she emerged for a brief while in 1665, and after her

## 32 Daughter of Anne of Denmark's Secretary

appeal to Sancroft at that date, she vanished into a like obscurity.

Authorities: *Works of William Fowler* (Scottish Text Society); *New Scott. Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, vol. ii. p. 112 (revised edition); *An Answer to the Calumnious Letter*, etc. 1581; *State Papers, Scotland*; *Register of the Great Seal of Scotland, 1660-1668*, p. 50; *Register of Privy Council of Scotland*, second series, vol. iv. p. 520; Marquis of Salisbury's MSS. (*Hist. MSS. Commissioners' Report*), vol. xii. p. 547; British Museum, Add. MSS. 27484, 38139; Harl. MS. 642; Somerset House, *P.C.C. Register*, 73 Capel; Lodge, *Illustrations of British History*, vol. iii.; E. T. Bradley, *Life of Arabella Stuart*; 'Trial of Daniel Axtell' in *State Trials*, vol. v. pp. 1146 *seq.* John Levett is mentioned in the *Book of Matriculations and Degrees in the University of Cambridge, 1544-1659*.

E. MARGARET THOMPSON.



## The Western Highlands in the Eighteenth Century

**I**N the muniment room at Dunvegan, the seat of MacLeod of MacLeod in Skye, are preserved a great number of documents which throw much light on the conditions prevailing in the Highlands during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

‘One of the first objects of an enquirer who wishes to form a correct idea of the state of a community at a given time, must be to ascertain of how many persons that community then consisted,’ says Macaulay.<sup>1</sup>

In the Highlands this is not easy, for no census was there taken till 1851. In the following estimate I have confined my attention to Skye, Harris and Glenelg, where the MacLeod estates were situated, but, probably, the same causes which increased or decreased population were equally at work all over the Highlands.

In early times, as far as I know, there is no evidence of what the population was. The force which a clan could put into the field at any given time gives no clue to the population living on its Chief’s estate, for that was more a question of arms than of men. It is not till 1772 that we find any definite statements. There is a report of that date on Harris, preserved at Dunvegan, which gives its population at 1,993, and in the same year Pennant fixes the population of Glenelg at 700, and that of Skye at from 12,000 to 13,000, but he says that about 1750 it may have been 15,000. This drop is probably accounted for by some emigration which took place about 1769, the first reference I find to emigration in any of the papers.

There are several letters from MacLeod’s factor on this subject. He says that Lord MacDonald’s tacksmen had formed a sort of company to purchase 100,000 acres of land in South Carolina, and that they proposed to emigrate in a body, taking a certain number of farm servants with them. He fears that the same

<sup>1</sup> *History*, vol. i. chap. 3.

thing may happen on MacLeod's Estate. Some few of MacLeod's tenants did emigrate, and all Lord MacDonald's went, and he had to import tenants from other parts of Scotland. As these tacksmen took a good many of their farm servants with them, this led to a considerable drop in the population.

Apart from this there is no reason to suppose that in earlier days the population was greater than it was about 1770. It was, I think, probably smaller. During the sixteenth century Clan Feuds had raged with frightful violence, specially towards its close. About 1570 the terrible massacre at Eigg had taken place; a little later a large force of Clan Ranald MacDonald's had landed in Skye to exact vengeance for this cruel deed; they surprised a number of the MacLeods in Church, and slaughtered the congregation, but were themselves almost entirely destroyed at the battle of 'the destruction of the wall.' About 1597 a feud broke out between the MacDonalds and MacLeods which brought both clans to the verge of ruin. After 1609, when the Statutes of Iona were agreed to by all the great Western Chiefs, there was not much fighting between the clans, but e'er long commenced a series of wars of another kind, though scarcely less devastating. The lives of many Highlanders must have been lost in the campaigns of Montrose; a gallant Highland army was destroyed at Worcester, the MacLeods alone losing nearly 1,000 men. It is difficult to estimate how many Highlanders were slain under Dundee, in the rising of 1715, and during the '45, though the number must have been very great. But it was not only the ravages of warfare which kept the numbers down. Smallpox was frightfully common; I find many references to it in the papers at Dunvegan, and in one year it swept away the whole population of St. Kilda except three men,—the infection having been brought on a ship which was wrecked there,—and outbreaks of the disease, hardly less destructive, occurred in other places.

For these reasons I am convinced that the estimates which are often formed of a teeming population in our Glens in ancient days are much exaggerated.

In the first half of the nineteenth century the population increased by leaps and bounds. The Duke of Argyle says in his book *Scotland as It Was and Is*, that people whose food consists mainly of potatoes are usually very prolific, and, if this is the case, it may account for the great increase in population, both in Ireland and in the Highlands.

From some figures in a Gazetteer of Scotland published in 1845, and from a memorandum in the late MacLeod's handwriting written about 1846, which gives approximately the population on different estates in the Highlands, as well as from the numbers Pennant gives, I have constructed the following table:

	1772.	1801.	1831.	1845.	1911.
Skye - -	13,000	13,728	22,796	29,500	13,319
Harris - -	1,993	2,996	3,900	8,500 <sup>1</sup>	4,974
Glenelg - -	700	2,834	2,874	1,800	481

I cannot account for the figures in Glenelg, but imagine that Pennant put the numbers too low in 1772, and that there was emigration between 1831 and 1845.

The rise between 1801 and 1831 took place in spite of the fact that in 1811 a great many tacksmen emigrated, taking some of their farm labourers with them. But there was no serious emigration till after the potato famine, when it became necessary that more than half the people should seek a livelihood in other lands. This emigration accounts for the great drop between 1845 and 1911.

What can be ascertained concerning the people themselves and the conditions under which they lived is of even greater interest than their numbers.

It is a remarkable fact that in the Western Highlands there were no small lairds, no class corresponding to the class of yeomen, which was then so numerous in England. The whole of the country was divided amongst a very few great families. The Earl of Sutherland owned nearly one million acres of land; the Earl of Argyle, the different branches of the MacKenzies, the MacDonalds of Slaitt and Clan Ranald, the MacLeans, the MacLeods all owned vast tracts of land. The estates of less powerful chiefs such as the MacKinnons and MacNeils covered large areas.

Up to 1745 these great chiefs still possessed their heritable jurisdictions, and practically governed the people on their estates. I find several instances which shew that this was the case, in letters from Sir Alexander MacDonald. In 1743 he writes that a man from the MacLeod Country had come over into his country in order to court a girl, that a quarrel had arisen between the MacLeod and a MacDonald rival, and that the

<sup>1</sup>This is probably over estimated.

former had cut off the ears of the latter. Sir Alexander asks MacLeod to punish the delinquent. In another dated March 1744 Sir Alexander tells how there has been 'a small invasion from Knoydart,' how three cows had been carried off, and describes the steps he is taking to punish the guilty parties. These would now be matters for the police; they were then attended to by the chiefs. And they also dealt with far more serious cases, and even possessed the power of inflicting the penalty of death. There is a hill near Dunvegan which is called the 'Hill of the gallows,' for here in old days criminals were hanged. A tradition says that the last occasion on which this power was exercised was in 1728. In that year a murderer escaped to the MacDonald country, was there arrested, brought back, and hanged on the hill of the gallows at Dunvegan.

To us, living in the twentieth century, it seems almost inconceivable that our forefathers not only possessed but exercised such powers less than two hundred years ago, but it is the undoubted fact that they did. Not only did the Highland chiefs possess them, but all the great landowners in Scotland. In 1747 the Heritable Jurisdictions Act was passed. In the *Scots Magazine* for that year the provisions of the Act are given. All these jurisdictions were taken away. There was a provision that those who held them should receive compensation, and there is in the same volume a long list of those who applied for compensation, and of the sums claimed which amounted to over £580,000.

I find none of the West Highland landlords in the list except the Duke of Argyle who claimed £25,000, MacKintosh who claimed £5,000, and MacNeil of Colonsay who claimed £1,200. I do not know the reason for this.

The Administration of Justice was put into the hands of Sheriff substitutes, who were then appointed all over Scotland. What we should call local Government was exercised by the Justices of the Peace. From some minutes of a meeting held at Sconser in 1788, we get some idea of what matters they dealt with, and the methods they employed. Attendance at the meetings was compulsory, and absentees were fined; they were the Highway authority for Skye; they made provisions for the hiring of servants, and fixed the wages which were to be paid—no one was allowed to pay more than the amount fixed. They made rules about such things as the maintenance of March dykes, the pounding of strayed sheep and cattle, the

certificates of beggars, the liability of people keeping dangerous beasts for any damage, the use of properly stamped weights and measures. There are provisions that no man shall be intoxicated at a funeral, or attend without an invitation, and that no one shall leave Skye during harvest time without the leave of two Justices of the Peace. This leave the Justices are not to give until after they have tried to get the applicant work in the island.

In theory the changes made by the Act of 1747 were very great. In practice they were probably small. The same people, who had previously acted under the authority of the chief, were now Justices of the Peace acting under the authority of the king, and they probably carried out their duties in much the same way as before.

Up to the end of the seventeenth century these powerful chiefs had lived at home. Each dwelt in his castle. Each had in his train a piper, probably many pipers, a harper, a bard, and a fool (who was possibly the cleverest man in his clan), beside many other retainers. They kept open house for their kinsmen, their clans and their friends. To them all disputes and differences were brought, and their decision was final. To quote Macaulay's words, 'Within the four seas and less than six hundred miles of London were many miniature courts, in each of which a petty prince, attended by guards, by armour bearers, by musicians, by an hereditary orator, by an hereditary poet laureate, kept a rude state, dispensed a rude justice, waged wars, and concluded treaties.' Nor, he goes on to say, had ignorance of what can be learned from books and of the fine arts kept them from managing their affairs with much skill and shrewdness. 'It is probable that, in the Highland Councils, men, who would not have been qualified for the duty of parish clerks, sometimes argued questions of peace and war, of tribute and homage, with an ability worthy of Halifax or Carmarthen, and that, at the Highland banquets, minstrels who did not know their letters, sometimes poured forth rhapsodies in which a discerning critic might have found passages such as would have reminded him of the tenderness of Otway or of the vigour of Dryden.'<sup>1</sup>

After the passing of the Jurisdictions Act these all-powerful chiefs became no more than the owners of large estates, and, as the result of their loyalty to the Stuarts, some of them lost their estates altogether.

<sup>1</sup> *History*, vol. ii. p. 32.

Many Highland properties were confiscated on account of the share their owners had taken in the '45, but most of these were restored to them, or to their descendants, before very many years had elapsed. Clan Ranald recovered his estate about 1770. In his attainder he had been called Donald MacDonald, whereas his real name was Ranald, and his attainder was thus void. General Fraser received a grant of the Lovat Estates in 1774. Lochiel recovered his in 1784 under the general act of amnesty.

MacLeod who had taken no part in the rising sold Harris in 1779, and also sold large tracts of land in Skye before the end of the century. This land in Skye was sold in comparatively small parcels, so a class of small lairds came into existence there, and remains to the present day.

After the year 1760 many of the chiefs were absentees. Some were in Parliament and forced to go to London every year to attend to their parliamentary duties. Others preferred to live in the south of Scotland.

I do not know what the heads of other clans did, but it is certain that, throughout the whole of the eighteenth century, the MacLeods of Dunvegan were only occasionally at home.

This was bad for the country. There are many letters at Dunvegan in which the writers trace the evils from which the people were suffering to the absence of the chiefs from home, and it was disastrous in its results to the chiefs themselves, and brought about the ruin of many Highland families.

In the south rents had already risen to a high level, but the value of land in the Highlands, owing to their remoteness and to many other causes, was still low, and when a great Highland landlord went to Edinburgh or London, and lived with men of his own social position who possessed much larger incomes than himself, he was bound to get into financial difficulties. He too often tried to mend matters by screwing up his rents, and his people felt much aggrieved to find that the chief, to whom they were so devoted, had become an oppressor, whose one thought seemed to be how much he could get out of his people to spend on his own selfish gratification.

Many letters in the muniment room at Dunvegan prove how strong this feeling was, more so perhaps amongst the tacksmen than amongst the humbler classes. Yet it is wonderful how warm, in spite of all this, the feeling, even of the tacksmen, was towards their chief. This is well illustrated by a document

dated September 16th, 1777. In that year the financial condition of the MacLeod family was well nigh desperate, and the tenants of the estate came forward and signed the document from which I give extracts

‘ We, the undersigned tacksmen, tenants and possessors on the estate of Norman MacLeod of MacLeod, Esq, wishing to shew our attachment to the family, and our desire to contribute, as far as our ability will admit, towards the support of their interest, and preservation of their estate, do hereby, in the hope that it may enable MacLeod and his Trustees to re-establish his affairs, and preserve the ancient possessions of the family, bind ourselves and successors for the space of three years to pay an additional rent of one shilling and sixpence in the pound of the rent now payable, on condition that, as our principal motive for becoming under this voluntary burden is our attachment to the present MacLeod, to the standing of the family, and our desire of their estate being preserved entire, that we shall be freed therefrom if we should have the misfortune to lose him by death, or if any part of the estate should be sold within the above-mentioned time.’ Here follow the names of thirty-six tenants.

Such an instance of the affection which the tenants on an estate felt for their landlord shews how strong clan feeling then was.

Taking the place of the small lairds and of yeomen in England were the gentlemen tacksmen on the estate. These were all cadets of the chief’s family, more or less nearly related to him. Out of the thirty-six who signed the document above given, nineteen were MacLeods, and five others were MacCaskills or MacSweyns, which were both minor septs of the clan. To them was entrusted the government of the people in their own districts.

The author of a report which was rendered to the British Fishery Society about the state of affairs at Stein towards the end of the eighteenth century says that the tacksmen had been ‘ most tyrannical and cruel in dealing with their people.’ This may have been true in isolated cases, but I do not believe that it was generally true. When in 1772 and 1811 some of the tacksmen proposed to emigrate and take their people with them, it seems incredible that people who had been so cruelly treated should be willing to accompany their tyrants when they went away. They certainly were willing to do so, and, in a good many cases, they actually did so.

In 1708 these gentlemen tacksmen paid rents for their farms varying from 200 to 400 marks a year.

Besides these gentlemen tacksmen were a number of men holding smaller farms, which paid from 80 to 180 marks a year; in a few cases they paid as little as 40 marks. Roughly speaking the mark would probably be worth as much as a pound sterling is at the present time.

The whole estate was let to tacksmen, and the masses of the people lived under the tacksmen and were their servants. Pennant says that the tenant of a farm which paid £50 in rent would have twenty farm servants employed on the land. He draws a pitiable description of the condition of these poor people, but, as he happened to visit Skye in a very bad year, I think the picture he draws must be coloured in unduly sombre hues, and this probably is the case with his whole description of the Island of Skye.

I do not find in any of the old rentals any trace of crofters' holding under the laird until 1754, when a few were given holdings. Some of the holdings were no doubt small, but the tenants all ranked as tacksmen, not as crofters. In the rental of 1683 there were 179 tenants on the Skye Estate and 59 in Harris. We know that the population of Harris a hundred years later was just under 2,000. Had the land been in the hands of the people, we should find 400 tenants instead of 59. We may put the population of the Skye Estates at 6,000, and, had the land been in the hands of the people, the tenants would have numbered something over 1,000 instead of 179.

But, though the humbler classes were not holders of land under the laird, though the standard of comfort was very low, and though the wages then paid for labour strike us as ludicrously insufficient, I believe that they were not badly off, and not discontented with their lot.

Much of the land was under cultivation, dairying operations were carried on on a large scale, and the kelp industry was beginning to be a source of revenue to the landowners, and to give employment to the humbler classes. Early in the eighteenth century it had been discovered that the seaweed which grew on the rocks, and to a still greater extent the floating ware cast up by the sea, were rich in alkalis and iodine. To extract these the weed was burnt, and sent south (generally to Liverpool), to be further treated and refined. As early as 1722 kelp was being made in the Orkneys, and the industry began in



1735 in North Uist and in 1748 in Harris. Here the results were very soon seen in the increased revenue derived from the Island. In 1744 Harris was worth £356, in 1754 it had risen to £544 and in 1769 to £806. In Glenelg, where there was no kelp, values rose at the same time, but not to the same extent. The value of Glenelg in 1744 was £373, in 1754 £407, in 1769 £679.

The kelp industry rapidly spread to the other outer islands, and to Skye where, however, there was less floating seaweed, and consequently the industry was never so important.

It not only benefited the landlords, but it gave employment to the people. The cost of making the kelp was something like £3 os. od. a ton and all of this went in wages to the people.

Early in the century wages were very low. A gardener and a gamekeeper each received about £5 a year, a master mason received about £10 a year, a blacksmith's labourer received 1s. a week, a farm labourer may have been paid even less, but the cost of living was extremely low. The board, lodging and attendance of Lady Grange in 1745 only cost £2 10s. od. a year, a wedder cost one shilling and eightpence, a cow seventeen to eighteen shillings, butter a penny a pound, cheese a halfpenny, meal sevenpence a stone. Probably the people were allowed by the tacksmen to cultivate a piece of land, and, though they earned very little in money, they were given some meal, and some wool from which they could spin and weave their clothes. They had peat for the cutting, they could catch fish in the sea. I am under the impression that a good deal of mutton was consumed, and I think that they got a share of the Mairts which were salted for use in the winter, and of the milk which was produced by the cows. I am inclined to think that they owned cows which were allowed to graze with the tacksman's herds.

They had no luxuries and few comforts, but they had the necessaries of life. In bad years, such as 1717 or 1772, they suffered terribly, and were reduced to picking up shell fish on the shores, and mixing blood drawn from living cattle with their oatmeal bannocks. But even then the laird was not unmindful of their sufferings. I find many references to his chartering ships to bring food to the country when the crops had failed at home. There was no poor law in Scotland until 1845, but I find in the estate accounts regular entries of 'pensions' being paid to poor persons who would otherwise have been destitute; and I believe that on most estates the duty of looking after the poor was thoroughly realised. I find also that many payments

were made to doctors and nurses, from which it would seem that the medical needs of the people were not lost sight of.

As time went on the cost of living rose but wages rose also. About 1775, the smith's labourer received 4s. 6d. a week, a farm labourer 4s. a week, if living in the house £2 a year and four pairs of shoes, a skilled carpenter £16 18s. od. a year. The wages of common women servants living in the house were 8s. a year and two pairs of shoes, of dairy women 15s. a year and three pairs of shoes. The shoes were valued at 2s. 6d. a pair. These later wages were fixed by a meeting of the Magistrates held in 1788.

In 1696 and 1708 education acts had been passed, and from the very beginning of the eighteenth century I find in the accounts payments to schoolmasters. The estate contributed about £5 a year towards the salary of each master, and every tacksman was bound under the conditions of his lease to make a certain payment for the same purpose. There were, I think, about six or seven schools on the Skye Estate, two in Harris, and certainly one in Glenelg. It would be interesting to know what language was being taught in these schools. Gaelic was undoubtedly the language of the people. In the report on Harris so often referred to, it is expressly stated that, out of the 1,993 inhabitants, only one hundred could speak English. The tacksmen no doubt spoke both Gaelic and English. I have no means of knowing whether the chiefs spoke Gaelic. They were certainly educated in the south. Sir A. MacDonald says in a letter written in 1744 that his son, Jamie 'is getting more Gallick at Kingsbourn than tongue can tell.' I suppose that up to 1747 the kilt was universally worn. It was then forbidden by law.

Turning to matters of religion I imagine that in early days the people followed their chiefs in these as in other matters. On the estates of Lord Lovat and Clan Ranald, the people are still Roman Catholic because their chiefs did not accept the Reformation. I incline to think that, during the first half of the seventeenth century, the Skye chiefs were Episcopalians, and that Ian Breac the sixteenth Chief of MacLeod, who succeeded in 1664, became a Presbyterian. At all events from the late seventeenth century onward the people on the ancient MacLeod Estates have been Presbyterians. From what Pennant and Boswell say of the clergy I gather that they were able and cultivated men. Certainly the Mr. McQueen mentioned by Boswell was.

In early days and during the whole of the eighteenth century much of the land was under cultivation. The climate and soil of the Western Isles are not really suitable for agricultural operations, but it was probably very difficult to import grain at that time. In some of the letters I find references which shew that this was the case. One letter describes the great difficulty of getting a ship to carry the corn, another says how badly the grain in a ship had been injured by salt water, a third relates the capture of a vessel laden with meal for use in Skye, by a French privateer.

Thus it was absolutely necessary to grow what corn was required at home. On much land now under heather are lazybeds, which shew that this land was once cultivated, but, on the other hand, some of the land now cultivated was then probably undrained marshland, lying as it does at a low level generally close to the sea, or on the banks of rivers. I gather from the quantity of meal which was paid as rent in lieu of money that Waternish and Minginish were the granaries of Skye.

The crops grown were beare, the *Hordeum vulgare* which is still grown in the Long Island, oats, a little rye, some flax from which a coarse linen was woven, and some linseed. The Harris report mentions that the home-grown seed was very bad, and says the shipwreck of an American vessel on the coast, which was laden with linseed, had enormously improved the crops. Clan Ranald introduced the potato in South Uist in 1743. At first the people would not look at it; 'You made us plant these worthless things,' they said, 'but Holy Virgin, will you make us eat them.' But these 'worthless things' were destined to become the staff of life in the Highlands. I find no reference to the potato in any of the eighteenth century letters at Dunvegan. Considering that from the point of view of the masses of the people its introduction was probably the most important event in the century, this omission is remarkable.

The methods of cultivation employed in the eighteenth century were somewhat primitive. The plough in use is thus described in an account of Harris dated 1772. 'Its whole length is but four feet seven inches, it is drawn by four horses abreast, it has one handle by which it is directed. The mould board is fastened with two leather thongs, and the soke and coulter are bound together at the point by a ring of iron.'

'Another instrument is also used called a ristle. It is only two feet long and is drawn by one horse. It has no soke, but

has a sharp crooked coulter which is drawn through the soil near ten inches deep. The use of it is to be drawn before the plough in order to cut the long twisted roots of a number of plants with which the sandy soil of Harris is infested, which are powerful enough to abstract the progress of so weak a plough as that which is commonly used.' Much of the cultivation was done with the 'caschrom,' the old kind of spade then in use.

Between 1732 and 1735 I find that mills were constructed at seven places on the Estate, and in all subsequent rentals, receipts from these mills appear. In the conditions of leases of 1769 there is a clause under which tenants were bound to grind their corn at the laird's mill, and if, for any reason, they chose to grind corn in their own querns, they were bound to pay their multure all the same. These new mills were probably worked by water power.

Before 1730 I assume that the corn was ground by hand-mills or querns. Pennant says it was a very laborious process and that it took two women four hours to grind a bushel of corn. He also describes a method of burning the corn which was called the 'graddan,' which takes the place of thrashing. 'This is performed in two ways, first by cutting off the ears and drying them in a kiln, then setting fire to them on a floor and picking out the grain, by this operation rendered as black as coal. The second method is more expeditious but very wasteful, as it destroys both thatch and manure. In this the whole sheaf is burnt without cutting off the heads.'

There were some sheep in the country. Probably the breed was similar to that now in St. Kilda, and it may be doubted if a sheep weighed more than 25 lbs. The price of a sheep remained during the first quarter of the century one shilling and eightpence, later it rose to two shillings and threepence, at which price mutton is little more than a penny a pound.

Plaid tartan and cloth are frequently referred to but the word wool is never used; probably neither sheep nor wool were exported in any quantities.

In 1772, however, some coarse woollen yarn and blanketing were exported from Harris. I should think that plenty of cloth was produced in the country to supply the local needs of the people by hand spinning and hand weaving. Pennant gives an account of the 'laughagh,' or 'walking the cloth.' Twelve or fourteen women sit down on each side of a long board, ribbed lengthways, putting the cloth upon it. First they work it

backwards and forwards with their hands and they then use their feet, singing all the time with such fury that you might imagine a troop of female demoniacs to have been assembled. This did the fulling of the cloth, a process which cleanses it from oil and grease.

There were more horses in the country than now. A little earlier we hear of droves of semi-wild horses wandering about the country, and the method of cultivation above described involved the use of a good many horses. These were probably rather ponies than horses, of a strong and serviceable breed.

The main wealth of the country lay in black cattle, of which there were large numbers. One result of this was that when a murrain occurred amongst the cattle, as happened in 1717 and 1772, the results were disastrous. There are a number of letters in the latter year which give an appalling description of the state of affairs. Every year a large drove was sent south for sale at Falkirk and other markets. The landlord received the money and settled with his tenants, deducting the rent due and charges for sending the drove.

In the eighteenth century the farm houses and farm buildings all belonged to the tenants. Macaulay gives an appalling description of the house of a Highland gentleman, and indeed of the Highland gentleman himself. This picture is probably painted in too dark colours, but the fact that, in the conditions of 1769, a rule is inserted that all new houses should be of stone and lime and no turf, implies that the old houses left much to be desired. It was not unnatural that it should be so. For centuries the raid of a hostile clan might reduce all the houses in the country to ashes, and it had been worth no man's while to build a house which could not be restored by the labour of a few days; and long after this danger had passed, men thought that what had been good enough for their fathers was good enough for them.

But not all the houses of the tacksmen were as bad as this. Johnson visited Talisker, the home of one of those on the MacLeod Estate, and writes thus, 'We spent two days at Talisker very happily, both by the pleasantness of the place, and the elegance of our reception.' He would not have written thus had he been entertained in a hovel. At Ullinish also, on a tacksman's house still standing, is an inscription saying it was built in 1770. The humbler classes no doubt lived in black huts, some of which may still be seen in the Highlands.

There were roads in the country, some of which can still be traced. I doubt whether there were any bridges, and whether the roads were much more than tracks across the moors. Every able-bodied man was bound to give six days' labour every year on the roads. At the meeting of Magistrates in 1788 already referred to, each gentleman tacksman was to furnish a list of all such within his bounds, but it was provided that in future labour should be commuted for two shillings and sixpence a head, and that tacksmen should pay twopence in the pound on their rent in lieu of their personal attendance. A committee was appointed to obtain the services of a contractor to carry out the work on the roads. This was probably the first germ of the system of rates in the Highlands. Poor rates, school rates, County Assessments were all unknown. Local Government was certainly cheap in those days, and I believe that it was also effective.

Communication with the outside world was very slow and very difficult. In the early years of the century there was no post office in Skye, neither were there any mails. There was an official at Dunvegan called 'MacLeod's post.' It was his duty to take 'expresses' to any place to which he was sent. He received a regular wage of fifteen shillings a year, and fifteen shillings for a journey to Edinburgh. This seems very little, but it was equivalent to £9 in our own days. As early as 1742 I find MacLeod writing that he will write again by the next post, from which I assume that a mail was then being sent to the Western Isles. But the only post office in Skye was at Dunvegan, and people who lived in all parts of the Island had to send there for their letters. The authorities would not allow a bag to be dropped by the postman at Sconser, and in 1753 Lady Margaret MacDonald wrote several letters to MacLeod bitterly complaining of this, and asking that a post office should be opened either at Portree or Sconser.

The outer islands were served by a packet which sailed from Dunvegan once a fortnight. Stornoway had a fortnightly packet sailing from Poolewe.

There are among the papers at Dunvegan a great many papers relating to election business.

Until 1832 the County Franchise in Scotland was confined to freeholders who held land worth £400 Scots money under the old valuation of 1690. Sometime early in the eighteenth century a plan was devised by means of which the owners of large properties were enabled to multiply the votes on their

estates. The owner gave to any person on whom he could rely, a charter for life of land valued under the valuation of 1690 at £400 Scots money, and that person gave the original owner a charter of the land at a peppercorn rent.

The former then became 'the subject superior' of the land and as such was entitled to vote. The original owner still enjoyed the profits of the land, but held it not as before of the Crown, but of the 'subject superior' whom he had himself created. This last person holding of the Crown was by Scottish law a baron, so the process is referred to as 'making Barons,' or as 'creating superiorities.'

In 1690 the MacLeod Estate was valued at £8,874, which, judiciously split up, would give twenty-two votes. In 1782 there were only ninety-eight voters on the roll for Invernesshire. So that MacLeod then commanded nearly a quarter of the votes in the whole county.

But this system had many disadvantages. It involved much expense, it became necessary for an heir to obtain seisin from each of the subject superiors on succeeding, instead of obtaining one seisin for the whole from the Crown, and, in one instance at all events, a new baron, having obtained his charter, refused to reconvey the land.

It may be doubted moreover whether much was really gained. Other owners of land in the county were as busy creating superiorities on their estates as MacLeod was. The Duke of Gordon seems to have been specially busy in this direction, and the record of elections induces me to think that MacLeod was outstripped in the race. Elections were won in 1741 and 1790, but they were lost in 1733 and 1823. Generally, I think, the new barons paid nothing for their rights, but I find that about 1790 £400 was paid for a superiority in Argyleshire, and that between 1818 and 1830 £325 was received for superiorities.

The earliest instance of creating barons which I find is in 1733, and the custom continued till the Reform Bill of 1832 was passed.

Though there are very few papers on the subject at Dunvegan, no sketch of the state of affairs in the Highlands during the eighteenth century would be complete without some reference to the Jacobite plots which were incessant, and to the Jacobite risings, which were very frequent during the first half of the century. The Earl of Sutherland and the Duke of Argyle were undoubtedly Whig, but the majority of the western chiefs were

enthusiastic Jacobites. Lord Seaforth, Clan Ranald, and Sir Alexander MacDonalld of Slaitt were all out in 1715. Sir Alexander MacDonalld of Slaitt and MacLeod were certainly concerned in the abduction of Lady Grange, which is generally believed to have been carried out because she was a Government spy whom it was necessary to remove because she had knowledge of Jacobite plots. There is, however, some reason to doubt whether her abduction was a move in the political game at all. It may have been prompted by purely personal motives.

Murray of Broughton and Lord Lovat maintained that MacLeod had entered into the most solemn engagements to join Prince Charles, and that he was a double-dyed traitor because he did not do so, but there is absolutely no proof that he had done so, and I very much doubt whether he had entered into any engagements at all. When the Prince came, fervent Jacobites like Lochiel and Clan Ranald thought that it was a mad enterprise, and were only won over by the personal charms of Charles Edward himself. The Skye chiefs, whatever their sympathies, held aloof, probably under the influence of the Lord President Forbes, and actually raised their clans to fight on the side of the Government in the inglorious campaign under Lord Loudon in the winter of 1745.

This they had great difficulty in doing, as the sympathies of both clans were certainly Jacobite. Sir Alexander MacDonalld in a letter dated September 25th, 1745, says, 'I need not tell you the difficulty of recruiting 100 men; the scarcity of bread forced away several in the spring to the Dutch Service, and the men here are almost as fond of the young gentleman as their wives and daughters are.'

During the last half of the century large numbers of men were raised in the Highlands for the army carrying out the policy which had been originally suggested by President Forbes, and adopted by Pitt. Among the papers at Dunvegan are references to recruiting which was going on in 1760 for some unnamed regiment.

In 1775 Norman MacLeod (afterwards General MacLeod) raised a company for the Fraser Highlanders. In 1780 he raised a large number of men for a second battalion of the 42nd, afterwards the 73rd. Some think that he raised the whole battalion. He was certainly its first Lieutenant-Colonel. In 1790 further recruiting was going on, though here again no regiment is mentioned.

RODERICK C. MACLEOD.



## An Unpublished Letter of Sir Thomas Browne, M.D.

THE great reputation of Sir Thomas Browne, author of *Religio Medici*, as a man of literature and science, brought him many valuable friendships, and among his correspondents were some of the most eminent individuals of his time. A large number of letters which he wrote and received have been preserved, and of these a considerable proportion are printed in Volume I. of Wilkin's edition of Browne's Works.<sup>1</sup> Among the letters classified by Wilkin under the heading of Miscellaneous Correspondence there is a series of eight which passed between Browne and Sir William Dugdale between 4th October, 1658, and 5th April, 1662.<sup>2</sup> Dugdale was interested in the art of embanking and draining, and was contemplating a treatise on the subject, about the time when this correspondence opened. He applied to Browne for critical, historical and scientific contributions to his work. This was in due course acknowledged by Dugdale, not only by letter but also in his book. It is probable that Browne complied with Dugdale's request that he would look through the manuscript before it went to press.

The autograph signed letter by Browne, which is here printed (pp. 52-56), bears internal evidence that it belongs to the series referred to. It was not known to Wilkin, but its absence was commented upon by him. Another gap in Wilkin's series was filled in the early seventies of last century by the publication of another manuscript letter by Browne. This was in great part reproduced by Southwell in his edition of Browne's *Natural History of Norfolk*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Sir Thomas Browne's Works, including his Life and Correspondence*. Edited by Simon Wilkin, F.L.S. London: Pickering, 1835-6, 4 vols. Vol. I. (dated 1836) contains the correspondence. For the present series see pp. 380-393.

<sup>2</sup> Browne (1605-1682) was knighted in 1671. Dugdale (1605-1686) was created Garter King-of-Arms and knighted in 1677.

<sup>3</sup> *Notes and Letters on the Natural History of Norfolk, more especially on the Birds*

The fens and a certain fishbone constitute the double thread upon which this correspondence is strung. The charming way in which Sir Thomas points out a fallacy that may arise in the interpretation of 'subterraneous discoveries' will appeal to the modern reader.

On 27th September, 1658, Browne wrote a letter to Dugdale, evidently agreeing to give some assistance asked for. This letter was not known to Wilkin, and so far as I know has not been recovered. Dugdale refers to it in the letter of 4th October, 1658,<sup>1</sup> in which he writes to thank Browne, promises to send him bones from a certain fish, and asks his opinion on the meaning of the Latin word *emuniendis*.

On 9th November, 1658 (Wilkin, letter 2), Dugdale writes to Browne. Wilkin thinks that this letter was a mere envelope, and that the discourse which it contained was the paper afterwards published as No. 9 of *Miscellany Tracts* (London, 1683), entitled *Of Artificial Hills*, and preceded by Dugdale's Note of Enquiry.

On 10th November, 1658 (Wilkin, letter 3), Browne writes to Dugdale on the correct interpretation of the word *emuniendis*.

On 17th November, 1658 (Wilkin, letter 4), Dugdale writes to Browne acknowledging Browne's letter of the 10th, and says: 'I have herewithall sent you one of the bones of that fish, which was taken up by Sir Robert Cotton, in digging a pond at the skirt of Conington Downe, desiring your opinion thereof and of what magnitude you think it was.' He also asks Browne for a list of writers who have described the improvements brought about by banking and draining in Italy, France or the Netherlands.

On 6th December, 1658 (Wilkin, letter 5), Browne writes to Dugdale: 'I received the bone of the fish, and shall give you some account of it when I have compared it with another bone which is not by mee.' He says he had been prevented by 'diuersions into the country' from sending an answer that day to the inquiry about banking and draining in other lands.

On 24th February, 1658-9 (Wilkin, letter 6), Dugdale writes an interesting letter to Browne. He is recovering from

*and Fishes, from the MSS. of Sir Thomas Browne, M.D.* Edited by Thomas Southwell, F.L.S. London: Jarrold & Sons, 1902. Appendix B, pp. 91-94.

<sup>1</sup>No. 1 of the eight letters published by Wilkin in the Browne=Dugdale series.

an illness, and is now able to look again at his books and papers, though not yet daring to venture abroad, owing to the cold weather. He thanks Browne for a note received on the preceding day 'touching the draining made of late years by the Duke of Holstein'; and also for his 'learned observations<sup>1</sup> touching the banking and draying in other forreign parts.'

'But that which puzzles me most,' he says, 'is the sea coming up to Conington Downe.'

This brings us to the consideration of the two letters which have come to light since Wilkin's time. Browne is obviously owing Dugdale a letter on the origin of the fens, and it seems permissible to infer from Dugdale's letter just quoted that Browne had not yet given him his views on the fish bone. Browne dealt with these two subjects in separate letters. I think the undated letter which was first published in the *Eastern Counties Collectanea* for 1872-3 (pp. 193-195), and was (in great part) reprinted by Southwell in the *Notes and Letters* in 1902, is the earlier of the two. It deals with the fish bone.

'Sr. I cannot sufficiently admire the ingenious industry of Sr Robert Cotton in preserving so many things of rarity and observation nor commend your own enquiries for the satisfaction of such particulars. The petrified bone you sent me, which with divers others was found underground near Cunnington, seems to be the vertebra, spondyle or rackbone, of some large fish and no terrestrious animal as some upon sight conceived, as either of camel, rhinoceros, or elephant, . . .

It seems much too big for the largest dolphins, porpoises, or sword fishes, and too little for a true or grown whale, but may be the bone of some big cetaceous animal, as particularly of that which seamen call a Grampus; . . . and not only whales but Grampusses have been taken in this estuarie or mouth of the fenland rivers. . . . We are not ready to believe that, wherever such relics of fish or sea animals are found, the sea hath had its course. And Goropius Becanus long ago could not digest that conceit when he found great numbers of shells upon the highest Alps. For many may be brought unto places where they were not first found. . . .

For many years great doubt was made concerning those large bones found in some parts of England, and named Giants' bones till men considered they might be the bones of elephants

<sup>1</sup> So far as I know, this communication has not been recovered.

brought into this island by Claudius, and perhaps also by some succeeding emperors. . . . But many things prove obscure in subterraneous discovery . . . In a churchyard of this city an oaken billet was found in a coffin. About five years ago an humorous man of this country after his death and according to his own desire was wrap't up in a horned hide of an ox and so buried. Now when the memory hereof is past how this may hereafter confound the discoverers and what conjectures will arise thereof it is not easy to conjecture.'

This letter is necessarily later than Browne's letter of 6th Dec., 1658, in which he acknowledges receipt of the bone. It may likewise be assumed that it was written prior to 16th Novr., 1659, the date of the next letter to be referred to. Southwell notes that the will of Richard Ferrer directing that his dead body be handsomely trussed up in a black bullock's hide, and be decently buried in the churchyard of Thurne was proved 'about 1654.' This would be 'about five years ago,' if Browne were writing in 1659, as is highly probable. Finally, the letter is endorsed 'Sir Thomas Browne's discourse about the fish bone found at Conington Com. Hunt, Shown. Dr. Tanner.'

The second of the two letters deals with the fens, and has never, so far as I know, been printed before. It is, with the exception possibly of the postscript and probably of the endorsement, a holograph letter, and is dated and signed, but the name of the person to whom it is written does not appear in it. The contents, however, leave no room for doubt that it is the missing communication from Browne to Dugdale.

Sr

I returne you many thankes for that handsome account concerning the cause, courses, & progresse of the fennes. Therin yo<sup>r</sup> conjecture is very rationally & raiseth a faire probabilitye: Hauing founded yo<sup>r</sup> opinion upon the ancient & receiued cause, from the stagnation of the fresh waters: wch was also the reason alledged of old by Aristotle, & Herodotus, for the raising of the grounds of Ægypt; & cause still assigned by the Ferrarians, why the innundations of the Po hath made so many marshes.

Concerning the sea or siltie soyle about the skirtes of Conington downe, where the fish bones were found, as also the burnt trees found under ground, in the Isle of Axholme; in points of such obscuritie probable possibilities must suffice for truth.

5<sup>E</sup> I return you many thanks for that handsome account  
concerning the cause, course, & progresse of the former  
Thromes conjecture is very rational & carrieth a faire pro=  
bability. Having founded your opinion upon the ancient &  
received cause, from the stagnation of the fresh waters:  
wh was also the reason ~~of~~ whered of old by Aristotle, &  
Herodotus, for the raising of the grounds of Egypt, & cause  
still assigned by the Ferranans, why the inundations of  
the sea hath made so many marshes.

Concerning the sea or siltye foyle about the shires  
of Cunington downe, where the fish bones were found, as  
also the burnt trees found under ground, in the yle of  
Acholme; in points of such obscure probable possibili=  
ties must suffice for truth.

How the sea should come to the skirtes of Conington, where the soile is siltie, & the bones of the fish were found, having noe knowledge of the place, or particular situation about it, I haue noe speciaall guide or direction to determin. But being not farr removed from the present fennes & great broads, it is not impossible that in large flowes, & great drifts of elder time, the silt might be landed so farr. For the soile was then lower, many foote, that is by the depth of the silt, & limous surface upon it : & the sea might flowe farr upon the face of the leuell, & so by frequent repetition of flouds, & windes extend it's silt & sands, till the higher grounds confin'd their progresse & expansion. Hee that considers some high sandie grounds in Brabant, wch they hold to haue beene made by the sea, may more easily apprehend this.

For the times when great mutations happened, or when thinges lately discovered were lodged under ground, consideration must be made of the lower soyle, of the siltie soyle, & of the soyle aboue it. The lower ancient, & proper soyle was laid, when the Rivers had their free course & egress, when the baye was deepe, not clogged w<sup>th</sup> sands, & the mouthes of the outlettis free. The siltie soile might be laid when the flouds at higher tides came farr, when the baye being shallowed made the flouds large, & caried farr ouer the leuell ; as it happeneth on the coast of Cambaia in India, where the ebbes leaue the land drie for fifteen miles together. The fenny soile was raised when the sea was restrained, by art & nature, & the land flouds settled their mudd upon it : increasing when the sands blockt out the sea, & cloyed the mouths of the riuers. Now according to these seuerall times, some guide may be had to seuerall doubts arising concerning the possibilities & time of such substances w<sup>ch</sup> are found in seuerall of them.

But for all great mutations, & obscure alterations in such places, wee may take in one way of salue from the hyemes magnae or great winters of Aristotle : for according to his doctrine in processe of time, & revolution of yeares there falls out a *μεγας χειμών* or great winter, abounding in continuall raines & flouds even to the dissipation of the inhabitants, which observation is confirmed by examples of lower countries, allowed by his comen-tators, & the reason assigned by Astrologers, from the conjunction of the upper planets in a watery Trigon. And though wee hold noe Register of such deluges, & perhaps they may be too old for o<sup>r</sup> records, yet since the same hath happened in other

will be burnt, & the trees themselves be so weakened  
that when they fall or were forced down, by impul=  
sion from outward agents, the trunk might fall,  
& the burnt root stand, in a black & burnt sub=  
stance advantaging its duration /

Kora. c. c.

now. X. c.

1654

Sr I am  
w<sup>th</sup> very affectionate regards  
Thomas Browne

with the use  
of clearing the grounds  
in Virginia & the west  
Indies, their business  
is to clear the ground  
of the trees

LETTER FROM SIR THOMAS BROWNE, 1659.

lowe regions, the like is probably possible in this; w<sup>ch</sup> might ouerturne woods & trees, alter the site & course of Riuers, wash, shaue & pare away the upper grounds, raise & leuell others, settle lakes & broades, & admitt of large sea fishes.

How the trees found underground in the Isle of Axholme should have burnt bottomes, seemes very obscure, but may happen two wayes. First from the custome of Barbarous nations abounding in wood & making little account therof; who ordinarily cutt not downe their trees for fuell, but upon occasion make a fire about the bottome, & fire the tree about the lower part, wherin having serued their turnes, they depart: And this might well be practised by our unciuilised predecessors. Soe in the voyages of the North-west passage when o<sup>f</sup> men come into the woodes they mett w<sup>th</sup> burnt trees. The like I haue often observed in Ireland, where passing through large woods I haue obserued many hundred trees, burnt at the bottome, the trunk yet standing in many. And therefore these trees being burnt, & often halfthrough or more at the bottome, & so readily disposed to breake w<sup>th</sup> windes or floudes, might easily soe fall that they might lye by their rootes.

Another way is possible, especially in moorie, turfie, or bituminous soiles, for in such, the surface of the earth doth sometimes take fire, smoakingly, & smotheringly burning, for many dayes together, as it hath happened in seuerall parts both of England & Ireland: If so, the lower parts of the trees might well be burnt, & the trees themselves be so weak<sup>ned</sup> that when they fell or were forced downe, by impulsions from outward agents, the trunk might fall, & the burnt roote stand, in a black & burnt substance advantaging its duration.

Norwich  
Nov. XVI  
1659.

Sr from

Your very affectionat seruant

THOMAS BROWNE

Ore the use  
of clearing the ground  
in Virginia & the west  
Indies their buisnes  
is to clear the ground  
of the trees.



On 29th November, 1659, Dugdale writes to Browne (Wilkin, letter 7).

'Yours of the 17th instant came to my hands about 4 days since, with those inclosed judicious and learned observations, for which I returne you my hearty thanks.'

Though the dates differ by one day, it is obvious that the letter which has just been transcribed at length is the one to which Dugdale refers.

This correspondence, so far as it is accessible at the present time, closes with a brief communication from Dugdale to Browne, of date 5th April, 1662 (Wilkin, letter 8). *The History of Embanking* had been published, and the author now sends Browne a presentation copy;<sup>1</sup> at the same time acknowledging how much he owed to Browne's help, and stating that at p. 175 of the book he had made some brief mention of this indebtedness.

The manuscript letter now published for the first time can be deciphered without much difficulty. The only troublesome word is the one which I have rendered 'Qre' after Browne's signature. The 'e' may be taken as correct; the earlier part of the word might be almost anything. 'Qre,' however, was in use in Browne's time and is a likely rendering. Thus in a letter from Browne to Dugdale (Wilkin, letter 5) there is a marginal MS. note by Dugdale, 'Qre: to ask the Docter whether ever he saw this draught' (Wilkin, I. p. 387).

The letter occupies nearly three pages of a four-page folio sheet, folio size. In the lower fourth of the fourth page, at the right-hand, it is endorsed in two vertical lines:

Sir Tho : Browne  
about the fens

The new letter belonged to the 'Collection of Autograph Letters and Historical Documents formed by Alfred Morrison.' When this collection was sold, the letter was purchased by Messrs. Dobell of London, through whom it came into my possession.

T. K. MONRO.

<sup>1</sup> *The History of Embanking and Draining of divers fenns and marshes, both in foreign parts and in this Kingdom, and of the improvements thereby.* By William Dugdale. London: 1662, folio.